

THE CHABAD WEEKLY

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❖ PARSHAT TAZRIA

This week's Torah portion, Tazria, speaks of one of the most serious forms of ritual impurity, the disease of tzara'at. A person thus afflicted (called a "metzora") was sent outside the Jewish camp and lived in total seclusion until he was cured. The only authority qualified to determine if an individual had tzara'at and was required to leave the camp was a kohen (priest), as it says, "When the disease of tzara'at is in a man, he shall be brought to the priest...and the priest shall see him and pronounce him impure...for all the days that he bears the affliction...he is impure..." Even the greatest Torah authority was not permitted to establish the existence of tzara'at if he was not a priest. The only opinion that bore weight was that of the kohen, and his decision was accepted as law.

Why couldn't a Torah authority establish the existence of tzara'at? Why did this have to be done by a kohen? The answer is revealed when we consider the punishment incurred by the metzora. A metzora was required to undergo a particularly harsh form of punishment: banishment and isolation from the rest of society. The metzora, forced to leave the camp of Israel, was seemingly cut off from the entire Jewish people. By nature, kohanim are merciful people. Their hearts are filled with love for their fellow Jews, as reflected in the Priestly Blessing: "...Who has sanctified us with His mitzvot and commanded us to bless His people Israel with love." The Torah recognizes that a priest will not rush to judge his fellow Jew impure. The priest is reluctant to pronounce a person a metzora, thereby subjecting him to severe punishment. The kohen will go to great lengths in order to spare another person suffering. The Torah relies on a kohen's judgment as it knows he will make the determination of tzara'at only when there is no other choice. For this reason the ability to establish tzara'at, and the accompanying responsibility for condemning a fellow Jew to social isolation, is given solely to him.

This contains a lesson for all of us: We must never deem a person worthy of censure and shun his company, even if his behavior appears defective. No flaw is so great that it warrants rejection of our fellow Jew. Instead, the first thing we must do is examine our own conduct and motivation. Are we seeing another Jew's defects out of love for him, or are we merely recognizing character defects in others because they exist within ourselves? For it is only once we are sure that we are acting out of genuine love that we may approach another person and speak to him about correcting his behavior. (From: L'Chaim 5757 #464, Adapted by Maayan Chai from Likutei Sichot, vol. 27)

"When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male." (12:2)

QUESTION: In the Gemara (Niddah 30b) Rabbi Simlai describes the way the unborn child looks in the mother's womb states, "There is a lit candle on its head by means of which he sees from one end of the world to the other." What is the significance of this description?

ANSWER: The words of Rabbi Simlai can be explained as an allegory. It is incumbent upon each and every individual to enhance the world with his presence. It is expected that he illuminate the universe with his Torah and mitzvot. Before birth, Hashem gives him the opportunity to see the world in its entirety and G-d declares, "You have the potential to master the entire world, providing that you influence it and not permit it to influence you." (From: Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky)

❖ PRE-PESACH

When it comes to getting the house ready for Passover, teamwork is essential to do the job right and every member of the family can and should participate. If you consider the task of removing all traces of chametz (leaven) from your possession as an adventure, it makes it more fun and

rewarding. And when you're having fun, everyone wants to join in. Consider cleaning according to the ABC's:

Attack the attic.

But remember that you only have to go through places that accumulate chametz during the year. Beware of bedrooms, books and even briefcases. Even if your policy is no food in bedrooms, crumbs wind up there. Chametz also wedges itself in books if you eat while you read.

Clear the cabinets, chairs, car and closets of chametz. This is a perfect time to have the carpets cleaned, too.

Deal with the drawers, and desks.

Eliminate your ego. What does ego have to do with Passover and chametz?

To make a long Chasidic teaching short, chametz contains leaven and rises. Matza doesn't have any leaven and therefore remains flat. As we rid our physical surroundings of leaven, we should try to eradicate ourselves of our pompous, haughty and self-righteous aspects, those parts of our personality which grow and rise.

Face the freezer and all the furniture. And, if you've contemplated cleaning your upholstery, now is the time.

Go for the garage, garbage cans and wastebaskets.

Hide the high chair. Unless you still need to use it. If so, thoroughly scrub it, and cover the trays.

Ignore the idea to quit. You're nearly half-way through!

Joyously de-chametz the jig-saw puzzles and all other toys.

It's easy not to be happy when you have 300 pieces of Lego to clean -- all with Cheerios mashed in. But think of all the quiet playtime these toys encourage. And think of all the joy that the children (or grandchildren) give you when you're playing with them!

Keep at the kitchen and kitchen appliances. The kitchen is major so ask a rabbi or rebbetzin how to make yours kosher for Passover.

Lather the luggage. Go through your suitcases and carry-on bags.

Make-over the medicine cabinet. Many non-prescription medicines contain chametz. If you must take medicine during Passover, consult your local rabbi (probably a nice guy who would love to hear from you).

Nurture your needs. Take a break. Sit down with a drink and relax for a few minutes. While you're relaxing peruse one of the many interesting Haggadas available today and you'll be preparing yourself mentally and spiritually for the holiday, as well.

Overtake your office. Unless you're taking the whole holiday off, you have to clean your office, as well.

Peruse your pockets, purse, and porch for chametz.

Quarantine your quarterback. Or, for that matter, anyone who goes running through your ready-for-Passover rooms with chametz.

Ready the refrigerator. Use up all those open jars and then clean the fridge well.

Sell your chametz. Jewish law prohibits one from owning chametz on Passover. Through your rabbi or local Chabad Center you can "sell" your chametz for the duration of the holiday.

Tackle the telephone. It's probably sticky if you talk while you're eating.

Unclutter the utility room.

Validate your vacuum cleaner by throwing out or emptying the bag after you vacuumed the last chametz.

Wash the wall where all the cake batter splatters when you bake.

Xerox your favorite recipes which can be used for Passover since your cookbooks are probably so full of chametz that they are unsalvageable.

Yield chametz from your yacht. Although, if you have a yacht you're probably not doing most of the cleaning yourself anyway.

Zee, it wasn't so bad after all! (From: L'Chaim 5756 #411)

Among my father's regular Torah-study sessions: A *parsha* of Chumash with Rashi daily; reciting Tanach by heart - a chapter each of Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim; a chapter of Mishnayot; a regular session in profound study of Gemara - two folio pages weekly, another in rapid study of Gemara - three pages daily; a session of study of Jerusalem Talmud; a regular period for Codes, but not daily. During the course of the year he would conclude the entire Midrash Raba, "borrowing" from the long *sedrot* and "repaying" on the shorter ones. (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM NISAN 3)

Every day, at every moment, must be an exodus from the self. If you're not leaving Egypt, you're already back there.

- Bringing Heaven Down to Earth