

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam*

DOCUMENT 256

OUTSIDE THE CAMP

A Covenant Deep Dive into *tzara'at* (skin affliction) — the “*Leprosy*” of the Torah — and Hansen’s Disease Today

What Did the Torah Call Leprosy, What Was It in the Days of Old, What Is It Today, Does Unclean Food Cause It, and What Can the Covenant Believer Do to Prevent It? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
The Torah gives two full chapters to <i>tzara'at</i> (<i>skin affliction</i>) (Leviticus 13–14). Rabbinic teaching has long held that <i>tzara'at</i> (<i>skin affliction</i>) is not a natural disease but a sign sent for sin, above all for evil speech, and that its laws cannot be applied today because no priest can declare it. The written text is examined here on its own terms.	English Bibles from Wycliffe and Tyndale onward rendered the word “ <i>leprosy</i> ,” and the Gospels record the healing of lepers who were told to show themselves to the priest. Christian missions have treated Hansen’s disease for 150 years. The Tanakh speaks first: what <i>tzara'at</i> (<i>skin affliction</i>) was, and whether it is the same disease the world calls leprosy today.	The Qur'an names the healing of <i>al-abras</i> (<i>the one with white patches</i>) among the signs given to 'Isa (Q. 3:49; 5:110), and a well-known hadith says, “ <i>Flee from the leper as you flee from a lion</i> ” (Sahih al-Bukhari 5707). Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia, and other Muslim-majority lands still report thousands of new Hansen’s disease cases each year.

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where

any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh's** own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh's** covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written Tanakh to five questions about the “*leprosy*” of the Bible: what the Torah actually says, whether the Torah's *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*) is the same disease the world now calls leprosy (Hansen's disease), what that disease was in the days of old and what it is today, above all in Africa, whether unclean food causes it, and what the covenant believer can do to prevent it. **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations and their English meanings appear together in bold italic at every occurrence. Scripture references are bold, and every quotation is set in bold italic. Verse numbers follow the English version; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets. Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. Each finding is graded under the two-or-three-witness standard as **Corroborated** (two or more independent witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Medical and scientific findings are graded the same way against the published research, and are marked Not corroborated where the research does not support a claim. Rabbinic literature, the New Testament, and the Qur'an and hadith appear only in the tables and the Three-Religion Audit, as comparative reference, never as authority. The medical sections are covenant study, not medical advice.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	The law of tzara'at in person, garment, and house; Moses' hand; Miriam; the camp kept clean; the food laws; the latrine outside the camp; the healer
Nevi'im (Prophets)	2 Samuel, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea	Joab's house; Naaman, Gehazi, the four men at the gate of Samaria; King Uzziah struck by Yahweh ; the one esteemed " <i>stricken</i> "; He has struck and He will heal
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Job, 2 Chronicles	Uzziah struck because of pride; his separate house; Asa and the physicians; Job's friends rebuked; wisdom for the body

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
New Testament	Matthew 8:2–4; Mark 1:40–45; Luke 4:27; 17:11–19	Lepers healed and sent to the priest; Naaman recalled
Qur'an and hadith	Q. 3:49; 5:110; Sahih al-Bukhari 5707	The healing of al-abras; " <i>flee from the leper</i> " beside " <i>no contagion</i> "
Rabbinic literature	Mishnah Nega'im; Talmud Arakhin 16a; Sanhedrin 98b; Maimonides, Laws of Tzara'at 16:10	Tzara'at as a sign for sin; the seven causes; the " <i>leper</i> " of Isaiah 53
Translations	Greek Septuagint, Leviticus 13 (lepra); Wycliffe and Tyndale English Bibles; JPS 1985	How tzara'at became " <i>leprosy</i> " in English
Archaeology and history	Robbins et al. 2009 (Balathal, India); Matheson et al. 2009 (Akeldama, Jerusalem); Carville, Louisiana, 1894–1999; Sushruta Samhita (kushtha); Lepers Act, 1898	The oldest evidence of Hansen's disease; lifelong isolation in modern times

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
	(repealed 2016); Personal Laws (Amendment) Act, 2019	
Medical and scientific research	WHO Weekly Epidemiological Record 2024–2026; WHO African Region; CDC; HRSA; Truman et al. 2011 (NEJM); Brazil armadillo studies 2018–2026; Hockings et al. 2021 (Nature); Moet et al. 2008 (COLEP, BMJ); Wang et al. 2023 (NEJM); Ethiopia case-control study 2025; Hutchinson 1906; Government of India, Press Information Bureau (Oct. 5, 2025)	Cause, transmission, the food question, Africa, and prevention

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — ONE WORD, TWO DISEASES

I-A. The Questions as They Are Asked

Few words in the English Bible carry more fear than *“leper.”* The questions put to this Institution are direct:

First: what do the Torah and the rest of the Tanakh actually say about the disease the English Bible calls leprosy?

Second: is the Torah's *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*) the same disease that doctors today call leprosy, or Hansen's disease?

Third: what was it in the days of old, and what is it today, when many thousands of new cases are still found every year in Africa?

Fourth: what causes it? Is it brought on by eating unclean foods?

Fifth: what can the covenant believer do today to prevent it?

No earlier numbered document in the Library is devoted to this subject. **Doc 128** touches it through **Isaiah 53:4**, and **Doc 132** mentions the cleansing rite of **Leviticus 14**; Section XI corrects one point in Doc 132.

I-B. How the Word “Leprosy” Entered the Bible

The Hebrew word in **Leviticus 13–14** is *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*), צָרַעַת. When the Torah was translated into Greek in the third century BCE, the translators chose *lepra* (*scaly*), a Greek word used

for flaking, scaly skin. At that time Greek writers called the disease we now name leprosy by a different word altogether, *elephantiasis*. Latin carried *lepra* forward, and the earliest English Bibles, Wycliffe's and Tyndale's, made it "*leprosy*." Over the centuries the English word came to mean the one disease later traced to a bacterium, and readers carried that meaning back into **Leviticus**.

Some modern translations have stepped back from the word. The Jewish Publication Society's 1985 translation renders the Hebrew "*scaly affection*" at **Leviticus 13:2**. The question this document must answer is not what the English word means today, but what the Hebrew word meant when **Yahweh** gave it.

II. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS

The vocabulary of **Leviticus 13–14** is technical and exact. The table sets out the terms this study relies on.

