

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 17

Tazria, Sicha 3

The Mishnah:

A *metzora*, a person who has contracted a spiritual malady that manifests as a skin disease, conveys impurity to his surroundings. The following Mishnah discusses the law when a *metzora* enters someone else's house without the permission or knowledge of the homeowner.

"If a metzora entered a house all the vessels in it... become unclean... immediately. Rabbi Yehudah says: only if the metzora remained there for the amount of time it takes to light a lamp. (Negaim 13:11)

The principle behind Rabbi Yehudah's ruling is that the *metzora* can only contaminate the vessels in the house if his presence there is welcomed and tolerated by the owner. But the owner is often preoccupied with an important task and does not have the opportunity to immediately ask the *metzora* to leave. Therefore, the owner has a grace period of a certain amount of

time to finish his business before having to ask the *metzora* to leave.

Commentaries explain that the lighting referred to here is the lighting of Shabbos candles — a particular engrossing task that the opener cannot interrupt to turn their attention to the uninvited *metzora*. This time period is just an example, however, and applied on any day of the week. When that amount of time passes and the owner still allows the *metzora* to remain, then the vessels contract impurity.

The Rebbe's Father:

Why does the Mishnah use Shabbos candles as the example for the amount of time that the *metzora* can remain in the house before contaminating the vessels? This implies that the meaning of Shabbos candles somehow suspends the power of the *metzora* and does not allow it to enter.

The Rebbe's father offers a Kabbalistic explanation: The house represents the Divine faculty of *malchus*, which is G-d's manifest presence within the world (like the dwelling within a house). The spiritual state of the *metzora* is the withdrawal of the

light of *chochmah* — the power of selflessness. The loss of this light is what allows the impurity of death (for the *metzora* is compared to a corpse) to enter the home. Lighting a candle, however, alludes to the work of drawing the light of *chochmah* within the world. Therefore, as long as the person is “lighting the lamp,” the impurity of the *metzora* is held at bay.

The Rebbe’s Explanation:

This can be further developed by examining the particular light that Shabbos candles elicit, and the particular darkness engendered by the *metzora*.

The sin of the *metzora* is negative, harmful speech which sows discord and division between people. Furthermore, Rambam writes that this interpersonal discord leads to a more dramatic division — idolatry. Idolatry is the denial of G-d’s unity with the world, driving a wedge between G-d and His creation. The *metzora*, therefore, represents the dangerous power of division.

Shabbos candles represent the essential force of Torah and mitzvos which is to “bring peace to the world.” All mitzvos heal

the rift between the world and G-d, advancing the awareness of Divine unity. But this healing takes place in an abstract, spiritual plane, and is not often felt viscerally. The Shabbos candles, however, tangibly express the mission of peace, for they bring physical light to the home. The reason for lighting Shabbos candles is to bring peace to the home, “so that people will not trip on a stone or piece of wood.” The unusual expression of “stone or piece of wood” alludes to man-made idols.” The implication is that the Shabbos candles reveal G-d’s unity so that the divide between G-d and the world is dissolved.

Therefore, the light of the Shabbos candles which promotes peace and unity is a powerful antidote to the divisiveness of the *metzora*.

This heightens the urgency of encouraging girls and young women to begin lighting their own Shabbos candles, even prior to marriage. For by doing so they will introduce more harmony and light to their personal lives and the world around them.
