

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
CHARLOTTE

SOCIAL DISTANCING, MASKS, AND QURANTINE; NOT JUST A 2020 THING:  
LESSONS FROM LEVITICUS 13:45-46 FOR A COVID-19 WORLD

SUBMITTED TO DR. RICHARD BELCHER, JR.  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
GENESIS – DEUTERONOMY | OT 5200

BY  
BENJAMIN W. TRAYNOR  
DECEMBER 2, 2020

## Introduction

No one wants to read anything else about coronavirus. Thankfully, then, this paper is not *about* coronavirus; it is, however, occasioned by it.<sup>1</sup> This year has seen many substantial changes in how we live, with, amongst other things, social distancing, masks, and quarantining all part of everyday life. It would appear remiss, therefore, not to pause, as 2020 draws to a close, and to view these practices through a theological lens. Given the limits of this paper, it cannot detail everything Scripture might say on these matters, it will, however, provide one lens through which to look.

The scope of this paper will be to exegete the pericope of Leviticus 13:45-46, where social distancing, mask wearing (of sorts), and quarantine are being used in Levitical law for someone suffering with leprosy<sup>2</sup>. The question becomes to what end are these restrictions given? In this paper I will argue that the demands of Lev. 13:45-46 are given so that Israel has a visual representation of the terrible cost of sin.<sup>3</sup> In other words, when disease forces a person

---

<sup>1</sup> It is also occasioned by the fact I have to submit an exegesis paper for this class, but the ongoing coronavirus pandemic helped me narrow down to this passage.

<sup>2</sup> Much ink has been spilled on what the precise medical nature of the disease is. The Hebrew צָרַעַת (*šāra'at*) has most commonly been translated as leprosy. It is, however, widely understood that *šāra'at* is not to be identified with, what is known today as, Hansen's disease. Briefly, there are two points worth noting about the nature of the disease. Firstly, the text is not primarily interested in the precise pathology of the disease, otherwise it would have listed more symptoms. With the lack of clinical information, however, this paper is going to argue there is something more important going on in the text than the precious nature of the disease. That is, that it is a picture of sin. Secondly, *šāra'at* is also found in human clothes (Lev 13:47-59), which is another factor to be considered when looking for a medical label. For the purposes of this paper, keeping in step with modern English translations, I will translate *šāra'at* as "leprosy". For more discussion around the medical nature of the disease see J. Dyneley Prince, "Note on Leprosy in the Old Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature*.38:1 (1919): 31–34; Samson O. Olanisebe, "Laws of Tzara'at in Leviticus 13-14 and Medical Leprosy Compared," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 42.2 (2014): 121–27; Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary* 3 (Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 226–27; Jay Sklar, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries Volume 3 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014), 181–84.

<sup>3</sup> The Church Father, Origen, concludes that leprosy has a religious dimension. He makes the case that the disease is a looking glass where we can see the sin's reflection. Although I will not be tracing his argument in this paper, he does make a persuasive case. See Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus: 1-16*, trans. Gary Wayne Barkley (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), chap. 8:5.

out of societal life, Israel has before their very eyes a reminder that their sin has shut them out of the presence of God - an infinitely worse fate. In order to evidence this claim, I will begin with examining this short text within its wider context. After establishing the proper context, I will consider the content of the law, with an extended discussion around how Genesis 1-3 helps to understand the content. Lastly, the paper will conclude with some applications, both for God's people today and the wider world.

### Context

There is good evidence to suggest Leviticus sits at the heart of the Pentateuch.<sup>4</sup> Understanding the thematic drive of the Pentateuch, therefore, is the key that will unlock the door to Leviticus. Following Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden of Eden, the history of redemption has been driven forward by a single focal point, "YHWH's opening up a way for humanity to dwell in his Presence once more."<sup>5</sup> Or, put another way, the question that has been driving redemptive history since Genesis 3 is *how can a holy God dwell with an unholy people again?* Unsurprisingly, then, at the heart of the Pentateuch is Leviticus, a book with the message of holiness running right through it,<sup>6</sup> and at the thematic center of Leviticus is Lev. 16, the Day of Atonement.<sup>7</sup> A day which, in sum, gloriously shows it is possible for unholy, sinful people

---

<sup>4</sup> Moshe Kline, "The Literary Structure of Leviticus," *Biblical Historian* 2.1 (2006): 11–28.; Arie C. Leder, *Waiting for the Land: The Story Line of the Pentateuch* (Phillipsburg, N.J: P&R Pub, 2010), 34–35.

