

Parashat Metzora

12th of NissanI, 5784 · April 20th, 2024

Shabbat Times (Cambridge)

Candle-lighting:	7:13pm
Minḥa-Ma'ariv:	6:45pm
Shaharit:	9:00am
Latest Shema:	9:19am
Latest Tefilla:	10:27am
Minḥa:	7:00pm
Ma'ariv/Havdala:	8:15pm

Announcements

Kiddush and se'uda shelishit this week are sponsored by the Shabbos Fund.

Pesach is this coming Monday

Sell your chametz! Forms have been sent to your email by Rav Noah; they must be returned by Sunday, April 21st.

The latest time for eating *chametz* is **10:26am** on Monday, April 22nd; the latest time for burning *chametz* is **11:34am** on Monday, April 22nd.

There will be a communal *bi'ur chametz* (burning of *chametz*) at Hillel on Monday, April 22nd from **8:15-9am**.st time for burning *cham*

The Torah details two instances in which one is obligated to shave his whole body: the *metzora* and the Levite who is entering the Temple service. Sharing this curious procedure, which overrides the biblical prohibition against making a bald spot (Lev. 21:5; Det. 14:1), indicates an underlying similarity between the *metzora* and the Levite. Rashi explains the similarity by a pseudo-*gezera shavah* (Det. 8:7)—the Levites were dedicated to the Temple Service in place of the firstborn sons. Those firstborn sons were guilty of idolatry for worshipping the Golden Calf. Idolatry is called “offerings for the dead” (Ps. 106:28), and in Parashat Behaalotecha, the *metzora* is compared to the dead (Num. 12:12). Just as the *metzora* must shave, so too does the Levite, who is similarly compared to the dead (the Siftei Chachamim explains that this particular idolator, and not others, is required to shave because of a real *gezera shavah*, though that is tangential to our discussion).

In Rashi's formulation, it is the state of having been dead (or dead-like) which causes one to undergo this ritualistic shaving. Therefore, the reason for their shaving is their entering a process of rebirth. Once dead, one cannot continue in the world as he just was. He must rid himself of the burdens and blunders of his previous life (the life of *lashon hara* and idolatry, respectively) and become a baby again. Therefore, he must become hairless, like a baby. He then can re-enter the world of the living. The *metzora* needs to re-enter the camp. He enters a new life where he will seek to be a life-affirming force in the community rather than a life-sucking one. The Levite will seek to transition from taking the material goods of the world and degrading them by using them for idolatry, by instead taking them and elevating them in the Temple Service. The Torah juxtaposes the convocational procedure of the Levite with the description of the Menorah, showing the proper manner in which gold ought be used.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, in his commentary on Leviticus, contends that the shaving ritual is an offensive against egoism to push one towards a socially conscious life. The *metzora*, Rav Hirsch explains, cut himself off from society through his Lashon Hara. Every part of the procedure of isolation, purification, and atonement is a symbolic action geared towards instilling in the *metzora* awareness of social responsibility. The shaving is across the whole body, but only of external hairs. These hairs insulate us from the outside world forming a division between the individual and the community. The *metzora* has completely walled himself off from his community and is totally insensitive to their needs and his own obligations. Therefore, he must be shaved so that when he forms this insulating barrier again it is done with special consideration for that which is without him. He must make himself vulnerable and exposed so that he can harden in an acceptable way.

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ZAAKAH

The Za'akah peer-support hotline is available as a resource for our community for those who feel they need to talk to someone on shabbat. It is not a substitute for professional crisis intervention. Call, text, or WhatsApp +1-888-4 ZAAKAH (+1-888-492-2524).

Weeknight Shi'urim

Join us for weeknight shiurim, taught by your fellow community members! Open to the entire community.

Monday, 8:30pm

Judaism and the Challenges of Modern Life, ed. Halbertal and Hartman
with Mike Frank

*If you would like to teach a shi'ur, in either a one-time or series format, please contact **Yonah Sperling-Milner**, the co-vice-chair of Education..*

Write for the CanTab!

If you're interested in writing a dvar torah, please be in touch with Education Co-Chairs Mike Frank and Theo Motzkin, or sign up at tiny.cc/cantab

/kan tab/

1. The name of the shabbat parasha sheet and newsletter of the Orthodox Minyan at Harvard Hillel; if you want to keep tabs on the minyan, now you can.
2. An allusion to the people who live in Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cantabrigians.
3. An attempt to open up a can of Torah issues.

Rav Hirsch does not focus on the Levites' roundabout connection to idolatry. Rather, he emphasizes the transition the Levite is about to experience: moving from individually-directed life to public service. While the Levite did nothing wrong previously, he must acclimate to a totally new mode of being, one where his every action is in service of the Holy Sanctuary where he will act on behalf of the Jewish people. So too, the Levite must expose himself anew to the external world, this time molding himself from the influence of those he serves. It is still difficult that the Levite, who has not sinned, and the *metzora*, who has, are subject to the same procedure. Consequently, Rav Hirsch points out that the Levite shaves himself, while the *metzora* is shaved by the Kohen. The Levite is seeking an opportunity to further sanctify himself, to increase his contribution to the Jewish community, voluntarily. Therefore, only he can conduct such a procedure. Meanwhile, the *metzora* must be forced out of the camp and cannot come back on his own accord. Rather, the community needs to see to it that he is reformed and corrected before he can reintegrate.

Rashi and Rav Hirsch's ostensibly dissimilar explanations for this similarity reveal to us the nature of birth. Rav Hirsch explained shaving as entering the community anew as a way of making one vulnerable and adherent to the needs of others, exiting pure selfish isolation. A baby starts within his mother's womb as a completely self-involved creature, even parasitic. But as he emerges into the world, he is faced with the hard reality that he cannot always be accommodated, and he must accommodate the needs of others. Really, birth and maturity is a process of socialization. The *metzora* must recommence this process from the beginning. The Levite shows that we can always grow and perfect our social contributions, though we may have to take what seems like a few steps back to do so.

Shabbat Shalom!
Spencer Glassman

“Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud had settled upon it and the Presence of G-d filled the Tabernacle.”
(Exodus 40:35)