



## **Parashat Tazria**

### **5 Nisan 5784 – April 13, 2024**

What is Tzara'at? It is often translated as leprosy, however, that is probably not the best definition. In appearance, tzara'at may look like leprosy but leprosy is a physical malady of the skin. Tzara'at is an affliction given directly by HaShem as a result of sin. One could call tzara'at a malady of the soul.

The Talmud has a list of “serious” sins that have the ability of causing a person to contract tzara'at, a “serious” sickness of the soul. Murder, theft, false promises, slander, and gossip are the major reasons.

It is often a mistake to understand tzara'at as a potentially contagious disease. Yes, there is isolation and the destruction of clothing or even a building, but the only part of tzara'at that is a contagion is when one is willing to allow immoral behavior to become acceptable and even venerated, and then fall prey to it.

While the Talmud gives possible reasons for tzara'at, the Torah itself does not. Tzara'at strikes suddenly and without warning. Rambam (Maimonides) writes that tzara'at associated with a garment is not a natural occurrence and does not typically occur in the world, which would also apply to a house. Simply put, there is nothing rational about the condition.

The bottom line of tzara'at is that it is a “heavenly punishment” for engaging in acts that tear down the social moral fabric that binds people together in trusting relationships. It is the isolation from family, friends, and most importantly, HaShem that the person with tzara'at is suffering.

The beauty of morality and holiness lies in understanding tzara'at for what it is and distancing oneself from its causes.

Good Shabbos!

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