

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Tazria:*** **Leviticus 13:47-59**
 Haftarah: **II Kings 5:15-27**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Luke 12:22-36**

The kohen is to examine the mildew

[Leviticus 13:50]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 119:113-120

This Week's Amidah prayer is Petition No. 2, *T'shuvah* [Starting Over]

V'ha-beged ki-yihyeh vo nega tzara'at – *And when on the garment comes forth a mark of tzara'at ...* ***b'veged tzemer o b'veged pish'tim*** – *in a garment of wool or a garment of linen* **Leviticus 13:47a.**

A great miracle has happened in the shadow of Mount Sinai. The Tabernacle – a structure patterned after the Heavenly Courts and Chambers of the Creator – has been built, furnished, and staffed according to a blueprint. The structure has been – and now constantly remains - Divinely indwelt. The Holy One's Great Cloud of Witnesses covers the Tabernacle; His 'glory' [in Hebrew *kavod*, meaning substance, weightiness, majesty, eye-catching, awe-inspiring beauty, and/or retinue] fills it from stem to stern. The greatest Era of *Imanu-El* [i.e. *God with us*] since the Garden of Eden is thus officially underway.

Acclimating to the Presence, the Cloud and the Glory

The inauguration of this glorious, prototypical Imanu-El Era has necessitated that we in the camp significantly '*raise our game*'. We are playing Eliza Doolittle to the Holy One's Henry Higgins. The Ultimate Divine Bridal Makeover that having the Manifest Presence of the Holy One abiding in our midst requires is therefore in full swing. As we process through the steps of this radical makeover we are discovering that the most profound changes the Holy One intends to bring about are not in others, as we might have supposed – they are in *us*. The changes He is bringing about through His Kedusha protocols are not environmental or atmospheric, but intimate and internal. His plan for fixing the world that He loves with all His Heart is slowly becoming clear. He is not planning on sending another great flood on the earth to fix it. He is not planning on raining fire and brimstone on purveyors of perversion like He did with Sodom and Gomorrah. He is not planning or dispatching hosts of angelic warriors to wage holy war upon evildoers. He is not even planning on sending angelic messengers to 'speak truth to power',

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as the world likes to say. What He is doing to fix the world is radically different. He is shaping us – the shell-shocked seed of Avraham together with a mixed multitude of volunteers from the nations - into a living, breathing, body that He can inhabit, through which He can work beautifully but discreetly.

The Redeemed, Divinely-Inhabited Body –

Using this ‘body’ as His Hands and Feet extended, He intends to gently but effectively bring about His Grand Plan for redemption and restoration. He intends to accomplish this bold objective without a hint of force, coercion, or deception – using us to demonstrate the superiority of His Plan for the ecosystem He created and the species He designed to manage that ecosystem over the folly of the nations – with all their self-will obsessed, materiality-infatuated, flesh-driven, man-enthroned, negative-energy fueled political theories, philosophies, ideologies, institutions, conventions, cultures and religions. He is focusing His attention on remaking a rag-tag mob of refugees fresh out of Egyptian bondage into a tabernacle of living stones like unto Avraham. He is changing us from the inside out, transforming one after another of us into humble servants of our fellow men, who model faith, hope, humility, irrepressible joy and unshakable love. He is slowly scraping off all our individual rough edges so that He mold us into a ‘*great nation*’ *counterculture*, fueled by *kedusha* infusions from Heaven’s beauty realm – a kingdom of royal ambassadors He can plant in every continent, every ethnicity, every economy, and every culture to provide light to the nations and as salt to the earth. He is not pouring out fury on the cadres and cartels who are corrupting the world; He is pouring the resources of Heaven into the far-greater-in-the-long-run project of changing US from traumatized survivors of the worst things that men can do to one another into - turning our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, our stiff necks into thick skin, and our bondage-acquainted souls into compassionate vessels of soothing balm for the healing of the nations. He intends for us to co-regent with Him in that great day when He brings His Kingdom out of the shadows and into the foreground, so is teaching us how to – and empowering us to – think like Him, to approach situations and people the way He does, and to forgive, redeem, and restore wounded souls according to His protocols. He wants to change us inside and out, making us over into calm, peaceful, joyful, gentle and wise Healers like Him. He wants to set us free from all of our many fruit-of-the-tree-of-knowledge induced pathologies – *i.e.* our attention deficits, emotional dysfunctionalities, anxieties, phobias, bi-polar episodes, obsessive/compulsive behavior patterns, narcissism, materialism, pseudo-intellectualism, and delusions of grandeur. He knows, however, that merely changing the inside of us will not be enough to accomplish His lofty Purposes for us. The changes He is bringing forth inside us must bear noticeable, quantifiable, external leaf and fruit. That means everything about the outside of us must also undergo significant changes - to testify to the

