

CHEVRAH TORAH...5777

With HEART in MIND

MUSSAR Teaching to Transform the Text & Our Lives

Tazria/Metsora—Leviticus 13:1-17

LO MASIG LEEBO B'TALMUDO—Not Being Satisfied w/One's Learning

...Key KOSHI...

NECHAMA:

“WHY should Torah select this particular disease? Is the Torah a medical treatise?!

WHY would leprosy be singled out for these special regulations and treatment?”

WHAT does this dis-ease teach us about the state of our souls today?



P'SHAT...Studying Torah—Encountering The Word—The Will—The ONE

The truly wise individual is not one who has achieved wisdom but a *talmid chacham*—a wise student...one who is constantly learning—including by observing and reflecting on what can be learned from other people.

13:1] The Eternal One spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:
 2] When a person has on the skin of the body a welling, a rash, or a discoloration, and it develops into a scaly affection on the skin of the body, it shall be reported to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons, the priests. 3] The priest shall examine the affection on the skin of the body: if hair in the affected patch has turned white and the affection appears to be deeper than the skin of the body, it is a leprous affection; when the priest sees it, he shall pronounce the person impure. 4] But if it is a white discoloration on the skin of the body which does not appear to be deeper than the skin and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall isolate the affected person for seven days. 5] On the seventh day the priest shall conduct an examination, and if the affection has remained unchanged in color and the disease has not spread on the skin, the priest shall isolate that person for another seven days. 6] On the seventh day the priest shall again conduct an examination: if the affection has faded and has not spread on the skin, the priest shall pronounce the person pure. It is a rash; after washing those clothes, that person shall be pure. 7] But if the rash should spread on the skin after the person has been seen by the priest and pronounced pure, that person shall again report to the priest. 8] And if the priest sees that the rash has spread on

13:1 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן
 לֵאמֹר: ² אִדָּם כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת
 אוֹסֵפֶחֶת אוֹ בַהֲרַת וְהָיָה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ לִנְגַע
 צָרְעַת וְהוּבֵא אֶל־אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אוֹ אֶל־אֶחָד
 מִבְּנָיו הַכֹּהֲנִים: ³ וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַנֶּגַע
 בְּעוֹר־הַבָּשָׂר וְשַׁעַר בְּנִגַע הַפֶּדָּא לָבָן וּמְרָאָה
 הַנֶּגַע עֲמֹק מֵעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ נִגַע צָרְעַת הוּא
 וְרָאָהוּ הַכֹּהֵן וְטִמָּא אֹתוֹ: ⁴ וְאִם־בַּהֲרַת
 לָבָנָה הוּא בְעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ וְעֵמֶק אֵין־מְרָאָה מִן־
 הָעוֹר וְשַׁעֲרָה לֹא־הַפֶּדָּא לָבָן וְהִסְגִּיר הַכֹּהֵן
 אֶת־הַנֶּגַע שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: ⁵ וְרָאָהוּ הַכֹּהֵן בַּיּוֹם
 הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְהִנֵּה הַנֶּגַע עֲמֵד בְּעֵלְיוֹ לֹא־פָשָׁה
 הַנֶּגַע בְּעוֹר וְהִסְגִּירוֹ הַכֹּהֵן שִׁבְעַת יָמִים
 שְׁנִית: ⁶ [שְׁנִי] וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֹתוֹ בַּיּוֹם
 הַשְּׁבִיעִי שְׁנִית וְהִנֵּה כָּהָה הַנֶּגַע וְלֹא־פָשָׁה
 הַנֶּגַע בְּעוֹר וְטִהְרוֹ הַכֹּהֵן מִסַּפְּחַת הוּא וְכִבֵּס
 בְּגָדָיו וְטִהַר: ⁷ וְאִם־פָּשָׁה תִפְשָׁה הַמִּסַּפְּחַת
 בְּעוֹר אַחֲרָי הִרְאֵתוֹ אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן לְטִהְרָתוֹ
 וְנִרְאָה שְׁנִית אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן: ⁸ וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה
 פָּשְׂתָה הַמִּסַּפְּחַת בְּעוֹר וְטִמָּאוֹ הַכֹּהֵן צָרְעַת
 הוּא: ⁹ נִגַע צָרְעַת כִּי תִהְיֶה בְּאָדָם

the skin, the priest shall pronounce that person impure; it is leprosy.