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>tzara'at</i> (<i>skin affliction</i>) צָרַעַת	H6883	The condition itself, in a person, a garment, or a house	Leviticus 13:2; 13:47; 14:34
<i>metzora</i> (<i>one afflicted with tzara'at</i>) מְצֹרָע	H6879	The person who has it; used of Naaman and of the four men at the gate	Leviticus 14:2; 2 Kings 5:1; 7:3
<i>nega</i> (<i>stroke / touch / plague</i>) נֶגַע	H5061	A mark or blow; from <i>naga</i> (<i>to touch / strike</i>), H5060. <i>Nega tzara'at</i> (<i>a plague of skin affliction</i>) is the Torah's full phrase	Leviticus 13:2–3
<i>se'et</i> (<i>swelling / rising</i>) שַׁיֵּת	H7613	A raised spot on the skin	Leviticus 13:2, 10
<i>sappachat</i> (<i>scab / rash</i>) סַפְּחַת	H5597	A scab or eruption	Leviticus 13:2; 14:56
<i>baheret</i> (<i>bright spot</i>) בְּהֶרֶת	H934	A white or shiny patch	Leviticus 13:2, 4, 38
<i>netek</i> (<i>scall</i>) נֶתֶק	H5424	A scaly patch in the hair of the head or beard	Leviticus 13:30–37
<i>bobak</i> (<i>harmless white spots</i>) בֹּבֶק	H933	Dull white spots on the skin, declared clean	Leviticus 13:38–39

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>mam'eret (malignant / spreading)</i> מַמְאֶרֶת	H3992	An active, spreading affliction in cloth or stone	Leviticus 13:51–52; 14:44
<i>yerakrak (greenish)</i> יֶרֶקֶרֶק and <i>adamdam (reddish)</i> אֲדָמָדָם	H3422 / H125	The colors of the mark in garments and houses	Leviticus 13:49; 14:37
<i>sagar (to shut up / quarantine)</i> סָגַר	H5462	The priest shuts the case up for seven days to observe it	Leviticus 13:4–5, 21, 31
<i>tame (unclean)</i> טָמֵא and <i>tahor (clean)</i> טָהוֹר	H2931 / H2889	Covenant status, declared by the priest; not a word for germs	Leviticus 13:3, 6
<i>badad (alone)</i> בָּדָד	H910	Dwelling apart	Leviticus 13:46
<i>machaneh (camp)</i> מַחֲנֶה	H4264	The camp in whose midst Yahweh dwells	Leviticus 13:46; Numbers 5:2–3
<i>rapha (to heal)</i> רָפָא	H7495	To heal; in Leviticus 14:3 the affliction “ <i>is healed</i> ” before the rite begins	Leviticus 14:3; Exodus 15:26
<i>ezov (hyssop)</i> אֶזֶב, <i>erez (cedar)</i> אֶרֶז, <i>sheni tola'at (scarlet)</i> שְׁנִי תוֹלַעַת	H231 / H730 / H8144	The materials of the cleansing rite	Leviticus 14:4, 6

Three lexical observations govern what follows.

First, the Torah's word is *nega (stroke / touch / plague)*, a mark that has been “*touched*” or “*struck*.” The same root stands in **Isaiah 53:4**, where the people say of the servant, “*we esteemed him stricken*” — *nagua (stricken)*, נָגוּעַ. The people's judgment in that verse was wrong.

Second, the same word *tzara'at (skin affliction)* is used for a person's skin, a woollen or linen garment, a leather article, and the plastered stones of a house (**Leviticus 13:47–59; 14:33–53**). A word that covers wool and walls is not the name of one human disease.

Third, *tame (unclean)* and *tahor (clean)* are words of covenant status. The priest does not cure; he declares. Whether the person may enter the camp, touch holy things, and come before **Yahweh** is what is being decided.

III. WHAT THE TORAH SAYS — LEVITICUS 13–14 READ IN ORDER

III-A. The Priest Examines and Declares

“When a man has in the skin of his flesh a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes in the skin of his flesh a plague of tzara’at, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests” (Leviticus 13:2)

The first act is to *“bring”* the person to be examined. The priest looks at two signs: whether the hair in the mark has turned white, and whether the mark appears deeper than the skin (**Leviticus 13:3**). If it is uncertain, he does not rule on sight. He *“shuts up”* the case for seven days and looks again, and if needed seven days more (**Leviticus 13:4–6**). The law builds in patience and a second look before any person is excluded.

III-B. The Signs

The chapter lists the signs that make a case unclean: white hair in the mark, a mark deeper than the skin, *basar chai* (raw / living flesh) בָּשָׂר חַי in a swelling (**Leviticus 13:10, 14–15**), and above all spreading, *pasoh tifseh* (it has surely spread) פָּשָׁה תִפְּשֶׁה (**Leviticus 13:7–8, 22, 27**). It then treats the same questions in a boil that has healed (**Leviticus 13:18–23**), a burn (**Leviticus 13:24–28**), the scalp and beard (**Leviticus 13:29–37**), and a bald head (**Leviticus 13:40–44**).

It also names what is not unclean. Dull white spots, *bobak* (harmless white spots), are clean (**Leviticus 13:38–39**). Ordinary baldness is clean (**Leviticus 13:40–41**). And in the most striking verse of the chapter, if the white covers the whole body from head to foot, the priest declares the person clean:

“if the tzara’at has covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce clean the one with the plague; it has all turned white; he is clean” (Leviticus 13:13)

Only if *“raw flesh”* appears does he become unclean again (**Leviticus 13:14**).

III-C. The Garment and the House

The law then turns to cloth and leather: a mark *yerakrak* (greenish) or *adamdam* (reddish) in wool, linen, or skin is shown to the priest, shut up seven days, washed, and burned if it keeps spreading (**Leviticus 13:47–59**). The house law is given for life in the Land, and **Yahweh** speaks of it in the first person:

“When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a plague of tzara’at in a house of the land of your possession” (Leviticus 14:34)

Sunken greenish or reddish streaks in the wall are examined; the house is emptied first so its contents are not made unclean; the stones are removed, the walls scraped and replastered, and the house torn down if the mark returns (**Leviticus 14:35–45**).

III-D. The One Declared Unclean — Outside the Camp

“And the one with tzara’at in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip, and he shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days that the plague is in him he shall be unclean; he is unclean; he shall dwell alone; outside the camp shall be his dwelling” (Leviticus 13:45–46)

The cry is *tame tame yigra* (he shall cry, unclean, unclean), טָמֵא טָמֵא יִקְרָא, and the place is *mi-chutz la-machaneh* (outside the camp), מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה. Three details matter. The separation lasts “all the days that the plague is in him,” not for life. The torn clothes and loosened hair are the signs of mourning. And the Torah itself gives the reason for sending out of the camp:

“that they may not defile their camps, in the midst of which I dwell” (Numbers 5:3)

The stated reason is the holiness of the camp where **Yahweh** dwells. The Torah does not state a theory of contagion. Whatever protective effect separation may have had, the text’s own reason is covenant holiness.