world of the transformative effect of our Bridegroom-King's amazing wisdom, kindness, purity, grace, and love on the human life. The Holy One therefore intends to dramatically change the *outside* of us – and all things the world associates with us - as well as the inside of us. To demonstrate His Manifest Wisdom, Power, and Artistry, the beauty He is calling forth from His Beloved ones simply must be both *internal* and *external*. Everything about us – or that the world associates with us – must transition from 'common' to gloriously holy.

So ... are the meditations of your heart and the thoughts of your mind ever increasing in beauty and wisdom? Are the words of your mouth and the expressions of your face toward others ever-increasing in beauty and grace? Are the garments and ornaments you wear ever increasing in beauty and modesty? And is your dwelling place ever increasing in beauty and hospitality? ***Mah tovu ohalecha Ya'akov, mishkanotecha Yisra'el?*** [How lovely are your tents, O Jacob – your dwelling places, Israel?]

The natural product of ever-increasing consecration to the Holy One and ever-increasing immersion in His Word and His Ways

What is our part in the process the Holy One has set in motion for internal and external transformation? It is our inestimable privilege to actually cooperate with Him and with His Make-Over protocol *on both internal and external level*. Neither the beauty nor the purity He calls forth from us is something we must create – His Words of Life themselves are fully capable of accomplishing this in us. All He calls forth from us is respect and some cooperation. Why on earth would we not respect Him Who has done so much for us? Why in the world would we not want to cooperate with Him? Ah Beloved, it seems there is *a little bit of slave and a whole lot of shrew* in the best of us.

Setting Free the Slave and Taming the Shrew

To illustrate my point let me engage you for a few moments with a parable. Imagine a lowly girl of the common people of a country who - miracle of miracles – wins a lottery of some kind and becomes betrothed to marry that country's king. Imagine the fully-committed, delightfully-enamored king sending the lowly commoner a wardrobe of beautiful dresses, veils and tiaras, jewelry and accessories for her to choose from, not only for the much-ballyhooed wedding day, but also for each day of her new life as co-regent of his kingdom. Imagine him sending along with those wardrobes the best hairdressers, manicurists, fashion consultants, and life-coaches in his kingdom to help his chosen one prepare for the wedding day and the glorious life He envisions them enjoying together. Now imagine her sending away those who bring the precious treasures the king has had made for her and all of the attendants he has sent for her, with a toss of her head

and saying: “NO, NO, NO! Take all those burdensome things and all those bothersome people away right now! How dare the king try to change the way I look and act! Doesn’t he know that I am free from the law? Isn’t it enough for him that I know his name, that I believe he loves me, and that I have let him forgive me of my sins? I will take his name if that’s what he wants, but I am not changing for him. I heard a really good preacher once say I don’t have to look like, act like, or talk like a bride or queen at all - because that’s all ‘old covenant’ stuff. Hasn’t the king heard? He really needs to get more in touch and up-to-date! So tell him ‘thanks but no thanks’ for the new wardrobe’. He can keep all that, or give it to the poor or something. I’ll just go on wearing my tattered old blue jeans, my crop-top t-shirt, my floppy gardening hat and my flip-flops. Oh, and be sure to tell the king that there is really no point in him calling me anymore. Tell him that if I need him for any reason, or ever have a few minutes with nothing better to do, he’ll be the first to know.”

Each instruction/injunction of Torah is designed to function like seed. It is deposited in us and then starts in its work in us in our innermost being. But before it is over, it is designed to change the exterior as well. Similarly, as we have been discussing in these studies the Words of the Holy One in the Book of Leviticus set forth the *official protocol for the ultimate extreme makeover* that the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven has arranged for His Bride to undergo. Every extreme make-over involves not only the way one thinks about herself, but also her diet, body, and self-image, and *wardrobe*.

Are Your Garments Spotless?

