



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

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## News This Week

### מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Azaryoh and Chedva Gardner on the birth of a boy.  
Mazel Tov to Adam and Sorela Bookman on the occasion of Shaya's Bar Mitzvah next week.

### Chaim Aruchim

We wish Chaim Aruchim to Johnny Berkovitz who has Yahrzeit for his father on Thursday, 10th Iyyar.

## Sounds of Solitude

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

There is a fascinating paradox that relates to the laws of tzora'as, the spiritual malady, a skin discoloration that affects those who gossip. On one hand, only a kohen can either pronounce a state of impurity or purity. On the other hand, the afflicted man is in control of his own destiny. The Gemarah tells us that if, for example, the afflicted man removes the negah, whether it is hair or skin, then he is no longer tamei. So this affliction, which is purely spiritual in nature, a heavenly exhortation to repent from nattering ways, is basically toothless. If the man wills it, he can refuse to go to the kohen and not be declared tamei. And if he so desires, he can even remove the negah before anyone declares its potency.

Another amazing dimension is applicable after the afflicted man is declared tamei. The Torah tells us "that he is sent out of the camp, where he sits in solitude" (Leviticus 13:46).

His departure from the camp of Israelites is surely not due to a contagious nature of the negah. After all, if that were the case, he would be sent away way even before the kohen's declaration of tumah.

So why send the man to confinement where no one will monitor his reaction to the negah on his being, a place where he could remove the negah, or adulterate its appearance? Why not have him locked in a cell under the supervision of a guard who would insure the integrity of the purification process?

In the early 1900s, a simple religious Russian Jew decided that he could no longer stand the Czar's persecution. He would leave Russia to join his son who had settled in Houston, Texas, some twenty years earlier. The son, who had totally assimilated and was a successful oilman, was thrown into a panic. "Of course, you are welcome, Pa," he cabled, "I will arrange a visa, your tickets and fares. But you must realize that I have a wonderful reputation here as an oil man. When you arrive, you must adapt to American culture or I will be destroyed.

Upon arrival at the train station, the old man, dressed in his long coat and up-brimmed hat, was whisked to a haberdashery, where he was fitted with the latest style fedora and a modern-cut suit. But still, his father looked too Jewish.

"Pa it's not enough. I'll take you to the barber."

The first thing that came off was the beard. The son looked on and said, "it's not enough Pa. The peyos, they'll have to go." The barber cut off the right peya. While the son looked on proudly, his pa was becoming a real American. Then the second. And the old man began to weep.

"Why are you crying, Papa?" the son asked incredulously.

The father, resigned to his fate, simply answered. "I am crying because we lost the Alamo!"

My grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, in his sefer Emes L'Yaakov, explains the concept of sitting in solitude, reflecting in unadulterated honesty about one's true feelings.

There comes a time in one's life where the message from heaven can only be

without the influence of others and the will to impress them. How often do we act because of the influence of friends and relatives? How often do we gossip due to peer pressure? We must make choices in life. Honest choices. We have to do what the neshama wants us to do. And we can't alter our true emotion due to social, peer, or monetary pressures.

Henny Youngman, a classic comedian, used to talk about his wonderful doctor. "If you can't afford the operation," he would say, "he'll touch up the x-ray!"

The afflicted man is sent away from anyone who may have influenced him to act in his blathering ways. He can reflect on his true feeling and his honest perceptions of life and his role. But this decision must be made when he is impervious to anyone who was normally in his sphere. And he has a choice. He can pull out the hair, he can scrape off the negah. He can fool the kohen. He can fool his family and fool his friends. But when he returns to the camp, the same man sans negah, the only one fooled is himself.

## Tons of Love

Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

And the person with Tzaraas, in whom there is the lesion, his garments shall be torn, his head shall be unshorn, he shall cover himself down to his mustache and call out, "Unclean! Unclean!"

All the days the lesion is upon him, he shall remain unclean. He is unclean; he shall dwell isolated; his dwelling shall be outside the camp. (Vayikra 13:45-46)

These are very harsh conditions for the Metzora to endure. Yes, he spoke Loshon Hora and he was the cause that people became separated from each other and this is his just repayment "Mida Kneget Mida" – measure for measure. However, isolation is severe. The toughest punishment a prisoner can receive is solitary confinement. That breaks a person more than physical privation. To be cut off from society is a huge dose of Din – Judgment!

Even if the goal is to get him to recognize "the evil of his ways" and to mend his behavior, it may just drive him further away in the end. I know too many examples of people who reacted negatively to punishment, not realizing it was tough love, and as a result they ran even further away. Therefore, it may be important for the Metzora, the isolated one, sitting alone in quarantine, to understand that he finds himself in a setting that is not a purely punitive.