<sup>5</sup> L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 37, ed. D.A. Carson (Downers Grove, Illinois: Apollos, InterVarsity Press, 2015), 55.

<sup>6</sup> Derek Tidball, *The Message of Leviticus: Free to Be Holy*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 31.

<sup>7</sup> Morales, *Who Shall Ascend?*, 27–34; R.M. Davidson, "Assurance in Judgment," *AR* 7 (1988): 20; W. Shea, "Literary Form and Theological Function in Leviticus," in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy* (Washington, D.C.: BRI, 1986), 131–32. There is a minority view which proposes an alternative structure to Leviticus, placing chapter 19 at the center of the book. For more see Mary Douglas, "Poetic Structure in Leviticus," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. D.P. Wright, N.D. Freedman, and A. Hurvitz (Winona Lake, Ind.:

to experience life in the presence of a holy God.<sup>8</sup> The theme of holiness, however, perhaps like the book of Leviticus as a whole, is often viewed the awkward great-uncle on Christmas day: we know he is part of the family, but no one really wants to have to talk with him for three hours over Christmas dinner. Armed with knowledge that Leviticus is central to the message of how humanity can dwell again in God's presence, however, should bring Leviticus to the front of the queue. In other words, we should all be desperate to be sitting next to him over dinner now. Holiness, all of a sudden, is very attractive.

Having briefly considered the context of the book, a second contextual consideration comes into view: where the pericope sits within Leviticus itself. This passage precedes the theological center, and falls into a larger unit of text, Lev. 11-15. Here laws are given concerning clean and unclean in daily life. From these chapters it is clear: YHWH's covenant people must be clean to enter his presence (Lev. 15:31). In other words, in light of our previous discussion, these laws are focused on Israel coming into God's presence, that she might be holy, and enjoy communion with God.<sup>9</sup> In short, chapters 11-15, "deal with a common theme: the precariousness, inherent danger... and entrenched temptation to sin that is bound

---

Eisenbrauns, 1995), 239–56. Also see Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Morales, *Who Shall Ascend?*, 31.

<sup>9</sup> M.R. Turnbull, *Studying the Book of Leviticus* (Richmond, Va.: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1926), chap. 17; John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Leviticus* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2004), 139. Martin Noth, *Leviticus*, trans. J.E. Anderson, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1965), 11.

up with being a creature of God.”<sup>10</sup> This foundation provides at least one lens through which the clean/unclean laws of Lev. 11-15 should not appear quite so abstract to post-modern eyes.<sup>11</sup>

Within Lev. 11-15, chapters 13-14 provide a subsection focusing on laws concerning people with leprosy (צָרַעַת; *ṣāra ‘at*). Indeed, the use of *ṣāra ‘at* is the thread marking Lev. 13:1 as a new section from Lev. 12:8, and 14:56 from 15:1.

Finally, Lev. 13 itself details laws concerning *ṣāra ‘at* and how priests are to handle it, with the chapter falling neatly into two parts: v.1-44 describe how a priest is to identify *ṣāra ‘at*, and v.45-46 give the instructions for the priest if indeed that is the diagnosis,<sup>12</sup> which, going forward, is the main concern of this paper.

### The Three Rules

The pericope vv.45-46 gives three rules for “the leprous person<sup>13</sup> who has the disease” (וְהִצָּרִיעַ אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ הַנֶּגַע) to follow. Each of these rules will now be briefly examined.

