



TorahActionLife

COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

METZORA
SHABBAT HAGADOL
 8th NISSAN 5776
 Shabbat begins: 19:43
 Shabbat ends: 20:49

This week's edition is sponsored
 Leiluy Nishmat Yedidya Ben
 Chorshit Z'L. Tihyeh Nishmato
 Betsurat Hachaim



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
DIRECTOR, TAL

Refinery!

This week's Torah portion, Metsora, discusses the laws of various forms of Tumah [spiritual defilement] that result from certain discolorations on the body, clothing, or one's home, as well as certain discharges.

Removing the impurity is not always a simple matter; it is a long process, and immediate success is not guaranteed.

Though these impurities are spiritual and not subject to the laws of nature, one cannot help but wonder why it is so difficult to remove them. As they are hardly visible to the human eye, why is this extensive effort needed to purify oneself?

Furthermore, Tsaraat was a miraculous occurrence. It only happened to the Bnei Yisrael and only whilst in Israel.

Surely if G-d Almighty cherishes us as *His* people there are more efficient and easier

ways to show it? Why such a tough punishment?

Imagine a person that supplies precious metals to his customers. These are not the typical gold, silver, or platinum; they are ultra-refined metals and far more valuable. His clients are mainly the US military who requires these metals for top-secret projects, NASA, and others involved in specialized research. A single item can run in excess of \$300,000 and only a few orders are needed each year to maintain profitability. The primary expense lies in refining the metal to such a degree that no amount of impurity can be detected.



Usually, this process is exacting but smooth. But one day, disaster strikes. One of his workers, a highly-trained employee, accidentally allowed the tip of one finger to come in contact with the two-inch strip of metal being prepared. This was an emergency. Immediately, the owner rented

out a special lab and hired an expert in removing all traces of impurity. The expert toiled for two weeks attempting to remove all traces of human contact. Special chemicals and equipment were required. The total bill for the repair was \$75,000.

Finally the owner was assured that the product was ready for delivery. Unwilling to risk shipping it via a third party, he hand-delivered the item to his client in Washington and returned home with the promise of payment as soon as the product cleared quality control. When two weeks passed and payment was still not forthcoming, he phoned his client to inquire about the delay. The response he received was, "We're sorry to inform you that we are still unable to forward payment. It seems that quality control detected a slight trace of human contamination and we're unsure whether this item will be acceptable for our purposes." It took another few weeks of agonizing before the client accepted the metal and forwarded payment.

If incidental human contact that lasted less than a single second required such superhuman intervention to be removed, it should come as no surprise to us that spiritual contamination, too, cannot so easily be removed. The Neshamah (Jewish soul) is a highly precious entity that must maintain an elevated degree of purity in order to achieve its pure goals.



Living with Mitzvos

1. What lies behind the name tzoraas?
2. What lies behind the name "Metzora"?
3. What do we have to be careful with when illustrating to others about tzoraas?
4. Where from Parshas Metzora do we find how we have to be careful about other peoples' possessions?
5. How many famous metzoroim in Jewish History can you think of?
6. In a leap year, (like 5776), Parshas Metzora falls as the week before Pesach. How is this significant?
7. What are the three levels of increasing purity to the "mechusar kepurim"?
8. Is tzoraas something beneficial for a person?

Answers On Page 3

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The small sin stains it, and only with an intensive cleansing process can it truly be removed.

Sometimes we think the sin is small, but it can leave everlasting contamination on our soul.

We can conceptualise this idea through the spiritual disease Tsarat.

At times we are faced with challenges and tend to speak of others in a derogatory way. Through a simple act of speech a person can build or destroy worlds.

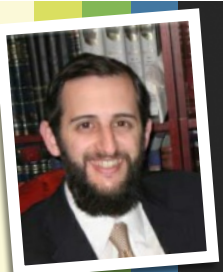
Our sages offer a fascinating insight from King David.

When King David (Tehilim 36:7) sang the praise of Hashem he said:

"Tzidkascha K'har'ray Kel" - Your righteousness (unbounded kindness) is like the mightiest of mountains.

