

Upon closer observation, certain aspects of a leper's behavior are similar to a mourner. The leper's clothes are torn, his hair disheveled, he does not shave or groom himself. Like a mourner, he sits alone, בַּד. Both feel rejected by Gd, distant from Him in their time of despair. Where the mourner cries for the relative s/he lost, the leper cries for himself. Where people approach the mourner and attempt to console him for his loss, the leper is cut off from everyone else and sits alone. Where the mourner is open to consolation from others, there is no one to visit and console the leper. Paradoxically, the leper himself is his only visitor as he cries out טָמֵא טָמֵא to remind himself of his predicament and in recognition that he alone is responsible for his situation. Yet despite his reclusiveness, he requires the Priest and others to help extricate himself from his state of impurity and return to the community. But initially all shun him. As Rashi says, since he separated others by speaking improperly, לִשְׁוֹן הָרַע, therefore he is separated from his loved ones and others.

What is the connection between the leper and the dedication of the Tabernacle? Why does the Torah introduce the laws of the leper so close to the story of the dedication of the Tabernacle? Why does the Torah insist that the leper be brought in front of Aaron or his sons, וְהֵבִיא אֶל הַכֹּהֵן? Why not simply say that the leper should approach the Priest on his own or the Priest of that time should visit the leper, similar to the way the Torah says that we must approach the Judge and Priest of "your time" (פֶּרֶשֶׁת שׁוֹפְטִים)? Is the sacrifice brought by the leper unique?

The latter portion of Parshat Tzav describes the sanctification process for Aaron and his children. After they were carefully washed, Moshe placed blood of the slaughtered ram on their ear, right thumb and right big toe. 3 animals were set aside for sacrifices. While Rashi says these 3 animals were the ones brought by Aaron as described in פֶּרֶשֶׁת שְׁמִינִי, it would appear from the verses that they were indeed brought first by Moses as part of the process of sanctifying the Priests and a second time by Aaron. Why was the same process repeated again in פֶּרֶשֶׁת שְׁמִינִי? Because we must appreciate what the Tabernacle represented. A people, only recently freed from slavery, having been steeped in idolatry was now preparing to approach and dwell with Gd כְּבִיכּוֹל. Whereas idolaters often debase themselves as part of their worship ceremony, the concept of קְדוּשָׁה, separation and recognition of greatness of Gd, is the polar opposite. The process of repeatedly assembling the Tabernacle and the careful preparation of Aaron and his children demonstrated to the people that the greater the sanctity, the greater the preparation.

The Priests needed to prepare themselves as well. Rambam says that the various preparations and processes performed before the erection of the Tabernacle and even during the periods the Temple stood were necessary to demonstrate its uniqueness and maintain the glory and awe of the institution in the minds of the people. Incense, קְטוֹרֶת, was brought to impart a fragrant smell to the Temple in order that it not smell awful, as some simple slaughterhouse, due to all the sacrifices that were brought. Only through

the appreciation of the grandeur of the Temple, and Gd who resides within it, could the people merit a special relationship with Gd.

At the time of building and erecting the Tabernacle, Aaron and his children were tainted by sin. Aaron was deeply responsible for the construction of the golden calf. Chazal say that his children were also culpable or liable for his sin. How could such a person serve in the Temple, his every act serving as a reminder of the sin he committed and the blemish he brought upon the people? How could he atone and be worthy to represent the people before Gd in the Tabernacle?

Moses brought 3 sacrifices, a sin offering, חטאת, a guilt offering, אשם, and a sacrifice that was completely consumed, עולה, on behalf of Aaron and his children. He washed them and girded them with their special garments. He dabbed blood on their ear, thumb and toe, they had to remain outside the tent for 7 days. All these are reminiscent of the process the leper undergoes when he terminates his leprosy. Aaron and his children, were like lepers who were distant from Gd because of their actions. They needed to be brought back close to Gd. One does not go from an outcast from all camps to entering the Tabernacle in a single day. It requires patience and time and remorse over past deeds. The view of self is inversely proportional to the level of sanctity to be attained. When Aaron expressed angst over being unworthy and trepidation at bringing the same animal he sinned with as a sacrifice, Moses told him that is exactly why he must do it: to show that he has cast off the sin and has fully repented.