III-E. Healed First, Then Cleansed

“and the priest shall look, and behold, the plague of tzara’at is healed in the one with tzara’at” (Leviticus 14:3)

The verb is *nirpa* (it is healed), נִרְפָּא, from *rapha* (to heal). Only after the priest has seen that the person is already healed does the rite begin: two clean living birds, *erez* (cedar), *sheni tola’at* (scarlet), and *ezov* (hyssop); one bird killed over living water; the living bird dipped and released “into the open field” (**Leviticus 14:4–7**). The person washes, shaves, and bathes, stays seven days outside his tent, and on the eighth day brings offerings (**Leviticus 14:8–20**).

The blood and oil are then placed on the tip of the right ear, the right thumb, and the right big toe (**Leviticus 14:14, 17**), the same three places marked when Aaron and his sons were ordained as priests (**Exodus 29:20; Leviticus 8:23–24**). The one who had been outside the camp is brought back with the marks of consecration. The Torah even makes room for the poor, who may bring smaller offerings

(Leviticus 14:21–22). The chapter closes by naming its purpose: *“to teach when it is unclean and when it is clean”* (Leviticus 14:57).

Finding — *tzara’at* (*skin affliction*) in the Torah is a condition of person, garment, and house; it is examined and declared by the priest, not treated by him; healing is from **Yahweh**, and the cleansing rite follows healing and restores the person to the camp. **Corroborated** (Leviticus 13:2–6; 13:47; 14:3, 34, 57; Numbers 5:2–3).

IV. WAS TZARA’AT THE SAME AS LEPROSY (HANSEN’S DISEASE)?

Hansen's disease is an infection of the skin and the nerves caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium leprae*, identified by the Norwegian physician Gerhard Armauer Hansen in 1873. A second, closely related bacterium, *Mycobacterium lepromatosis*, was identified in 2008. The table sets the Torah's signs beside the known course of the disease.

FEATURE	TZARA’AT IN THE TORAH	HANSEN’S DISEASE
Found in cloth and stone	Yes: wool, linen, leather, house walls (Leviticus 13:47; 14:34)	No; it infects people and a few animal species
Whole body turned white	Declared clean (Leviticus 13:13)	Never produces an all-white, <i>“clean”</i> stage
Key signs	White hair in the mark, depth, raw flesh, spreading	Pale or reddish patches with <u>loss of feeling</u> ; thickened nerves; weakness of hands and feet
Numbness and deformity	Never mentioned	The hallmark of the disease when untreated
Time scale	Judged in weeks: seven days, then seven more	Incubation about five years, sometimes twenty or more; slow course
Sudden onset and sudden healing	Moses’ hand, Miriam, Gehazi, Uzziah: struck at once by Yahweh or at a prophet’s word; Moses and Miriam restored within days	Develops slowly; cured by months of antibiotics

Medical writers who study **Leviticus 13** most often suggest that the chapter covers a family of skin conditions, with vitiligo, psoriasis, fungal infections, and eczema among the usual proposals, and that

the garment and house cases describe mold and mildew. The Tanakh does not name any of these, and this study does not choose among them.

IV-A. What Archaeology Adds

The oldest skeletal evidence of Hansen's disease comes from Balathal in Rajasthan, India, from a man buried between 2500 and 2000 BCE (Robbins and colleagues, 2009). The earliest case in the Land of Israel confirmed by the bacterium's own DNA is a man buried in a first-century CE tomb in the Hinnom Valley at Jerusalem, who suffered from both leprosy and tuberculosis (Matheson and colleagues, 2009). Historians commonly hold that the disease spread westward from India after about 326 BCE. None of this proves that Hansen's disease was absent from the ancient Near East in Moses' day; it shows that the firm evidence for it in the Land comes much later.

Finding — that *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*) of the Torah is the same disease as Hansen's disease is **Not in the text**. That *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*) was a broader covenant category, including conditions of cloth and stone and conditions the Torah declares clean when fully spread, is **Corroborated** (**Leviticus 13:13, 47; 14:34**). Hansen's disease may have been among the cases a priest was shown in later centuries, but the Torah's signs do not describe it.

V. THE NARRATIVE WITNESSES — WHO WAS STRUCK, AND WHY

Outside **Leviticus 13–14**, the Tanakh names *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*) in the lives of seven people or households. The table sets them out with the cause the text itself gives, if any.

PERSON	TEXT	WHAT HAPPENED	CAUSE GIVEN IN THE TEXT
Moses	Exodus 4:6–7	His hand became <i>“like snow”</i> and was restored at once	None; a sign for Egypt
Miriam	Numbers 12:1–15; Deuteronomy 24:8–9	Struck <i>“like snow,”</i> shut outside the camp seven days; Moses prayed for her	She and Aaron spoke against Moses
The house of Joab	2 Samuel 3:29	David's curse: let the house never lack one with a discharge or <i>tzara'at</i>	The blood of Abner

PERSON	TEXT	WHAT HAPPENED	CAUSE GIVEN IN THE TEXT
Naaman	2 Kings 5:1–14	An Aramean commander, healed after dipping seven times in the Jordan at Elisha's word	None given
Gehazi	2 Kings 5:20–27	Struck <i>“like snow”</i> for life, with his descendants	Greed and a lie to his master
Four men at the gate	2 Kings 7:3–10	Outside the gate of Samaria, they found the Aramean camp empty and brought the news	None given
King Uzziah (Azariah)	2 Kings 15:5; 2 Chronicles 26:16–21	Struck in the forehead in the Temple; lived in a separate house until death	Pride: he burned incense, a priest's duty

Uzziah's dwelling is called *beit ha-chofshit* (*the separate house*), 2) **בֵּית הַחֹפְשִׁית** Chronicles 26:21), and even in death he was buried apart, *“for they said, He is a leper”* (2 Chronicles 26:23).

Witness One — Speech. Miriam's affliction follows her words against Moses, and the Torah later commands Israel to *“remember what Yahweh your Elohim did to Miriam on the way”* in the same breath as the law of the plague (**Deuteronomy 24:8–9**).

Witness Two — Greed and deceit. Gehazi took silver and garments from Naaman in his master's name and lied about it; the prophet's word was *“the tzara'at of Naaman shall cling to you”* (2 Kings 5:27).

Witness Three — Pride against the holy. Uzziah *“was lifted up in his heart”* and went in to burn incense, which belonged to the priests alone; the affliction rose on his forehead while he was still holding the censer (2 Chronicles 26:16–19).

