Leviticus 13 | Sunday May 18, 2025

In this section of Leviticus God is teaching His people the distinction between clean and unclean. These laws interact with very practical parts of life, and are given **in practical terms**. They were not meant to be a scientific classification of animals, or an encyclopedia of differing medical aliments. These laws were practical and meant to be memorized and used by His people. Each item of uncleanness is another reminder that we are not living in the garden but with sin and its polluting influence. This section on leprosy, various diseases, and mold has practical benefits and it points Israel to what life and wholeness looks like in Jesus. A pattern will emerge for each case. A preliminary symptom **is noticed, then inspected** by the priest. God gives the priest what to look for to decide if the disease is to be viewed as **clean or unclean**. If the priest is unsure, then a **7-day quarantine** is used to watch how things develop, and sometimes followed by a second quarantine period. Then God gives instructions about what to do if the disease in question is unclean.

Leviticus 13:1-59 ESV

> (1) The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, (2) “When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, **and it turns into a case of leprous disease** on the skin of his body, then **he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests,** (3) and **the priest shall examine the diseased area** on the skin of his body. And if the hair in the diseased area **has turned white** and the disease appears to be **deeper than the skin of his body**, it is a case **of leprous disease**. When the priest has examined him, **he shall pronounce him unclean**. (4) **But if** the spot is white in the skin of his body and appears no deeper than the skin, and the hair in it has not turned white, **the priest shall shut up the diseased person for seven days.** (5) And the priest shall examine him on the seventh day, and if in his eyes the disease is checked **and the disease has not spread in the skin**, **then the priest shall shut him up for another seven days.** (6) And the priest shall examine him again on the seventh day, and if the diseased area has faded and the disease has not spread in the skin, **then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only an eruption.** And he shall wash his clothes and be clean. (7) **But if the eruption spreads** in the skin, after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall appear again before the priest. (8) And the priest shall look, and if the eruption has spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a leprous disease. (9) “When a man is afflicted with a leprous disease, he shall be brought to the priest, (10) and the priest shall look. And if there is a white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair white, and there is raw flesh in the swelling, (11) it is a chronic leprous disease in the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. He shall not shut him up, for he is unclean. (12) And if the leprous disease breaks out in the skin, so that the leprous disease **covers all the skin of the diseased person from head to foot**, so far as the priest can see, (13) then the priest shall look, and if the leprous disease has covered all his body, he shall pronounce him clean of the disease; **it has all turned white, and he is clean.** (14) **But when raw flesh appears on him, he shall be unclean.** (15) And the priest shall examine the raw flesh and pronounce him unclean. **Raw flesh is unclean, for it is a leprous disease.** (16) **But** if the raw flesh recovers and turns white again, then he shall come to the priest, (17) and the priest shall examine him, and if the disease has turned white, **then the priest shall pronounce the diseased**

