

# א ב י ס ל תורה!

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לי ניסן תשפ"ו · תזריע/מצורע

## The גימטריה of the מצורע

By Menshi Trachtenberg '26

Regarding the מצורע, the תורה says, "הוא בָּדֵד יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ" (ויקרא) "לְמַחֲנֶה" "he must sit alone outside of the camp" (י"ג:מ"ו). רש"י on this פסוק says that because this person said לשון הרע and, in doing so, divided people, he is punished measure for measure and, therefore, is separated himself.

The רמב"ן on the next פסוק adds something interesting. He explains that צרעה would only appear on white clothing and not on colored ones. This is because if a colored shirt changes color, one could claim that it happened naturally through a chemical reaction or natural fading. But on a white shirt, a change in color is undeniable that it is Hashem's doing. It is a wake up call that cannot be ignored. It proves that the person's spiritual connection with Hashem has been strained.

There is a famous idea in the גמרא in כד-בג-מכות, where תנ"ך explain the פסוק "תורה צוה לנו משה מורה" פסוק "תורה צוה לנו משה מורה" as an inheritance to the congregation of יעקב (דברים) "יעקב" "the תורה was commanded to us by משה as an inheritance to the congregation of יעקב (דברים) "יעקב" (ל"ג:ד). They explain that the word תורה, which has a גימטריה of 611, corresponds to the 611 מצוות that were given through משה, the other two, being the first two commandments, were given directly from Hashem at הר סיני. Interestingly, there is also a hint that the words "הוא בָּדֵד יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ לְמַחֲנֶה" has the same גימטריה as תורה, 611.

משה is the one who gave us the 611 מצוות of the תורה, which brings the Jewish people together as one unified people under one system of serving Hashem. The fact that the תורה has the same number of מצוות as the words "הוא בָּדֵד יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ לְמַחֲנֶה", is a clear message: If one use one's mouth to destroy the unity משה built, one is effectively trading in the תורה for isolation.

This creates a powerful contrast. The תורה given to all of the Jewish people standing together as one, represents unity and shared responsibility. On the other hand, the מצורע represents isolation, being forced to be alone.

The רמב"ן idea about the white clothing helps us understand this isolation. Just as the white clothing makes the spiritual damage undeniable so that the person cannot make excuses, sitting in isolation makes the social damage undeniable.

By being physically removed from everyone, a person is forced to feel the reality of what their הרע did. They created distance between people with their words, so now they too have to live in that distance.

The goal of the תורה is not just a test to pass it is a tool for connection. When a person uses speech to divide others, they distance themselves from the spirit of the תורה. But when one uses one's words to bring people together, one is fulfilling what the תורה truly is, something that builds unity between people and between Hashem and the Jewish people.

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## Being Uniquely Human

By Amira Kahan '28

In this week's פרשה, we learn about the laws of צרעת, and the purities and impurities associated with it. According to Rav Shimshon Rephael Hirsch, the essence of what it means to be human is the ability to make choices, decide between what is right and wrong, and balance between the physical and spiritual. Human kind is a combination between animals and angels - animals follow instinct and what they desire physically, while angels are entirely spiritual creatures. Rav Hirsch writes that spiritual impurity is caused by our forgetting of our ability to choose, causing our physical selves to be in control. Rav Hirsch extends this principle to the most extreme form of impurity, impurity to a corpse. The body of a dead animal or human causes impurity because seeing a dead form can lead to a person forgetting about their unique ability of choice. The ritual of purifying oneself after being in contact with a dead body reminds a person of the control that they have in balancing the physical and the spiritual.

Many people, when learning about צרעת, think of it as leprosy. However, it is a completely different disease. צרעת is solely spiritual, and it is a measure for a measure: the מצורע caused someone else to feel alone by speaking gossip about them, so in return they are now alone in isolation (בודד יושב). The word used to describe צרעת is the word "אִיָּוֶה" "affliction" (ויקרא י"ג:ט), which has the same root as to touch, לנגוע. The מצורע is touched by Hashem Himself and marked for all to see. Another word to be interpreted is the word מצורע

itself, which can be separated into 2 words: מוציא רע - bringing out evil. Contracting צרעת brings forth and exposes a person's inner corruption which would have otherwise gone unnoticed by others. The מצורע is forced to confront a problem within themselves. They were touched and marked by Hashem, and can no longer evade the consequences of their choices.

The message to be found from this week's פרשה is that our choices define who we are. We may not be stricken by a skin disease and sent into isolation when we make a mistake, but our decisions, whether correct or not, make us uniquely human. We have the opportunity to use our freedom to help others and make the world a better place.



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