Yet the same Tanakh shows cases with no sin attached. Moses' hand was a sign. Naaman is introduced as *“a mighty man of valor”* with no charge against him, and the four men at the gate of Samaria became the bearers of good news: *“this day is a day of good tidings”* (2 Kings 7:9). The law of **Leviticus 13–14** itself names no cause at all.

Finding — that **Yahweh** struck particular people with *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*) for particular sins, above all sins of speech, greed, and pride, is **Corroborated** (**Numbers 12**; 2 Kings 5:27; 2 Chronicles 26:16–21). That every case is a punishment for sin is **Not in the text** (Exodus 4:6; 2

Kings 5:1; 7:3–9). That anyone with Hansen's disease today is under judgment is **Not in the text**, and to say so repeats the error of those who *“esteemed him stricken”* (Isaiah 53:4).

V-A. Are Today's Patients the Descendants of Gehazi?

Readers who meet Gehazi's story often ask whether the people with leprosy in Africa today descend from him. The question comes from the text itself, because the prophet's words included his children:

“The tzara'at of Naaman shall cling to you and to your seed forever” (2 Kings 5:27)

The curse named Gehazi's descendants, and that must be said plainly. But the word *le'olam* (*forever / for a lasting time*), לעולם, H5769, does not always mean without end. It often means for an indefinite, lasting time, as when a servant serves his master le'olam (forever / for a lasting time) for the rest of his life (Exodus 21:6). The Tanakh gives Gehazi no genealogy, names no child of his, and never mentions his line again. Gehazi himself appears once more, telling the king of Israel about the great things Elisha had done (2 Kings 8:4–5). No text connects his descendants to Africa or to any other people. Under Deuteronomy 19:15, the claim has no witness at all.

Four further reasons rule it out.

First: it is a different disease. Section IV found that the *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*) of the Torah is not Hansen's disease. Even if Gehazi's line had continued, what clung to it was *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*), not the bacterial infection found in Africa today.

Second: Hansen's disease is not inherited. It is a bacterium caught from another person through long, close contact (Section VII-B). Some people's genes make them more likely to fall ill, but those genes are found in populations throughout the world, not in one family line.

Third: it is curable. Six to twelve months of free medicine cures Hansen's disease (Section VIII-B). A curse that *“clings forever”* does not fit a disease that medicine removes.

Fourth: Africa is not where most cases are. In 2024 Africa reported about 11 percent of the world's new cases. India, Brazil, and Indonesia together report many times more (Section VIII). The disease follows poverty, crowding, and late treatment, not one man's family tree.

The covenant also forbids passing judgment down a bloodline:

“The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children for the fathers; each shall be put to death for his own sin” (Deuteronomy 24:16)

“the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father” (Ezekiel 18:20).

The text that speaks of iniquity visited on later generations names *“those who hate Me”* (Exodus 20:5), not people who are simply born into a family. Pinning an ancestral curse on a whole people in Africa repeats the error of the so-called *“curse of Ham,”* which the Library corrected in Doc 223. It would also lay on thousands of patients, many of them children, the very stigma that keeps the sick from treatment.

Finding — that **Yahweh** struck Gehazi and his seed with *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*) for greed and deceit is **Corroborated** (2 Kings 5:20–27). That people with leprosy in Africa or anywhere today are Gehazi's descendants is Not in the text. That Hansen's disease is an inherited curse is not corroborated, and it is contradicted by **Deuteronomy 24:16** and **Ezekiel 18:20**.

VI. HOW DOES ONE GET TZARA'AT? — YAHWEH PUTS THE PLAGUE

For Hansen's disease, the question of how a person gets it is answered by medicine (Section VII-B). For the Torah's *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*), the Tanakh answers the question itself, and its answer is of a different kind. It does not name a germ, a food, or a neighbor. It names the giver. In the house law, in Miriam's case, and in Uzziah's, the text says plainly that **Yahweh** put the plague there.

VI-A. The House: “I Put a Plague”

“When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a plague of tzara'at in a house of the land of your possession” (Leviticus 14:34)

The verb is *ve-natati* (*and I put / I give*), נָתַתִּי, from *natan* (*to give / to put*), H5414. The same verb stands in the same verse: *“which I give you for a possession.”* The hand that gives Israel the Land is the hand that puts the mark on a house within it. **Yahweh** speaks in the first person, and He does not speak of the plague spreading from one house to the next. The house is struck because He puts the mark there.

The reason the house falls under His hand is stated elsewhere in the same book:

“the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me” (Leviticus 25:23).

A house built on His land stands on His ground. Even so, the procedure is merciful. The owner comes and reports,

“it seems to me there is as it were a plague in the house” (Leviticus 14:35);

the priest orders the house emptied before he goes in,

“that all that is in the house not be made unclean” (Leviticus 14:36);

and the stones are removed, the walls scraped and replastered, and the house watched again before anything is torn down (Leviticus 14:37–45).

VI-B. Miriam: The Cloud Departed

“And the anger of Yahweh was kindled against them, and He departed. And the cloud departed from over the tent, and behold, Miriam was with tzara’at, like snow” (Numbers 12:9–10)

The order of the verses is the teaching. First the anger of Yahweh is kindled; then He departs; then the cloud of His presence lifts from the tent; and only then is Miriam found with tzara’at (skin affliction). The affliction follows His withdrawal. Aaron pleads (Numbers 12:11–12), and Moses cries out, *“El na refa na lah (O El, heal her now, I pray)”*, אֵל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ (Numbers 12:13). Yahweh answers, sets the seven days outside the camp, and the people wait for her (Numbers 12:14–15). The One who struck is the One who is asked to heal. The Torah later commands Israel never to forget it:

“Remember what Yahweh your Elohim did to Miriam” (Deuteronomy 24:9).

VI-C. Uzziah: “Because Yahweh Had Struck Him”

“And Uzziah was angry, and a censer was in his hand to burn incense; and while he was angry with the priests, the tzara’at rose up on his forehead before the priests in the house of Yahweh, beside the altar of incense ... and they hurried him out from there; and he himself also hastened to go out, because Yahweh had struck him” (2 Chronicles 26:19–20)

The Chronicler states the cause in plain words: *ki nig’o Yahweh (because Yahweh had struck him)*, וַיִּגַּע. The book of Kings says the same:

“And Yahweh struck the king, and he was one with tzara’at until the day of his death” (2 Kings 15:5), *va-yenagga (and He struck)*, וַיִּנְגַּע.

Both verbs come from *naga (to touch / strike)*, the root of the Torah’s own word *nega (stroke / touch / plague)* (Section II). The mark of *tzara’at (skin affliction)* is, in the Hebrew, a “stroke,” and in these texts the One who strikes is named. It rose on the king’s forehead at the altar, in front of the priests, at the very moment he defied them. He lived out his life in a separate house, *“cut off from the house of Yahweh”* (2 Chronicles 26:21).

