

## Parshas Metzora

This week is Shabbos Hagadol, and we read from the Metzora, the Parsha. The Metzora includes further details of a leper, their diagnosis, and their sacrifice regimen to become part of the camp. Included is the leprosy of houses and clothes. Each type of leprosy represents the extent to which a person's influence can be seen. At first, a person's actions affect themselves, then it can spread to their clothes and their home. The process of cleaning up the affliction is set out in the Parsha.

The connection between the Parsha and Pesach, which we will celebrate this coming week, is profound. On Pesach, a significant part of the holiday is the restriction on what we can eat. Chassidus provides us insight into the spiritual levels of restricting eating chometz. Chometz, leavened goods, are haughty, as they were allowed to rise. Even if it is a primary food, such as bread, which we can use to sustain and nourish ourselves throughout the year because it is allowed to rise, it is contrasted by the unleavened Matzah of Pesach.

For one week a year, we limit the haughtiness that we ingest, which influences our existence. That influence affects our bodies, clothes, and houses; much like speaking, lashon hora can result in leprosy of the body, clothes, or house. The lesson of controlling one's speech, lest it result in leprosy, is crucial. It parallels the restrictions of Pesach, where we recognize that not all food, sustaining us, is good for us. We achieve redemption only when we recognize and

cut out the proverbial chometz from our lives. The food of redemption isn't a lavish meal; it is an unleavened cracker. It is between us and Hashem in its basic format, with no 'leavening.'

The Torah's relatively large focus on the leper teaches us that speech and controlled speech are critical. More importantly, fundamental human nature can be gossiping and speaking ill of others, which means that if the Torah tells us not to, humans can conquer the problem and not commit the acts of Lashon hora, but it remains a tempting sin.

We must know that the negative influence is profound (affecting our bodies, clothes, and houses in the extreme). Haughtiness is one trait that allows a person to gossip and slander. According to Midrash, this is why the sacrifice includes cedar and hyssop. The person acted haughty like a cedarwood but should be humble like grass. Even though one should be upright and stand tall, one must have humility, which connects to the above-unleavened bread. Even in our state of redemption from Egypt, we eat the most straightforward food format because if we let "chometz" get to our heads, we can, heaven forbid, veer away from Hashem.

In fact, the Haftorah is sometimes read by communities on Shabbos Hagadol, even when it is not the 14th of Nisan, from Malachi 3, which is about the judgement preceding the final redemption. Notwithstanding our shortcomings, Hashem will still redeem us, although we must repent and return to Hashem to

reap all the benefits sooner rather than later.

The Haftorah from Malachim 2, the regular Haftorah if not Shabbos Hagadol, also recounts the results of arrogant behaviour. The theme is that being arrogant and lewd, like Chometz can be, needs to be humbled, or it affects the body, clothes and houses as we do on Pesach by eating unleavened simple bread.

May we merit Mashiach for all our collective efforts until now to get back on the righteous path and remain close to Hashem always!

Good Shabbos.