

Tazria-Metzora in a Nutshell

(Leviticus 12:1–15:33)

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 (a naturally gathered pool of water) 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).

(continued next column)



Our Torah revolves around Chesed, kindness. But sometimes, true kindness is not giving in and allowing a person to continue without refinement. Instead, it involves compelling him to stop, break his previous pattern, and sense the hardship he has caused. This will provide the motivation for him to begin anew and develop the inner resources of love which he, like all men, possesses within his heart. – The Rebbe

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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 two 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. ❖

The plague of tzaraat comes only as a punishment for "lashon harah" (evil talk). -- (Midrash Rabbah; Talmud; Rashi)

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Halachic Zmanim
Shabbos, April 17, 2021
Daylight Savings Time
Earliest Tallis 5:14 AM
Latest Morning Shema 9:33 AM
Earliest Mincha (Gedola) ..1:31 PM
Plag Hamincha6:19 PM
Earliest Evening Shema8:08 PM

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Shabbos Schedule

Erev Shabbos – Apr 16 / Iyar 4

Candle Lighting 7:20 pm

Mincha 7:20 pm

Shabbos Day – Apr 17 / Iyar 5

Shacharis 10:00 am*

Torah Reading 10:50 am

Rabbi Drasha 11:15 am

Mincha 7:25 pm

Rabbi's Drasha 7:45 pm

Shabbos Ends 8:22 pm

**Latest morning Shema is now 9:33 AM. Be sure to recite the Shema at or before that time (even if at home).*

Weekday Schedule (not on a holiday):

Minyan

Shacharis (Mon-Fri) 6:15 am

Shacharis (Sunday) 9:00 am

Mincha (Sun-Thurs) 1:45 pm

Maariv (Sun-Thurs) 9:15 pm

Bulletin

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Chassidic Masters

Powerful Insights From the Rebbe

Compiled by Mordechai Rubin

1. A Transcendent Connection

In 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. ❖

2. A Dangerous Mission

Parshas 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. ❖

3. 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. When a person speaks undesirably, that indicates that he has undesirable character traits.

(Continued next page)

Powerful Insights From the Rebbe *(continued)*

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 tzaraas blemish 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. ❖

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Haftorah for Parshios Tazria-Metzora in a Nutshell

II Kings 7:3-20

This week's haftorah discusses the story of four men stricken by tzara'at, a skin ailment caused by sins — one of the main topics of this week's Torah reading.

Haftorah's backdrop: King Ben-Hadad of Aram besieged Samaria (the Northern Kingdom of Israel). The resulting famine was catastrophic, reducing many to cannibalism. King Jehoram of Israel wanted to execute the prophet Elisha, considering that his prayers could have prevented the entire tragedy. Elisha reassured the king: "So has G-d said, 'At this time tomorrow, a seah of fine flour will sell for [merely] a shekel, and two seahs of barley will sell for a shekel in the gate of Samaria.'" One of the king's officers present scoffed at the prophecy: "Behold, if G-d makes windows in the sky, will this thing come about?" Elisha responded, "Behold, you will see with your own eyes, but you shall not eat there from."

Now, four men suffering from tzara'at dwelled in quarantine outside the city. They too were hungry, victims of the famine. They decided to approach the enemy camp to beg for food. They arrived only to find a deserted camp. For "G-d had caused the Aramean camp to hear the sound of chariots and the sound of horses, the sound of a great army. And they said to one another, 'Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us.'" The entire enemy army fled, leaving behind their tents, horses, donkeys and provisions.

The four men went to the city and reported their findings to the gatekeepers who, in turn, informed King Jehoram. Though originally thinking that this was an ambush planned by the enemy, the king sent messengers who confirmed the miracle. The people swarmed out of the city and looted the enemy camp, thus breaking the famine and fulfilling Elisha's prophecy.

And the officer? The king placed him in charge of the city gates. He was trampled to death by the rampaging crowds — after seeing the fulfillment of the prophet's words... ❖

From Our Sages

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

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)

Good Shabbos to all!

שבת שלום גוט שבת!