VI-D. The Same Hand in Every Witness

TEXT	WHO GIVES IT	THE WORDS OF THE TEXT
Exodus 4:6–7	Yahweh, as a sign	<i>“Put your hand into your bosom”; the hand came out white, and was restored at His word</i>
Leviticus 14:34	Yahweh	<i>“I put a plague of tzara’at in a house”</i>
Numbers 12:9–10	Yahweh	His anger kindled; He departed; the cloud lifted; Miriam was struck
Deuteronomy 24:9	Yahweh	<i>“what Yahweh your Elohim did to Miriam”</i>
2 Kings 5:27	Spoken by the prophet Elisha	<i>“The tzara’at of Naaman shall cling to you”</i>
2 Kings 15:5	Yahweh	<i>“And Yahweh struck the king”</i>
2 Chronicles 26:20	Yahweh	<i>“because Yahweh had struck him”</i>

The healing belongs to the same hand. When the king of Aram sent Naaman to be healed, the king of Israel tore his clothes and said,

“Am I Elohim, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends to me to recover a man of his tzara’at?” (2 Kings 5:7).

Even a faithless king knew that only **Elohim** could take it away. **Yahweh** Himself says it:

“I put to death and I make alive; I have wounded and I heal” (Deuteronomy 32:39),

and the prophet echoes it:

“He has torn, and He will heal us; He has struck, and He will bind us up” (Hosea 6:1).

VI-E. Why This Answers the Questions of Leviticus 13–14

Once the giver is known, the shape of the law makes sense.

First: why a priest and not a physician. The mark is **Yahweh's**, so it is read by His servant at His sanctuary. The priest examines and declares (Leviticus 13:2–3); the law's stated purpose is *“to teach when it is unclean and when it is clean”* (Leviticus 14:57).

Second: why no remedy is given. The Torah prescribes no ointment, no diet, and no treatment for *tzara'at* (skin affliction). It says only that the plague “*is healed*” (Leviticus 14:3). Miriam is healed after prayer (Numbers 12:13–15), and Naaman after obeying the prophet's word (2 Kings 5:14).

Third: why no rule of contagion. The Torah never says that one catches *tzara'at* (skin affliction) from another person or that one house catches it from another. The reason it gives for sending the afflicted out of the camp is holiness: “*that they may not defile their camps, in the midst of which I dwell*” (Numbers 5:3).

Fourth: why a house. Yahweh gives the Land and remains its Owner (Leviticus 25:23). He may mark a house in His land as He marks a person. The house law names no sin, and the Torah does not state His reason for striking any particular house.

Fifth: what it is for. In the texts, *tzara'at* (skin affliction) serves as a sign (Exodus 4:8), as correction (Numbers 12; 2 Chronicles 26), and as a lesson to be remembered (Deuteronomy 24:8–9). In every case there is a road back: prayer, waiting, healing, and a rite that brings the person home (Numbers 12:13–15; Leviticus 14).

VI-F. What This Does and Does Not Mean Today

The Tanakh names **Yahweh** as the giver of *tzara'at* (skin affliction). It does not say that every sickness is a direct stroke from His hand. It records sickness that comes from a blow in a quarrel (Exodus 21:18–19) and from old age (Genesis 27:1; 48:1), and it treats healing by human means as right and required (Exodus 21:19). Hansen's disease has a known cause in a bacterium passed between people (Section VII-B). **Yahweh** remains sovereign over life and death (Deuteronomy 32:39), but where the Tanakh says “*Yahweh struck,*” the sacred text or a prophet said so.

No one today, without a prophet's word and without a priest to examine, may look at a sick neighbor and declare that **Yahweh** has struck him. That was the error of those who “*esteemed him stricken, smitten by Elohim*” (Isaiah 53:4), and of Job's friends, whom **Yahweh** rebuked (Job 42:7).

Finding — that **Yahweh** is the One who puts *tzara'at* (skin affliction) on the person and on the house, and the One who heals it, is Corroborated (Leviticus 14:34; Numbers 12:9–10; Deuteronomy 24:9; 2 Kings 15:5; 2 Chronicles 26:20; 2 Kings 5:7; Deuteronomy 32:39). That He gives it only as punishment for sin is Not in the text (Exodus 4:6; Leviticus 14:34; 2 Kings 5:1). That anyone today may declare an illness to be **Yahweh's** stroke without a prophet's word is Not in the text (Isaiah 53:4; Job 42:7).

VII. DOES UNCLEAN FOOD CAUSE IT?

VII-A. What the Tanakh Says

The food laws of **Leviticus 11** stand only one chapter before the law of *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*), and some teachers have drawn a line from one to the other. The order of the book is food (**Leviticus 11**), childbirth (**Leviticus 12**), skin, garments, and houses (**Leviticus 13–14**), and bodily discharges (**Leviticus 15**): a sequence of the ways a person becomes unclean and is made clean. Standing next to each other in the book does not make one the cause of the other.

No verse in the Tanakh says that eating any food causes *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*). The Tanakh's own answer to how one gets *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*) is that **Yahweh** puts it (Section VI); where it names the occasion, it is speech, greed, pride, or bloodguilt (Section V). The general promise that obedience keeps away “*the diseases of Egypt*” is real (**Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 7:15**), but it covers the whole covenant, not the food laws alone, and it names no single disease. The skin afflictions threatened in **Deuteronomy 28:27** are the boil of Egypt, the scab, and the itch, and *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*) is not among them.

Finding — that unclean food causes the *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*) of the Torah is **Not in the text**.

VII-B. What Causes Hansen's Disease

Hansen's disease is caused by *Mycobacterium leprae* and, less often, *Mycobacterium lepromatosis*. The World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control state that it passes mainly through droplets from the nose and mouth during long, close, and repeated contact with a person who has the untreated disease. It is not spread by a handshake or by sitting beside someone, not by sex, and not from mother to unborn child. About 95 percent of people are naturally able to fight off the bacterium. The bacterium multiplies very slowly, doubling about every two weeks, so symptoms usually appear about five years after infection and sometimes twenty years or more. A person on treatment soon stops spreading it.

VII-C. The Food Question Tested

Four food claims are commonly made. Each is graded against the research.

