

# Dvar Torah for Parshat Tazria Metzora

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Based on *Likutey Moharan* I, Lesson #1

“If a person has a blotch, discoloration or spot on the skin of his body...he shall be brought to Aharon or one of his descendants, who are *kohanim*. The *kohen* shall examine the mark...” (Leviticus 13:1–3).

We will read later (Leviticus 16:4) that on Yom Kippur, for the Yom Kippur parts of the service, the *kohen gadol* (high priest) wore only white garments. In this week’s Torah reading we learn that there are three degrees of white that are *tamei* (impure). How can it be that on the holiest day of the year, when the holiest Jew enters the holiest place on earth, he

wears white—a universal sign of cleanliness and purity—and the appearance of white blotches on a person’s skin announces that he is *tamei* and may even have to be quarantined and sent somewhere beyond the boundaries of holiness (ibid. vv. 4, 46)?

The answer is in our mind. Rebbe Nachman teaches (*Likutey Moharan* I, 29) that the more refined one’s speech is, the “whiter” (cleaner) one’s clothing is. (Refined speech is speech that enhances the honor of God [e.g., praising Him, His people and His Torah], and does not denigrate God’s honor by being used to lie, slander, curse, or the like.) This whiteness, he writes, stems from the mind. The less our thinking is clouded by personal interests, the more clearly we can see the truth that surrounds us.

Sometimes, however, our thinking is rationalization. We allow our desire to express desire to hijack our thinking so that we don’t understand that what looks like a mitzvah, may really be our own evil inclination dressed in white. How can we prevent this?

A *kohen*, who is trained to recognize shades and degrees of white, needs to be summoned when a white blotch appears on the skin. He can tell and determine if it is pure white or impure white. To get our minds “white” we need to invest honest effort in our Torah study *and* review our thinking with a *talmid chakham*, a Torah scholar whose behavior lives up to his knowledge. When we humble ourselves by submitting our reasoning to review and our selves to scrutiny, even (or perhaps especially) when we feel certain that we are right, we take a big step towards correcting our thinking and making our souls pure white. Amen.

*agutn Shabbos!*

*Shabbat Shalom!*