9] When a person has a scaly affection, it shall be reported to the priest. 10] If the priest finds on the skin a white swelling which has turned some hair white, with a patch of undischored flesh in the swelling, 11] it is chronic leprosy on the skin of the body, and the priest shall pronounce the person impure; being impure, that person need not be isolated. 12] If the eruption spreads out over the skin so that it covers all the skin of the affected person from head to foot, wherever the priest can see—13] if the priest sees that the eruption has covered the whole body—he shall pronounce as pure the affected person, who is pure from having turned all white. 14] But as soon as undischored flesh appears in it, that person shall be impure; 15] when the priest sees the undischored flesh, he shall pronounce the person impure; it is leprosy. 16] But if the undischored flesh again turns white, that person shall come to the priest, 17] and the priest shall conduct an examination: if the affection has turned white, the priest shall pronounce as pure the affected person, who is then pure.

18] When an inflammation appears on the skin of one's body and it heals, 19] and a white swelling or a white discoloration streaked with red develops where the inflammation was, that person shall report to the priest. 20] If the priest finds that it appears lower than the rest of the skin and that the hair in it has turned white, the priest shall pronounce the person impure; it is a leprosy affection that has broken out in the inflammation. 21] But if the priest finds that there is no white hair in it and it is not lower than the rest of the skin, and it is faded, the priest shall isolate that person for seven days. 22] If it should spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce the person impure; it is an affection. 23] But if the discoloration remains stationary, not having spread, it is the scar of the inflammation: the priest shall pronounce that person pure.

וְהוּבֵא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן : ¹⁰ וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה
שָׂאת לְבִנְהָ בְעוֹר וְהָיָא הַפֶּכֶה שְׂעָר לָבָן
וּמַחֲיַת בְּשָׂר חַי בְּשֵׂאת : ¹¹ צָרַעַת נוֹשֶׁנֶת
הוּא בְעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ וְטִמְאֹו הַכֹּהֵן לֹא יִסְגְּרוּ
כִּי טִמְאָ הוּא : ¹² וְאִם־פָּרוּחַ תִּפְרָח הַצָּרַעַת
בְּעוֹר וְכִסְתָּהּ הַצָּרַעַת אֶת כָּל־עוֹר הַנֶּגַע
מֵרֵאשׁוֹ וְעַד־רִגְלָיו לְכָל־מְרֵאָה עֵינֵי הַכֹּהֵן :
¹³ וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה כִסְתָּהּ הַצָּרַעַת אֶת־כָּל־
בְּשָׂרוֹ וְטָהַר אֶת־הַנֶּגַע כָּלֹו הַפֶּדָּ לָבָן טָהוֹר
הוּא : ¹⁴ וּבָלוֹם הִרְאֹוֹת בּוֹ בְּשָׂר חַי וְטִמְאָ :
¹⁵ וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַבְּשָׂר הַחַי וְטִמְאֹו
הַבְּשָׂר הַחַי טִמְאָ הוּא צָרַעַת הוּא : ¹⁶ אִוֹ כִּי
יָשׁוּב הַבְּשָׂר הַחַי וְנִהְפָּד לְלָבָן וּבָא אֶל־
הַכֹּהֵן : ¹⁷ וְרָאָהֹו הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה נִהְפָּד הַנֶּגַע
לְלָבָן וְטָהַר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַנֶּגַע טָהוֹר הוּא : פ
[שְׁלִישִׁי] ¹⁸ וּבְשָׂר כִּי־יִהְיֶה בּוֹ־בְעוֹר שְׁחִין
וְנִרְפָּא : ¹⁹ וְהָיָה בַמָּקוֹם הַשְּׁחִין שָׂאת לְבִנְהָ
אִוֹ בְּהִרַת לְבִנְהָ אֲדַמְדָּמַת וְנִרְאָה אֶל־
הַכֹּהֵן : ²⁰ וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה מֵרֵאָה שְׁפַל מִן־
הָעוֹר וְשִׁעָרָהּ הַפֶּדָּ לָבָן וְטִמְאֹו הַכֹּהֵן נֶגַע־
צָרַעַת הוּא בְּשְׁחִין פָּרַחַה : ²¹ וְאִם | יִרְאֶנָּה
הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה אִיוֹ־בָהּ שְׂעָר לָבָן וְשִׁפְלָה אֵינָנָה
מִן־הָעוֹר וְהָיָא כְּהָה וְהִסְגִּירוּ הַכֹּהֵן שְׁבַעַת
יָמִים : ²² וְאִם־פָּשָׂה תִפְשָׂה בְעוֹר וְטִמְאָ
הַכֹּהֵן אֲתוֹ נֶגַע הוּא : ²³ וְאִם־תַּחֲתִיָּהּ תַעֲמֹד
הַבְּהִרַת לֹא פָשְׂתָה צָרַבַת הַשְּׁחִין הוּא
וְטָהַרוּ הַכֹּהֵן :