#### *Removal from Life*

First, the person must “wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose.” The Qal form of פָּרָמִים (translated ‘torn’) occurs three times in the OT, all in Leviticus (Lev. 10:6; 13:45;

---

<sup>10</sup> Ephraim Radner, *Leviticus*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2008), 145.

<sup>11</sup> Laws concerning bodies, disease, sex, bodily discharges (and so on) not only look odd to postmodern sensibilities, but often downright offensive. This wider context, therefore, help the reader see why these laws are given by YHWH. The issue with Leviticus (and perhaps much literature) is that people rarely take time to try and understand the context.

<sup>12</sup> For helpful table and discussion around the various steps taken at each stage of identifying the disease see Sklar, *Leviticus*, 181–82.

<sup>13</sup> וְהִצָּרִיעַ “the leprous one” Although distinctions are made throughout chapter 13 between laws exclusively for men, and laws for both men and women, it is clear וְהִצָּרִיעַ established that both men and women are in view. For further discussion see John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged In The Form of a Harmony*, trans. Charles Bingham (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 1:16; Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, 228–36.

21:10). In both other occasions the command is *not* to tear clothes, making v.45 unique in its prescription. What links the three occurrences is that they are both made regarding times of death.<sup>14</sup> As such, “this gesture embodies the leprous person’s sorrow at his affliction with *sāra* ‘at and removal from the realm of life.’”<sup>15</sup> Now in this state of decay and corruption, the leper is in the full view of God and the Israelite camp, counted as dead in his flesh.<sup>16</sup> Thus, he is in a posture of mourning and shame.<sup>17</sup>

### *Masks and Social Distancing*

The affliction of leprosy is a sign that all is not as it should be, the illness has disrupted normal life.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, it is not unexpected that the leper needs to make his affliction known. He must now “social distance” himself, and his cry of “unclean, unclean” (אֲנִי טָמֵא אֲנִי טָמֵא) will have precisely that effect.<sup>19</sup> People would have melted away before the leper faster than ice cream on a summer’s day in Charlotte. The leper must also wear a mask, of sorts. Using his hand, he was to cover (סָפַף) the lower part of his face; only his eyes are left uncovered. This is another sign of his unworthiness, his shame, his uncleanness, and his mourning.<sup>20</sup> The leper is ritually dead,<sup>21</sup> and, finally, must now make his way outside the covenant community.

---

<sup>14</sup> Noth, *Leviticus*, 106.

<sup>15</sup> Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, 237.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew A. Bonar, *A Commentary on Leviticus*, Reprint., Geneva Series Commentary (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 225; Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged In The Form of a Harmony*, 1:17.

<sup>17</sup> See also Num. 14:6; 2 Sam 1:11; 2 Kgs 22:11; Ezek. 24:17.

<sup>18</sup> Tidball, *Leviticus*, 174.

<sup>19</sup> This was still happening in Jesus’ day. When he approaches the lepers in Luke 17:12 we are told they, “stood at distance” (οἱ ἕστησαν πόρρωθεν).

<sup>20</sup> See Ezek. 24:17 and Mic. 3:7

<sup>21</sup> Currid, *A Study Commentary on Leviticus*, 182.

## *Quarantine*

Undoubtedly the worst part of contracting the condition, is that those who were unclean had to quarantine outside the camp. Their isolation from the rest of God’s people is emphasized by the double use of the Hebrew stem וָשַׁב (“to dwell”).<sup>22</sup>

בְּדָד יֵשֵׁב

He shall live alone

מִחוּץ לַמִּחֲנֶה מוֹשְׁבֵוֹ

His dwelling shall be outside the camp<sup>23</sup>

Although it is possible the law was given to help stop the spread of the disease,<sup>24</sup> the *primary* motive for moving a leprous person outside of the camp is that God’s people must be kept ritually clean. As such, this would have been a time of increased anxiety and much distress for the leper, not, as we post-moderns like to think, a time of detox, relaxation, and an exciting time away from it all.<sup>25</sup> Outside the covenant community, the sick person is cut off from friends, family, and, above all, barred from drawing near to God in covenant gathered worship.<sup>26</sup> Uncleanness meant being barred from the sacred.<sup>27</sup> Until the skin healed, all they could do is wait, with all around them thrown into chaos and disorder. The sick person would be desperate for their “new normal” to be over.