Claim One — Rotten or salted fish. In 1906 the English surgeon Jonathan Hutchinson published *On Leprosy and Fish-Eating*, arguing that eating decaying fish was the true cause of leprosy. Hansen himself searched fish for the bacillus for years without success, leprosy specialists of the day rejected the theory, and it was pointed out that Brahmins who never ate fish still contracted the disease. **Not corroborated.**

Claim Two — Armadillo. In the southern United States, a 2011 study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (Truman and colleagues) found that wild nine-banded armadillos and many local patients in Texas and Louisiana carried the same strain of the bacterium, and it concluded that the disease was reaching people from the animals. Studies in Brazil found higher antibody levels among people who ate armadillo most often (2018), and a 2026 case-control study found armadillo meat eaten far more often by patients than by healthy neighbors. Researchers add that the risk from well-cooked meat is very low; hunting, handling, and cleaning the animal also carry risk, and at least one Brazilian study found no link. **Corroborated as a real but limited route, in the Americas.**

The armadillo is not a clean animal under the Torah. It neither divides the hoof nor chews the cud (**Leviticus 11:3; Deuteronomy 14:6–8**), and it walks on its paws:

“whatever goes on its paws, among all the animals that go on all fours, they are unclean to you” (**Leviticus 11:27**).

The one food-linked route that science has documented runs through an animal the covenant already forbids. That is worth noticing; it does not show that the food laws were given to prevent Hansen's disease, and the Torah does not say so.

Claim Three — Bushmeat in Africa. There are no armadillos in Africa. In 2021 researchers reported leprosy in wild chimpanzees in Guinea-Bissau and in Taï National Park in Côte d'Ivoire (Hockings and colleagues, *Nature*), with strains that are rare in humans. No study has shown that eating or handling bushmeat is a cause of Africa's human cases. **Not corroborated** as a cause, though wild primates are also unclean under **Leviticus 11:27** and there is good reason to leave them alone.

Claim Four — Pork, shellfish, and other unclean foods. No published study links pork, shellfish, or any other forbidden food to Hansen's disease. Pork carries its own documented dangers, examined in **Doc 241**, but leprosy is not among them. **Not corroborated.**

VII-D. What Actually Drives the Disease in Africa

Studies in endemic countries point to the same set of risks again and again: living in the same household as an untreated patient, crowded housing, poverty, and late diagnosis. A 2025 case-control study at Shashemene in Ethiopia found that contact with a patient, household food shortage, and lack of a latrine at home each raised the risk of leprosy, while BCG vaccination and good personal hygiene lowered it (*Scientific Reports*, 2025). Genetic differences in the immune response help explain why only a small share of people who are exposed ever fall ill.

Finding — that Hansen's disease is caused by eating unclean food in general is **Not corroborated**. Its cause is a bacterium spread mainly from person to person; handling and eating wild armadillo is a

documented minor route in the Americas. Hunger, crowding, poor sanitation, and delayed treatment are the conditions in which it spreads.

VIII. LEPROSY IN THE DAYS OF OLD AND TODAY

VIII-A. The Long Exile

From the Middle Ages into the twentieth century, much of the world treated leprosy with lifelong exclusion. Europe built leper houses by the thousands. In Louisiana, the state opened a leper home at Carville in 1894; the U.S. Public Health Service took it over in 1921, and it served as the National Leprosarium until 1999. Patients there were forced to change their names and leave their families. In 1941 Dr. Guy Faget and his team at Carville showed that the sulfone drug Promin could reverse the disease, and outpatient treatment became possible, yet the stigma kept many residents there for the rest of their lives.

The Torah's pattern was different. Its separation lasted *“all the days that the plague is in him”* (**Leviticus 13:46**), was decided only after repeated examination (**Leviticus 13:4–6**), and ended with a rite that brought the person back into the camp marked like a priest (**Leviticus 14:14**). Exile for life, applied to a treatable disease the Torah never named, went beyond the text.

VIII-B. The World Today

Leprosy is curable. Since 1995 the World Health Organization has supplied multidrug therapy, a combination of rifampicin, clofazimine, and dapsone, free of charge to every patient in the world; since 2000 the medicine has been donated by Novartis. Treatment lasts six months for the milder, paucibacillary form and twelve months for the multibacillary form. New cases have fallen from about 752,000 reported in 2000 to 172,717 reported in 2024. Brazil, India, and Indonesia each still report more than 10,000 new cases a year.

VIII-C. Africa

In 2024 the 47 countries of WHO's African Region reported 19,171 new cases, 11.1 percent of the world's total, a rate of 15.1 per million people. Six countries reported more than 1,000 new cases each: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Tanzania. Somalia also reports between 1,000 and 10,000. Of Africa's new cases, 1,400 were children, a sign that the disease is still being passed on, and 2,919, or 15.2 percent, already had visible disability at diagnosis, nearly three times the global share of 5.3 percent. Late diagnosis is Africa's heaviest burden.

MEASURE (2024)	WORLD	WHO AFRICAN REGION
New cases	172,717	19,171 (11.1% of the world)
Rate per million people	—	15.1
New cases among children	9,397 (5.4%)	1,400 (7.3%)
New cases already disabled at diagnosis (grade 2)	9,157 (5.3%)	2,919 (15.2%)
Countries with more than 1,000 new cases	Brazil, India, Indonesia (over 10,000); 12 others	DR Congo, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania

WHO published its update for 2025 on September 17, 2026, with reports from 203 countries and territories; the figures above are the most recent full set available to this study.

VIII-D. India

No nation has carried more of the world's leprosy than India. The oldest skeletal evidence of the disease anywhere comes from Balathal in Rajasthan, from a man buried between 2500 and 2000 BCE (Section IV-A).

Ancient Sanskrit writings describe a skin disease called *kushtha* (*a skin disease, including leprosy*). The Sushruta Samhita, a classical Indian medical text, describes its treatment. Scholars still debate how closely these descriptions match Hansen's disease, just as they do with the *tzara'at* (*skin affliction*) of **Leviticus 13**. For centuries the main treatment, in India and later across the world, was chaulmoogra oil, pressed from the seeds of a tree long used in Indian medicine. It remained in use until the sulfone drugs of the 1940s.

The long exile. In 1898 the British colonial government passed the Lepers Act, which allowed people with leprosy to be confined to separate settlements. The law outlived its purpose by decades and was not repealed until 2016. About 750 leprosy colonies remain, many built on government land where families have lived for generations without owning their homes.

Until 2019, leprosy was legal grounds for divorce under five national marriage laws: the Divorce Act (1869), the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act (1939), the Special Marriage Act (1954), the Hindu Marriage Act (1955), and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act (1956). The Personal Laws (Amendment) Act of 2019 removed leprosy from all five. Legal experts report that more than a

hundred provisions in other national and state laws still discriminate against people affected by leprosy, including some that bar them from standing in local elections.

