

Leviticus 13

Verses 1- 8

Then the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ²“When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling or a scab or a bright spot, and it becomes an infection of leprosy on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests. ³ The priest shall look at the mark on the skin of the body, and if the hair in the infection has turned white and the infection appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is an infection of leprosy; when the priest has looked at him, he shall pronounce him unclean. ⁴ But if the bright spot is white on the skin of his body, and it does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and the hair on it has not turned white, then the priest shall isolate *him who has* the infection for seven days. ⁵ The priest shall look at him on the seventh day, and if in his eyes the infection has not changed *and* the infection has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall isolate him for seven more days. ⁶ The priest shall look at him again on the seventh day, and if the infection has faded and the mark has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is *only* a scab. And he shall wash his clothes and be clean. ⁷ “But if the scab spreads farther on the skin after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall appear again to the priest. ⁸ The priest shall look, and if the scab has spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is leprosy.

Before we look at the various forms of leprosy and the laws that were put in place to hinder the spread of this disease, the following facts are good to know.

1. Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease still exists.
2. In the United States, about 100 people receive a leprosy diagnosis every year.
3. Leprosy is caused by infection with the bacterium *Mycobacterium leprae*.
4. Symptoms include light colored or red skin patches with reduced sensation, numbness and weakness in hands and feet.
5. Leprosy can be cured with 6-12 months of multi-drug therapy. Early treatment avoids disability.
6. Leprosy spreads by airborne droplets from an infected person. (Coughs or sneezes).

Verses 1 - 8

Steps in the diagnosis of Leprosy

1. If a person had a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot on his skin then the person was brought to Aaron or one of his sons and they would decide if the person had leprosy based on a physical inspection of their skin. Vs. 2
2. If the person had white hairs in the affected area; or if the disease went below the epidermis then it was leprosy and the priest had to pronounce him as unclean. Vs. 3
3. If the person did not appear to have leprosy then there was an extended observation of 7 days. Vs. 4
4. If the infection had not changed then the person was isolated for 7 more days. Vs. 5
5. If the infection had faded and the mark had not spread then the priest would pronounce him as clean. After he washed his clothes he was considered clean. Vs. 6
6. However, if the scab spreads after he had been declared clean he would have to appear before the priest again. Vs. 7
7. If the scab had spread the priest would pronounce him as unclean. Vs. 8

Chronic leprosy

Verses 9 - 17

⁹“When the infection of leprosy is on a man, then he shall be brought to the priest. ¹⁰The priest shall then look, and if there is a white swelling in the skin, and it has turned the hair white, and there is quick raw flesh in the swelling, ¹¹it is a chronic leprosy on the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean; he shall not isolate him, for he is unclean. ¹²If the leprosy breaks out farther on the skin, and the leprosy covers all the skin of *him who has* the infection from his head even to his feet, as far as the priest can see, ¹³then the priest shall look, and behold, *if* the leprosy has covered all his body, he shall pronounce clean *him who has* the infection; it has all turned white *and* he is clean. ¹⁴But whenever raw flesh appears on him, he shall be unclean. ¹⁵The priest shall look at the raw flesh, and he shall pronounce him unclean; the raw flesh is unclean, it is leprosy. ¹⁶Or if the raw flesh turns again and is changed to white, then he shall come to the priest, ¹⁷and the priest shall look at him, and behold, *if* the infection has turned to white, then the priest shall pronounce clean *him who has* the infection; he is clean.

In verses 1 thru 28 there are four different cases of leprosy described.

Verses 1 – 8	leprosy
Verses 9 – 17	chronic leprosy
Verses 18 thru 23	leprosy after having a boil
Verses 24 thru 28	leprosy after being burned by fire

Verses 9 - 17

¹⁰ The priest shall then look, and if there is a white swelling in the skin, and it has turned the hair white, and there is quick raw flesh in the swelling, ¹¹ it is a chronic leprosy on the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean; he shall not isolate him, for he is unclean.

This person did not need to go thru the 14 day isolation period because there was no doubt that he had leprosy.