person clean; he is clean. (18) “If there is in the skin of one's body **a boil** and it heals, (19) and in the place of the boil there comes a white swelling or a reddish-white spot, then it shall be shown to the priest. (20) And the priest shall look, and if it appears deeper than the skin and its hair has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a case of leprous disease that has broken out in the boil. (21) But if the priest examines it and there is no white hair in it and it is not deeper than the skin, but has faded, then the priest shall shut him up seven days. (22) And if it spreads in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a disease. (23) But if the spot remains in one place **and does not spread**, it is the scar of the boil, and the priest shall pronounce him clean. (24) “Or, when the body has a burn on its skin and the raw flesh of the burn becomes a spot, reddish-white or white, (25) the priest shall examine it, and if the hair in the spot has turned white and it appears deeper than the skin, then it is a leprous disease. It has broken out in the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a case of leprous disease. (26) But if the priest examines it and there is no white hair in the spot and it is no deeper than the skin, but has faded, the priest shall shut him up seven days, (27) and the priest shall examine him the seventh day. **If it is spreading in the skin**, **then the priest shall pronounce him unclean**; it is a case of leprous disease. (28) **But if the spot remains in one place and does not spread in the skin,** but has faded, it is a swelling from the burn, and **the priest shall pronounce him clean**, for it is the scar of the burn. (29) “When a man or woman has a disease on the head or the beard, (30) the priest shall examine the disease. And if it appears deeper than the skin, and the hair in it is yellow and thin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is an itch, a leprous disease of the head or the beard. (31) And if the priest examines the itching disease and it appears no deeper than the skin and there is no black hair in it, then the priest shall shut up the person with the itching disease for seven days, (32) and on the seventh day the priest shall examine the disease. **If the itch has not spread**, and there is in it no yellow hair, and the itch appears to be no deeper than the skin, (33) then he shall shave himself, but the itch he shall not shave; and the priest shall shut up the person with the itching disease for another seven days. (34) And on the seventh day the priest shall examine the itch, and **if the itch has not spread** in the skin and it appears to be no deeper than the skin, then **the priest shall pronounce him clean**. And he shall wash his clothes and be clean. (35) But **if the itch spreads** in the skin after his cleansing, (36) then the priest shall examine him, and **if the itch has spread in the skin**, the priest need not seek for the yellow hair; **he is unclean.** (37) But if in his eyes the itch is unchanged and black hair has grown in it, the itch is healed and he is clean, and the priest shall pronounce him clean. (38) “When a man or a woman has spots on the skin of the body, **white spots,** (39) the priest shall look, and **if the spots on the skin of the body are of a dull white, it is leukoderma that has broken out in the skin; he is clean.** (40) **“If a man's hair falls out from his head, he is bald; he is clean.** (41) **And if a man's hair falls out from his forehead, he has baldness of the forehead; he is clean.** (42) But if there is on the bald head or the bald forehead a reddish-white diseased area, it is a leprous disease breaking out on his bald head or his bald forehead. (43) Then the priest shall examine him, and if the diseased swelling is reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, like the appearance of leprous disease in the skin of the body, (44) he is a leprous man, he is unclean. The priest must pronounce him unclean; his disease is on his head. (45) “**The leprous person** who has the disease **shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and**

> **he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’** (46) **He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.** (47) “When there is a case of leprous disease in a garment, whether a woolen or a linen garment, (48) in warp or woof of linen or wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin, (49) if the disease is greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin or in the warp or the woof or in any article made of skin, it is a case of leprous disease, and it shall be shown to the priest. (50) And the priest shall examine the disease and shut up that which has the disease for seven days. (51) Then he shall examine the disease on the seventh day. **If the disease has spread** in the garment, in the warp or the woof, or in the skin, whatever be the use of the skin, the disease is a persistent leprous disease; **it is unclean**. (52) **And he shall burn the garment**, or the warp or the woof, the wool or the linen, or any article made of skin that is diseased, **for it is a persistent leprous disease. It shall be burned in the fire.** (53) “And if the priest examines, and **if the disease has not spread** in the garment, in the warp or the woof or in any article made of skin, (54) then the priest shall command that they wash the thing in which is the disease, and he shall shut it up for another seven days. (55) And the priest shall examine the diseased thing after it has been washed. And if the appearance of the diseased area has not changed, though the disease has not spread, it is unclean. You shall burn it in the fire, whether the rot is on the back or on the front. (56) “But if the priest examines, and if the diseased area has faded after it has been washed, he shall tear it out of the garment or the skin or the warp or the woof. (57) Then if it appears again in the garment, in the warp or the woof, or in any article made of skin, **it is spreading. You shall burn with fire whatever has the disease.** (58) But the garment, or the warp or the woof, or any article made of skin from which the disease departs when you have washed it, shall then be washed a second time, and be clean.” (59) This is the law for a case of leprous disease in a garment of wool or linen, either in the warp or the woof, or in any article made of skin, to determine whether it is clean or unclean.

It is important to note that the priest **was not functioning as a doctor**, because how to treat these various diseases is not mentioned. The priest **was functioning as a public health officer** who was tasked with keeping a contagious disease from spreading. In modern terms many varying diseases are represented in this chapter. The Hebrew term used means **a spot, stroke, wound, or mark**. It refers in general to a disruption to the skin, garment or house that is not normal and if spreads, is contagious and unclean. **Many varying diseases are represented in this chapter from, psoriasis, eczema, boils, leukoderma, mildew, mold and even leprosy which is known today as Hansen’s disease**. When something did not look normal God gave these laws for the priest to distinguish if it was a contagious dangerous issue or something benign. Leprosy in this chapter is used similarly to how we use the broad term of cancer today; there are many varying specific types.