A bride must have *a trousseau fitting for her wedding day and her honeymoon*. And of course all the garments of that trousseau should be *without spot or wrinkle* or any such thing. Hence today’s aliyah deals with *detecting and eliminating potential problems with the clothing/garments of the people in the Holy One’s redeemed community*.

As the *Kedusha Discourse* starts to get intense, the Holy One instructs us what to do when we find something our English Bibles call “the *plague of mildew*” [KJV] in the garments we wear. As Torah puts it:

Zot torat nega-tzara'at beged ha-tzemer o ha-pish'tim

This is the torah of the mark of tzara'at in a garment of wool or linen,

o ha-sh'ti o ha-erev o kol-keli-or l'taharo o l'tam'o

either in the warp, or the woof, or in anything of leather . . .

[Leviticus 13:59]

Get ready for another form of the Holy One’s Divine shock treatment. This time it

is going to involve the garments we wear when we go forth to represent our King and His Kingdom in the world. The Hebrew term the English translators render as “*plague of mildew*” is *nega tzara’at* - a phrase consisting of the word *nega*², followed by the word *tzara’at*. This Hebrew word draws a picture of something being struck, or “marked” with an identifying mark – a spot or stripe of *tzara’at*. The first word in the operative phrase, *nega*, is derived from the verb root *naga*³, meaning “*to strike with a disease*”. The first Biblical usage of the word ***naga*** is in Genesis 12:17, where Torah tells us:

*And the Holy One plagued [naga] Pharaoh and his house with great plagues
because of Sarai, Avram's wife.*

Another illustrative example of the Biblical usage of this Hebrew concept is found in the Pesach story, in Exodus 12:22:

*And you are to take a bunch of hyssop,
and dip [it] in the blood that [is] in the basin,
and strike [naga] the lintel and the two side posts
with the blood that [is] in the basin*

Also consider one of the most famous usages of this word, in Isaiah 53:4, 8:

*Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows:
yet we did esteem him stricken [naga], smitten of God, and afflicted .
* * **

*He was taken from prison and from judgment:
and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living:
for the transgression of my people was he stricken [naga].*

If you have been studying this week you have already found that what our English Bible’s translate as “leprosy” is not the condition we know as leprosy today, but a supernatural skin condition with which persons within the redeemed community (or otherwise closely related to the Holy One, as was Na’aman the Syrian) were stricken by the Holy One, usually as a form of loving discipline (with a redemptive purpose) when they habitually indulged in attitudes, speech, and behavior inconsistent with their redeemed nature. It was not a ghastly terror, as some might suppose, but an expression of the Holy One’s love and His desire to heal and restore. In a community of people living constantly in the Presence of the Holy One, it was (and is) to be expected, and cherished, as an evidence of His love. It *offends the mind to reveal the heart*. That is the Holy One’s way.

The absence of the supernatural condition of ***tzara’at*** from the redeemed community today – if indeed it is truly absent - is probably *evidence that we really*

² Nega is *nun, gimel, ayin*, Strong’s Hebrew word #5061, pronounced ***neh’-gah***.

³ Naga is Strong’s Hebrew word #5060.

*do not live constantly in His Presence*⁴.

Wool, Linen, and Leather

The Holy One mentions three materials in which we are to be on the lookout for signs of *acute toxicity*. These materials are found in garments, but also in various other applications. The materials we are told to be especially watchful over are: 1. *wool* [Hebrew *tzemer*], 2. *flax-cloth (i.e. linen)* [Hebrew *pish'teh*], and 3. *leather* [Hebrew *or*].

Wool [Hebrew *tzemer*, meaning *shaggy*], is a material made from the shorn hair of sheep, used in Biblical times primarily as a warm *material for outer garments* and to stuff in mattresses *to sleep on* and pillows/cushions *to sit or recline on* – and, of course, to make *prayer shawls* [*tallitot*]. With regard to this material we know from Holy Writ that:

- a. it is *not to be admixed/adulterated with linen* to make any garment [Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 22:11];
- b. it *was employed by Gideon*, in '*fleece*' form, to verify that the Holy One was with him [Judges 6:36-40]
- c. *its appearance (especially its whiteness) is what the Holy One promises to change the stain of our sins to look like* [Isaiah 1:18];
- d. in the Heavenly realms, the *head and hair of the Heavenly One the Revelator called, alternatively, the 'Ancient of Days', the 'Son of Man' and 'the Lamb' project the appearance of this material* [Revelation 1:20; see also Daniel 7:9].