¹³ then the priest shall look, and behold, *if* the leprosy has covered all his body, he shall pronounce clean *him who has* the infection; it has all turned white *and* he is clean. ¹⁴ But whenever raw flesh appears on him, he shall be unclean.

If the skin turns white he is clean but if there is raw flesh he is unclean.

Verses 18 - 23

¹⁸ “When the body has a boil on its skin and it is healed, ¹⁹ and in the place of the boil there is a white swelling or a reddish-white, bright spot, then it shall be shown to the priest; ²⁰ and the priest shall look, and behold, *if* it appears to be lower than the skin, and the hair on it has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is the infection of leprosy, it has broken out in the boil. ²¹ But if the priest looks at it, and behold, there are no white hairs in it and it is not lower than the skin and is faded, then the priest shall isolate him for seven days; ²² and if it spreads farther on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infection. ²³ But if the bright spot remains in its place and does not spread, it is *only* the scar of the boil; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

Leprosy after having a boil

¹⁸ **“When the body has a boil on its skin and it is healed, ¹⁹ and in the place of the boil there is a white swelling or a reddish-white, bright spot, then it shall be shown to the priest;**

Getting a boil on the skin was not a sign of leprosy unless there was a white swelling or a reddish-white, bright spot after the boil had healed.

²¹ **But if the priest looks at it, and behold, there are no white hairs in it and it is not lower than the skin and is faded, then the priest shall isolate him for seven days;**
²² **and if it spreads farther on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infection.**

If the bright spot spreads after being isolated for 7 days then it was leprosy and the person was pronounced unclean by the priest.

²³ **But if the bright spot remains in its place and does not spread, it is *only* the scar of the boil; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.**

If the bright spot does not spread he is clean.

Verses 24- 28

²⁴ **“Or if the body sustains in its skin a burn by fire, and the raw *flesh* of the burn becomes a bright spot, reddish-white, or white, ²⁵ then the priest shall look at it. And if the hair in the bright spot has turned white and it appears to be deeper than the skin, it is leprosy; it has broken out in the burn. Therefore, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infection of leprosy. ²⁶ But if the priest looks at it, and indeed, there is no white hair in the bright spot and it is no deeper than the skin, but is dim, then the priest shall isolate him for seven days; ²⁷ and the priest shall look at him on the seventh day. If it spreads farther in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infection of leprosy. ²⁸ But if the bright spot remains in its place and has not spread in the skin, but is dim, it is the swelling from the burn; and the priest shall pronounce him clean, for it is *only* the scar of the burn.**

Leprosy after being burned by fire

²⁴ “Or if the body sustains in its skin a burn by fire, and the raw *flesh* of the burn becomes a bright spot, reddish-white, or white, ²⁵ then the priest shall look at it. And if the hair in the bright spot has turned white and it appears to be deeper than the skin, it is leprosy; it has broken out in the burn.

These were the telltale signs of leprosy.

But if the priest looks at it, and indeed, there is no white hair in the bright spot and it is no deeper than the skin, but is dim, then the priest shall isolate him for seven days; ²⁷ and the priest shall look at him on the seventh day. If it spreads farther in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infection of leprosy.

If there was no white hair in the bright spot and it was no deeper than the skin then he was isolated for 7 days. If the spot spread during that time then he had leprosy. If it did not spread then he was free of leprosy.

Verses 29 - 37

²⁹ “Now if a man or woman has an infection on the head or on the beard, ³⁰ then the priest shall look at the infection, and if it appears to be deeper than the skin and there is thin yellowish hair in it, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a scale, it is leprosy of the head or of the beard. ³¹ But if the priest looks at the infection of the scale, and indeed, it appears to be no deeper than the skin and there is no black hair in it, then the priest shall isolate *the person* with the scaly infection for seven days. ³² On the seventh day the priest shall look at the infection, and if the scale has not spread and no yellowish hair has grown in it, and the appearance of the scale is no deeper than the skin, ³³ then he shall shave himself, but he shall not shave the scale; and the priest shall isolate *the person* with the scale seven more days. ³⁴ Then on the seventh day the priest shall look at the scale, and if the scale has not spread in the skin and it appears to be no deeper than the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; and he shall wash his clothes and be clean. ³⁵ But if the scale spreads farther in the skin after his cleansing, ³⁶ then the priest shall look at him, and if the scale has spread in the skin, the priest need not seek for the yellowish hair; he is unclean. ³⁷ If in his sight the scale has remained, however, and black hair has grown in it, the scale has healed, he is clean; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