REMEZ...*Acquiring Torah*...When Torah penetrates our entire being, not just our *seichel/intellect*, this is the acquisition of Torah. —R' Avi Fertig

- V.2 *When any person has on the skin of his body a swelling, a rash, a discoloration, and it develops into a Tza'ra-at/leprosy... he shall be brought to Aaron the kohen or to one of his sons...*
RASHI... It is a Scriptural Decree: There is neither purity nor impurity except by word of the Kohen.
MISHNA NEGA'IM... R' Chanina teaches: The colors of the leprosy-signs are 16. R' Dosa ben Harkinas says: The colors of the leprosy-signs are 36. R' Akavya ben M'Halaleel says: They are 72...R' Judah says: The colors of the leprosy-signs should be applied leniently, not stringently...Let a German be judged leniently according to the standard of his own skin; let an Ethiopian be judged leniently according to the color of his own skin...A priest may examine any leprosy-sign save his own. R' Meir adds: His own, and those of his kin...[Mishnah Nega'im, 1:4, 2:5]
- V.3 *The Kohen shall look at the affliction on the skin of his flesh: if hair in the affliction has turned white, And it appears to be deeper than the skin of his flesh---it is Tza'ra-at/leprosy. The kohen shall see it & pronounce him unclean.*
TALMUD... “on the skin of his flesh” This teaches us that the kohen must look both at the affected area and the surrounding skin---all as one...Then he sees, “*hafach lavan---it has turned white*” and not red, and not green, and not black, and not yellow... [Mishnah Nega'im, 4:10]
ALTER... “when the Kohen sees it...” The verb “*Ra-AH—see*” has the obvious force of “*examine*”...But these regulations for skin conditions reflect an ambiguous conception of disease that wavers between pathology and ritual impurity...Thus the quarantining of the afflicted person might involve fear of contagion or might be chiefly an avoidance of ritual contamination...
MESHECH CHOCHMA... “when the Kohen sees HIM” The Kohen is to examine the whole person, not alone the diseased limb. He is to see what is whole and healthy about the person, not only what is afflicted.
- V.4-5 *The Kohen shall isolate the person for 7 days. On the 7th day, the Kohen shall see/examine him...*
ABARVANEL... I've seen this interpreted that he is imprisoned so that friends and relatives cannot bring him remedies to remove the symptoms rather than nature taking its course.
S'FORNO... Since this disease is a kind of moral punishment, the period of isolation is designed to prompt the afflicted to look inside and repent... “*Then the Kohen shall quarantine it for another 7 days...*” The Kohen examines the *metsora* that he should examine himself, urging him to pray. And the Kohen prays for him too.
- V.9 *The affliction of Tza'ra-at---Leprosy, when it is in a person, he shall be brought to the kohen...*
TORAT KOHANIM... “*ki tih'yeh B'Adam---when it is*” To include even the most severe, one who comes with white over his entire body in need of healing from his total uncleanness.
SIFTEI KOHEN... The affliction is called *S'eYT*---related to the term “*Hit'NaS'uT, to feel oneself lofty*”... So the Tza'ra-at is identified as “*b'adam—in a person*” when it makes him feel superior...Thus an outward symptom reveals that there is an inner rot which festers beneath the surface.
- V.10-11 *If the kohen looks and here finds on the skin a white swelling which has turned some hair white, with a patch of undisclored flesh in the swelling, it is recurring leprosy on the skin...the Kohen shall pronounce him unclean...*
RASHI...Notwithstanding the surface appearance of improving health, there is an old festering infection just underneath, so the white remains: *He is tamei—unclean.*
ETZ HAYIM... “undisclored”—That is, exposed flesh. When healing occurs, white skin grows over the infected area. Recurrence of the infection is indicated by the reappearance of raw flesh. No need for quarantine; acute Tzara'at has recurred.
- V.12-13 *If the Tza'ra-at erupts on the skin, spreading so that it covers all the skin of the afflicted one from head to foot, wherever the eyes of the kohen can see---then the kohen shall look, and if the Tza'ra-at has covered all of his flesh, he shall pronounce him pure/clean, for he has turned all white; he is clean.*
R' S.R. HIRSCH...This law refutes the ‘contagion theory’ of Tza'ra-at. For if the purpose of the quarantine is to prevent the spread of a feared infection, then an affliction which covers the entire body should be the most dangerous of all!
TUR...The spread to the entire body shows that the affliction is superficial, since it does not penetrate deeply. Once it completely covers, it is on the verge of healing, and will soon darken and disappear.
R' ELIE MUNK...If the white area covers as much as 99% of the body, the person is declared contaminated. But as soon as the affliction reaches its climax, engulfing him, it becomes pure. This teaching is consistent with the idea that God's salvation may feel closest to a person only when his ordeal reaches its greatest intensity, when he is on the edge. It is then that the turning point in human destiny occurs...So too, taught our Sages, in the spiritual realm... “*Only when a generation is totally worthy or totally guilty will the Redeemer appear.*” [B.Talmud, Sanhedrin 98a]

