
Isolation and Quarantine...

Rabbi Alon Meltzer

A New Page of Talmud

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Metzora 5782



This shall be the ritual for a leper at the time of being purified. When it has been reported to the priest, the priest shall go outside the camp. If the priest sees that the leper has been healed of the scaly affection - **Vayikra 14:2-3** to a site near the boundary of the encampment where the priest can come to inspect the afflicted person easily without having to subject himself to special effort.- **Seforno on Vayikra 14:2²** this also teaches that he is not to tarry in performing these rites. והוא אל הכהן, "after he had been purified he shall be brought to the priest;" while still outside the camp, but where the priest can inspect him without undue discomfort. We

know that the afflicted person could not yet have entered the confines of the camp from what is written immediately following, i.e. that the priest had to leave the camp in order to perform his duties. An alternate explanation:

the words: "and he was brought to the priest," mean that he had to be brought to the priest because he was still resident outside the camp, so that he had to be brought to the boundary. The priest on his part came as near as he could in order to meet him. – **Chizkuni on Vayikra 14:2³** So Miriam was shut out of camp seven days; and the people did not march on until Miriam was readmitted.– **Bamidbar 12:15⁴** Even though the cloud had lifted off the encampment and the Tabernacle. The Torah writes: ובהעלות הענן מעל המשכן יסעו בני ישראל בכל מסעייהם, "when the cloud would lift from above the Tabernacle the Children of Israel would begin all their respective journeys." They did not journey on this occasion as they realised that the reason why the cloud had lifted was in order to distance itself from the tzoraat.⁵ **Seforno on Bamidbar 12:15** He transgresses thereby (Devarim 24:9):

"Remember what the Lord your Gd did to Miriam on the way when you went out of Egypt." The Torah exhorted us hereby that we mention verbally, always, the great punishment [leprosy] that the Blessed Lord brought upon the tzadeketh, Miriam the prophetess — who spoke only about her brother, whom she loved as her soul, whom she raised on her knees, and for whom she endangered her life, to rescue him from the Nile. And she did not speak in denigration of him, but only compared him to other prophets. And she did not speak so to his face to shame him, and not in public, but only to

The priest shall go outside the camp...

וַיֵּצֵא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל-מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה...
Vayikra 14:3

her brother Aaron, privately. And he [Moses] was not offended by all this, viz. (Bamidbar 12:3): "And the man Moses was extremely humble, more than any man

on the face of the earth" — in spite of which all her good deeds did not avail her and she was punished with leprosy for this. How much more so will other people, the fools, who are prolix in speaking "great and awesome things" against their friends, be severely punished for this.⁶— **Chofetz Chaim, Introduction to Laws of Lashon Hara** It is human nature to be attracted to the ideas and actions of one's neighbours and friends and to follow the customs of the people of his land. Therefore, a person needs to bind himself to the righteous and always dwell in the midst of the wise in order that he might learn from their deeds and keep far from the evil ones who walk in darkness so as not to learn from their deeds.⁷ – **Mishnah Torah, Human Dispositions 6:1**

A new page of Talmud - Rabbi Alon Meltzer