---

<sup>22</sup> Sklar suggests those outside the camp were not necessarily in complete isolation from anyone per se, as they could gather as a group. Although his may be true, the key point is that they are isolated from the covenant community. For further discussion see Sklar, *Leviticus*, 183.

<sup>23</sup> See Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, 238.

<sup>24</sup> Douglas, *Leviticus*, 184; Currid, *A Study Commentary on Leviticus*, 183; Sklar, *Leviticus*, 187.

<sup>25</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1979), 200.

<sup>26</sup> Tidball, *Leviticus*, 175.

<sup>27</sup> John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 335.

## *Summary*

The thesis of this paper is these three rules, especially quarantine, give Israel a picture of sin. We have established that the camp must be ritually (and morally) clean, and that the sick person must remain outside the camp until they are well (Lev. 14). We have seen above, there is certainly a reminder of death, which of course is the curse for sin (Rom. 5:12). There is, however, an even clearer way for this to be seen: it is to remember the tabernacle (and later the temple) are patterned after Eden.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, it is to Eden we must go.

## **Remembering Paradise Lost**

### *Eden as sacred space*

It is often forgotten Eden was built to be a sacred space,<sup>29</sup> a temple for God to dwell with man.<sup>30</sup> Within the creation account, Wenham makes a compelling argument that Genesis 1 deals with time, Genesis 2 deals with space (creation of Eden), and Genesis 3 deals with status (Adam and Eve are put out of the garden). Pulling his argument together, he writes,

In summary, when God created the cosmos, he brought order to it. He established equilibrium and took up his residence in its midst to maintain this equilibrium. The equilibrium consisted of organized space, established status, and ordered time. When sin entered the world, this order was jeopardized, and chaos threatened again. The sanctuary of Israel represented a small, idealized island of order in a world of threatened chaos. It was a place that preserved equilibrium for God's presence, which in turn was

---

<sup>28</sup> See John Levenson, "The Temple and the World," *JR* 64 (1984): 275–98; Gordon Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986).

<sup>29</sup> I would acknowledge a greater uptake in a biblical theological approach to thinking about "the theology of Eden". For an example see Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*, 2012. Yet, what is still often missing from biblical theological books like this is a lack of emphasis on the sacredness of the space that YHWH gives.

<sup>30</sup> John H Walton, "Equilibrium and the Sacred Compass: The Structure of Leviticus," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 11.2 (2001): 293–304; Jonathan Gibson and Mark Earney, eds., *Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2018), 3.



an anchor against disorder. *Preserving* sacred space provided for God's continued presence.<sup>31</sup>

As such, since the sacred space had to be preserved for God's continued presence, it becomes clear that anything – or anyone – who is unclean would have to be removed from that sacred space. In short, the sacred space becomes not *only* about sinful people. We are often conditioned to think purely in soteriological terms. Yet, although there is not less than that going on in Leviticus (see Lev. 16), there is *more* than just a description of “me and God.”<sup>32</sup> Here we are simply to remember that Eden was designed as a place of *order* in a world of chaos (Gen. 1:2), a space in whose very air was not to have a hint of pollution. Therefore, space becomes a picture of proximity to God's presence. The nearer to the center of the sacred space a person is, the closer proximity to God they have. Conversely, the further they travel away from the central point of the sacred space, the further from YHWH's presence they are.<sup>33</sup> We can conclude, therefore, that space, and where an individual is located within (or outside) that sacred space will give a picture of humanity before a holy God.

#### *Eden as status*

Eden had to be kept clean; sinful humanity could not dwell there. Once Adam and Eve had sinned (Gen 3:1-7) it is not surprising that they were driven out of the garden (Gen. 3:22-24). Adam and Eve, now unclean, unholy, and sinful, were put “outside the camp.” In light of the previous discussion there is a dual point needing emphasized here. Firstly, Adam (and Eve)

---

<sup>31</sup> Walton, “Equilibrium and the Sacred Compass,” 296–97. Emphasis my own.

