

# Leviticus

## Lesson 9

The straightforward law concerning leprosy needs only a few notes of commentary with each point. I think it would be helpful if I summarize the standard order of a leprosy diagnosis before we begin.

- First, the priest is the authority to diagnosed leprosy as clean or unclean in every situation.
- Second, the priest looks for a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot called the “mark.”
- Third, with a mark present, the priest quarantines the person or item for seven days.
- Forth, the priest inspects the mark for spreading or changed, the quarantine continues for seven days.
- Fifth, the presence of white hair in the mark is an immediate sign of leprosy.
- Sixth, once the mark has turned entirely white, the priest declares the person clean.
- Seventh, once clean, the quarantine continues for seven days.
- Eighth, on the eighth day, the clean person presents his offerings at the Tent of Meeting.

With these points in mind, we can now discover them again as we read and study the law of leprosy. Chapters 13 and 14 contain the whole law of leprosy. Because of all the different kinds of leprosy described in chapter 13, we must break this study into two lessons

### VIII. The Law Concerning Leprosy (13:1-59)

#### A. The Suspicion of Leprosy on a Man (13:1-8)

##### 1. Three Conditions – Swelling, Scab, Bright Spot (13:1-2)

The LORD gave the law concerning leprosy to both Moses and Aaron. When there was a suspicion of leprosy on a man, Aaron was to look for three conditions – swelling, scab, or a bright spot. The LORD spoke in chapter 13 verse 1. *“Then the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling or a scab or a bright spot, and it becomes an infection of leprosy on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests.”* (13:1-2).

The text says, *“When a man....”* We need to move this side point out of the way immediately. The Hebrew word for “man” is *adam*. You should recognize it because it was the formal name of the first man the LORD created. But it is the word that properly means *all humans – male and female together*. Therefore, most of the new versions render this verse as “When a person ....” We agree. The LORD is directing this instruction to the priests for both males and females.

Swelling skin, scabs, and bright spots were sure to come upon everyone living in tents out by a mountain as the Nation of Israel was doing at the time. The mere process of gathering wood for the fires lends to cuts and wounds. But the issue at hand deals with infected wounds. We have all had an infected wound. The skin around the wound becomes reddish; fever appears and, with that, the area becomes stiff and swollen, which is exactly what the LORD is addressing with Moses and Aaron.

##### a) Hair Turned White in Infection and Deep Infection – Declare Unclean (13:3)

When an infection appears in a wound, the person must go to the priest for a diagnosis. Verse 3 says, *“The priest shall look at the mark on the skin of the body, and if the hair in the infection has turned white and the infection appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is an infection of leprosy; when the priest has looked at him, he shall pronounce him unclean.”* (13:3).

The “mark” on the skin is the infected area around the wound that has swollen, turned reddish, hard, and is hotter to the touch than the normal skin. We understand that. But the first sign of

leprosy is the presence of a hair that has turned white, along with the infection appearing to be much deeper in the flesh than just a skin-deep scab. The white hair and the swelling are an immediate declaration that the person is unclean with leprosy.

**b) Bright Spot with No Turned White Hair – Isolation Seven Days (13:4)**

But not so fast. Men are hairy, and the hair in the wound may not have turned white, but the mark on the skin has turned whiter than the normal skin around it. What should the priest do? Verse 4. *“But if the bright spot is white on the skin of his body, and it does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and the hair on it has not turned white, then the priest shall isolate him who has the infection for seven days.”* (13:4).

The diagnosis of the priest is, “I don’t know if you are clean or unclean. Let us isolate you for seven days and take another look then.” So, the priest isolates the person from all family and friends, most likely outside the camp for seven days.

**c) Infection Not Changed - Isolate for Seven Days (13:5)**

At the end of the seven days, the priest inspects the isolated person again. Verse 5. *“The priest shall look at him on the seventh day, and if in his eyes the infection has not changed and the infection has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall isolate him for seven more days.”* (13:5).

With no change in the wound visible, the careful priest isolates the person for seven more days.

