

## —Metzora—

Saturday Morning Torah Study

*Shabbat April 20, 2024*

*(Plaut pp. 841-43)*

Leviticus 14:1-11:

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ב זֹאת תְּהִי־הָ תּוֹרַת הַמִּצְוָה בַּיּוֹם  
טְהַרְתּוּ וְהוֹבֵא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן: ג וַיֵּצֵא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְרָאָה  
הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה נִרְפָּא נִגְע־הַצֹּרֵעַת מִן־הַצְּרוּעַ: ד וְצִוָּה הַכֹּהֵן וּלְקַח  
לַמִּטְהָר שְׁתֵּי־צִפְרִיִּים חַיִּים טְהוֹרִים וְעֵץ אֲרִז וְשְׁנֵי תוֹלַעַת וְאֵזֹב: ה וְצִוָּה  
הַכֹּהֵן וּשְׁחַט אֶת־הַצִּפּוֹר הָאֶחָת אֶל־כְּלֵי־חָרֶשׁ עַל־מִים חַיִּים:  
ו אֶת־הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיִּיהַ יִקַּח אֹתָהּ וְאֶת־עֵץ הָאֲרִז וְאֶת־שְׁנֵי הַתּוֹלַעַת  
וְאֶת־הָאֵזֹב וְטָבַל אוֹתָם וְאֶת | הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיִּיהַ בְּדַם הַצִּפּוֹר הַשְּׁחֻטָּה עַל  
הַמִּים הַחַיִּים: ז וְהִזָּה עַל הַמִּטְהָר מִן־הַצֹּרֵעַת שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים וּטְהוֹרוּ  
וּשְׁלַח אֶת־הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיִּיהַ עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה: ח וְכִבֶּס הַמִּטְהָר אֶת־בְּגָדָיו  
וְגִלַּח אֶת־כָּל־שְׁעָרוֹ וְרַחַץ בַּמַּיִם וְטָהַר וְאַחַר יָבֹא אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה וְיֹשֵׁב  
מַחוּץ לְאֹהֶלוֹ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: ט וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִגְלַח אֶת־כָּל־שְׁעָרוֹ  
אֶת־רֹאשׁוֹ וְאֶת־זַקְנוֹ וְאֶת גִּבּוֹת עֵינָיו וְאֶת־כָּל־שְׁעָרוֹ יִגְלַח וְכִבֶּס  
אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וְרַחַץ אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמַּיִם וְטָהַר: י וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִקַּח  
שְׁנֵי־כִבָּשִׂים תְּמִימִם וְכִבְשָׂה אֶחָת בֵּת־שְׁנָתָה תְּמִימָה וּשְׁלֹשָׁה  
עֶשְׂרִים סֵלֶת מִנְחָה בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן וְלֶג אֶחָד שֶׁמֶן: יא וְהָעֲמִיד הַכֹּהֵן  
הַמִּטְהָר אֶת הָאִישׁ הַמִּטְהָר וְאֹתָם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה פְּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד:

God spoke to Moses, saying: This shall be the ritual for a leper at the time that he is to be cleansed. When it has been reported to the priest, the priest shall go outside the camp. If the priest sees that the leper has been healed of his scaly affection, the priest shall order two live clean birds, cedar wood, crimson stuff, and hyssop to be brought for him who is to be cleansed. The priest shall order one of the birds slaughtered over fresh water in an earthen vessel; and he shall take the live bird, along with the cedar wood, the crimson stuff, and the hyssop, and dip them together with the live bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water. He shall then sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed of the eruption and cleanse him; and he shall set the live bird free in the open country. The one to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his

hair, and bathe in water; then he shall be clean. After that he may enter the camp, but he must remain outside his tent seven days. On the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair—of head, beard, and eyebrows. When he has shaved off all his hair, he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; then he shall be clean. On the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish, three-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in for a meal offering, and one *log* of oil. These shall be presented before the Eternal One, with the man to be cleansed, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, by the priest who performs the cleansing.

Commentary of Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzhak: 1040-1105):

חיות. פֶּרֶט לְטָרְפוֹת: טְהוֹרוֹת. פֶּרֶט לְעוֹף טָמֵא, לְפִי שֶׁהִנְגְּעִים בְּאֵין עַל לְשׁוֹן הָרַע שֶׁהוּא מַעֲשֵׂה פְטוּיֵי דְבָרִים, לְפִיכָּךְ הִזְקִקוּ לְטָהָרְתוֹ צְפָרִים שֶׁמִּפְטָפְטִין תְּמִיד בְּצִפְצוֹף קוֹל (עֲרֵכִין ט"ז): וְעֵץ אֲרֶז. לְפִי שֶׁהִנְגְּעִים בְּאֵין עַל גְּסוֹת הָרוּחַ (שם): וְשָׁנֵי תוֹלַעַת וְאֲזָב. מַה תִּקְנָתוֹ וְיִתְרַפֵּא? יִשְׁפִּיל עֲצָמוֹ מִגְּאֻתוֹ כְּתוֹלַעַת וְכְאֲזָב:

**4. Two live clean birds.** The birds must be “live” and not dying; “clean” and not from one of the “unclean” birds that may not be eaten. The reason for this is that leprous affections come upon a person as punishment for injurious speech, that is, for idle chatter about other people. It is therefore necessary that he brings birds, which are always chattering and chirping, so that he may be cleansed. **Cedar wood.** This lofty tree was used because plagues come also as punishment for haughtiness. **Crimson stuff, and hyssop.** What is the remedy he should use that he may be healed? Let him abandon pride, and regard himself as lowly as a worm (תולעת) and as hyssop.