<sup>32</sup> Walton, “Equilibrium and the Sacred Compass,” 299.

<sup>33</sup> Radner, *Leviticus*, 144–45. Also see Psalm 42. Part of the reason the psalmist is downcast is because he is geographically so far removed from Jerusalem (Ps. 42:5) he cannot join the procession to the house of God, with all the songs of praise and gladness (Ps. 42:4)

were put outside the garden because of their sin (Gen 3; Romans 5). Sin meant relational distance from God,<sup>34</sup> they could not be near to him. Yet, secondly, even when their sin was “covered” (Gen. 3:21), and in a sense “they were made right with God,”<sup>35</sup> they were kept out to *keep Eden clean*. In other words, although being outside the garden makes one a sinner (Rom. 5:1-5), it now does not necessarily make one more of a sinner than anyone else. We are all born “outside of the garden” and are kept there not only because of our sin, but for the sake of God’s presence within the garden too.

What has this got to do with Leviticus? Since the tabernacle is set up as reminder of Eden, the command for the unclean person to live outside of the camp (Lev. 13:46) becomes an echo of Gen. 3.<sup>36</sup> The unclean person, and indeed the entire community is, therefore, to understand this disease in terms of sin. Not that, as previously discussed, this made the sick person anymore of a sinner than anyone else: sickness was not necessarily a result of personal or moral failure.<sup>37</sup> Yet, it was to serve as a reminder of sin, that the presence of sickness in the world is ultimately a result of a broken, fallen, and sinful world. Therefore, the command of v.46 was to be a real-life illustration of what sin does: it sends you outside the camp, away from God, away from the Divine, the sacred, and the worshipping life. Contracting sickness or disease was not to be considered sinful in itself, but it reflected sin’s damage to the earth, and

---

<sup>34</sup> I fully appreciate “relational distance” is the understatement of the century, for it was utterly catastrophic for man’s communion with God. The second worst day in all of history.

<sup>35</sup> Only Christ can wash Adam clean. Since Adam goes on to fulfill creation mandate, thus implying faith (although not fully realized), I think we will see Adam in heaven. For more see Jonty Rhodes, *Covenants Made Simple: Understanding God’s Unfolding Promises to His People*, North American edition. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 2014), 29–41.

<sup>36</sup> Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch*, 332–37; Kevin Chen, *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 58; Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, 242–44.

<sup>37</sup> Tidball, *Leviticus*, 175. See also the life of Job. He was “blameless” (Job. 1:1), yet greatly afflicted.

as such had no place inside the sacred space.<sup>38</sup> Although not part of the pericope of this paper, it is clear that an unclean person could be made clean and brought back inside the camp (Lev. 14:8). Therefore, there could be movement between the circles of cleanness and uncleanness. Thus, given the parallels between Eden and the Tabernacle, movement inwards, being clean, would have been a picture of readmittance into Eden,<sup>39</sup> whereas being thrown out of the camp is a “reenactment of the fall, when Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden.”<sup>40</sup> As Morales acknowledges, “The analogy between Israel’s exile from the land and that of Adam from the garden has long been acknowledged...what has, perhaps, been less recognized is how the clean/unclean legislation may have played out that drama ritually on a regular basis in the life of Israel.”<sup>41</sup> In short, when an Israelite witnessed a sick person making their way to quarantine, hearing their cries of “Unclean, unclean”, seeing only their eyes, as their hand masked their face, they were to remember Adam. They were to picture him, clothed in animal skin, his head drooped in shame, stumbling from Eden, cast out of God’s presence. They were to remember paradise lost.

### **Application of the Law**

The application of this law is not to civil governments, well, at least not primarily, nor in the sense we might think. It does not give advice on quarantines, lockdowns, congregational singing during pandemics, or whether masks are effective in slowing the spread of a virus. These matters are important, and they are consuming our lives, and the lives of our governing

---

<sup>38</sup> Morales, *Who Shall Ascend?*, 162.

