

Parshah Tazria-Metzora in a Nutshell
(Leviticus 12:1–15:33)

Anshei Lubavitch Congregation

Rabbi Levi and Leah Neubort

Adult education:

Rabbi Avrohom and Rivky Bergstein

Youth Outreach:

Rabbi Eli and Ruty Steinhauser

Shul Temporarily Closed
“Shabbos Schedule”
Please daven at Home

Erev Shabbos – ROSH CHODESH

Apr 24 / Nissan 30

Candle Lighting 7:28 pm

Shabbos Day – ROSH CHODESH

Apr 25 / Iyar 1

Shabbos Ends..... 8:31 pm

**Latest morning Shema is now 9:26 AM. Be sure to recite the Shema before that time.*

Weekday Schedule (not on a holiday):

Shul Temporarily Closed
Please daven at home.

Incense Portion

Exodus 30:22–38

Although we unfortunately no longer have the Temple, the Kabbalists say that by reading the portion in the Torah that discusses the incense, it is as if one actually brought it. Thus, although many have the custom to recite this portion daily, one should take extra care to learn and recite it at the time of an epidemic.

The Parshahs of Tazria and Metzora continue the discussion of the laws of tumah v'taharah, ritual impurity and purity.

A woman giving birth should undergo a process of purification, which includes immersing in a mikvah and bringing offerings to the Holy Temple. All male infants are to be circumcised on the eighth day of life.

Tzaraat (often mistranslated as “leprosy”) is a supra-natural plague, which can afflict people as well as garments or homes. If white or pink patches appear on a person’s skin (dark pink or dark green in garments or homes), a kohen is summoned. Judging by various signs, such as an increase in size of the afflicted area after a seven-day quarantine, the kohen pronounces it tamei (impure) or tahor (pure).

A person afflicted with tzaraat must dwell alone outside of the camp (or city) until he is healed. The afflicted area in a garment or home must be removed; if the tzaraat recurs, the entire garment or home must be destroyed.

When the metzora (“leper”) heals, he or she is purified by the kohen with a special procedure involving 2 birds, spring water in an earthen vessel, a piece of cedar wood, a scarlet thread and a bundle of hyssop.

Ritual impurity is also engendered through a seminal or other discharge in a man, and menstruation or other discharge of blood in a woman, necessitating purification through immersion in a mikvah. ❖

Eruv website:
www.fairlawneruv.com
Eruv Hotline: 201-254-9190.

Upon recommendation of the Dept of Health, local hospitals, and the Rabbinical Council, the shul will be closed until further notice.

Charity

In late 1827 an epidemic broke out in the city of Orsha (near the city of Lubavitch), in which three or four people were dying daily, the in-habitants turned to his son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel, later known as the Tzemach Tzedek, for advice.

In addition to quoting a story in the Zohar about reading the portion of the ketoret during an epidemic, the Tzemach Tzedek suggested that, in light of the verse in Proverbs “And charity will save from death,” they should add in charity. However, he stressed that, as is explained in Tanya, it is preferable to give charity many times throughout the day (especially before prayer) in smaller denominations than just giving one large sum, even if it equals the same amount. Ideally, the total sum of each day should be a multiple of 18.

Halachic Zmanim

Shabbos, April 25

Daylight Savings Time

Earliest Tallis 5:01 AM
Latest Morning Shema 9:26 AM
Earliest Mincha (Gedola).. 1:30 PM
Plag Hamincha 6:25 PM
Earliest Evening Shema 8:17 PM

Chassidic Masters

5 Powerful Insights From the Rebbe

Compiled by Mordechai Rubin

A Transcendent Connection

Our Torah reading begins with the commandment of circumcision. Now, the Torah had already taught us about this mitzvah when relating the story of Abraham's circumcision. Why then does it mention it here a second time?

Our Rabbis explain that this communicates a fundamental lesson. We observe the mitzvos, not because of our Patriarchs' observance, but because we were commanded to at Sinai. Our Patriarchs' service prepared the ground for our relationship with G-d, but the relationship itself was established through the giving of the Torah.

What's the difference? The Patriarchs were inspired men, trying with all the energy they could muster to reach out to G-d and establish a connection with Him. But at the giving of the Torah, G-d reached out to man.

The Patriarchs reached the highest peaks that mortals could. We cannot expect to attain those heights. Nevertheless, our observance of the mitzvos possesses a measure of superiority over their divine service. The giving of the Torah changed the entire paradigm, lifting us above the human realm entirely. It enables us relate to G-d on His terms and tap

into the spiritual potential that He grants us.

Accordingly, the commandment for circumcision - and the other commandments mentioned in the Book of Genesis - were repeated at Sinai. For this repetition enabled their observance to be charged with this superior energy.