"Mishpatecha K'thome Rabbah" - your judgment is like the vast deep waters".

Strangely, Rav Papa applies this verse to Tsaraat!



RABBI RAPHY GARSON
OHR YISRAEL
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LEARNING EXPERIENCE

*"Great minds discuss ideas.
Average minds discuss events.
Small minds discuss people."* -
Henry Thomas Buckle

Recently the Daily Mail ran an article headlined "Gossip is good for you: Women who chat regularly are happier and healthier". Scientists claim it makes you healthier. Research shows gossiping boosts levels of progesterone, a hormone which reduces anxiety and stress.

Headlines like this, coupled with a world where the media makes a living off gossip, makes the area of controlling our speech difficult for the Jew.

"Your righteousness is like the mightiest of mountains" –that refers to the one week period for man.

"Your judgment is like the vast deep waters" –that refers to the three week period for houses.

Rashi explains that it's a show of kindness that man is only left 'hanging' for a week.

The Maharsha explains that the kindness to man is that Hashem vents his judgments against the houses.

However, as Rabbi Isaac Sher asks, the entire world is saturated with Hashem's kindness and is scrutinized by Hashem's probing judgment. Is there no greater example of Hashem's kindness and judgment than leprosy!?

Rabbi Sher explains in the following manner. The Torah is revealing to us that we are the dearest, most beloved children of Hashem. At the same time, realize that the same love that He has for you, He also has for others.

The Rabbis teach that each time someone speaks badly of others, it is like killing three people.

1. THE PERSON SPEAKING - is being killed in the eyes of God. Hashem gave that person the gift of speech, and its being used to put others down.

But Lori Palatnik in her book *"Gossip -- Ten Pathways to Eliminate It From Your Life and Transform Your Soul,"* explains that on another level, the speaker is being killed in the eyes of all those who are listening.

When you have "the goods" on some-one and say to a group of people, "Did you hear why James broke up? *Everyone* leans in to hear the juicy gossip, and you become the centre of attention. At that moment you are crowned as the King! Yet, it only lasts a moment. As people will shy away from you if you are known as the type of person eager to speak badly of others. Others will not long come to you for advice or trust you.

Temporally you are popular but in the long run, you are lessened in everyone's eyes if you gossip. When you speak badly of others, it is like committing slow suicide.

2. THE PERSON YOU ARE SPEAKING ABOUT - The person who is the topic of discussion at hand is obviously being killed. Such people are going about their business innocently, oblivious to the fact that you are speaking about them and affecting the way others view them. Irreparable damage can be done with every word, whether the information is true or not.

It is because Hashem cherishes us so dear that we are commanded not to speak badly of anyone else.

Our parsha shows just how careful we must treat every child of Hashem.

Realize the lengths that the Father is going to in order to deal with the child that bad-mouthed His other children. To try to correct and guide that child. This clearly shows the love and confidence that the Father has in that child. The same love that Hashem has for others, He also has for him. Even after his having done what he did, the Father wants nothing more than for the son to return.

What an incredible gift for a person. Such "Tzidkascha"! Within the span of a week, to recognize and learn from the mistake he made and thereby be restored from death to life. In the place of the "Mishpatecha k'thome rabbah" for his belittling one of Hashem's beloved children, comes the "Tzidkascha k'har'ray el" with the realization that he too is a beloved child of Hashem.

We live this word with a *shem tov*. A person's reputation is a major part of their existence. Money can be earned back, but a reputation for honesty, integrity, and kindness, for being a good parent, or a kind person, while developed over years, can be wiped away instantly in a flash of evil speech.

In today's age of emails and facebook posting going viral - one click of a button can destroy lives!

The Chinese phrase 'tiu lien' describes what happens when a person's reputation is damaged. They translate into: 'Lose face' 'to suffer public disgrace', i.e. to be unable to show one's face in public .. "lost face," as if they no longer exist.

3. THE PERSON LISTENING - The Talmud says that the person who is damaged most of all is the one who is listening. Worse than gossiping is listening to gossip!

