



# THE NEW SHOFAR

***Jesus warns us not to treat people as outcasts because they may have what we think of as their “sores”!***

***October 9th***

***Have faith! Trust God! Step out in Hope! Obey!***

Priests had great power. Once a priest judged a person to be unclean, that person was cut off from society and family. He could not hold a job or engage in business. He was reduced to begging. They were unclean to others and unclean in God's eyes. When Jesus told the men to visit the priests, He was telling them to get a certificate of release indicating they were free from the disease. As they followed His instructions, they were cleansed. He did not heal them on the spot. He did not heal them in a distant spot. He healed them *as they moved to obey His orders*.

The ten lepers didn't ask for healing. They were probably looking for pity or a handout. When they obeyed Jesus' instructions, they discovered He had given them much more than they asked for. The same applies to us. When God tells us to do something small, all we have to do is obey Him! When we obey Him, He may surprise us by giving us more than we would have ever dared ask of Him.

## **An unclean Samaritan among unclean lepers**

What was an unclean Samaritan (a foreigner) doing among nine unclean Jewish lepers? Leprosy joined them together in a shared misery. Out of all those who had been healed, the one knowing the least about Jesus returned to thank Him. The most religious people are not always the ones who see life's graces or think to say thanks. The lepers were Jesus' fellow Israelites. They knew that He has been healing those in need and they showed Him due respect. The Samaritan-who worshipped God differently enough to be an unclean outsider-knew that Jesus' power was of God and that in thanking Jesus he was giving glory to God.

The Samaritan was an outsider, and he saw Jesus for who He really is and turned back to throw himself at Jesus' feet while praising God. In doing so, he showed not that Jesus has come for everyone but that those who are on the margins of society are most likely to see God working through Jesus. The insiders often miss this, preferring to work within the confines of the established institution.

Once again, we are not that much different to the lepers. As sinners, we have been defiled with the leprosy of sin. This is why we should put our faith in God and obey His commands with confidence knowing that He will heal us if we follow His instructions. This will be evidence that we have made peace with God.

## **Physical healing is not necessarily the best God has on offer**

While the one who returned had the same experience as the others, he had a different consequence as a result of his meeting with Jesus. The other nine lepers were healed, but only one was “made well”. Being “made well” is more important than being healed. And, unless gratitude is part of our human nature, we can’t be whole people. The other nine were merely healed. If ingratitude is more deadly than leprosy, the nine were in worse shape than before. Only one came back and was made whole.

### ***Faith is to be lived and not just something to believe***

Jesus’ words in verses 17-19 reveal a note of sadness and surprise. The nine Jewish lepers who had been healed went away, clutching their blessings to themselves. Only the Samaritan returned, and Jesus rewarded him with a healing beyond the physical. The power of God cleansed him inwardly from the corrupting power of sin.

Nothing pleases God more than faith, and faith is always expressed and made real through action. If we need a miracle, some direction or an answer from God, we have to do more than just believe God can do it. We need to respond to our belief with gratitude, expressing our thanks knowing God’s response is already working. Actions *do* speak louder than words.

The Samaritan leper praised God, but he still had problems. He lived as an outcast with no family, no job, no home and no village. He was still to be living as an unclean Samaritan, still unloved, still despised. In spite of these problems, he still praised God. Similarly, all of us have our own problems. We are invited to focus on our sure faith and hope in God being bigger than all of our problems and challenges, and that He is present in the midst of all our challenges, joys and futures.

### ***We too can treat others as though they were lepers***

For the Samaritan leper, his encounter with Jesus was a life-changing invitation into a kingdom and a new community, into life as a new creation. When he fell at Jesus’ feet, he saw the Son of God who made him well. The Samaritan’s response is a model of discipleship: faith driven action. His grateful response to his healing was the start of a lifelong process of rejuvenated living in the Kingdom.

This parable offers Christians today a challenge, for there is the very real danger we can create our own categories of “lepers”, people we push to the margins. Whom have we cast out or ignored? Who are those considered “unclean” among us? They include divorced and remarried women, women who have had abortions, refugees, prisoners, ex-convicts and so on. And here is a further invitation: what are the actions and words of mine that may be “sores” to others? Do I too need

healing if I am going to bring people to Christ, rather than chase them away; am I undermining the peace of my brothers and sisters because of the way my “sores” revolt them?