

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 27

Tazria, Sicha 2

The Context:

When a person discovers a lesion on their skin that might qualify as tzaraas, rendering the person impure, they need to present the lesion to a Kohen who pronounces the impurity. If the Kohen is not well versed in the laws of tzaraas, an expert, non-Kohen, is consulted. If he determines that the lesion is indeed tzaraas, he advises the Kohen, who then makes the pronouncement. The expert himself cannot declare the impurity, it must be done by the Kohen.

The Question:

Seemingly, the Kohen is disconnected from the realm of impurity, his task is to complete the purification process of those who have contracted impurity, through sacrifices and sprinklings. Why would the impurity of the metzora be contingent on the Kohen's declaration?

The Explanation:

The impurity of the metzora is unique in its severity. He or she is banished from all three Israelite camps, and must sit alone,

quarantined from other people with an impure status. In order to banish a Jew to such a severe state of loneliness, we must ensure that the declaration of their impurity is not motivated by self-righteousness, ego, or contempt. Only someone who truly loves the other can be trusted to say this person needs to be isolated in order to recover from a deep impurity. A Kohen is such a person. They are mandated to "bless the people of Israel with love," they are associated with the Divine attribute of loving-kindness. Therefore, even if the wisest expert concludes that a person has tzaraas they cannot actually render the person impure. Only a kohen, suffused with love and compassion for every Jew, can make that heartbreaking decision.

The Lesson:

When we think we have discovered an impurity in another Jew, we must rigorously investigate ourselves and our motives to determine if they are founded on love and care for the other, or if our own ego and self-interest is behind the aspersions. Through the effort to truly love our fellow Jew, we eliminate the cause of the exile, which is referred to as "the leper," and usher in the redemption.
