



PARSHIOT TAZRIA / METZORAH

The Torah reading cycle continues this week with TWO PARSHIOT, containing the laws of physical and spiritual purity. These portions focus upon tzora'at, a physical affliction for transgressing the laws of speech, and the purification process. Tzora'as progressively afflicts home, clothes and skin unless one cleans up his speech.

There are two types of speech transgressions. One is Loshon Hora (literally "evil tongue"), making a derogatory or damaging statement about someone even though you are speaking the truth. The other is Rechilut (literally "tale bearing"), telling someone the negative things another person said about him or did against him.

The Torah states regarding someone who is afflicted with this spiritual disease, "and (the one afflicted with tzora'at) shall call out: 'Unclean, Unclean' (Leviticus 13:45)." The afflicted person, as he moves about, calls this out about himself as a warning to others (which also serves as an embarrassment to himself).

A commentary here writes that one can also read the verse in another manner. It could be that the afflicted person is calling out ABOUT other people, "Unclean! Unclean!" That is a person who finds fault with others is really projecting his own faults and imperfections onto others. As the Sages say in the Talmud (tractate of Kiddushin, page 70a), "those who try to invalidate others do so with their own blemishes."

One means of finding out your own faults is to see what faults you tend to notice in others. When one points a finger at someone, three fingers point back at himself!

It's a scary thought to think about ourselves, but if we're honest, we may often find that it's the truth!

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Cohen