Why in the eyes of God is the passive listener the one who is doing the most harm?

The answer is profound - Of all three parties, the listener is the only one who has the ability to stop the evil speech in its tracks. The speaker has already made the decision to speak, the one being spoken about is clueless of the situation. The listener is the only one who has the power to change the course of the conversation, which is why God puts the onus on the listener.

She suggests that there are TEN PATHWAYS TO POSITIVE SPEECH, and we would be well advised to internalise these truths.

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1. **Speak No Evil.** Say only positive statements. Let words of kindness be on your tongue.

2. **Hear No Evil.** Refuse to listen to gossip, slander and other negative forms of speech.

3. **Don't Rationalize Destructive Speech.** Excuses like "But it's true" or "I'm only joking" or "I can tell my spouse anything" just don't cut it.

4. **See No Evil.** Judge people favourably, the way you would want them to judge you.

5. **Beware of Speaking Evil Without Saying an Evil Word.** Body language and even positive speech can bring tremendous destruction.

6. **Be Humble; Avoid Arrogance.** These will be your greatest weapons against destructive speech.

7. **Beware of Repeating Information.** Loose lips sink ships. Even positive information needs permission before being repeated.

8. **Honesty Really Is the Best Policy -- Most of the Time.** Be careful to always tell the truth, unless it will hurt others, break your own privacy or publicize your accomplishments.

9. **Learn to Say "I'm Sorry."** Everyone makes mistakes. If you've spoken badly about someone, clear it up immediately.

10. **Forgive.** If you have been wronged, let it go. Achieving forgiveness is not always easy. There is a famous story about the great sage the Rashash (Rabbi Shmuel Shtrashun, 19th century Vilna) who had a fund to lend money to poor people. One day while the rabbi was studying Talmud, the local tailor

came in to repay his loan of 10,000 rubles. The rabbi was so engrossed in his learning, that he stuck the money in a book and forgot about it.

A week later, he was reviewing his loan ledger and noticed that the 10,000 ruble loan was never paid. So he called the tailor and asked for it. "But I paid you last week," said the tailor.

"Okay, then where's your receipt?" said the rabbi, who truly had no recollection of being paid back.

"You were studying and I didn't want to disturb you," replied the tailor.

Soon enough, word got out that the tailor and the rabbi were involved in a financial dispute. "The nerve of this man to pit his word against the rabbi!" they said. The tailor's reputation was ruined, and he was shunned by the community.

About a year later, the rabbi was reviewing a section of Talmud and came across an envelope containing 10,000 rubles. Then he realized what had happened! He immediately called the tailor and apologized. "But your apology doesn't help me," he said sadly. "My reputation is ruined forever!"

"Don't worry," said the rabbi. "I'll make a public announcement in the synagogue, letting everyone know that it was I who made the mistake."

"That won't help," said the tailor. "They'll think you're just saying it because you feel sorry for me."

The rabbi thought long and hard until he came up with a solution. "You have a daughter and I have a son," he said. "Let's arrange for them to be married. In that way, everyone will be assured that you are fully trustworthy, for otherwise I would never agree to this match." And with that, the harm was repaired.

But it's not always so easy. One man spread a rumour about another. He later felt regret, and went to the rabbi to ask how to make amends. "Go to the store and buy a bag of seeds," said the rabbi, "then go to a big open field and scatter the seeds into the wind. Do so and report back to me in a week."

The man did as he was told, and came back the next week to find out what to do next. "Now," said the rabbi, "go back to the field and pick up all the seeds."

"But," the man protested, "those seeds have scattered far and wide! I'll never find them all. Many have even already taken root!"

"Exactly," explained the rabbi. "Now you understand. When we speak badly about another person, the effect is far and wide. And it is damage that can never be fully undone."

Speech has been compared to an arrow: once the words are released, like an arrow, they cannot be recalled, the harm they do cannot be stopped, and the harm they do cannot always be predicted, for words like arrows often go astray.