**d) Scab Faded or Not Spread – Declare Clean (13:6).**

At the end of the seventh day, making a total of fourteen days of isolation from family and friends, the priest inspects the person again. Verse 6. *“The priest shall look at him again on the seventh day, and if the infection has faded and the mark has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a scab. And he shall wash his clothes and be clean.”* (13:6).

After fourteen days, if the mark fades with no spreading, the priest declares the person clean. The leper washes his clothes, the same clothes he has worn for fourteen days.

**e) Scab Spread – Declare Unclean (13:7-8)**

But on that fourteenth day, if the scab enlarges itself, there is a medical problem. Verse 7. *“But if the scab spreads farther on the skin after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall appear again to the priest. The priest shall look, and if the scab has spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is leprosy.”* (13:7-8).

When the priest sees the wound increased in size, he declares the person unclean with leprosy. Not spoken here, but the LORD will say later, the person with leprosy must isolate from family and friends outside the camp until the leprosy runs its course.

**B. The Chronic Leprosy on a Man (13:9-23).**

**1. White Swelling, Hair Turned White, Quick Raw Flesh – Declare Unclean (13:9-11).**

But not all leprosy runs its course in the same way. Some people experience chronic leprosy with raw open flesh. What should happen then? Verse 9. *“When the infection of leprosy is on a man, then he shall be brought to the priest. The priest shall then look, and if there is a white swelling in the skin, and it has turned the hair white, and there is quick raw flesh in the swelling, it is a chronic leprosy on the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean; he shall not isolate him, for he is unclean.”* (13:9-11).

With this instruction, we can immediately conclude several kinds of leprosy exist with varying seriousness and length of ailment. Here we see the swelling in place, and the hair in the wound turned white as expected with leprosy, but the LORD adds the factor of “*quick raw flesh*.” The word “*quick*” means *to have life*. The Hebrew word is *baya*, and it means *to live*. This means that the

infected raw flesh reproduces itself with more infected raw flesh instead of healthy flesh. The priest must declare him unclean and isolate him for seven days. Not said here, but can be assumed by the way the LORD handled the previous leprosy instructions, the priest inspects at the end of the seven days. If the infection remains, he isolates another seven days, and the process continues until the leprosy runs its course.

## 2. White Leprosy Covers All of Body – Declare Clean (13:12-13)

The presence of white dead skin and flesh means the death of leprosy because it has run its course. We see that next in verse 12. *“If the leprosy breaks out farther on the skin, and the leprosy covers all the skin of him who has the infection from his head even to his feet, as far as the priest can see, then the priest shall look, and behold, if the leprosy has covered all his body, he shall pronounce clean him who has the infection; it has all turned white and he is clean.”* (13:12-13).

With the chronic leper, the disease finally covers all the skin and flesh of the man. When it runs its course, the leprous skin and flesh turn completely white. When the person is completely white from head to toe, the priest proclaims him clean. As we will see, the leper remains isolated another seven days, and then on the eighth day, he presents his offering at the Tent of Meeting, but that information comes later in the text.

## 3. Presence of Raw Flesh – Declare Unclean (13:14-15)

When the priest inspects the leper at the end of the seven days, and raw flesh appears or is still present, the priest declares an immediate uncleanness. Verse 14. *“But whenever raw flesh appears on him, he shall be unclean. The priest shall look at the raw flesh, and he shall pronounce him unclean; the raw flesh is unclean, it is leprosy.”* (13:14-15).

## 4. Raw Flesh Turned White Leper – Declare Clean (13:16-17)

But if, upon inspection, the raw flesh turned white, what is the priest to do? Verse 16. *“Or if the raw flesh turns again and is changed to white, then he shall come to the priest, and the priest shall look at him, and behold, if the infection has turned to white, then the priest shall pronounce clean him who has the infection; he is clean.”* (13:16-17).

When all the raw flesh turns white, the appearance means the leprosy has run its course. The priest declares the person unclean. No doubt he must remain in isolation seven more days for a final inspection as with the others.

