

# LEPROSY

---

## CULTURAL INSIGHT

In the Old Testament, *leprosy* refers to a variety of skin ailments, most of which are not to be associated with Hansen's disease, the disease we commonly call leprosy. Instead, biblical leprosy (Hebrew *ša'arat*) refers to those skin diseases that rendered an individual ritually unclean under the law of Moses. Some potential skin infections contained under the rubric of *ša'arat* could have been psoriasis, scabies, favus, impetigo, and other skin infections that leave a specific mark or wound. In fact, under the law, buildings and cloth could also contract *ša'arat* and its attendant ritual impurity. The ritual uncleanness was, from the biblical perspective, more important than potential contagiousness. This is illustrated by the non-Israelite Naaman, whose leprosy was not an obstacle to his achieving a high office in the army.

### ***Related verses***

Leviticus 13

Leviticus 14

Deuteronomy 24:8

2 Kings 5:1–27

2 Chronicles 26:19

### **Credits**

***Author:*** Avram R. Shannon

***General Editor:*** Taylor Halverson

***Associate Editor:*** Morgan Tanner

***Senior Editor:*** Sarah Whitney Johnson

***Assistant Editor:*** Verlanne Johnson

***ScripturePlus Design:*** Jasmin Gimenez Rapple