Many deny that modern day leprosy (Hansen’s disease) is represented in this chapter at all. One reason given is that the Greek language has a very specific term for leprosy (**elephantiasis**) and that word is not used in the New Testament or in the Old Testament Greek translation. Both use the term **lepra**, which means a scaly, flaky diseased skin. This is the more generic term but it was broad enough to include **leprosy** (Hansen’s disease). Others argue that the symptoms mentioned do not match late stage leprosy. This is true but the goal of the chapter is early detection and the symptoms do match early leprosy. The larger issue is the constantly changing

understanding of Leprosy.

Leprosy or Hansen's disease is one of the oldest infectious diseases of human history. Throughout history it has been a major problem, **in the early 1200's there were over 19,000 leprosy hospitals in Europe**. It is extremely serious and was known as the **"living death."** There was no known treatment, isolation and quarantine were used for generations to stunt its spread. Worldwide rates started declining in the **13th century for unknown reasons** except for certain countries. Dr. Hansen in **1870's** discovered the bacteria that causes Leprosy and a treatment was able to be created. Despite the new treatment even in the 20th century leper colonies were still used to contain the disease. Today's treatment has become so effective it is now known as a curable disease.

Generally, it was thought that Leprosy **did not exist in Egypt/ Israel during the time of Moses,** thus the disease mentions in Leviticus 14 could not have been modern Leprosy. Then in **2009 a 4,000-year-old skeleton in India** was discovered that was killed by leprosy. **And the new thinking is that Leprosy was wide spread in the Egypt/ Promise Land region by the time of Moses.** This history is important for two reasons. **First, it proves once again the accuracy of God's word.** Archeology consistently uncovers truth that the Word long taught. Secondly, is that God's hard instructions of quarantine/ isolation do not make sense if the skin disease in question is something relatively minor like **psoriasis or eczema.**

Leprosy though fits these serious precautions. The disease attacks the nerves, respiratory tract, skin, and eyes. It often leads to inability to feel pain, loss of hands/ feet, disfigurement and eventually is fatal. There is no doubt that Aaron and Miriam viewed Leprosy as a death sentence.

Numbers 12:10-12 ESV

> (10) When the cloud removed from over the tent, behold, Miriam was **leprous, like snow**. And Aaron turned toward Miriam, and behold, she was leprous.
> (11) And Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord, do not punish us because we have done foolishly and have sinned.
> (12) Let her not be **as one dead**, **whose flesh is half eaten away when he comes out of his mother's womb."**

Miriam had sinned by complaining against Moses and God judged her by giving her leprosy. Aaron understood the seriousness of the disease, and pleaded that she would not become like one whose flesh is half eaten away. The disease is a reminder of how the human body had been corrupted since the garden. **Having Leprosy was not a sin,** though God did use it as a judgment at times for sin. Yet it was so dangerous for God's people and defiling **that mishandling Leprosy was a sin.**

Deuteronomy 24:8-9 ESV

> (8) "Take care, in a case **of leprous disease, to be very careful to do according to all that the Levitical priests shall direct you.** As I commanded them, so you shall be careful to do.
> (9) **Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam** on the way as you came out of Egypt.

Israel was called to take extreme care in following these instructions. Miriam is held up as an example of how dangerous leprosy was. These laws were God instructing His people how to practically handle the defilement sin had caused.

Leviticus 13:45-46 ESV

> (45) "**The leprous person** who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and **he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.'**
> (46) **He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.**

As long as a person had leprosy they were continually unclean and had to remain outside of the camp. They **were to walk with signs of mourning, a continual reminder of their impending fate** and warn others of their unclean state. **Their clothing and hair showed they were mourning their own death.** It was not hyperbole to call leprosy the living dead. This disease separated you from Israel and from access to the tabernacle because it was so dangerous. This was not a vanity issue. Many other skin ailments are listed in chapter 13, and are declared clean as long as it is not contagious to others.