A Dangerous Mission

Metzora begins with the description of the purification process for a person who became impure because of tzaraat, a skin condition resembling leprosy. It is an ailment that comes about because of a person's conduct. Because he spread lashon hara, malicious gossip about another person, his own body is affected and his skin begins to decay.

How can he correct himself? After the kohen (priest) determines him to be impure, he is told to go outside the city limits and live alone, distant from others. As our Sages explain: "Since he created separation among others, he is forced to live alone." As he lives his solitary existence, he hopefully learns the severity of his transgression and in this way, expiates his sin.

How does he become pure? A kohen comes out beyond the city limits and inspects his body to see if his skin ailment has healed. Now usually a kohen is not allowed to become impure himself; he must take utmost care in this regard. This is of essential importance to him. For if a kohen becomes impure, he may not serve in the

Temple for the duration of his impurity. It is highly likely that impure objects will be located in the place where the person afflicted with tzaraat stays. And yet, the kohen makes an exception and goes out to help this person.

His conduct is an example for us in our present-day lives. Showing us the extent of the commitment we must make, extreme efforts are necessary, even when there is a risk to our own personal selves. Even though we may be prevented from entering G-d's Temple as a result, we have to do what we can to enable another person to attain purity and resume normal social relations with his fellow men.

The Job of the Kohen

The large majority of the subject matter of this Torah reading focuses on the affliction of tzaraat. Tzaraat is not a natural occurrence; it is a sign and a wonder prevalent among the Jewish people to warn them against lashon hora, 'undesirable speech.'" For speech is a uniquely human potential, reflecting our innermost tendencies. Therefore, if it is misused, it has severe consequences. When we speak words of gossip or slander, we are not merely hurting the person we are speaking about, we are harming ourselves and, in a larger sense, undermining the spiritual makeup of the entire Jewish people.

Speech does not originate in a vacuum. Instead, it reveals what is hidden in a person's heart.

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When a person speaks undesirably, that indicates that he has undesirable character traits. The tzaraat afflictions are intended to draw his attention to these character faults and inspire him to correct them.

To assist a person in this task, the Torah ordained that when a person had a tzaraas blemish, he would have to appear before a kohen (priest) to have the blemish inspected and ultimately be declared pure. The kohanim were characterized by a desire for unity and love for their fellow Jew. For that reason, they were chosen to bless the people. Indeed, the blessing they recite before conveying the Priestly Blessing, emphasizes this quality, stating that they were “commanded to bless His people Israel with love.”

When a person with a tzaraatblemish came to a kohen, a two-tiered process took place. On one level, the kohen was watching the internal process of purification. On a deeper level, he was causing it. Every time he looked at the blemish, he imparted spiritual energy — love and care — to the blemished person, energy that enabled him to heal his character flaws and ultimately be purified from his affliction.

Is Moshiach a Leper?

The term metzora refers to a person afflicted with tzaraat, a skin condition which resembles leprosy. The question arises: Why does such a negative subject feature in the name of a Torah reading?

Chassidus explains that tzaraat stems from intense spiritual energy that cannot be manifest because of a lack of adequate mediums of expression. When this energy is

not harnessed correctly, there can be negative results. The blemishes appear on the person’s skin, for a) the problems lie at the peripheries not at the core. At the core, the potential is awesomely positive; and b) when the problems on the peripheries are revealed, they can be corrected. Ultimately, through the suffering and purification process which a leper must undergo, the eventual outcome is also positive.

In this vein, we can understand why our Sages describe Mashiach as “a leper” and the Temple as “a house afflicted with tzaraat. ” Since there are blotches of evil in the world that prevent the light of redemption from being manifest, the power of these lights is turned inward and is reflected in the leprous blemishes to be visited on Moshiach and the Temple.

Moshiach’s suffering will not, however, be for all time. Instead, “the leper will be purified” and the inner light identified with him will be expressed throughout existence. And then, “the spirit of impurity will be removed from the earth.”

Addressed at Sinai

As soon as a Jewish baby is born, what G-d declared at Sinai applies to him. All souls of all generations, this baby’s soul included, were present at Sinai when G-d addressed them – in the first person: “I am the Lord thy G-d, Who brought you out from the Land of Egypt.” G-d made His declaration known, so that in this very year, when a baby boy or girl will be born, and someone will walk by and see this newborn infant lying in the stroller, it will strike him: here is a child whom G-d Himself told at Sinai, “I am the Lord thy G-d who took you out of Egypt!” ❖

“It would be desirable that you establish the custom of reciting Tehillim — at least a few kapitlach —in shul during the weekdays as well. Convey to the congregants the words that my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, related: that reciting Tehillim protects [a person] from many undesirable matters and draws down abundant good for the needs of every single individual.”