The leper's haughtiness led him to speak לשון הרע, which Chazal say is equivalent to all 3 cardinal sins at once. He must be brought down, to the point that no one will associate with him in order that he can rebuild himself, but only after coming to grips with the full extent of how far he has fallen. He must rend his clothes, grow his hair – acts of mourning for he mourns himself. For only through the demise of the wicked, טמא, person who was here before can a new, טהור, person emerge. Nadav and Avihu refused to appreciate the greatness of Gd and their own relative insignificance. They pushed themselves close to the Divine Countenance when the correct action was to view themselves as outsiders, מחוץ למחנה, until Gd allowed them to come close and pronounced them טהור. They still had to wait 7 days מחוץ למחנה before they could approach the door of אהל מועד. They were not yet worthy to enter. Nadav and Avihu forfeit their lives in an attempt to subvert the will of Gd. They should have viewed themselves as repentant lepers who were being allowed back in to the community. Instead they remained haughty individuals.

This is the symmetry and connection between פרשת שמייני and פרשיות תזריע מצורע. The Torah mentions the important role played by Aaron and his children regarding the leper, because, they above all others knew how to empathize with the leper. They were rejected because of sin, yet they returned to Gd. They had to sit outside the tent for seven days

and undergo a purification process similar to the leper. They also required help from Moses to reach purity. The children of Aaron can give the leper hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel. You can't do it all yourself, but if you make the effort to repent, others will help you return from ostracism.

The ceremony of the 8 day מלואים period was meant as a blueprint. מסכת יומא says that the verse לעשות לכם לכהן אדמה ד' refers to the Red Heifer and the Yom Kippur service. If we analyze the service performed on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of מלואים, we see that Aaron brought a sacrifice for himself and for the other Priests and for the people. This was the precursor to the עבודת יום כפור where similar sacrifices were brought. Just like with the מלואים and the leper, there was a 7 day period between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur (excluding the day of Rosh HaShana itself and the intervening Sabbath) where the Kohen Gadol would prepare himself for his awesome task. He could not jump right into עבודת יום כפור. The common denominator is that anyone wishing to come close to Gd must follow a process through which they come to appreciate the greatness of Gd and their own relative insignificance. Only then can they come close to Gd. Perhaps that is why the Torah tells us Gd commanded Aaron אחר מות, after the death of his sons reminding us again of the connection between their death and their casual, haughty approach that was incompatible with the great sanctity of the Tabernacle. According to Rambam, the 50 day period from the exodus to receiving the Torah at Sinai was required to take them from the depths of sin to the point where they could join with Gd at Sinai. One must prepare for an encounter with קדושה. The flippancy attitude towards sanctity is the root cause for the death of Aaron's children and the leper's punishment.

The purification process for the leper is similar to the פרה אדומה that required with running water, earthen vessel, עץ ארז, red string. The פרה אדומה represents traumatized man who encountered his greatest fear and contradiction, death. His entire world has collapsed on him with the death of a loved one. He requires someone to assist in bringing him back. The leper also has encountered death, his own, מצורע חשוך כח. He needs the same sprinkling by a priest in order to bring himself back and rejoin the community.

The underlying premise in all these cases is the concept of Teshuva. Gd says just make an effort, take the first step and I will do the rest. וזרקתי אליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם מכל. Only after we prepare ourselves through recognition of our pervasive faults and how far we have fallen, can we call out to Gd to cleanse us. Just as the leper may enter the Temple only after he has been purified, we may enter the Temple after Gd purifies us through the sprinkling of water. Only then will we merit והביאותים אל הר קדשי. ושמתם בבית תפילתי עולותיהם וזבחייהם לרצון על מזבחי. Once again our offerings will be accepted by Gd.

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