Leprosy on the head or on the beard

²⁹ “Now if a man or woman has an infection on the head or on the beard, ³⁰ Then the priest shall look at the infection, and if it appears to be deeper than the skin and there is thin yellowish hair in it, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a scale, it is leprosy of the head or of the beard.

This form of Leprosy is very similar to the others we have covered except for the yellow and black hairs. The other forms of leprosy had white hairs in the infection.

³¹ But if the priest looks at the infection of the scale, and indeed, it appears to be no deeper than the skin and there is no black hair in it, then the priest shall isolate *the person* with the scaly infection for seven days.

As with the others forms of leprosy, some cases required isolation until the person could be inspected for further proof of being clean or unclean.

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

If these 3 symptoms did not appear then the person was isolated for another 7 days.

³⁴ Then on the seventh day the priest shall look at the scale, and if the scale has not spread in the skin and it appears to be no deeper than the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; and he shall wash his clothes and be clean.

If the scale did not spread and it was no deeper than the skin then he was clean.

³⁵ But if the scale spreads farther in the skin after his cleansing, ³⁶ then the priest shall look at him, and if the scale has spread in the skin, the priest need not seek for the yellowish hair; he is unclean.

This is similar to the situation in verses 7 and 8. These cases had to be heartbreaking because the leprosy was discovered after getting an all clear diagnosis.

³⁷ **If in his sight the scale has remained, however, and black hair has grown in it, the scale has healed, he is clean; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.**

The black hair was a good sign because it meant the scale had healed. The person was clean and could return home to his family.

Verse 38 - 39

³⁸ **“When a man or a woman has bright spots on the skin of the body, even white bright spots, ³⁹ then the priest shall look, and if the bright spots on the skin of their bodies are a faint white, it is eczema that has broken out on the skin; he is clean.**

Eczema is a skin disorder that can last several years or be life long and one's family history may increase the likelihood of getting it. People with Eczema were clean, they did not have leprosy.

Verses 40 - 44

⁴⁰ **“Now if a man loses the hair of his head, he is bald; he is clean. ⁴¹ If his head becomes bald at the front and sides, he is bald on the forehead; he is clean. ⁴² But if on the bald head or the bald forehead, there occurs a reddish-white infection, it is leprosy breaking out on his bald head or on his bald forehead. ⁴³ Then the priest shall look at him; and if the swelling of the infection is reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, like the appearance of leprosy in the skin of the body, ⁴⁴ he is a leprous man, he is unclean. The priest shall surely pronounce him unclean; his infection is on his head.**

⁴⁰ **“Now if a man loses the hair of his head, he is bald; he is clean. ⁴¹ If his head becomes bald at the front and sides, he is bald on the forehead; he is clean.**

Being bald is not a health issue but if his head has an infection that is a reddish-white, then he is unclean (he has leprosy).

⁴² **But if on the bald head or the bald forehead, there occurs a reddish-white infection, it is leprosy breaking out on his bald head or on his bald forehead.**

It seems that leprosy on the head was easier to diagnose than on the body.

Verses 45-46

⁴⁵ “As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be uncovered, and he shall cover his mustache and cry, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ ⁴⁶ He shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

People with leprosy were subject to the following humiliation.

1. His clothes shall be torn.
2. The hair of his head shall be uncovered.
3. He shall cover his mustache and cry, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’
4. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

Leprosy was and can be a tragic disease if it is not treated.

See Pics 1305



This is awful but it can get much worse than this.

