

THE WEISS EDITION

תזריע-מצורע

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Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

Lightpoints

לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת הרה"ג ישעיהו זושא

ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם

נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט התשפ"ב

תנצב"ה

תזריע

Tazria

יג:יד | 13:14

וּבַיּוֹם הַרְאֹת בּוֹ בֶּשֶׂר חַי יִטְמָא

But on the day that live flesh is seen in it, he shall become unclean.

The Mitzvos of a Sinful Jew

Before a person afflicted with *tzaraas* is deemed impure, he must be examined by a Kohen to determine if his lesions indeed bear the signs of impurity. Only certain days are suitable for this examination, which the Talmud derives from the Torah's choice of the words "*On the day* that live flesh is seen in it," rather than, "*When* live flesh is seen in it."¹ For example, says Rabbi Yehudah, the lesions of a bridegroom are not examined during the seven days of his wedding celebration, and no lesions are examined during holidays. We do not disrupt

1. Moed Katan 7b.

the joy of observing the holidays or fulfilling the mitzvah of marriage with an examination for possible impurity.

The Torah's barring of examination for *tzaraas* on these days is remarkable.

"*Tzaraas*," writes Maimonides,

is a sign and a wonder prevalent among the Jewish people to warn them against *lashon hara*, "undesirable speech." For when one speaks *lashon hara*, the walls of his house change color. If he repents, the house will become pure again. If, however, he persists in his wickedness until his house requires demolition, the leatherwear in his house upon which he sits and lies will change color.... If he persists in his wickedness until they require burning, the clothes he wears will change color.... If he persists in his wickedness until they require burning, his skin will change and develop *tzaraas*. He will be isolated and made known to the public until he ceases to engage in the talk of the wicked, namely mockery and *lashon hara*.²

Evidently, the *tzaraas*-affected person whose mitzvah observance the Torah is accommodating is a repeat offender of the horrible sin of *lashon hara*! Yet his examination is delayed in order to allow him to properly celebrate his marriage or the holidays.

This illustrates the power of a Jew's observance of a mitzvah, regardless of his spiritual state: the holiness of his mitzvah can prevail over and even suspend the impurity caused by his otherwise sinful behavior.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 37, pp. 37-41

2. Mishneh Torah, Hil. Tum'as Tzaraas 16:10.

 יג:מז | 13:36

כָּל יְמֵי אִשֶּׁר הִנְגַע בּוֹ... בְּדָד יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה מִוְשְׁבוֹ

All the days the lesion is upon him... he shall dwell in isolation; his dwelling is outside the camp.

Preventive Medicine

The impurity of a *metzora*, a person afflicted with *tzaraas*, is unusually severe in that a *metzora*'s mere entry into a home conveys impurity to the home's contents.

Rabbi Yehudah³ opines that this applies only when the *metzora* enters the house with permission, in which case the house is deemed “the *metzora*'s dwelling” and becomes impure. If the *metzora* enters without permission, however, Rabbi Yehudah says that “everything remains pure unless he stays long enough for a candle to be kindled.”

What is the reasoning behind this leniency? According to Rabbi Yehudah, the home is deemed “the *metzora*'s dwelling” only if the residents of the home approve of his entry. As the people of the home might be preoccupied with something else when the *metzora* first enters, Rabbi Yehudah allows for the time it would take to light a candle before deeming them compliant. What is the significance of the time it takes to light a candle? The Sages based this allowance on the lighting of the Shabbos candles, which one may not interrupt before the *berachah* has been recited, and therefore one could not tell the *metzora* to leave.⁴

That the lighting of Shabbos candles is the “standard”

3. See Mishnah, Nega'im 13:11; Tosefta, Nega'im 7:11.

4. See Tiferes Yisrael, Nega'im ad loc.

which determines how long the impurity of *tzaraas* can be kept at bay is a powerful indication of the importance of lighting Shabbos candles.