<sup>39</sup> Morales, *Who Shall Ascend?*, 166.

<sup>40</sup> Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 201.

<sup>41</sup> Morales, *Who Shall Ascend?*, 166.

officials. There is, however, application for civil governments here, and for God's people - indeed for all of humanity: in times of plague and disease, we must remember sin. Sin which separates us from communion with YHWH, which is always the primary healing we need. In that sense, the "lepers (of Lev. 13) provide a figural hint at an entire history that is to follow."<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, I will make three applications from this passage. First, this pericope shows our sin. Second, it reminds us now is the time to repent. Third, as a consequence of these, it tells us we should be crying to God for mercy.

*"The State of the Sinner"*

These three laws show "the state of the sinner."<sup>43</sup> Lev. 13:45-46 illustrates the terror of one who is excluded from the Lord's presence and dead in sin, "the deathlike hue of the whole form proclaims the total departure from the breath of God and divine nature."<sup>44</sup> Coronavirus, as other diseases, has given the world "a dark picture of man's natural state."<sup>45</sup> A world in quarantine is an illustration of a world naturally "outside" God; a world in masks is a world embracing its own uncleanness; a socially distanced world is a world in misery, longing for the embrace of faces turned *towards* them: needing the Divine face turned towards it above all. We no longer need a priest to make us ritually clean (Lev. 14), but a High Priest who will make us clean inside out (Heb. 10:10-14).

---

<sup>42</sup> Radner, *Leviticus*, 147.

<sup>43</sup> Bonar, *Leviticus*, 257.

<sup>44</sup> Bonar, *Leviticus*, 257.

<sup>45</sup> Samuel H. Kellogg, *The Book of Leviticus*, Expositor's Bible (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1891), 343.

It must be stressed at this stage, as previously mentioned, that the presence of a disease in a person is not necessarily directly due to their sin, or a sinful action of that person. This, however, is not unknown in Scripture (Num. 12:1-15; 2 Kgs: 5:20-27; 2 Chr. 26:16-21), and it would always be wise to examine one's life to see if willful sinful action is present (Jas. 5:13-16).<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the disease, it may be said, is analogous to sin. Like leprosy, "sin may appear insignificant at the start; but it is progressively... affects the whole body. To humans it is incurable and shuts one out of the presence of God and from fellowship with fellow believers."<sup>47</sup> The question, then, arises, what is the sinner to do?

### *No balm of Gilead*

This must all be pressed home further. For, if we do not repent of our sin we will remain "lepers" forever. We must recognize the time we are in! All our sufferings today – lockdowns, masks, quarantines – are but a waste if we do not understand these things are all but the shadow of death. Today we can escape them! But the eternally leprous soul will have no opportunity to pass back through Eden's gate; they will suffer God's wrath forever. Andrew Bonar drives this home saying of the sinner, "once in hell, thou art forever and forever miserable. No balm of Gilead is there... Leprosy is eternal there; and therefore wailing and woe never end."<sup>48</sup> And so, for the man or woman who does not know Christ, the implication is clear: cry to Jesus for mercy. Our coronavirus is wasted if we do not, seeing our sin, come to Jesus and repent. I fear many in this time will see their frailty, and recognize all is not as it should be, and yet,

---

<sup>46</sup> Sklar, *Leviticus*, 188.

<sup>47</sup> Tidball, *Leviticus*, 175.

<sup>48</sup> Bonar, *Leviticus*, 258.

ultimately, will fail to come to Christ. There is one who has had mercy on us; a High Priest is near! The Ten Lepers in Luke 17:11-19 cried, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us”, and he had pity on them. Yet only one came back (Lk 17:15-19). Soon Eden’s gates will be shut forever, the lepers eternally left outside. A world pandemic must teach us to cry for mercy while the gates are still open, for soon Christ will shut them, only taking the clean in with him.

