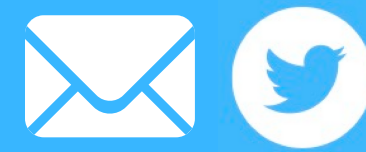




PARSHA PAGES



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Created by Adele Nemirov

TAZRIA METZORA - תזריע מצורע

WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS WEEK'S PARSHA?

Parshas Tazria begins with Hashem teaching Moshe about the laws of a woman who has just given birth. For a baby boy, the baby is circumcised on the 8th day, and the mother is in a state of ritual impurity for 40 days, and for a baby girl, 80 days. After this time period, she brings an offering to **Mishkan** or **Beit HaMikdash**, the Holy Temple. Next, Hashem teaches Moshe and Aharon about **Tzara'as**, a unique skin condition that makes an individual ritually impure. When someone suspects that he or she has Tzara'as, they are examined by a Cohen. If the Cohen suspects Tzara'as, the individual isolates for 7 days and is reexamined. The Torah describes how the infection appears on different parts of the body. If the Cohen diagnoses the individual with Tzara'as, he or she must dwell outside of the camp of the Jewish people until the infection disappears. **Clothes** that are infected with Tzara'as must be shown to a Cohen. An infected piece of clothing must be isolated for 7 days, and if the spot has spread, the clothing must be burnt. If it has not spread, the clothing is isolated for another 7 days, and then the infected area is torn out. **Parshas Metzora** describes the cleansing process for a **Metzora**, someone who has Tzara'as. After the isolation period, the Metzora is visited by a Cohen who evaluates if the infection has gone. If so, the Cohen ritually slaughters a bird, dips a second bird in its blood, sprinkles the blood on the Metzora and sets the live bird free. The individual washes their clothes, shaves their head, bathes, and is allowed to re-enter the camp, but must remain outside of his or her tent for 7 days. After 7 days, the Metzora again shaves, bathes and washes their clothes, and brings an **offering**, based on their means, which includes a **guilt-offering** and oil that is used to purify the Metzora. Once the Jews arrive in Israel, a **building** can also be infected with Tzara'as. The owner approaches a Cohen to inform him, and the Cohen tells the owner to remove his or her belongings from the house, and then comes to examine it. If he suspects Tzara'as, the building is closed for 7 days. If the infection spreads, the infected stones and plaster are removed and placed outside of the city and replaced with new stones and plaster. If the infection reappears, the house is torn down, and the materials are brought outside of the city. Anyone who was in the house while it was closed is impure until evening, and anyone who eats or sleeps in the house must wash their clothes. If the infection doesn't spread, the Cohen cleanses the house with the same process as cleansing a Metzora. A man who has a seminal emission or a woman who has her period is considered ritually unclean, as is anything that he or she sits on, and any person who touches him or her or their bedding, which becomes unclean for that day, and must bathe or be washed. The man bathes that day, and after 7 days, bathes again and brings an offering, consisting of a **sin-offering** and a **burnt-offering**. The woman waits 7 days after she finishes bleeding, and then brings the same offering. Hashem says that a ritually impure person cannot come to the **Mishkan** or **Beit HaMikdash**, or they risk death.

THINK ABOUT IT: *The concept of having a status of ritual impurity might seem foreign to us in the modern world. How can we frame this concept in a way that helps us relate to it?*

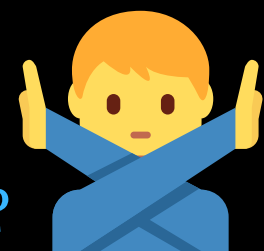


WHAT IS TZARA'AS?

Tzara'as is a skin-condition described in the Torah that hasn't been seen or treated by a medical professional in hundreds of years, which might make you ask: **what exactly is Tzara'as?** And **why does it happen?** Our Rabbis (**Gemara Archin 16a**) teach us that **Tzara'as** was a reaction to **improper behavior**, and there there are **seven** things that caused Tzara'as: malicious speech, or **lashon hara**, bloodshed, an oath taken in vain, forbidden sexual relations, arrogance, theft, and stinginess. **Rabbi Shimson Refael Hirsch** (1808-1888, Germany) explains that Tzara'as was treated by a Cohen, and not a doctor or healer, because it was a **spiritual affliction**, not a physical illness. **Ramban** (1194-1270, Spain and Israel) teaches that Tzara'as can appear on clothing and houses as well as skin because it is a sign of Hashem **withdrawing** His presence from the world because of improper behavior.

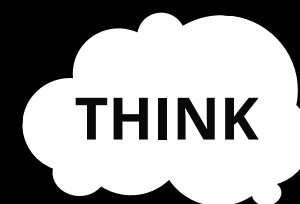
נגע צרעת כי תהיה
באדם והובא אל
הכהן: (ויקרא יג:ט)
When a person has a
mark of (suspected)
Tzara'as it shall be
reported to the priest.

DISCUSS: *Do you think that an immediate Divine reaction to sin, like Tzara'as, is a good thing? Why? Why not? Someone who has Tzara'as must isolate outside of the community. What can we learn from that process?*



A DIVINE TIME-OUT

There are several places in Jewish Law that render a person ritually impure and require a him or her to **separate** from the community or from the **Mishkan** or **Beit HaMikdash**. For example: an individual with **Tzara'as**, a woman who has just had a baby, and someone who comes in contact with a dead body. You might be wondering: **what do all of these things have in common?** **Rabbi Menachem Leibtag** (Present, Israel) explains that a status of ritual impurity requires the person to take a divine-commanded **time-out** from normal life. Whether it be recovering from childbirth, processing death, or considering the sin that caused **Tzara'as**, the separation is commanded to give the individual space to reflect and heal before returning to society. A comparable commandment is the process that an individual undergoes after losing a loved one, such as sitting **shiva** for 7 days and reciting **Kaddish** for 11 months.



Have you ever experienced a major event without being able to reflect? How did that feel?