## 5. Boil Turns to Deep White Swelling or Reddish White Spot – Declare Unclean (13:18-20)

Perhaps we come to a third strain of leprosy that begins with a boil. Verse 18. *“When the body has a boil on its skin, and it is healed, and in the place of the boil there is a white swelling or a reddish-white, bright spot, then it shall be shown to the priest; and the priest shall look, and behold, if it appears to be lower than the skin, and the hair on it has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is the infection of leprosy, it has broken out in the boil.”* (13:18-20).

The Hebrew word for “boil” is *bashal*, and it means *seethe*. An archaic English word, *seethe* needs defining in today’s language. It is a hard tumor-like wound that bubbles up in size and oozes out liquid as if it is “boiling from within.”

In the case of the “boil,” the priest relies on two signs. First, does it look like the boil goes deep past the skin into the flesh? Second, does it contain the presence of a hair turned white in the wound? In either case, the priest must declare the man unclean. Out to isolation, he must go.

## 6. Boil, No White Hairs, and Skin Deep – Isolate Seven Days (13:21)

But what if the priest looks for the two signs that we just mentioned, and they are not there? What does the priest do? Verse 21. *“But if the priest looks at it, and behold, there are no white hairs in it, and it is not lower than the skin and is faded, then the priest shall isolate him for seven days; …”* (13:21).

As we should expect by now, the priest does not know if leprosy remains in the wound, so the person isolates for seven days.

#### **7. Boil, White Swelling or Reddish Spot Spreads – Declare Unclean (13:22)**

But, if upon inspection, the priest finds the boil spreading, what does he to do? *“… and if it spreads farther on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infection.”* (13:22).

With a spreading boil, the priest declares the man unclean. He remains in isolation.

#### **8. Scar from Boil – Declare Clean (13:23)**

If upon inspection on the seventh day, the priest finds a bright spot or a scar in place of the boil, verse 23 says, *“But if the bright spot remains in its place and does not spread, it is only the scar of the boil; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.”* (13:23).

In this case, the priest declares the man clean.

### **C. The Burn Turned to Leprosy on a Man (13:24- ).**

#### **1. Burn Turns to Deep Bright Spot, Reddish-white, or White – Declare Unclean (13:24-25)**

Alas, the LORD introduces another source of leprosy, one from a burn. Verse 24. *“Or if the body sustains in its skin a burn by fire, and the raw flesh of the burn becomes a bright spot, reddish-white, or white, then the priest shall look at it. And if the hair in the bright spot has turned white and it appears to be deeper than the skin, it is leprosy; it has broken out in the burn. Therefore, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infection of leprosy.”* (13:24-25).

The source of this wound comes from a fire burn. No doubt fire burns were common in the camp, but in this case, the burn becomes infected beyond the expected. The priest looks for two things— the deepness of the infection and the presence of a white hair. With one or both present, the priest declares the leper unclean. Isolation begins.

#### **2. No White Hair No Deep Spot – Isolate Seven Days (13:26)**

But with neither of the two signs present, the priest still protects the other people. Verse 26. *“But if the priest looks at it, and indeed, there is no white hair in the bright spot and it is no deeper than the skin, but is dim, then the priest shall isolate him for seven days…”* (13:26).

Nothing new here. If the priest does not know for sure, isolation continues.

#### **3. Bright Spot Spreads Deeper – Declare Unclean (13:27)**

Seven days later, upon inspection, if the wound becomes worse, we know the prescription by now. Verse 27. *“… and the priest shall look at him on the seventh day. If it spreads farther in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infection of leprosy.”* (13:27).

The spread of the wound immediately prescribes the declaration of an unclean leper. Isolation continues.

#### **4. Bright Spot Stays the Same – Declare Clean (13:28)**

But if, on that seventh day, healing appears, the prescription changes. Verse 28. *“But if the bright spot remains in its place and has not spread in the skin, but is dim, it is the swelling from the burn; and the priest shall pronounce him clean, for it is only the scar of the burn.”* (13:28).

