

LITTLE GEMS

Tazria/Metzora

Shalom children! Boy, there is so much to learn about clean and unclean things, and there are so many rules to learn too! Of course, the priests were in charge of making sure people knew the rules. They also had jobs to do that had them traveling and working day and night. It was a good thing Yahweh chose the whole tribe of Lewi to take care of all the priestly duties.

Now, we have already said that being unclean didn't really mean you were dirty, or that you had done something bad and had to ask for forgiveness. It was just a way for Yahweh to make a difference between things that were set apart only for Him and the things that were not allowed to touch those set-apart things. Clean things simply had a different purpose from unclean things, like the animals that we could eat and the ones we could not eat. And if you became unclean, you didn't stay that way forever. Today we are going to cover a few of the things that made people unclean. And we will talk about some ways that Yahweh used to show people they might be doing something they shouldn't without even realizing it.

The first thing we will cover is a mommy who just had a baby. Now, many of you may have a little brother or sister. You may have even just seen a lady with a big belly who was carrying a baby, like this lady. **(Show pregnant woman.)** Well, having a baby is not a bad thing. In fact, we love to have new babies and Yahweh does too. He told the very first man, Adam, and very first woman, Hawwah, to have babies. But for a mommy who just had a baby, Yahweh had rules about when she could come into the temple again. She could still worship Yahweh, but for many days after having the baby, the mommy needed to rest and take care of the baby. Yahweh wanted them to stay home to do that. They could still sing praises to Yahweh and pray to Him, but for several days they needed to do it from home and NOT at the temple. **(Place mom with newborn baby in her house on board.)** Now, this was a great time for mommies to sing to their babies so that when they were first brought to the temple they wouldn't get scared with all the noise.

The first time the mommy could go to the temple again, she brought some gifts for sacrifices to Yahweh. Remember that we talked before about sacrifices? Well, Yahweh knew some people had more wealth than others, and He said that those who had a lot had to bring a one year old lamb and a pigeon or turtledove. **(Place sacrifice on board.)** But if they weren't wealthy enough to have lambs, they could bring 2 turtle doves or 2 pigeons. **(Place birds on board.)**

The next thing that Yahweh had rules about was when a person developed bumps on their body. These were not any old bumps like you may have from a bug bite. And they were not like chicken pox bumps that you could catch from someone else who had it.

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They were more like when you have a scab or like when the Mitsrites got boils all over their bodies. **(Place Mitsrite family with bumps on board.)** These were bumps that Yahweh put on there, so they were no accident. We call these bumps tzara'at. Why would Yahweh put bumps on someone? He may have put the bumps there to get someone's attention, or it might be really just a bug bite or something else. In any case, just to be safe, they had to go to the priest and let him check the bump to make sure it was okay.

Now there were rules the priest had to be careful to follow. They couldn't just look at someone's bump and make a decision on the spot. They had to inspect it for color, texture, and even watch to see if the one bump turned into more bumps. **(Place priest looking at man with bumps on board.)** The doctor does the same thing if you get sick, and your mom and dad ask him to check to see if you are getting better or not. **(Place doctor examining child's throat on board).**

In Yisra'el, the person would sometimes have to go in a room and not come out for a whole week. Sometimes he had to do this twice. **(Place man looking out of a house window on board.)** Man was that boring! But no matter, you had to do exactly what the priest said. Sometimes the person got to hear the priest say, "You are clean, go home," but sometimes they didn't get such good news. If they were told it was tzara'at, they had to leave their house and go live outside of the area where everyone else lived. **(Place unclean man by small tent far from house on board.)** The man had to cover his mouth, tear his clothes, and yell, "Unclean, unclean!" if anyone came near.

Now another thing that could happen is that a person may become bald headed. **(Place bald headed man on board.)** Being bald headed is not a sin either, or a sign that someone has done something bad. In fact, there are many men walking around who are bald headed and are just fine. But if a person got an infection on his head or forehead, then the priest had to check it out to make sure it was not tzara'at. Like the other person with tzara'at, he also had to go live away from everyone. The same thing happened if there was an infection that got in their hair or their beards. But if they were okay after the priest checked twice, the person only had to wash their clothes and then they could go home. **(Remove all items from board.)**

Now, people were not the only things that could get tzara'at. Clothes and houses could get it too. Let's start with clothes. Wool, linen, and leather could also get tzara'at. For the clothes, if a person saw that there were green or red spots on the garment or on something made of leather, like maybe their shoes or their belts, they took it to the priest to check it. **(Place tunic with spots on board.)** Man, those people sure hoped the priest would say it was okay. But before the priest could say it was okay or not, he had to lock up the item for a week. After a week, if there were more spots it was tzara'at. But if not, they had to wash it and then wait another week so the priest

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could check it again. If it stayed clean, then it was just a dirty garment that apparently needed extra washing. Maybe it was just someone who spilled some juice on it and didn't want anyone to *know*. But if the garment showed new spots or didn't look any better, then the priest would say it was unclean and they had to burn it. Man oh man, I hope it wasn't someone's favorite tunic! But no matter, once the priest made his decision it had to be followed. **(Remove tunic from board.)**

Now for the house. Obviously they couldn't bring the house to the priest. So the priest would have to travel to the house in order to check it out. If there were green or red spots on the bricks in the house and the bricks were all dented **(place house with infected bricks on board)**, then the priest would have to take out the bricks and throw them far away, in a place outside of where everyone lived. They would have to put new bricks where the old ones were, take all the furniture and belongings out of the house, and close up the house. After several days, the priest would come back to see if the new bricks were okay. Meanwhile, the family would have to go sleep somewhere else. Now, that may have seemed like fun getting to spend a week away from home, but for the mommies and the daddies that was a lot of work. What's more, maybe they had to spend money to stay in a lodge until the priest said they could go home. Worst of all, if the new bricks had become infected, the whole house had to come down. **(Place pile of stones and rubble on board.)** No joke, every brick had to be knocked out! Down came the doors and the windows, and it all had to be carried to a place far from where the people lived. And now that family had to build a new house! And not only that, but if anyone had slept in the old house, they were unclean until that evening.

Now, just like the mommies having babies, the people who had been unclean had to wait until they were clean again in Yahweh's eyes before they could bring sacrifices to the temple once more. There were a lot of rules that the priest and the person had to follow to make sure they became clean in Yahweh's eyes. But it was all Yahweh's way of protecting the people and teaching them to always be careful and to trust the priests to help them get through a rough situation. Yahweh always looks out for His people, even when we don't know we are doing something wrong.

Well children, we have come to the end of our story for today. We will see you next week for another exciting Little Gems story!