This I heard from one of my holy Rebbeim, Rabbi Ezriel Tauber ztl. Every situation in life has an admixture of DIN- Judgment, Rachamim – Mercy, and Chessed – Kindliness! How so!? Chaim just finished an inspired Davening and now he's driving to work on the West Side Highway. He's on his way to an important early morning meeting. Traffic is flowing swimmingly and the

## Davening Times

### פרשת תזריע מצורע

1st Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	6.25pm
- Candle Lighting	Not before 6.45pm
2nd Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.10pm
- Candle Lighting	7.17pm - 7.35pm
Shacharis - Hashkomo	7.30am
2nd Shacharis	9.30am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.36am
Mincha	2.00pm / 6.00pm / 8.03pm
Motzei Shabbos	9.08pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

weather is fair and it looks like all systems are humming perfectly. Chaim is listening to a Daf HaYomi Shiur and life could not be better.

Suddenly, flub flub flub, his right front tire blows out and he puts on his yellow blinkers as he crawls in the right lane looking for a place to pull over. By the time he reaches the rare cut out area which qualifies for a shoulder on the road he has terribly torn up the tire and maybe ruined the rim too. He calls roadside service, AAA or Oy Oy Oy, and they tell him that help is on the way and will be there in 45 minutes. Now he will miss that important meeting. His boss will be upset.

Now let's examine this situation using these three lenses of Din, Rachamim, and Chessed. The obvious Din is that he out the price of tire and he has some repairing to do at work. What had he done to deserve this!? I don't think anyone can say for sure. Maybe something terrible! Maybe nothing at all!

The Rachamim in this scene is that perhaps this was just a slap on the wrist in comparison to what he truly deserved. No one can be certain, but Boruch HASHEM it was his tire and not his car or him that was damaged or lost. He found a rare shoulder spot on the road. He is sitting in a safe place. He has road side service. He's been spared, because he has a spare. He has only to wait 45 minutes and all will be well again very soon.

The Chessed in the scenario is he's alive. He can breathe. At that very time his wife is doing carpool and taking their two healthy children to school. He has time to listen more carefully to his Daf HaYomi Shiur. This list is actually endless.

Employing these three ways of seeing each situation can free the person from obsessing on a "woe is me" and "why me" attitude and allow them to see that what looks like a punishment is really a hug. The Talmud says, "Push away with the left and draw close with the right!" The standard understanding is that the left is weaker than the right and the pushing away is only to draw even closer. I heard an alternative explanation that if you do both the pushing away and the drawing close at the same time you turn the person, and that slightly new perspective can help them understand that in the tough is tons of love.

## **A Message in White** **Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)**

We are struck by the Torah's treatment of nega'm, the discolorations of people, garments and dwellings that our parshah deals with at great length. We are baffled by the complexity of its details. We begin our attempt to decipher its message with the easiest step: understanding that we are not looking at the Torah's prescription for a natural occurrence.

Many outside of our circles took the simple and completely unsubstantiated route of seeing – especially in regard to tzara'as on human skin – an ancient approach to a medical issue. Numerous clues in our parsha belie this possibility. Not the least of which is the role of the kohain, without whose pronouncement the afflicted person continues business as usual. If this section was the reaction of the ancients to a dread and uncomprehended disease, the metzora ought to have been confined or banished from the community immediately. His cure can come later; the first order of business should be to minimize the risks to others.

Tzara'as, however, is not leprosy[2]. The classic progress of the true medical affliction, turning the skin white from head to toe, is not called tzora'as but shechin Mitzrayim, and is halachically excluded from the treatment in our parshah.

What, then, are we to make of it? The Torah later cautions that we take heed about the plague of tzora'as, and not forget what Hashem did to Miriam[3]. We could ask for no better assistance in breaking the code of our parshah.

Miriam had spoken lashon hora about Moshe. Implicitly, she had also over-rated herself relative to Moshe. For these sins – decidedly social sins- she is banished from the community, and must wait outside its limits for seven days. When Moshe entreats Hashem on her behalf, He responds that if a human father had displayed strong disapproval of his daughter (disapproval that bordered on contempt) in a dramatic manner, would she not be shamed into retreating from his presence for a week?

The message is clear. Tzora'as is a dramatic message of disapproval sent by our Divine Father in response to social sins, and meant to induce shame in the transgressor, who must then in solitude consider his unworthiness to remain in the company of the community. He deserves to be banished from the special community of men in which Hashem's Presence takes its place in the mishkan which is its fulcrum of activity and ideological focal point.