Leviticus 13:12-15 ESV

> (12) And if the leprous disease breaks out in the skin, so that the leprous disease **covers all the skin** of the diseased person from head to foot, so far as the priest can see,
> (13) then the priest shall look, and if the leprous disease has covered all his body, **he shall pronounce him clean of the disease; it has all turned white, and he is clean.**
> (14) **But when raw flesh appears on him, he shall be unclean.**
> (15) And the priest shall examine the raw flesh and pronounce him unclean. **Raw flesh is unclean, for it is a leprous disease.**

This seems counter intuitive, but true leprosy would not spread this fast, and if it did cover the whole body then there would be raw flesh. Even when a person was covered head to foot in a rash, **God declared them clean because it was not contagious.** God was sorting out for Israel what issues were dangerous and could spread to the camp and which ones would not. Our bodies do not function perfectly ever since humanity was sent out of the garden. **They keep finding knew ways to break down**. It is a reminder of the physical death that sin has caused. **Leprosy is the perfect embodiment of what sin has done to humanity, without Jesus we are the living dead.**

Romans 7:24 ESV

> (24) Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from **this body of death?**

2 Corinthians 5:1-5 NLT

> (1) For we know that when **this earthly tent we live in is taken down** (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), **we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body** made for us by God Himself and not by human hands.
> (2) **We grow weary in our present bodies**, and **we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing.**
> (3) For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies.
> (4) While we live in these earthly bodies, **we groan and sigh**, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. **Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life.**
> (5) God Himself has prepared us for this, **and as a guarantee He has given us His Holy Spirit.**

Reading Leviticus 13 should make us long for our new bodies. The body is temporary it is a mere tent. A body of death that keeps reminding us that **it is dying a little more each day**. We grow weary, groan, and sigh as we long for our perfect resurrected bodies. When we put on our resurrected bodies we will be swallowed by life! This is in part why disease and illnesses are so hard, they remind us of death.

Leviticus 13 kept these diseases from spreading in the camp of Israel. A safeguard from the continual spread of death. **The final judgment was up to the priest.** It was their decision who was clean and unclean.

Leviticus 13:6-8 ESV

> (6) **And the priest shall examine him** again on the seventh day, and if the diseased area has faded and the disease has not spread in the skin, **then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only an eruption.** And he shall wash his clothes and be clean.
> (7) **But if the eruption spreads** in the skin, after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, **he shall appear again before the priest**.
> (8) And the priest shall look, and if the eruption has spread in the skin, **then the priest shall pronounce him unclean;** it is a leprous disease.

The opinion of the person did not matter. It was the priest's responsibility and right to declare who was clean an unclean. **The great news is that Jesus is our great High Priest, and He came to rescue us from this body of death**. He came so that we can be swallowed up by life.

Mark 1:40-44 ESV

> (40) And a leper came to Him, **imploring Him**, and kneeling said to Him, "If You will, **You can make me clean."**
> (41) **Moved with pity, He stretched out His hand and touched him** and said to him, "I will; **be clean."**
> (42) And immediately the leprosy left him, and **he was made clean.**
> (43) And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once,
> (44) and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them."

The desperation for the Leper is hard to comprehend. This man was isolated from His family, the temple, and was mourning his eventual death. He pleaded for Jesus to cleanse Him. Jesus was deeply moved, with sympathy for the man. He saw what the pollution of sin has done to us as a people. **He touched the leper! This is an amazing moment that speaks so much truth. To heal us and rescue us from our body of death Jesus had to put on a physical body of death.** Jesus declared the man was clean. The living dead now had life. He has done the same for us. Through His death and resurrection we are declared clean in His sight. We all have a body of death and know pain and heart ache it brings in our life and our loved ones lives. Through our great high priest our future is amazing and full of life.

Revelation 21:22-23; 27 ESV

> (22) **And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.** (23) And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, f**or the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.**
> (27) **But nothing unclean will ever enter it,** nor anyone who does what is detestable or

> false, **but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.**
