

Parshas Tazria-Metzora

in a Nutshell

(Leviticus 12:1–15:3)

Anshei Lubavitch Congregation

Rabbi Levi and Leah Neubort

Adult education:

Rabbi Avrohom and Rivky Bergstein

Youth Outreach:

Rabbi Eli and Ruty Steinhauser

Shabbos Schedule

Erev Shabbos – Apr 21 / Nisan 30 (Rosh Chodesh)

Candle Lighting.....7:24 pm

Mincha7:25 pm

Shabbos Day – Apr 22 / Iyar 1 (Rosh Chodesh)

Shacharis10:00 am*

Torah Reading11:00 am

Kiddush.....12:10 pm

Mincha7:25 pm

Pirkei Avos/Rabbi's Drasha ...7:45 pm

Shabbos Ends8:27 pm

*Latest morning Shema is now **9:29 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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The Parshah of Tazria continues 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 red or green in garments), 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.

(continued next column)



Our Rabbis explain the distinction between the Torah's prohibitions and its laws of impurity as follows: Prohibitions guard against evil that our minds and hearts can appreciate. The laws of impurity, by contrast, protect against a dimension of evil which we cannot comprehend.

-- The Rebbe

As outlined at the start of the portion of Metzora, 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.

When a home is afflicted with tzaraat, in a process lasting as long as nineteen days, a kohen determines if the house can be purified, or whether it must be demolished.

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 via immersion in a mikvah. ❖



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Halachic Zmanim

Shabbos, Apr 22, 2023
Daylight Savings Time

Earliest Tallis.....5:07 AM
Latest Morning Shema9:29 AM
Earliest Mincha (Gedola).. 1:30 PM
Plag Hamincha..... 6:22 PM
Earliest Evening Shema 8:13 PM

Chassidic Masters

The Runaway Soul

*Based on the teachings of
the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com*

The Torah sections of Tazria (Leviticus 12–13) and Metzora (Leviticus 14–15) discuss the laws of tzaraat, a spiritual illness. Its identifying mark is a white patch (or patches) appearing on the skin of a person, or a dark green or dark pink patch (or patches) on a cloth or leather garment or on the walls of a home.

Not every such patch indicates tzaraat. There are several secondary symptoms that determine whether the person (or house or garment) should be declared tamei (impure). In the human body, one of the signs of tzaraat is if the white patch subsequently causes (at least) two hairs in its area to turn white.

Regarding this law, there is a remarkable passage in the Talmud that recounts a debate taking place in the Academy of Heaven:

It was debated in the Academy of Heaven: If the white patch precedes the white hair, it is impure; if the white hair precedes the white patch, it is pure; but what if there is doubt (as to which came first)?

The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: It is pure.

The entire Academy of Heaven said: It is impure.

Said they: Who shall decide it for us? Rabbah bar Nachmeini. For Rabbah bar Nachmeini had declar-

ed: I am singular[ly knowledgeable] in the laws of tzaraat . . . They dispatched a messenger [to bring him to heaven] . . . Said [Rabbah]: Tahor! Tahor! (Pure, pure!). (Talmud, Bava Metzia 86a)

Flight From Self

To understand the meaning of this debate between the Holy One and the Academy of Heaven, and why a mortal human being was called upon to decide between them, we must first understand the nature of the tzaraat disease in general, and the significance of the white patch and the white hair in particular.

Chassidic teaching explains that the human soul is driven by two contrary forces: the drive to run or escape (ratzo), and the drive to settle (shov). Every time we are overcome by excitement, love, ambition or yearning, we are running, escaping the self to reach for something greater, more beautiful and perfect than it. Whenever we experience awe, humility, devotion or commitment, we are settling—affirming our connection to our existence, our place in the world and our mission in life. Ratzo drives us to climb a mountain, shov to build a home; ratzo to pray, shov to do a mitzvah.

In a spiritually healthy soul, the will vacillates between ratzo and shov like the rise and fall of a well-balanced pendulum, or the contraction and expansion of a smoothly beating heart. The constraints of our place in the world, the finiteness of our nature and body, the boundaries of our very being—these impel us to escape them, to strive for the unbounded and the infinite.

But our very escape brings us to a place from which we better appreciate the beauty and necessity of our existence. Thus the ratzo peaks and provokes a counteraction of shov, a return to oneself and one's place in the world.

Tzaraat is a condition in which this crucial balance is disrupted. The pendulum of the soul ascends in its ratzo arc, but fails to swing back in shov. The will escapes the self and fails to return, leaving behind a vacuum in which all sorts of undesirable elements can now take root, like weeds in an abandoned garden.

This is symbolized by the white patches and the white hairs that are the symptoms of tzaraat. A patch of white skin indicates that life and vitality have departed from (this part of) the body. Still, a white patch alone does not mean that the will's failure to settle has resulted in any negative developments in the character and behavior of the person. But when we see white hairs sprouting in the white patch—when we see dead things feeding on this dead place—we have a full-blown case of tzaraat.

