

Parsha Plug: Parshat Tazria-Metzora

<p>Vayikra 15:16-18</p>	<p>ויקרא טו:טז-יח</p>
<p>16 A man from whom there is a discharge of semen, shall immerse all his flesh in water, and he shall remain unclean until evening. 17 And any garment or any leather [object] which has semen on it, shall be immersed in water, and shall remain unclean until evening. 18 A woman with whom a man cohabits, whereby there was [a discharge of] semen, they shall immerse in water, and they shall remain unclean until evening.</p>	<p>טז וְאִישׁ כִּי־תִצָּא מִמֶּנּוּ שִׁכְבַּת־זָרַע וְרָחַץ בַּמַּיִם אֶת־כָּל־בְּשָׂרוֹ וְטָמֵא עַד־הָעֶרֶב: יז וְכָל־בְּגָד וְכָל־עוֹר אֲשֶׁר־יְהִי עָלָיו שִׁכְבַּת־זָרַע וְכִבֵּס בַּמַּיִם וְטָמֵא עַד־הָעֶרֶב: יח וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אִישׁ אִתָּהּ שִׁכְבַּת־זָרַע וְרָחַצוּ בַּמַּיִם וְטָמְאוּ עַד־הָעֶרֶב:</p>

<p>Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim Kriyat Shema 88:a</p>	<p>שולחן ערוך קריאת שמע סימן פח סעיף א</p>
<p>All who are impure are able to read from the Torah and say Kriyat Shema and pray with the exception of the baalei keri that Ezra took out and he forbid them from learning, Shema, and prayer until he immersed. Ezra decreed this in order that the talmidei chachamim would not be able to be near their wives like chickens [a.k.a. to frequently be with their wives]. But later on, they cancelled Ezra's decree and only held according to the rule that even a baal keri is permitted to learn Torah, say Kriyat Shema, and pray without immersing and without washing in nine kav. This is the practice.</p>	<p>כל הטמאים קורין בתורה וקורין ק"ש ומתפללין, חוץ מבעלי קרי שהוציאו עזרא מכל הטמאים ואסרו בין בד"ת בין בק"ש ותפלה עד שיטבול, (א) כדי שלא יהיו ת"ח מצויין אצל נשותיהן כתרנגולין. (ב) א ואח"כ בטלו (ג) אותה תקנה, והעמידו הדבר על הדין, שאף בעל קרי מותר בד"ת ובקריאת שמע ובתפלה בלא טבילה ובלא רחיצה דתשעה קבין, * <א> וכן פשט (ד) [א] המנהג.</p>

<p>Rambam Mishneh Torah Mikvaot 11:12</p>	<p>רמב"ם משנה תורה מקואות יא:יב</p>
<p>It is a clear and apparent matter that the concepts of purity and impurity are Scriptural decrees and they are not matters determined by a person's understanding and they are included in the category of <i>chukim</i>. Similarly, immersion in a <i>mikveh</i> to ascend from impurity is included in the category of <i>chukim</i>, because impurity is not mud or filth that can be washed away with water. Instead, the immersion is a Scriptural decree and requires the focusing the intent of one's heart. Therefore our Sages said: "When one immersed, but did not intend to purify himself," it is as if he did not immerse. Although it is a Scriptural decree, there is an allusion involved: One who focuses his heart on purifying himself becomes purified once he immerses, even though there was no change in his body. Similarly, one who focuses his heart on purifying his soul from the impurities of the soul, which are wicked thoughts and bad character traits, becomes purified when he resolves within his heart to distance himself from such counsel and immerse his soul in the waters of knowledge. And Ezekiel 36:25 states: "I will pour over you pure water and you will be purified from all your impurities and from all your false deities, I will purify you."</p>	<p>דבר ברור וגלוי שהטומאות והטהרות גזירות הכתוב הן ואינן מדברים שדעתו של אדם מכרעתו והרי הן מכלל החוקים וכן הטבילה מן הטומאות מכלל החוקים הוא שאין הטומאה טיט או צואה שתעבור במים אלא גזירת הכתוב היא והדבר תלוי בכוונת הלב ולפיכך אמרו חכמים טבל ולא הוחזק כאילו לא טבל ואעפ"כ רמז יש בדבר כשם שהמכוין לבו לטהר כיון שטבל טהור ואף על פי שלא נתחדש בגופו דבר כך המכוין לבו לטהר נפשו מטומאות הנפשות שהן מחשבות האון ודעות הרעות כיון שהסכים בלבו לפרוש מאותן העצות והביא נפשו במי הדעת טהור הרי הוא אומר וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם מכל טומאותיכם ומכל גלוליכם אטהר אתכם</p>