Commentary of Bekhor Shor (Joseph ben Isaac Bekhor Shor 12th Century):

וְעֵץ אֲרֶז וְשָׁנֵי תוֹלַעַת וְאֲזָב. אֲרֶז גְּבַה שְׁבֵאֵילָנוֹת וְאֲזָב נְמוּךְ, סִימָן שֶׁמִּגְבִּיהוֹת בָּא לְנִמְיֻכּוֹת, וּמִי גָרַם לוֹ? הַחֵטָא, שֶׁהוּא כְּשָׁנֵי תוֹלַעַת.

**4. Cedar wood, crimson stuff, and hyssop.** These symbolized how his “crimson” sin has brought him from the heights of the cedar to the lowliness of

the hyssop.

Commentary of Abarbanel (Don Isaac Abarbanel (1437-1508):

**4. Cedar wood, crimson stuff, and hyssop.** Each of these items symbolizes one of the four aspects of leprosy: The birds, that his flesh is no longer dead but once again alive. The cedar, which does not decay, that his infection is gone. The crimson, that his blood is once again healthy. The hyssop, that his foul smell is gone.

Leviticus 14:12-20:

יב וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ הָאֶחָד וְהִקְרִיב אֹתוֹ לְאַשֶׁם וְאֶת־לֶג הַשֶּׁמֶן וְהִנִּיף אֹתָם תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: [שני] יג וְשָׁחַט אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ בְּמִקְוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁחָט אֶת־הַחֲטָאת וְאֶת־הָעֵלָה בְּמִקְוֹם הַקֹּדֶשׁ כִּי כַחֲטָאת הָאֲשֶׁם הוּא לִכְהֵן קֹדֶשׁ קְדָשִׁים הוּא: יד וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן מִדַּם הָאֲשֶׁם וְנָתַן הַכֹּהֵן עַל־תְּנוּךְ אֲזוֹ הַמִּטְהָר הַיְמָנִית וְעַל־בִּהֶן יָדוֹ הַיְמָנִית וְעַל־בִּהֶן רַגְלוֹ הַיְמָנִית: טו וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן מִלֶּג הַשֶּׁמֶן וַיִּצַק עַל־כַּף הַכֹּהֵן הַשְּׂמָאלִית: טז וְטָבַל הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־אֶצְבָּעוֹ הַיְמָנִית מִן־הַשֶּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל־כַּף הַשְּׂמָאלִית וְהִזָּה מִן־הַשֶּׁמֶן בְּאֶצְבָּעוֹ שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: יז וּמִיָּתֵר הַשֶּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל־כַּף יָתוּ הַכֹּהֵן עַל־תְּנוּךְ אֲזוֹ הַמִּטְהָר הַיְמָנִית וְעַל־בִּהֶן יָדוֹ הַיְמָנִית וְעַל־בִּהֶן רַגְלוֹ הַיְמָנִית עַל דָּם הָאֲשֶׁם: יח וְהִנּוֹתָר בַּשֶּׁמֶן אֲשֶׁר עַל־כַּף הַכֹּהֵן יָתוּ עַל־רֹאשׁ הַמִּטְהָר וְכִפֹּר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: יט וְעָשָׂה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַחֲטָאת וְכִפֹּר עַל־הַמִּטְהָר מִטְּמֵאתוֹ וְאַחַר יִשְׁחָט אֶת־הָעֵלָה: כ וְהָעֵלָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הָעֵלָה וְאֶת־הַמִּנְחָה הַמִּזְבְּחָה וְכִפֹּר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן וְטָהַר:

The priest shall take one of the male lambs and offer it with the *log* of oil as a guilt offering, and he shall elevate them as an elevation offering before the Eternal. The lamb shall be slaughtered at the spot in the sacred area where the sin offering and the burnt offering are slaughtered. For the guilt offering, like the sin offering, goes to the priest; it is most holy. The priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering, and the priest shall put it on the ridge of the right ear of him who is being cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. The priest shall then take some of the *log* of oil and pour it into the

palm of his own left hand. And the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in the palm of his left hand and sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the Eternal One. Some of the oil left in his palm shall be put by the priest on the ridge of the right ear of the one being cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot—over the blood of the guilt offering. The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one being cleansed. Thus the priest shall make expiation for him before God. The priest shall then offer the sin offering and make expiation for the one being cleansed of his uncleanness. Last, the burnt offering shall be slaughtered, and the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the meal offering on the altar, and the priest shall make expiation for him. Then he shall be clean.