On the other hand, the existence of white hairs, in and of themselves, do not indicate tzaraat. These might represent the ordinary baggage that we lug through life, the run-of-the mill negative traits and experiences that actually have the positive function of challenging us and provoking our finest talents and most potent energies.

(Continued next page)

It is only when the white hairs are caused by the white patch that something serious is afoot. Such a condition indicates that the person has run away with his escapist impulses so high and so far that he has completely abandoned his commitments to life and productivity, leaving behind a hollow and lifeless self that is a breeding ground for what is worst in human nature.

Hence the law that white hairs are a symptom of tzaraat only when the white patch precedes the white hair, indicating that this dead growth is the result of a certain area of the person's life having been drained of its vitality.

Two Visions of Man

What is the root cause of tzaraat? Ratzo is the escape from self, while shov is the return to self. It would therefore seem that tzaraat—ratzo without shov—derives from excessive selflessness.

In truth, however, the very opposite is the case. Ratzo is what the soul desires to do, while shov is what the soul is committed to do. Escapist behavior is the ultimate self-indulgence, while settling down is the ultimate submission. Tzaraat, then, derives from a lack of humility, from the failure to yield one's own will to the will of one's Creator.

This explains the aforementioned debate between the Holy One and the Academy of Heaven. The Kabbalists speak of two types of divine energy that nourish our existence: a divine light that "fills the worlds," entering within each creature to relate to its individual character; and a divine light that "encompasses the worlds"—a transcendent energy to which we can relate only as something mystical or spiritual—something that is outside of ourselves.

Of course, the divine essence is neither "filling" nor "encompassing." Ultimately, G-d's relationship with our existence cannot be defined as internal or external—it is neither and both, for the divine reality is beyond such distinctions and characterizations. But G-d desired to relate to us in a manner that is consistent with our reality. In our experience, there are things that are internal—things that we can understand and empathize with—and things that are encompassing, meaning that they are beyond the parameters of our understanding. So He, too, relates to us via these two channels, making Himself available to us via rational and apprehensible media (e.g., the laws of nature), as well as through mystical and spiritual vectors.

There are numerous differences between these two modes of divine energy and their effects upon us, discussed at length in the works of Kabbalah and Chassidism. One basic difference is that the divine light that "fills the worlds" gives credence to our sense of reality and selfhood; while from the perspective of the "encompassing" light, which transcends the parameters of our existence, our reality has no true validity, and our sense of self is little more than an illusion.

The "Academy of Heaven" is an allusion to the filling light, while "the Holy One" (kedushah, holiness, means "transcendence") connotes the "encompassing" light of G-d. So regarding the case in which there is doubt as to whether the white hair came before or after the white patch, the "Academy of Heaven" is inclined to declare this a case of tzaraat. For this is the divine perspective on man that recognizes man's selfishness. If tzaraat is a possibility, we must suspect that it has indeed occurred.

"The Holy One," however, sees man as an essentially selfless being. From the standpoint of the "encompassing" light, tzaraat is an anomaly. If there is clear and conclusive evidence that a person has indulged his escapist desires to such an extreme, the laws of tzaraat apply. But where there is doubt, this divine perspective is inclined to declare him pure.

The Verdict

Who might decide between these two divine visions? Only one who is in touch with the overriding vision, with the singular truth that transcends both the "filling" and the "encompassing" modes of divine relationship with reality.

Rabbah bar Nachmeini was "singular in the laws of tzaraat." He was a human being, but a human being who had so thoroughly devoted himself to G-d's Torah that he had uncovered its singular core—uncovered the divine vision of reality as it relates to the very essence of G-d rather than to either the "filling" or the "encompassing" elements of His light.

When Rabbah bar Nachmeini pondered the laws of human selfishness and selflessness, he saw man as G-d Himself sees him: as a creation utterly devoted to the will of its Creator. A creation who, even if touched by the possibility of a shov-deficiency malady, is invariably declared: Pure! Pure! ❖

From Our Sages – Tazria-Metzora

On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised (Leviticus 12:3)

Said Rabbi Yitzchak: The law of the man and the law of the beast are equal. The law of man is that "On the eighth day he shall be circumcised," and the law of the beast is, "From the eighth day onward it shall be accepted as a fire offering to G-d" (Leviticus 22:27).

(Midrash Rabbah)

The number seven represents the natural, and the number eight represents the holy. This is why circumcision on the eighth day takes precedence over Shabbat, the seventh day.

(Keli Yakar)

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 hara (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)

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)

Two birds (Leviticus 14:4)

Because the plague of tzaraat comes as a punishment for evil talk, which is an act of chatter, therefore birds are needed for his purification, because they chatter continuously with a twittering sound.

(Rashi; Talmud)



Haftorah for Rosh Chodesh in a nutshell

Isaiah 66:1–24

This haftorah, 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. ❖

Join us each
weekday morning
Mon-Fri as we delve into
the mysteries of
Chassidic concepts.
5:55 am,



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Good Shabbos to all!