	<p>השם ברחמיו הרבים מכל חטא עון ואשמה יטהרנו אמן.</p>
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<p>Bereshit 1:1-2</p>	<p>בראשית א:א-ב</p>
<p>1 In the beginning of God's creation of the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was astonishingly empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water.</p>	<p>א בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: ב וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתָה תֵהוֹ וּבְהוֹ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹקִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:</p>

<p>Bereshit 6:17</p>	<p>בראשית ו:יז</p>
<p>17 And I, behold I am bringing the flood, water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which there is the spirit of life, from beneath the heavens; all that is upon the earth will perish.</p>	<p>יז וְאָנֹכִי הֹנֵנִי מֵבִיא אֶת־הַמַּבּוּל מַיִם עַל־הָאָרֶץ לְשַׁחַת כָּל־בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ רֹוּחַ חַיִּים מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּאָרֶץ יָגוּעַ:</p>

<p>Shemot 14:21-22</p>	<p>שמות יד:כא-כב</p>
<p>21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord led the sea with the strong east wind all night, and He made the sea into dry land and the waters split. 22 Then the children of Israel came into the midst of the sea on dry land, and the waters were to them as a wall from their right and from their left.</p>	<p>כא וַיִּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ עַל־הַיָּם וַיּוֹלֶךְ ה' אֶת־הַיָּם בְּרוּחַ קְדָוִים עֹזָה כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה וַיִּשָּׂם אֶת־הַיָּם לְחִרְבָּה וַיִּבְקְעוּ הַמַּיִם: כב וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיְבֻשָׁה וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם חוֹמָה מִיְמִינָם וּמִשְׁמָאלָם:</p>

<p>Susan Handelman, Di Yiddishe Heim and Total Immersion: A Mikvah Anthology (Jason Aronson, 1996).</p>	
<p>To fulfill the mitzvah of <i>mikvah</i>, one must immerse completely, be entirely enveloped by the waters. This total immersion of self means losing one’s independent existence, going out from oneself, elevating oneself by becoming a vessel for holiness. Maimonides writes in his code of Jewish Law, the <i>Mishneh Torah</i>, that this immersion requires the intent of the heart, the intent to purify oneself spiritually from all wrongful thoughts and bad traits, to bring one’s soul into “the waters of pure understanding.” <i>Chassidut</i> makes a further illuminating connection between this concept of <i>mikvah</i> and the nature of the great flood that occurred in the days of Noah. Why, the question is asked, was water the chosen instrument for removing the wicked from the world, and why did the flood have to last for such a long time, forty days and forty nights? Surely if G-d simply wanted to punish the sinners, He could have done so immediately. The answer, chassidic teaching explains, is that the flood was not just a punishment, but also a purification for the world. It completely enveloped the earth, and its forty days and forty nights correspond to the measure of forty <i>se’ah</i> of water required to make a ritually fit <i>mikvah</i>. The waters of the flood cleansed the world by immersion in the same way one is purified by immersion in the waters of the <i>mikvah</i>. The separation and removal of all extraneous and undesirable elements has the ultimate purpose of bringing the world (and a person) to a higher level...[T]he ultimate cause of <i>tum’ah</i> is separation from G-d; and to be united means to be “nullified” to Him, to lose the sense of one’s independent existence and be attached to one's</p>	

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