Commentary of ibn Ezra (Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra 1091/92-1167):

על תנוך. טעמו ידוע ממקומו והנה המטהר מהצרת שהוא בגוף כמו הכהן שימלא ידו כי העון כמו הצרעת בנפש והבהן מקום חבור והוא עקר כל המעשים והימנות בעבור כח הצד הימין והתנוך זכר לשמוע אשר צוה:

**14. The ridge.** We understand what this must be from its location on the ear. **The right ear... the thumb... the big toe.** These represent the body of the one who is being cleansed, just as they do the bodies of the priest when they are consecrated, for sin is the leprosy of the soul. The thumb and big toe are the keystones of the hand and the foot, representing the essence of action. The ear is a reminder to hear that which he was commanded. The right side is used because that is the dominant side.

Commentary of Hizkuni (Rabbi Hizkuni ben Manoah mid-13th Century):

ולקח הכהן, ונתן הכהן מה נתינה בעצמו של כהן אף קבלה בעצמו של כהן, יכול אף נתינה של מזבח תהא ביד, תגל כי כחטאת האשם הוא לכהן מה חטאת טעונה כלי אף אשם טעון כלי. נמצאת אומר שני כהנים מקבלין את דמו אחד בכלי ואחד ביד וזה שקבל בכלי בא וזורקו על קיר המזבח וזה שקבל ביד בא לו אצל המצורע.

**14. The priest shall take... and the priest shall put.** Just as the priest personally performs this rite so he personally performs the other rites connected

with this sacrifice. I might have thought that placing the blood on the altar should be performed by some specially designated vessel such as a spoon or something like it. To prevent us from thinking this, the Torah repeats the word (הכהן) where it did not appear to have been necessary, and adds that the procedure for the sin offering is the same as that for the guilt offering. There were two priests needed for this whole procedure: One would receive the blood in a vessel, and the other, in his hand. The first would sprinkle the blood from his vessel on the side of the altar, and the other who held the blood in his hand would approach the one being cleansed.

Commentary of Gersonides (Rabbi Levi ben Gershom 1288-1344):

**14. The priest shall take... and the priest shall put.** Though the verse does not say so, the dashing of the blood against the altar must come first. As with every sacrifice, it is the giving of the divine portion to God that permits the rest for human use.

Leviticus 14:21-32:

כא ואם־דל הוא ואין ידו משגת ולקח כבש אחד אשם לתנופה לכפר עליו ועשרון סלת אחד בלול בשמן למנחה ולג שמן: כב ושתי תרים או שני בני יונה אשר תשיג ידו והיה אחד חטאת והאחד עלה: כג והביא אתם ביום השמיני לטהרתו אל־הכהן אל־פתח אהל־מועד לפני יהוה: כד ולקח הכהן את־כבש האשם ואת־לג השמן והניף אתם הכהן תנופה לפני יהוה: כה ושחט את־כבש האשם ולקח הכהן מדם האשם ונתן על־תנוך אזור־המטהר הימנית ועל־בהן ידו הימנית ועל־בהן רגלו הימנית: כו ומר־השמן יצק הכהן על־כף הכהן השמאלית: כז והזה הכהן באצבעו הימנית מן־השמן אשר על־כפו השמאלית שבע פעמים לפני יהוה: כח ונתן הכהן מן־השמן אשר על־כפו על־תנוך אזור המטהר הימנית ועל־בהן ידו הימנית ועל־בהן רגלו הימנית על־מקום דם האשם: כט והנותר מן־השמן אשר על־כף הכהן יתן על־ראש המטהר לכפר עליו לפני יהוה: ל ועשה את־האחד מן־התרים או מן־בני היונה מאשר תשיג ידו: לא את אשר־תשיג ידו את־האחד חטאת ואת־האחד עלה

עַל־הַמִּנְחָה וְכֹפֶר הַכֶּהֵן עַל הַמַּטְהָר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: לֵב זֹאת תֹּרֵת  
אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ נִגַע צָרַעַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִשִּׁיג יָדוֹ בְּטַהֲרָתוֹ:

If, however, he is poor and his means are insufficient, he shall take one male lamb for a guilt offering, to be elevated in expiation for him, one-tenth of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in for a meal offering, and a *log* of oil; and two turtledoves or two pigeons, depending on his means, the one to be the sin offering and the other the burnt offering. On the eighth day of his cleansing he shall bring them to the priest at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, before God. The priest shall take the lamb of guilt offering and the *log* of oil, and elevate them as an elevation offering before the Eternal One. When the lamb of guilt offering has been slaughtered, the priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the ridge of the right ear of the one being cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. The priest shall then pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand, and with the finger of his right hand the priest shall sprinkle some of the oil that is in the palm of his left hand seven times before God. Some of the oil in his palm shall be put by the priest on the ridge of the right ear of the one being cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, over the same places as the blood of the guilt offering; and what is left of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one being cleansed, to make expiation for him before the Eternal. He shall then offer one of the turtledoves or pigeons, depending on his means—whichever he can afford—the one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, together with the meal offering. Thus the priest shall make expiation before the God of All Being for the one being cleansed. Such is the ritual for him who has a scaly affection and whose means for his cleansing are limited.