

The Shul

at the Lubavitch Center

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April 25, 2020

Tazria–Metzora

1 Iyar, 5780

Adjusting to Holiness

Freedom from a mysterious illness is one of the topics of this week's Torah reading. A person who suffers from this condition is called a metzora. This is often translated as "leper," but in fact the metzora is not the leper of modern Africa or of Europe in the Middle Ages. Rather, he suffers from a condition (called tzaraat in Hebrew) which has a spiritual origin, relating to the special task of the Jew and to his or her special relationship with G-d.

One of the explanations given for this illness is that it is the result of speaking badly about other people—lashon hara. However, another explanation, found in the Kabbalah and chassidic teachings, is rather different. The condition of being a metzora is the product of an imbalance. In this it is similar to mild physical problems, such as acne, which might be caused by a hormone imbalance. This could be as a result of the natural process of maturation, such as during adolescence. In the case of the metzora, the imbalance is spiritual in nature.

In the physical condition of adolescent acne, the extra hormone which has caused the problem is actually something good. In time the body's system will adjust to it, balance will be restored and the problem will disappear.



The spiritual condition of the metzora is similar. The person is actually being confronted with an intense burst of holiness. This is really a good thing. The problem is that the person is not yet able to absorb this holiness properly into his system. As a result, he shows symptoms of the spiritual illness which renders him a metzora.

Hopefully, he will gradually adjust to the increased holiness and regain his spiritual balance. He achieves this through the process described in this week's Torah reading. This involves being seen by the kohen (priest), who spiritually helps the person absorb this intense holiness. There might also be a time of seclusion, as described in the haftorah, which tells of four tzaraat sufferers who were staying outside the city of Samaria, and who helped end the famine caused by a siege. Finally, the person regains his or her spiritual balance and returns to their normal activities.

In Temple times this was part of the pattern of Jewish life, precisely because of the great intensity of spiritual awareness while the Temple stood in Jerusalem. After it was destroyed, our senses became more dulled. Although each individual has a close personal relationship with G-d, and is given a tremendous task to achieve in order to reveal the divine in the world, a person no longer can become a metzora. If we get white patches on our skin, we go to a doctor, not to a kohen.

Despite this, at the heart of the Jewish people the concept of the metzora still exists. In a striking passage, the Talmud describes the Messiah as being a metzora. How can this be? Because the coming of the Messiah represents the fulfillment of the process of climbing to higher spiritual levels and the absorption of intense holiness. Using our earlier image, the "adolescent" Jewish people will suddenly mature, with smooth and healthy skin.

There will be no more wars between nations, and each person will become focused on awareness of the divine and observance of G-d's law: for the Jew, the 613 mitzvot; for all humanity, the seven Noahide laws. We will adjust to and advance in the intensity of holiness, reaching the goal where "the world will be filled with knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the seabed."

(by Tali Loewenthal from www.chabad.org)

Have A Good Look

"...he shall be brought to Aharon the Kohein, or to one of his sons the Kohanim" (13:2)

The Torah discusses a person who is afflicted with the spiritual malady known as "tzora'as". Although it is a spiritual affliction, tzora'as manifests itself physically, in the form of a skin disease. An individual suffering from this disease must be brought before a Kohein to be diagnosed. The Seforno questions why the Kohein is the only person empowered with the ability to proclaim the affected individual either tamei – impure or tahor – pure.

In all prior situations in Sefer Vayikra where a Kohein's services were required, the Torah stated that the service shall be performed by either a Kohein or the children of Aharon the Kohein. However, concerning tzora'as, the Torah states that the metzora shall be brought to either Aharon himself or one of his children. Why does the Torah personalize Aharon's involvement in this procedure?

Very often the manner in which a person validates his own standing in life and boosts his self-esteem is by focusing on the failures and shortcomings of others. The Mishna describes Aharon's nature as an "ohev shalom verodeif shalom" – one who loves and pursues harmony. Aharon had the ability to create harmony in relationships where there had previously been enmity. Only a person who is predisposed to focusing on the positive traits of others can have this ability. Seeing the positive in others is what allowed Aharon to present a person's former enemy as an individual worthy of his friendship.

It is this quality of Aharon which makes the Kohein worthy of diagnosing tzora'as. Only a person who searches for the positive in people is qualified to evaluate their flaws. A person whose predisposition is to search out the flaws of others, cannot render an objective judgement.

It is precisely for this reason that the Torah emphasizes Aharon personally. Unlike other services that any Kohein can perform by dint of his ancestral right, the ability to diagnose a metzora stems from his non-judgmental nature, to which all Kohanim are predisposed due to Aharon's perfection of this quality.

(by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Yahrzeits This Week:

Brocha Siff	3 Iyar - Sunday night / Monday	for father	Rav Aaron ben Rav Gedaliyahu
David Marks	3 Iyar - Sunday night / Monday	for father	Moshe ben Yitzchak
Helen London	7 Iyar - Thursday night / Friday	for father	Dovid ben Meyer

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DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday — Rosh Chodesh Iyar, 4/24 —30 Nisan

Shacharit — 6:40
 Candles — 7:36 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'aiv — 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat — Rosh Chodesh Iyar, 4/25— 1 Iyar

Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:37 a.m.
 Beitzah Gemora Shiur — 6:25 p.m.
 Minchah — 7:25 p.m.
 Ma'ariv — 8:38 p.m.

Sunday, 4/26— 2 Iyar

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:45 p.m.

Monday, 4/27— 3 Iyar

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Mincha / Ma'ariv — 7:45 p.m.

Tuesday, 4/28— 4 Iyar

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Mincha / Ma'ariv — 7:45 p.m.

Wednesday, 4/29— 5 Iyar

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Mincha / Ma'ariv — 7:45 p.m.

Thursday, 4/30 — 6 Iyar

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Mincha / Ma'ariv — 7:45 p.m.

Friday, 5/1 — 7 Iyar

Shacharit — 7:00
 Candles — 7:43 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'aiv — 7:00 p.m.

CANCELED