The declaration becomes clean, but the person must stay in isolation seven more days before coming to the camp as in the previous cases.

## D. The Infection of Leprosy in the Hair of Man and Women (13:29-37)

Now the LORD introduces when leprosy found in the hair on the head or beard. Verse 29. “*Now if a man or woman has an infection on the head or on the beard, …*” (13:29).

Concerning leprosy, all the way to this point in the law, the LORD uses the Hebrew word *adam*; we have already discussed that it means *humans or persons*. Here the LORD gives specific instructions to a “*man or woman*.” What is the difference? The Hebrew word for man here is *wr·’š*, and it means *male*. The Hebrew word for a woman here is *’š·šah*, and it means *female*. So, the LORD carefully contrasts the male and the female because the male typically wears a beard in Jewish life.

### 1. Deep in Skin with Thin Yellowish Hair – Declare Unclean (13:30)

Whether male or female, when an infection appears, the person must go to the priest. Verse 30. “*… then the priest shall look at the infection, and if it appears to be deeper than the skin and there is thin yellowish hair in it, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a scale, it is leprosy of the head or of the beard.*” (13:30).

The priest inspects the infection with the only two signs he knows how to use upon the first visit. He looks for the depth of the infection and the color of the hair in the infection. Here we see a difference in the color of the hair. On the body, he looks for a white hair. On the head or beard, he looks for yellowish hair. If the two are present, the person is unclean. To isolation the person goes.

### 2. Skin Deep with No Black Hair – Isolate Seven Days (13:31)

The presence of white or yellow hair causes an immediate unclean declaration. But if the wound does not have hair in it, it makes the diagnosis difficult. But what the absence of hair? Verse 31. “*But if the priest looks at the infection of the scale, and indeed, it appears to be no deeper than the skin and there is no black hair in it, then the priest shall isolate the person with the scaly infection for seven days.*” (13:31).

The people of the Nation of Israel were black-headed. As age came along, many of them would become gray-headed. In this inspection, the wound seems to be on the surface, but the black hair is missing. A bald spot appeared. Just to be safe, the priest orders isolation for seven days.

### 3. Not Spread, Shave – Isolate Seven Days (13:32-33)

After seven days, the priest inspects the person again. Verse 32. “*On the seventh day the priest shall look at the infection, and if the scale has not spread and no yellowish hair has grown in it, and the appearance of the scale is no deeper than the skin, then he shall shave himself, but he shall not shave the scale; and the priest shall isolate the person with the scale seven more days.*” (13:32-33).

With no changes in the wound, the person shaves all the hair but not the wound area. The person stays in isolation for another week.

### 4. No Change – Declare Clean (13:34)

With another week behind, the priest inspects again. Verse 34. “*Then on the seventh day the priest shall look at the scale, and if the scale has not spread in the skin and it appears to be no deeper than the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; and he shall wash his clothes and be clean.*” (13:34).

If the wound does not change over the fourteen days, the priest declares the person clean. He washes his clothing. No doubt, the person stays in isolation for seven more days because it is part of the routine before bringing an offering to the Tent of Meeting.

### 5. Change – Declare Unclean (13:35-36)

But if the wound spreads after shaving all the hair, a prescription changes. Verse 35. “*But if the scale spreads farther in the skin after his cleansing, then the priest shall look at him, and if the scale has spread in the skin, the priest need not seek for the yellowish hair; he is unclean.*” (13:35-36).

If the wound grows, it does not matter if yellow hair appears, the mere size of the growing wound requires the declaration of uncleanness and isolation away from the camp.

#### 6. Spot Remains with Black Hair Growing – Declare Clean (13:37)

But if the wound contains black hair, the news was good. Verse 37. *“If in his sight the scale has remained, however, and black hair has grown in it, the scale has healed, he is clean; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.”* (13:37).

Black hair is the normal color for Israelites. With black hair growing in the old wound, the person is clean.