-- Lubavitcher Rebbe 16 Iyar, 5711

From Our Sages

A person to whom shall occur in the skin of his flesh... the plague of tzaraat (Leviticus 13:2)

The plague of tzaraat comes only as a punishment for lashon harah (evil talk).

-- (Midrash Rabbah; Talmud; Rashi)

Why is the metzora different from all other ritually impure persons in that the Torah said, "He shall dwell alone; outside the camp shall his habitation be"? With his gossip and slander, he separated a husband from his wife, a man from his neighbor; therefore said the Torah: "He shall dwell alone."

-- (Talmud, Erachin 16b)

The Psalmist compares slanderous talk to "Sharp arrows of the warrior, coals of brooms" (Psalms 120:4). All other weapons smite from close quarters, while the arrow smites from the distance. So is it with slander: it is spoken in Rome and kills in Syria. All other coals, when extinguished, are extinguished without and within; but coals of brooms are still burning within when they are extinguished without. So is it with words of slander: even after it seems that their effects have been put out, they continue to smolder within those who heard them. It once happened that a broom tree was set on fire and it burned eighteen months—winter, summer and winter.

-- (Midrash Rabbah)

Evil talk is like an arrow. A person who unsheathes a sword can regret his intention and return it to its sheath. But the arrow cannot be retrieved.

-- (Midrash Tehillim)

To what may the tongue be compared? To a dog tied with an iron chain and locked in a room within a room within a room, yet when he barks the entire populace is terrified of him. Imagine if he were loose outside! So too the tongue: it is secured behind the teeth and behind the lips, yet it does no end of damage. Imagine if it were outside!

-- (Yalkut Shimoni)

Evil talk kills three people: the speaker, the listener, and the one who is spoken of.

-- (Talmud, Erachin 15a)

The speaker obviously commits a grave sin by speaking negatively of his fellow. The listener, too, is a partner to this evil. But why is the one who is spoken of affected by their deed? Are his negative traits worsened by the fact that they are spoken of?

Indeed they are. A person may possess an evil trait or tendency, but his quintessential goodness, intrinsic to every soul, strives to control it, conquer it, and ultimately eradicate its negative expressions and redirect it as a positive force. But when this evil is spoken of, it is made that much more manifest and real. By speaking negatively of the person's trait or deed, the evil speakers are, in effect, defining it as such; with their words, they grant substance and validity to it.

But the same applies in the reverse: speaking favorably of another, accentuating his or her positive side, will help him realize himself in the manner that you have defined him.

-- (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

A man once came to see Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch and proceeded to portray himself as a villain of the worst sort. After describing at length his moral and spiritual deficiencies, he begged the Rebbe to help him overcome his evil character.

"Surely," said the Rebbe, "you know how grave is the sin of lashon harah, speaking evilly of a human being. Nowhere, to my knowledge, does it say that it is permissible to speak lashon harah about oneself." ❖

Haftarah for Rosh Chodesh in a Nutshell

Isaiah 66:1–24

This haftarah, read whenever Shabbat coincides with Rosh Chodesh, mentions how in the messianic era, every Shabbat and every Rosh Chodesh everyone will come to the Temple to worship G-d.

In this prophecy Isaiah tells us how G-d (who is too great to be fully contained in physical space, even in the Temple) pays attention to the humble G-d-fearing person, and rejects a person who does (or even intends) evil.

The prophet continues to foretell the fortune that will come upon Jerusalem (and the Jewish nation) in the time to come, and how even non-Jews will come to recognize G-d and assist in restoring the Jewish people to their land and their Temple. ❖

Pirkei Avos – Ethics of the Fathers

Pirkei Avos contains six chapters, and there are six Shabbats between Passover and Shavuot. Every Shabbat, customarily after the afternoon Minchah prayers, we study one chapter. After the Jews left Egypt, they embarked on a period of self-refinement and character improvement. This was critical in order that they be worthy of receiving the Torah on Shavuot. While counting the Omer, we too try to perfect our character. To assist in achieving this goal, we study Avos, the tractate which is devoted to piety, humility, kindness and ethics.

Many (including Chabad) continue this chapter-a-week regimen throughout the summer months, until Rosh Hashanah. The summer is generally a time when people are more active, tend to vacation, and all too often relax their moral and religious standards. The chapter-a-week of Avos is meant to keep us spiritually strong and healthy, and prepared to face the moral challenges the summer months present.

The Talmud teaches that the best vaccine against all illness is a healthy confidence in the Director of the Universe.

From all of us at Anshei-Lubavitch, we hope and pray for the safety and health of you and your loved ones. May the Almighty protect us all and send complete healing to those who need healing. And may our world very soon find the ultimate cure to all diseases with the coming of Moshiach, sooner than we can imagine.

Good Shabbos to all!

שבת שלום גוט שבת!