D'RASH...*Helping the Heart feel what the Mind understands ...*

"Rabbi Elazar Ha'Kapar taught: Envy, desire and the pursuit of honor put a person out of this world." [P.Avot, 4:21]

ALAN MORINIS...

...When a person is so thoroughly satisfied with his or her accomplishments, it is a very short step to arrogance...We are cautioned to be vigilant against corrupt feelings stealing into our hearts as the twisted outcome of our efforts...This is a real hazard on the spiritual path.

...When we pursue a spiritual life, and especially when we experience the changes that are the fruit of our efforts, we need to be on guard for feelings of self-praise and condescension toward others that can come to roost within...

... Rabbi Israel Salanter understood the problem from the roots up:

Do not be surprised that a person with all his faults and smallness of stature nevertheless considers himself greater than his contemporaries. For the more a person loves being praised and admired, the more will his desire for praise grow, and cover up his deficiencies, to the point that he no longer senses them. [With heart in Mind, pgs. 191-193]



...Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto tells us that as humans we are all “placed between wholeness and deficiency, with the ability to earn wholeness...Man’s inclinations are balanced between good and evil, and he is not compelled toward either of them...” In every decision and choice you make, there will be an option that represents the way of your higher self—your soul. What you eat, how you speak, how much you sleep...and a hundred daily decisions are the battleground...