### E. The Infection of Leprosy in the Skin of Man and Women (13:38-39)

#### 1. Bright Spots Faint White Eczema – Declare Clean (13:38-39)

Not all spots on the skin which dry to scales are leprosy. Nevertheless, when a spot occurs, the priest must be notified to give a diagnosis. Verse 38. *“When a man or a woman has bright spots on the skin of the body, even white bright spots, then the priest shall look, and if the bright spots on the skin of their bodies are a faint white, it is eczema that has broken out on the skin; he is clean.”* (13:38-39).

Faint white skin with a little scale is not leprosy; it is eczema. The Hebrew word that we translate as *eczema* is *bobaq*. It means a *white spot*. The English word “*eczema*” means *something thrown out by heat, or to boil over, break out, or bubble*. The ancient physicians called it “*eczema*” because it began as a *fiery pustule on the skin*. It is associated with yeast, and as it grows on the skin, its fiery nature causes great itching. Nevertheless, it is not leprosy, and the person is clean. No isolation.

### F. The Infection of Leprosy on a Bald Man (13:40-46)

#### 1. Just the Loss of the Hair – Declared Clean (13:40)

Eczema is not leprosy, and neither is the natural baldness of a man. Verse 40. *“Now if a man loses the hair of his head, he is bald; he is clean.”* (13:40).

The Hebrew word for *man* is the word that means a *male*, as we formally explained. The natural process of baldness is not leprosy; the man is clean.

#### 2. Bald on Front and Sides – Declared Clean (13:41)

Israelites and men in all nations can lose hair on the front and sides of their heads. Verse 41. *“If his head becomes bald at the front and sides, he is bald on the forehead; he is clean.”* (13:41).

With the normal bald patterns of men – he is still clean.

#### 3. Bald Head or Forehead with Reddish-white Infection – Declared Unclean (13:42-46)

But if with the loss of hair comes the mark of the tale-tell sign of the reddish-white infection, the priest must make a diagnosis. Verse 42. *“But if on the bald head or the bald forehead, there occurs a reddish-white infection, it is leprosy breaking out on his bald head or on his bald forehead. Then the priest shall look at him; and if the swelling of the infection is reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, like the appearance of leprosy in the skin of the body, he is a leprous man, he is unclean. The priest shall surely pronounce him unclean; his infection is on his head.”* (13:42-44).

We have already seen this diagnosis before. In all other situations, the priest looks for the deepness of the infection and the hair color. Even in the case of the loss of hair with a spreading infection, it would likely be leprosy. When a man begins to become bald with a leprous sore mark, the priest must declare him unclean. Off to isolation, he must go to live. We will learn that soon.

### a) Tear Cloths, Cover Hair and Mustache – Cry Unclean (13:45)

Once diagnosed as a leper, the leper must follow a process. Verse 45. “*As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be uncovered, and he shall cover his mustache and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!.'*” (13:45).

First, torn clothing must be discarded. Second, the rest of the hair on his head, mustache, or beard is shaved. Third, when coming near anyone, the leper must declare the with words, “unclean.”

### b) Liver Alone Outside of Camp (13:46)

Where does the leper live once diagnosed? Verse 46. “*He shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.*” (13:46).

The leper’s isolation was not just for seven days, it was for all the days he was infected, and his isolation was to be outside the camp away from all family and friends.

## G. The Infection of Leprosy on Garments (13:47-59)

Now we come to the most difficult part of this section to understand. We clearly understand that leprosy is an infection that attacks humans. So far, the LORD has dealt with what might be six different kinds or varieties of leprosy in humans. But now, the LORD speaks of a kind of leprosy that attacks garments and walls. We begin this leprosy in verse 47. “*When a garment has a mark of leprosy in it, whether it is a wool garment or a linen garment, whether in warp or woof, of linen or of wool, whether in leather or in any article made of leather, if the mark is greenish or reddish in the garment or in the leather, or in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of leather, it is a leprous mark and shall be shown to the priest. Then the priest shall look at the mark and shall quarantine the article with the mark for seven days.*” (13:47-50).