Chazal take full note of this. They tell us that tzora'as is a Divine reaction to lashon hora. Disparaging, belittling, and unflattering speech drives wedges between people, and unravels the cohesion of a community. He who causes separation between man and wife, between friend and friend, must be separated from the community.

As part of his atonement, he offers two birds, animals the tweet and chatter as he did. Furthermore, Chazal see in nega'im in general a connection to a

host of social sins, including spilling of blood, perjury, pride, and selfishness that keeps a person indifferent to the needs of others[4]. A slightly different formulation[5] speaks not of the sin, but of the parts of the body that commit the sin: a lying tongue, proud eyes, heart pondering violence, etc. Chazal are saying that all of Man's organs and limbs are meant to do good, help others, seek good and justice. By perverting their purpose, they deserve to be stricken.

The details begin to fall into place. Tzora'as strikes a person's skin, the body's chief interface with the external environment. Skin connects him with the world outside himself, senses the impact of what is apart from him, and bears its immediate impact in place of the internal organs. When he does not properly feel the most important parts of the external world, i.e. the needs of his fellow citizens, he is made to feel the touch of Hashem upon him.

Some part of his skin turns white. This may indicate that he has "died," in a manner of speaking. He has become numb, in part, to his closeness to G-d, which is what ordinarily animates and sensitizes him. Alternatively, the white color may indicate the ashen complexion of deep, penetrating shame. The one to "out" him, to make his deficiency public, is the kohain, acting as the surrogate for the mishkan he represents, and its message of all that is proper and holy that we are expected to do when we ask Hashem to dwell amongst us. (The nega is clearly meant to be a message shared by others. To be considered tzora'as, it must lodge on an area of the skin that is plain and visible, but not in a fold of skin, apparent only to the afflicted.) The kohain does nothing less than pronounce him, in the name of the mikdosh, unworthy to live within the company of men. The Torah treats the metzora severely. No other person who is tamei is fully ejected from the borders of the community.

The progress of the plague is often complicated. A nega may be tentative, sending him into isolation for a test period. Sometimes, it is definitively declared by the kohain. In both cases, he spends his time in isolation, mulling over what has gone wrong in his relations to others. The point of the "test" weeks may very well be to see if he responds to the message by mending his ways. (This may also explain the curious halacha that a kohain does not pronounce a nega tamei during a holiday or the week of wedding celebration. Coupled with his receiving a warning sign in the undiagnosed patch of discoloration on his body, the frequent and positive social interactions available at such times may be enough to stir him to repent.)

Three symptoms force a declaration of certain, definitive tumah: a spreading of the discoloration, a hair in its midst that turns white, and the appearance of fresh, unblemished skin in the midst of the nega. The first is intuitive; the other two require some explanation.

Hair, in a sense, performs the opposite function of skin. If skin is meant to sense and respond, hair is made to protect against sensation. It shields the body from casual stimulation of the skin underneath. A white discoloration symbolizes the death of the person's capacity to respond positively to others. A hair turning white signifies further deterioration. Even his defenses against negative influences upon him have withered and suffered.

The emergence of healthy flesh may indicate that all his efforts at improvement have proved insufficient. He has generated pure, healthy flesh – but it has not been enough to overcome the dead flesh. His good remains imprisoned within his deficiency.

Curiously, if the discoloration erupts over the entire body of the metzora, he finds temporary respite from his tumah. Yet, if the same were to occur without any prior discoloration at all, he becomes a definitive metzora! The point may be that a person cannot be expected to heal himself unless the memory of his old, undamaged self is fresh in his mind. His association with the community and with the mikdosh in its midst must still be a working influence upon him. If a message of all-enveloping tumah and failure is delivered to him within a state of prior tumah, he is powerless to make the internal changes that he needs. He must wait for a partial remission of his symptoms, at which point he is returned to his isolation!

The nega of a small child would seem to undermine this entire approach. Any Divine message about faulty behavior should only be given to someone morally responsible for his actions. Minors would seem to be excluded. The nega, however, may be intended for the parents, not the child. While entrusted to their care, the child completely depends upon them. This message may be the most effective of all. It tells the parents that if they cannot motivate themselves to change for their own sakes, they should have compassion on their child, and realize how their shortcomings will damage his future development.

We now stand in awe before the beauty of this parshah. No human court will or can address these flaws in character and in relating to others. Only G-d can do that. When the Jewish people live on their land and in the presence of His mikdosh, His love for even the sinner moves Him to reach out and touch him – and to describe in advance how that message will come.