...The soul is not static; you are on a journey...We can sometimes fall prey to the illusion that life has us in a stationary pattern...It isn't true. We are constantly in motion...The Talmud assures: One who comes to purify himself will be assisted from on High...Higher states, spiritual breakthroughs, the movement from brokenness toward wholeness are gifts...These acts of grace are more likely when you take the steps to see inside and act to help yourself along the way...The learning you do along the way of the soul etches it's message on the flesh of your heart. It becomes who you are... [Everyday Holiness, pgs. 291-292]

SOD...*Helping the soul-light shine...Practice focuses on recalibrating the soul-traits that are obstructing your soul's light from shining into your l*

R'KERRY OLITZKY ...

Tzara'at. Leprosy. Rotting skin. Wounds that ooze endlessly with stagnant pus. Body odor that knows no cosmetic cover-up. Excruciating pain that tests the endurance of even the most faithful among us. A real disease that afflicts real people—causing real suffering, real disfigurement, and real death. It would be easier not to talk about it, to avoid it, to pretend that it does not exist—as did some of the early Reformers—and instead together probe the depths of meaning elsewhere in the Torah text. But there is no point mincing words, no reason to try to turn the Torah into a kinder, gentler sort of document that radiates only Divine light and sheds no darkness, a sacred text that elevates the spirit while avoiding the existential realities of human existence. But the Torah is much of this world—the world of the physical body—as it is of the other world—the world of spirit and soul.

Parashat Tazria/Metzora may be about leprosy to the ancient folk, but Tazria/Metzora is not about sickness or disease of the body. It is not about folk medicine and healing. It is not even about ritual impurity and priestly cleansing. Metzora is merely a metaphor. It is about the disease of the soul; a disease to which we are all susceptible; a disease that is so powerful that it can consume the body and the spirit in one fell swoop. Yes, our Torah portion is all about diseased and broken souls. But what is frightening about Metzora is not the wounds that require constant attention that are described in sickening detail here and elsewhere. No, what is frightening about our portion is the way Metzora, in its bleak and dismal darkness, finds a way to reflect the dark side of the self and make it even more so.

Through the genius of the Biblical author—who points out through the body what she wants to teach us about the soul—we seem to learn just a little bit more about ourselves. Listen carefully to what she is teaching us. This week's Torah portion reminds us that with all the good we have to offer, everything commendable that we have discovered about ourselves, there remains a dark side, a defect, a misalignment of character. When we forget, that's when the disease erupts. Perhaps it is *davka* because of the haughtiness of self-aggrandizement, a belief that we have achieved a certain level of moral perfection, *tzara'at* reminds us that we are human, imperfect, prone to moral error. Like so many other bodily diseases that we have learned, through the discoveries of modern medical science, live inside of us all the time, threatening to play havoc with our bodies when we least expect it, *tzara'at*, is always there, ever ready to erupt and take control. And when these *tzara'at* gushes forth, its lesions may adhere to our bodies, but it also casts a shadow over our souls. And only the bright light of Torah, which has the power to illuminate our lives, can diminish the darkness of our souls.

According to the Torah text, a white leprous swelling of the skin is a symptom of ritual impurity, or uncleanness. However, when the skin on the entire body turns white, after the disease has run its course, and the body has responded, this whiteness is then declared a mark of cleanness. And we learn from the text that the priest is the only one capable of healing a person of his or her leprosy. But what is taking place? The priest does not actually heal the person of leprosy. And the lesions do not disappear in their entirety; they leave their mark on the individual in the form of a white powder. And so by analyzing this unusual process of ritual cleansing, we come to understand that through this process the priest takes on the leprosy himself. By transferring the burden from the one who is afflicted, he leaves only the trace reminder of the disease with the afflicted person. The priest—that's you and me in our particular understanding of the text—carries that burden with and joins it with the burden of others and of his own broken soul. By doing so, he is able to help people experience their lives as a blessing once again. At the same time, we realize that although we, like the leper, are unclean and broken, through real healing, we have the power to cleanse one another. When we recognize this profound spiritual truth, then we—as modern priests—can begin the process of healing of self and others.

CONSIDER

WHAT is the state of your spiritual dis-ease?

HOW will you identify/deal with the 'tzara-at' of your life?

HOW do you help your-self/soul...others...to heal?