The purpose of the Shabbos candles, says the Talmud, is to promote *shalom bayis*, peace *in the home*. The light of the candles allows the people of the home to enjoy Shabbos by eliminating the discomfort caused by darkness and the discord it engenders. And just as the Shabbos candles save the home from physical distress, the light of this mitzvah also protects the home from any spiritual maladies—in this case, the impurity of *tzaraas*. Moreover, *tzaraas* is caused by *lashon hara*, derogatory speech, which “causes rifts between husband and wife or between man and his fellow.”⁵ It thus follows that the way to fend off the divisiveness and discord that is synonymous with *tzaraas* is the kindling of the Shabbos candles, which promote peace and harmony.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 17, pp. 141–143

5. Arachin 16a–b.

מצורע

Metzora

יד:לוו | 14:36

וְצִוָּה הַכֹּהֵן וּפָנּוּ אֶת הַבַּיִת בְּטָהֳרָם יָבֵא הַכֹּהֵן
לְרִאוֹת אֶת הַנֶּגַע וְלֹא יִטְמָא כָּל אֲשֶׁר בַּבַּיִת

The Kohen shall order that they clear out the house before the Kohen comes to look at the lesion, so that everything in the house should not become unclean.

Precious Possessions

When discolorations resembling *tzaraas* appear on the walls of a person's home, a Kohen is called to determine if these are signs of impurity or not. Until the Kohen declares otherwise, the home and everything inside of it remain pure. Therefore, before beginning his inspection, the Kohen instructs the owners of the home (and allows them time) to clear it of its contents.

The Mishnah⁶ notes that even if the contents of the house

6. Negaim 12:5, quoted in Rashi, Vayikra 14:36.

would become impure, the loss would be minimal, for clothing, as well as metal and wooden utensils, can easily be restored to their pure status by immersion in a *mikvah*. The Torah's concern was solely for earthenware vessels, which cannot be purified, so the damage would be permanent if they were to become impure.

To put things in perspective: The supernatural occurrence of *tzaraas* on a person's home is a result of his indulgence "in the talk of the wicked—i.e., mockery and *lashon hara*."⁷ Yet the Torah delays the examination of his house in order to save even the simplest of his personal possessions from being ruined.

This illustrates just how cherished every Jew is in the eyes of G-d, just by virtue of his inherent Jewishness. Despite the lowly level to which *metzora* has fallen, he and everything associated with him—even his most petty belongings!—forever remain G-d's top priority.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 37, pp. 37-41

7. Mishneh Torah, Hil. Tum'as Tzaraas 16:10.

 15:16 | טו:טז

וְרָחַץ בַּמַּיִם אֶת כָּל בְּשָׂרוֹ

He must immerse all his flesh in water.

Keeping Your Head Underwater

The Torah’s laws concerning ritual impurities and their means of purification are in the category of *chukim*—Divine decrees that transcend any reason or understanding. Nevertheless, writes Rambam, there is an important lesson in character development to be learned from one of the primary methods of ascending from ritual impurity: immersion in the waters of a *mikvah*.

Just as one who intends to be purified becomes pure as soon as he immerses himself... so too, one who sets his heart on purifying himself from the filth that besets men’s souls—namely, crooked ideals and negative traits—becomes clean as soon as he resolves in his heart to abandon those ideals, and immerses his soul in the waters of knowledge.⁸

But is this comparison accurate? In order for immersion in a physical *mikvah* to be effective, the entire body, including the head, must be submerged *beneath* the water’s surface.⁹ In the analogy, however, in which the spiritual purification occurs via “the waters of knowledge,” it would seem that the

8. Mishneh Torah, Hil. Mikvaos 11:12.

9. In fact, the Sages determined the amount of water necessary to constitute a mikvah based on this very requirement—“it must be sufficient water for one’s entire body to be covered therein” (Pesachim 109a).

objective should be to *unify* your mind with the knowledge, not to submerge your mind *beneath* it.

The Rambam's use of this analogy, however, is precise. By comparing spiritual purification and transformation to immersion in a *mikvah*, the Rambam is emphasizing that in order to purify yourself from the impurities of the soul, it is not enough to *fill* your mind with Torah wisdom; you must submerge and lower your head, as it were, so that the waters of Torah rise *above* you. Meaning that you must submit yourself entirely to the Torah's ideals, with a devotion that surpasses the extent of your understanding and intellect.

—*Igros Kodesh*, vol. 5, p. 90;
Toras Menachem, vol. 7, pp. 57–58



לעילוי נשמת
הרה"ת **אפרים ב"ר שמשון** ע"ה
קארלעבאך
נלב"ע ביום ה' אייר ה'תשמ"ה
תנצב"ה
•
נדפס ע"י בני משפחתו שיחיו

לעילוי נשמת
הרה"ת **נחום ב"ר יחזקאל** ע"ה
דורב
נלב"ע ו' אייר תשס"ה
תנצב"ה
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נדפס ע"י חתנו הרה"ת **מיכאל**
וזוגתו מרת **איטא חיי** שיחיו
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