Stigma rooted in belief. In India, as in the ancient Near East, leprosy has often been read as punishment: in popular Hindu belief, the fruit of sins committed in a past life. It is the same error the Tanakh rebukes in those who “esteemed him stricken, smitten by Elohim” (Isaiah 53:4) and in Job’s friends (Job 42:7). The disease itself shows that leprosy follows poverty, crowding, and delayed treatment, and those burdens fall hardest on the poor.

The turn. India began its National Leprosy Control Programme in 1955 and adopted multidrug therapy in 1983. The number of patients fell from more than four million in the early 1980s to fewer than 200,000 by 2005. In December 2005 India was declared to have eliminated leprosy as a public health problem (fewer than one case per 10,000 people). Elimination, however, did not mean the end of new cases. India still reports more than 100,000 new cases a year, more than half of the world’s total. Together with Brazil and Indonesia, it accounts for nearly 80 percent of all new cases worldwide.

MEASURE	EARLIER	2024–25
Prevalence per 10,000 people	57.2 (1981)	0.57
New cases per 100,000 people	9.73 (2014–15)	7.0
Children among new cases	9.04% (2014–15)	4.68%
New cases already disabled (grade 2), per million	4.68 (2014–15)	1.88
Contacts given preventive rifampicin	71% (2019–20)	92%
Cases found by door-to-door search campaigns	—	27,428

(Source: Government of India, Press Information Bureau, October 5, 2025.)

What India is doing now.

- **House-to-house search.** Twice a year, health workers go door to door in the Leprosy Case Detection Campaign. Village health activists (ASHAs) watch for new patches of numb skin.
- **Awareness.** The SPARSH campaign, held around Anti-Leprosy Day, fights stigma.

- **Protecting contacts.** Nearly every contact of a new patient now receives the single dose of rifampicin described in Section IX.
- **A home-grown vaccine.** Indian scientists developed a vaccine from *Mycobacterium indicus pranii* (MIP), studied both to protect contacts and to help treatment.
- **The goal.** The National Strategic Plan and Roadmap 2023–2027 aims to interrupt transmission, with zero child cases in every district. Earlier plan documents set 2027 for this; the government's 2025 statement speaks of 2030.

Those who went outside the camp. India's history also holds people who did what the Torah's pattern calls for: going to the afflicted and bringing them back.

- In 1939 Mahatma Gandhi took into his ashram at Sevagram a Sanskrit scholar with leprosy, Parchure Shastri, and cared for his wounds himself.
- Christian missions and Indian reformers alike founded hospitals, homes, and villages where patients could live and work with dignity.
- That work echoes the Torah's own aim for the one outside the camp: examination, healing, and return (**Leviticus 13:4–6; 14:3, 14**).

Finding — India's burden is **Corroborated** by its own government figures and by WHO: the world's oldest skeletal evidence, the largest share of today's new cases, and a decline of about 99 percent in prevalence since 1981. That leprosy in India is punishment for sin in a past life is **Not in the text**, and it contradicts **Deuteronomy 24:16, Ezekiel 18:20, and Isaiah 53:4**. The means that are ending it in India are **Corroborated**: early search, free treatment, protection of contacts, and the removal of unjust laws. They match the covenant pattern of examining, healing, and restoring.

IX. WHAT CAN THE COVENANT BELIEVER DO?

The Torah's own pattern gives the order: bring the mark to be examined, wait and look again, keep the camp clean, and restore the one who is healed. Joined with what is now known about the disease, that pattern gives nine practices. They are covenant wisdom for households and congregations, not a substitute for a health worker.

#	PRACTICE	WHAT IT MEANS	COVENANT BASIS
1	Know the early signs	A pale or reddish skin patch with loss of feeling; numbness or tingling in hands or feet; thickened nerves; weakness in the hands, feet, or eyelids	Leviticus 13:2: the mark is brought to be seen

#	PRACTICE	WHAT IT MEANS	COVENANT BASIS
2	Get examined early and take the full treatment	Multidrug therapy is free through national programs; it cures the disease and stops its spread. Treating early prevents lasting disability	Exodus 21:19: <i>“he shall surely cause him to be healed”</i>
3	Check the household	Family members of a patient should be examined, and U.S. guidance advises a yearly check for five years. Where offered, a single dose of rifampicin cuts contacts’ risk by about half	Leviticus 13:5–6: look again after seven days
4	Accept BCG vaccination where it is given	The childhood tuberculosis vaccine gives partial protection against leprosy	Proverbs 22:3: the prudent sees danger and takes cover
5	Keep sanitation and hygiene	A latrine at home and regular washing were both linked to lower risk in Ethiopia	Deuteronomy 23:12–14 [Hebrew 23:13–15]; Leviticus 14:8–9
6	Feed the hungry household	Food shortage raises the risk; the open hand is a preventive act	Deuteronomy 15:11; Isaiah 58:7
7	Keep the covenant food law	Do not hunt, clean, or eat wild armadillo or wild primates; avoid carcasses	Leviticus 11:27, 39–40; Deuteronomy 14:21
8	Do not shun the patient	A person on treatment is not a danger to others. Stigma keeps people from seeking care, and that spreads the disease	Leviticus 19:14, 18; 2 Kings 7:9
9	Pray, and obey the instruction given	Naaman was healed when he did what he was told, not what he expected	2 Kings 5:10–14; Exodus 15:26

Two points in the table need a word. In the third practice, the single dose of rifampicin was shown in a large trial in Bangladesh (the COLEP trial) to lower the risk among contacts by 57 percent over two years, and WHO recommends it. A 2023 trial in China found that a single dose of rifapentine lowered household contacts’ risk by 92 percent; that newer drug is still being studied. On the fifth practice, the Torah’s command to dig a place outside the camp for waste was given *“for Yahweh your Elohim walks in the midst of your camp”* (**Deuteronomy 23:14**); modern research on leprosy in Ethiopia now counts the missing latrine as a risk factor. The reason the Torah gives is holiness; the benefit to the body follows it.

The covenant also keeps the balance on medicine. King Asa, in his disease, *“did not seek Yahweh, but the physicians”* (2 Chronicles 16:12). The fault is that he did not seek Yahweh, not that he used a physician; the same Torah requires the one who injures another to pay for his healing (Exodus 21:19). Seek Yahweh, and use the healing He has put within reach.

Finding — early examination, full treatment, care for the household, clean living, and refusal to shun the afflicted are supported both by the Tanakh's pattern and by the medical record. **Corroborated.** That keeping the food laws alone will prevent Hansen's disease is not corroborated; it removes one small route and leaves the main one untouched.

X. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION HANDLES TZARA'AT AND LEPROSY

The table sets the three traditions against the Tanakh's own findings. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only, in keeping with the standing rule of this document.