For those who are Christians, however, there will be two responses. These days of plague must remind us of the seriousness of sin. Times when we are quarantining and cannot attend church, when we are separated from the body of believers are to be somber and solemn days. We will mourn, and, like our OT brothers and sisters, have much sorrow over empty pews and closed hymnals. These are days of mourning. Our second response, however, in light of this passage is that in these days we will give thanks to the Father for sending his Son. For we too were once leprous but have been washed clean by Christ’s blood. Our skin was once blemished, swollen, and full of sinful puss. But our flesh is now made new by the Lord of life.<sup>49</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Throughout the previous pages, it has been argued that the law of Lev. 13:45-46 had one primary purpose: to remind Israel of their sin. Yes, it may well have acted to stop the spread of disease too, but that was secondary. Israel needed to be reminded of Eden, and Adam’s expulsion, more than they realized, and the presence of disease within the camp did exactly that.

The application of this law today, then, is not to be a medicinal one. When the world is engulfed in a pandemic, we are to remember the sinful nature of our flesh that sends us away

---

<sup>49</sup> Radner, *Leviticus*, 147.

from God, and our need for the cleansing work of Christ to bring us near again. The world needed that message in 2019 too, but 2020 has brought it into sharper focus. There is one main lesson for a coronavirus engulfed world: “repent and believe the gospel” (Mk. 1:15) and be healed from your sin.

## Bibliography

- Bonar, Andrew A. *A Commentary on Leviticus*. Reprint. Geneva Series Commentary. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983.
- Calvin, John. *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged In The Form of a Harmony*. Translated by Charles Bingham. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996.
- Chen, Kevin. *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch*. Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2019.
- Currid, John D. *A Study Commentary on Leviticus*. Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2004.
- Davidson, R.M. "Assurance in Judgment." *AR* 7 (1988): 18–20.
- Douglas, Mary. *Leviticus as Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- . "Poetic Structure in Leviticus." Pages 239–56 in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*. Edited by D.P. Wright, N.D. Freedman, and A. Hurvitz. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995.
- Gibson, Jonathan, and Mark Earney, eds. *Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2018.
- Kellogg, Samuel H. *The Book of Leviticus*. Expositor's Bible. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1891.
- Kiuchi, Nobuyoshi. *Leviticus*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary 3. Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Press, 2007.
- Kline, Moshe. "The Literary Structure of Leviticus." *Biblical Historian* 2.1 (2006): 11–28.
- Leder, Arie C. *Waiting for the Land: The Story Line of the Pentateuch*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub, 2010.



- Levenson, John. "The Temple and the World." *JR* 64 (1984): 275–98.
- Morales, L. Michael. *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 37. Edited by D.A. Carson. Downers Grove, Illinois: Apollos, InterVarsity Press, 2015.
- Noth, Martin. *Leviticus*. Translated by J.E. Anderson. The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1965.
- Olanisebe, Samson O. "Laws of Tzara'at in Leviticus 13-14 and Medical Leprosy Compared." *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 42.2 (2014): 121–27.
- Origen. *Homilies on Leviticus: 1-16*. Translated by Gary Wayne Barkley. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005.
- Prince, J. Dyneley. "Note on Leprosy in the Old Testament." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 38:1 (1919): 31–34.
- Radner, Ephraim. *Leviticus*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2008.
- Rhodes, Jonty. *Covenants Made Simple: Understanding God's Unfolding Promises to His People*. North American edition. Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 2014.
- Sailhamer, John H. *The Pentateuch as Narrative*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.
- Shea, W. "Literary Form and Theological Function in Leviticus." Pages 131–68 in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*. Washington, D.C.: BRI, 1986.
- Sklar, Jay. *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries Volume 3. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014.

- Tidball, Derek. *The Message of Leviticus: Free to Be Holy*. The Bible Speaks Today. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005.
- Turnbull, M.R. *Studying the Book of Leviticus*. Richmond, Va.: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1926.
- Walton, John H. "Equilibrium and the Sacred Compass: The Structure of Leviticus." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 11.2 (2001): 293–304.
- Wenham, Gordon. "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story." *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies*. Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986.
- Wenham, Gordon J. *The Book of Leviticus*. NICOT. Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1979.