Verses 47 - 59

⁴⁷ “When a garment has a mark of leprosy in it, whether it is a wool garment or a linen garment, ⁴⁸ whether in warp or woof, of linen or of wool, whether in leather or in any article made of leather, ⁴⁹ if the mark is greenish or reddish in the garment or in the leather, or in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of leather, it is a leprous mark and shall be shown to the priest. ⁵⁰ Then the priest shall look at the mark and shall quarantine the article with the mark for seven days. ⁵¹ He shall then look at the mark on the seventh day; if the mark has spread in the garment, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in the leather, whatever the purpose for which the leather is used, the mark is a leprous malignancy, it is unclean. ⁵² So he shall burn the garment, whether the warp or the woof, in wool or in linen, or any article of leather in which the mark occurs, for it is a leprous malignancy; it shall be burned in the fire. ⁵³ “But if the priest shall look, and indeed the mark has not spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of leather, ⁵⁴ then the priest shall order them to wash the thing in which the mark occurs and he shall quarantine it for seven more days. ⁵⁵ After the article with the mark has been washed, the priest shall again look, and if the mark has not changed its appearance, even though the mark has not spread, it is unclean; you shall burn it in the fire, whether an eating away has produced bareness on the top or on the front of it. ⁵⁶ “Then if the priest looks, and if the mark has faded after it has been washed, then he shall tear it out of the garment or out of the leather, whether from the warp or from the woof; ⁵⁷ and if it appears again in the garment, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of leather, it is an outbreak; the article with the mark shall be burned in the fire. ⁵⁸ The garment, whether the warp or the woof, or any article of leather from which the mark has departed when you washed it, it shall then be washed a second time and will be clean.” ⁵⁹ This is the law for the mark of leprosy in a garment of wool or linen, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of leather, for pronouncing it clean or unclean.

⁴⁷ “When a garment has a mark of leprosy in it, whether it is a wool garment or a linen garment, ⁴⁸ whether in warp or woof, of linen or of wool, whether in leather or in any article made of leather, ⁴⁹ if the mark is greenish or reddish in the garment or in the leather, or in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of leather, it is a leprous mark and shall be shown to the priest.

Modern leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, cannot directly infect clothing in the way that skin lesions or fungal infections can. However, the term "leprosy" in the Bible, was broader and included fungal infections that could affect garments.

⁵⁰ Then the priest shall look at the mark and shall quarantine the article with the mark for seven days. ⁵¹ He shall then look at the mark on the seventh day; if the mark has spread in the garment, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in the leather, whatever the purpose for which the leather is used, the mark is a leprous malignancy, it is unclean. ⁵² So he shall burn the garment, whether the warp or the woof, in wool or in linen, or any article of leather in which the mark occurs, for it is a leprous malignancy; it shall be burned in the fire.

The priest would quarantine the clothing for 7 days and if the mark spread it was a leprous malignancy and the clothing had to be burned.

⁵³ “But if the priest shall look, and indeed the mark has not spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of leather, ⁵⁴ then the priest shall order them to wash the thing in which the mark occurs and he shall quarantine it for seven more days.

If the mark had not spread after the 7 days then the clothing was washed and the priest would quarantine it for 7 more days.

Great care was exercised to avoid destroying anything usable. Clothing was not a throw away item like it has become today.

⁵⁵ After the article with the mark has been washed, the priest shall again look, and if the mark has not changed its appearance, even though the mark has not spread, it is unclean; you shall burn it in the fire, whether an eating away has produced bareness on the top or on the front of it.

If the mark had had not changed it was still unclean.

⁵⁶ “Then if the priest looks, and if the mark has faded after it has been washed, then he shall tear it out of the garment or out of the leather, whether from the warp or from the woof; ⁵⁷ and if it appears again in the garment, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of leather, it is an outbreak; the article with the mark shall be burned in the fire.

If the mark faded the priest would tear it out of the garment but if the mark appeared again then it was an outbreak and it was burned with fire.

⁵⁸ The garment, whether the warp or the woof, or any article of leather from which the mark has departed when you washed it, it shall then be washed a second time and will be clean.” ⁵⁹ This is the law for the mark of leprosy in a garment of wool or linen, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in any article of leather, for pronouncing it clean or unclean.

The garment from which the mark has departed when you washed it, it shall then be washed a second time and will be clean.