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	⬢ ISLAM
Teaching	Rabbinic teaching reads tzara'at as a sign sent for sin. The Talmud lists seven causes: evil speech, bloodshed, a vain oath, sexual immorality, arrogance, robbery, and envy (Arakhin 16a). Maimonides calls it <i>“a sign and a wonder”</i> and not a natural disease (Laws of Tzara'at 16:10). The Mishnah tractate Nega'im works out the signs in detail.	The Gospels record Jesus healing lepers and sending them to the priest with <i>“what Moses commanded”</i> (Mark 1:44; Luke 17:14), and recall Naaman (Luke 4:27). The medieval church built leper houses and held rites that separated the leper from society for life. Modern missions, among them The Leprosy Mission (founded 1874), have cared for patients for 150 years.	The Qur'an counts the healing of <i>al-abras (the one with white patches)</i> among 'Isa's signs (Q. 3:49; 5:110). The same hadith that says <i>“flee from the leper as you flee from a lion”</i> opens with <i>“there is no contagion”</i> (Sahih al-Bukhari 5707), and scholars have long debated how the two fit.
Covenant strength	Keeps the Torah's link between tzara'at and speech, as Deuteronomy 24:8–9 does with Miriam; keeps the word tzara'at rather than <i>“leprosy.”</i>	Honors Leviticus 14 by sending the healed to the priest; its hospitals and missions carry out the command to care for the afflicted.	The Arabic <i>abras</i> describes white patches, close to the Torah's own signs; the Qur'an presents healing as a sign from the Creator.

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	✱ ISLAM
Covenant departure	The list of seven causes goes beyond the four Tanakh names. Reading every case as punishment conflicts with Moses' hand, Naaman, and the four men at the gate.	Merging tzara'at with Hansen's disease led to lifelong exile, which Leviticus 13:46 never commanded; <i>"leper"</i> became a word of contempt.	<i>"Flee"</i> from the patient, taken without the text's context, feeds the stigma that keeps patients from treatment.
Covenant witness	Its insistence that the priest declares and does not treat preserves the plain structure of Leviticus 13 .	Read from the Tanakh outward, the Gospel accounts affirm Leviticus 14 : the healed is sent back to be declared clean.	Placing healing among the signs of the Creator matches Exodus 15:26 : <i>"I am Yahweh who heals you."</i>

XI. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Library's rule is that its own earlier work is tested by the same standard as everyone else's.

Correction 1 — Doc 132, the cedar in Leviticus 14. *Gum Spirits of Turpentine* (Part II and Witness I) presents the cedar wood of **Leviticus 14:4** as a material *"prescribed in the Levitical purification ritual for skin disease"* and says the rite *"prefigures"* the antimicrobial action of resin. **Leviticus 14:3** states that the rite begins only after the priest sees that *"the plague of tzara'at is healed."* The cedar, scarlet, and hyssop are not applied to any lesion; they are used with the birds and the blood in declaring the healed person clean. That the cedar in **Leviticus 14** served as a treatment is **Not in the text**. Doc 132's separate findings on the chemistry of pine resin are not affected by this correction.

Correction 2 — terminology. Where earlier Library documents use *"leprosy"* for **Leviticus 13–14**, future revisions should use *tzara'at (skin affliction)*, and reserve *"leprosy"* or *"Hansen's disease"* for the bacterial disease, as this document does. **Doc 128's** reference to **Isaiah 53** is accurate as a comparative citation and needs no change.

XII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON TZARA'AT AND LEPROSY

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. Each declaration below draws on more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	<i>tzara'at (skin affliction)</i> is a covenant condition of person, garment, and house, examined and declared by the priest; it is not one named disease.	Leviticus 13:2–3, 47; 14:34, 57
II	<i>tzara'at (skin affliction)</i> of the Torah is not the same as Hansen's disease; the English word " <i>leprosy</i> " came through translation, not from the Hebrew.	Leviticus 13:13, 47; 14:34
III	The Torah's separation was temporary, patient, and aimed at restoration, and it ended with the healed person brought back and marked like a priest.	Leviticus 13:4–6, 46; 14:3, 14; Exodus 29:20
IV	Yahweh Himself puts <i>tzara'at</i> on the person and on the house, and He alone heals it; He struck some people for speech, greed, and pride, but the Tanakh does not make every case a judgment, and no one may call a sick person accursed.	Leviticus 14:34; Numbers 12:9–13; 2 Kings 5:7; 15:5; 2 Chronicles 26:20; Isaiah 53:4
V	No text of the Tanakh says that unclean food causes <i>tzara'at</i> ; the one food-linked route to Hansen's disease that science has documented runs through an animal the covenant already calls unclean.	Leviticus 11:27; Leviticus 13–14; Deuteronomy 28:27
VI	Healing is from Yahweh , and seeking Him does not forbid using the treatment He has placed within reach.	Exodus 15:26; 21:19; 2 Kings 5:14; 2 Chronicles 16:12
VII	The covenant believer brings the mark to be examined, keeps the household and the camp clean, feeds the hungry, and does not shun the afflicted.	Leviticus 13:2; 19:18; Deuteronomy 15:11; 23:12–14

XIII. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO ASKS

Behind the question about leprosy there is usually a fear: of catching it, of what it says about the one who has it, or of having done something to deserve it. Tanakh's answer is fivefold.

First: know what the Torah's word means. *tzara'at (skin affliction)* was a covenant condition of skin, cloth, and stone, judged by the priest and ended by healing and restoration (**Leviticus 13–14**). It came from the hand of **Yahweh**, and so did its healing (**Leviticus 14:34; Numbers 12:10, 13**). It is not the same as the disease the world now calls leprosy.

Second: do not call the sick accursed. Yahweh struck Miriam, Gehazi, and Uzziah for what they did, and the text says so. He did not say it of Naaman or of the four men who carried good news, and He does not say it of the child in Ethiopia or Nigeria who has Hansen's disease today (**Isaiah 53:4; 2 Kings 7:9**).

Third: unclean food is not the cause. Keep the covenant food law because it is the covenant, and it will keep you away from the armadillo and the wild primate. But the disease comes mainly from long, close contact with an untreated person, in the conditions of hunger and crowding (**Leviticus 11:27**).

Fourth: bring the mark to be seen, and take the healing. A numb patch on the skin should be examined without delay. Treatment is free, it cures, and it stops the spread (**Leviticus 13:2; Exodus 21:19**).

Fifth: bring them back into the camp. The Torah's last word on the one who had been outside the camp was a rite of return (**Leviticus 14:14–20**). The covenant community's work is not to keep the healed outside, but to bring them home.

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REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Genesis 27:1; 48:1	Sickness of old age	VI
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“So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of Elohim; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

2 Kings 5:14 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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