We all recognize the terms “*wool … linen … leather.*” But what does the LORD mean by “*warp or woof*”? Threads in a material running lengthwise are called *warp*. Threads running crosswise are called *woof*. These threads create a texture on the wool and linen fabrics. The priest inspects the material to discover green or yellowish growing marks anywhere, front, back, between the layers, or in the under-garment structure. If an organic mark is present, the garment is quarantined for seven days. We are not told where the quarantined garment is kept, but surely outside the camp for the safety of all.

### a) If Leprous Mark Has Spread – Burn Garment (13:51-52)

As with humans, the priest inspects the garments at the end of seven days. Because we know how the LORD has dealt with all the human wounds, we can assume correctly how He deals with the garments, but with an added twist. “*He shall then look at the mark on the seventh day; if the mark has spread in the garment, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in the leather, whatever the purpose for which the leather is used, the mark is a leprous malignancy, it is unclean. So he shall burn the garment, whether the warp or the woof, in wool or in linen, or any article of leather in which the mark occurs, for it is a leprous malignancy; it shall be burned in the fire.*” (13:51-52).

At the end of seven days of isolation for the garment, if the diseased mark grows, the garment does not remain in isolation; it is burned.

### b) If Leprous Mark Has Not Spread – Quarantine Seven Days (13:53-54)

At the end of seven days of isolation for the garment, if the diseased mark had not spread in any part of the garment, the priest would do the same thing that he had done with humans. Verse 53. “*But if the priest shall look, and indeed the mark has not spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of leather, then the priest shall order them to wash the thing in which the mark occurs and he shall quarantine it for seven more days.*” (13:53-54).

With no disease growth in seven days, the garments are washed and remain in isolation for seven more days.

**c) Wash Garment and If Mark Remains – Burn It (13:55)**

At the end of the second week, one week after the garment is washed, the priest inspects the garment again. Verse 55. *“After the article with the mark has been washed, the priest shall again look, and if the mark has not changed its appearance, even though the mark has not spread, it is unclean; you shall burn it in the fire, whether an eating away has produced bareness on the top or on the front of it.”* (13:55).

If the mark is not washed away and remains at the end of the week, the garment is unclean and must be burned. The last phrase of the verse says, *“... whether an eating away has produced bareness on the top or on the front of it.”*

No doubt, we would not call this leprosy today; we would call it fungus. We understand that word, and we know that when a fungus is growing on a garment and not treated, it will destroy the threads of the material or eat holes in leather. Today we have cleaners for such funguses, but in the ancient days, they did not. When a fungus will not die and fade away after being washed, it cannot die. Therefore, the only option given by the LORD is to burn the article. It did not matter where the fungus mark was, in full view or hidden underneath.

**d) Wash Garment and the Mark Faded – Tear It Out and Burn It (13:56)**

If the priest finds upon inspection that, after the washing seven days before, the mark is faded, the LORD has a different plan. *“Then if the priest looks, and if the mark has faded after it has been washed, then he shall tear it out of the garment or out of the leather, whether from the warp or from the woof; ....”* (13:56).

When the priest sees the mark faded after the washing and quarantined for seven days, the faded area must be torn out, and new material sewn in to repair the garment. The part that is torn out is burned.

**e) Mark Returns – Burn It (13:57)**

If the priest finds upon inspection that, after the washing seven days before, the mark is still present, we have a new instruction. Verse 57. *“...and if it appears again in the garment, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of leather, it is an outbreak; the article with the mark shall be burned in the fire.”* (13:57).

**f) Wash Garment and Mark Departed Wash Again– Declare Clean (13:58-59)**

If the priest finds upon inspection that, after the washing seven days before, that the mark is gone, then verse 58 says, *“The garment, whether the warp or the woof, or any article of leather from which the mark has departed when you washed it, it shall then be washed a second time and will be clean. This is the law for the mark of leprosy in a garment of wool or linen, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of leather, for pronouncing it clean or unclean.”* (13:58-59).

With our next lesson in chapter 14 of Leviticus, we discover the law for the offerings of a leper after being declared clean, as well as the issue of leprosy growing on the walls of one's home.