Parshaat Metzora is a timely reminder. Tzara'at was an entirely spiritual sickness - just as lashon hara, causes mainly intangible harm rather than physical. The spiritual nature of gossip is actually that which makes it such a great transgression, worthy of a such intense punishment.

The Beit Hamikdash was destroyed because of evil slander. Which is why the Chafetz Chaim explains that refraining from gossip is the single most effective way to reverse the damage and bring about the redemption!

Living with Mitzvos

1. The Targum of "tzaraas" is "sigurasa" that means "closed". This expresses that tzaraas comes and spiritually "closes off" a person.
2. The word "metzora" is a contraction of "moitz ra" meaning someone who brings out (of his mouth) evil (words) and this is punished with tzaraas.
3. Rava says that one must not demonstrate two things on one's own body - shechting and tzaraas as then there could be the danger of it actually happening to that person. (See Rashi to Gittin 57b).
4. Rashi (14:36) brings that before the Kohen would see and pronounce a tumah nega that appeared on the walls of a house, the owner should empty out all his possessions, so that his earthenware pots will not need to be broken.
5. In the Torah it is Miriam (and Aaron - see Gemora Shabbos 97a) and Moshe's hand (Shemos, 4:6). Paro used the babies blood for a bath to cure him being a metzora. Which other ones can you think of?
6. The Biur Halacha (428:4) brings that since we read about the breaking of earthenware pots (Metzora, 15:12) this is the same idea of hagolas keilim where we can remove chometz.
7. The "mehusar kepurim" would first count seven days and immerse himself in a mikva and then is permitted to eat maaser. Then by nightfall he can eat teruma and the next day after bringing his sacrifices he can eat kodshim.
8. Tzaraas is beneficial to a person. It is like a father disciplining his child where the punishment is out of love and comes to make the son repent from his evil actions. The tzaraas make a person repent and this is seen in the tzaraas disappearing and being allowed back into camp.

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STORIES OF OUR CHACHAMIM

Once the two Tzaddikim, R' Yaacov Yosef of Polnoye, the "Toldos", and Reb Nachman of Horodenka, were travelling to Mezhibuzh to spend Shabbos with their Rebbe, the Ba'al ShemTov. It was Friday, and they set out from Polnoye with their horse and wagon in time to arrive in Mezhibuzh by midday. They hadn't even travelled half the distance, when they saw ahead of them a broad regal carriage, trimmed with gold and ivory, and drawn by four white horses. Obviously it was the carriage of a wealthy and important individual. It was making its way along the road leisurely, as if Shabbos wasn't to be expected later in

the day. Passing was impossible at this time of year due to the mountainous snowdrifts piled high along the both sides of the road. They had no choice but to slow down and to follow along behind.

The "Toldos" became very agitated and began to bewail the situation, predicting that they would surely have to profane the Shabbos if they wanted to spend Shabbos in Mezhibuzh. Reb Nachman however, kept calm, reminding his companion that everything would be okay, that all that Hashem does is for the best. Moreover, as disciples of the Baal ShemTov, they had learned that Hashem guides everything that occurs in the world, and therefore their situation was certainly Hashem's hand at work.

Less than an hour passed before they had to come to a complete halt. Spread out on the road ahead as far as the eye could see was a company of Russian soldiers, and they were marching at pace that confirmed that their job this morning was to compact the mud of the road with their feet. Now the "Toldos" became doubly agitated, not knowing who to lash out against first. But Reb Nachman assured him that everything in Hashem's plans are for the ultimate good. The commander of the company, seeing the regal looking coach coming his way, obviously recognized that a personage of some importance was inside and gave orders for the entire company to thin out and make passage for the dignitary and his "entourage". In moments the two Tzaddikim, following close behind the carriage of the dignitary, were beyond the sea of soldiers, continuing on the road to Mezhibuzh.

Not more than a few more minutes passed until they came to a fork in the road. The dignitary in his coach went one direction, the Toldos and Reb Nachman the other. Regaining speed, they arrived in Mezhibuzh with ample time to prepare for Shabbos.



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