

Tazriah - Metzarah - Rabbi Lerner - April 22, 2012

The Tumah of the Zavah and Nidah

15:31: *You shall separate Bnei Yisrael from their Tumah and they shall not die as a result of their Tumah if they contaminate the Mishkan amongst them.* **Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch**: This command of keeping away from Tumah was not given to Bnei Yisrael directly - it says "**you** shall separate them" - this command is directed to Moshe and Aharon. The pressure is placed on the leadership to teach the people to distance themselves from Tumah. They must teach them the concept of Tumah and Taharah.

Oznayim LaTorah: There are people who educate and rebuke the people in public about shabbos, kashrus and other mitzvos; but when they get to the mitzvos of Taharas Hamishpachah and Nidah, they don't like to talk about it - they feel that it is a lack of modesty, of tzniyus, to discuss these topics in public. To what is this compared? Chazal say "What is the example of a chasid shoteh?" A chasid normally is one who goes lifnim meshuras hadin, above and beyond the halachah; but a chasid shoteh is someone who would not save a drowning woman so as not to look at her because of tzniyus issues. Similarly, a rabbi who won't talk about certain areas of Jewish life such as Taharas Hamishpachah and Arayos are like the chasid shoteh. When laws are given to be followed to prolong life, then certainly teaching about these topics to preserve the people's spiritual lives is critical. This is why the onus is placed on the leaders here, to make sure to teach these laws. When any rabbi feels reluctant to teach these laws because it is inappropriate and immodest to discuss publicly, he should remember the image of the drowning woman; here it is saving a spiritual life. There is no place here for being too modest to talk about these laws - it is very important to teach Bnai Yisrael.

15:19: *When a woman has a discharge, a discharge of blood coming from her flesh, for seven days she is a nidah and whoever touches her becomes contaminated until the evening.*

15: 20-4: If she lies down on a bed, it becomes tamei; if she sits on a chair it become tamei. These objects then become tamei and anyone who touches them in turn become tamei. If a man should actually sleep with her, have intimate relations with her, then her status is transferred onto him, he becomes tamei for a full week and he becomes an av hatumah - he transmits tumah to anything he touches. This intimate contact turns them into one, and every aspect of her prohibition of tumah falls on him as well. But aside from the concern of Tumah, there is a separate issue stated elsewhere about the prohibition of sleeping with her, a major transgression. This is first stated in the next parsha of Acharei Mos. In 18:2-5 the Torah warns us not to repeat the horrible practices of Egypt, and not to imitate the terrible practices of Canaan. These places are the worst role models. What were the acts of Egypt and Canaan that were so depraved? These first pasukim in Perek 18 were general rules; the specifics then follow in the next few pasukim, beginning in 18:6 with incest. In 18:20 it switches to adultery, then homosexuality, bestiality. In the middle of this, in 18:19, is the prohibition of relations with a nidah - it is in the middle of these terrible sins to emphasize that this too is a serious sin. In 18:24-29 it warns not to be defiled with all of these practices; this is what the seven nation of Canaan do and why they are being vomited out of the land. The **Rav**: this pasuk gives the land of Israel a vivid image like a living being that is incapable of digesting this abominable behavior; that is the kedushah of Eretz Yisrael; it is alive, and spiritually sensitive. The land cannot stand this type of behavior, and we are warned not to do these things so that we will not be vomited out as well. Anyone involved in any of these abominations in this long list will cause them to be cut off from the nation (they will

get Kareis). Finally, a third place where these laws are mentioned are in the next parsha of Kedoshim where the punishments are listed in perek 20. Pasuk 20:10 tells us that adultery and incest are capital crimes and punishable with death. In 20:18 it talks about sleeping with a Nidah - there the punishment is Kareis. Why does the Torah separate all of these laws into three different sections in the Torah? First there is the description that there is Tumah involved. The next mention is the prohibition and warning not to do these things. Finally there is the third place where there is the mention of the punishment. It is separated to tell us that sometimes we won't get the punishment for the sin; the main reason not to do it is because God tells us not to, that it is immoral and wrong - not because we will be punished. Even without punishment, God's saying not to do it should be sufficient. It is not just the punishment that should deter us.

What is behind this concept of Nidah? **Sforno**: this all comes from the punishment of Chava after eating from the Etz Hadaas. This was included in the punishment that Hashem would greatly increase her sadness. In Bereishis 3:16: *To the woman He said 'I will greatly increase your sadness (Itzvoneich) and childbearing (Heroneich); in pain (Be'Etzev) you shall give birth to your children; your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.'* **Rashi**: The sadness (Itzvoneich) is the struggles and challenges of raising the children; Hayroneich is the difficulty of the pregnancy of nine months; the next (Etzev) is the pain of childbirth; the final one, Teshukaseich, is your desire for intimacy with your husband. The Gemorrah in Eruvin 100: *Harbah Arbeh Itzvoneich*: the double lashon of Harbah Arbeh refers to the two different types of bleeding - one is menstruation, and the other is the bleeding from the first time the hymen is penetrated - both cause pain and Tumah. Had it not been for the sin of Chava who allowed herself to be enticed by the snake, none of these problems would have ensued. Hashem created this Tumah because of the sin.

Abarbanel: it wasn't just that she committed this sin; it was the tremendous desire she had to have the fruit. As a midah kaneged midah, Hashem punishes her, that from her own body will come something to remove her desire. She could not control her desires, for the one item she could not have in Gan Eden she showed no discipline - therefore, Hashem made her not be able to fulfill her desires with these changes to her body.

15:19: There are two special categories - Nidah and Zavah. When she begins to bleed, for seven days she is a Nidah, and all the laws of Tumah are triggered, and she is forbidden to have relations. What does it mean she becomes Tamei for seven days? According to the Torah, she would be prohibited from relations for seven days from the beginning of the bleeding; if at the end of those seven days, she is clean, she then goes to the mikvah and can resume having intimate relations. But we hold a minimum of 12 days instead of just a week - why is that? In 15:25 there is the category of a Zavah which is not a normal flow. If she has bleeding for three days at the wrong time, or she continues to bleed after the seven days of Nidah, then these days are like the Nidah with all the restrictions, but then, as it says in 15:28, she must count another seven days after the bleeding stops; only then can she go to the mikvah. This is much more stringent than a Nidah where she doesn't have to count seven days after the bleeding stops - the entire Tumah is just seven days, or another few days if still bleeding. But if she bled three days after the seven, she is a Zavah, and with a Zavah the count of seven clean days first begins after the bleeding stops. Nidah does not need a count of clean days, while unnatural Zavah bleeding is a whole different story. Gemorrah in Nidah: there is a Halachah Lemoshe MiSinai tells us that the subsequent 11 days after the seven days of Nidah should be clean; if she bleeds after those seven days, that is abnormal and she is a Zavah. This is the complication of abnormal bleeding, and engenders a whole different form of Tumah, that of the Zavah, which will then entail another

count of seven clean days. This has revolutionized the laws of Nidah - women were petrified of the two different kinds of blood, and 2000 years ago were worried about making a mistake with this severe sin. So at some point in history, the women decided that they wanted to make it simple for themselves - as soon as there is any bleeding they declare themselves Zavah instead of Nidah. This stringency has been in place for 2000 years because of the possible confusion with these two types of bleeding. All bleeding creates the most severe status. The Gemorrah says that she can't even count the seven clean days if the bleeding lasts only three days - she must wait at least five days before beginning the count of seven. The women got the message of separating themselves from Tumah in a big way.