The kind of linen mentioned in this context was rough cut, flax-cloth linen [Hebrew *pish'teh*, meaning cut and wrought flax]. This is to be contrasted with the much more refined material referred to in the Bible as *shesh* – a highly refined form of linen used for royal garments, priestly garments, and in the construction of the Mish'kan. Rough-cut flax-cloth was primarily used for: a. under-garments [like those worn by the priests, when on duty in the Mish'kan, but not as finely cut and woven], b. turbans/head coverings; c. ropes and measuring lines, d. napkins, e. swaddling babies, and f. wrapping human

⁴ Those of us who have joined our lives with Messiah and received the indwelling of the ***Ruach*** [Spirit/Breath] of the Almighty, should, theoretically, be even closer to the Holy One, and more susceptible to *tzara'at*, than were the Redeemed in the desert; that is not, however, always the case. The indwelling presence of the Holy One, you see, is not necessarily a MANIFEST presence. One of the elemental corollaries of the spiritual truth of the Holy One's omnipresence is that the Holy One can be *present but hidden*. The Holy One is everywhere – yet He is **seen** only where and when He chooses, for His own Divine purposes, to make His Presence *manifest*. What does that mean for us? It means that, until Messiah comes with His clouds in radiant glory, the only Divine indwelling we will be able to experience will remain the indwelling of His *Hidden Presence*. Our faces will not glow as did the faces of Moshe and Stephen. Our bodies will not be transfigured in the sight of men. And, most of us will not know the precious gift of *tzara'at*-type discipline.

bodies for burial.

Leather [Hebrew *or*], which consists of the tanned skin of once living creatures – especially *tahor* animals like oxen/cattle, goats, sheep, and deer - was primarily used for tool-belts, sometimes called ‘girdles’ in older English translations, for heavy outer garments used in cold or wet weather, for sandals, for saddle bags and satchels, for wineskins, and, perhaps most interestingly, as scrolls on which to write and/or record things. In II Kings 1:8, Holy Writ tells us that Eliyahu wore a belt or girdle of leather⁵. The first usage of the material, of course, was the act of the Holy One, Who chose to cover Adam and Chava in *ketonot or* – i.e. full length, long-sleeved outer garments specially crafted for them out of skin. The source of the skin used by the Holy One to cover Adam and Chava is not specifically mentioned in the Torah; it has long been theologically associated, however, with the ‘*Lamb slain before the foundation of the world*’ Whose *Or* has become – or at least in Whose *Or* has been written/recorded - the so-called Book of Life [in Hebrew, *Sefer Chayim*. See Revelation 13:8; see also Revelation 3:5, 17:8, 20:12 and 15, and 21:27.

Could the close association of these three materials with virtually everything we think, say, and do make them likely targets for the manifestation of any *tumah* or *tzara*’at that is active in us?

Think about it: if a person smokes cigarettes, what happens to their clothes? They start to reek of - and turn yellow from - cigarette smoke. If a person eats like a pig, and drops food particles or juices on his clothes in the process, his clothes take on the smell, and let everyone who comes close to him know exactly what he had for dinner. Does it work the same way with *tumah*?

If we have a ‘pig-like’, ‘dog-like’, or ‘predator-like’ attitudes, worldviews, and approaches to life and human interactions, do our garments and the things around us tell the world about it?

If our hats, caps, and head coverings could read out minds and record our thoughts on their outer surfaces, I wonder what kinds of things they would they tell the world?

If our garments, our mattresses, and our favorite couch or recliner cushions could hear and understand every word that come out of our mouths, and could repeat them . . . I wonder what embarrassing things they would say?

⁵ Yochanan the Immerser wore garments made of coarse camel hair - not true leather.

If the modern equivalent of animal skin scrolls – our computer and smart phone keyboards – had a keystroke-tracking program affixed to them for a day . . . I wonder what kind of fascinating story they would tell about the ‘real’ us?

I guess it is time for a reality and accountability check, Beloved. What is going on with us can affect everything we touch – for the better . . . or for the worse!

What is This Thing Our English Bibles Call ‘Mildew’?

What we know as “mildew” today can be defined as “*a growth caused by micro-organisms, whose spores, in a moist, warm environment, become molds*”, and which “*during their growth produce acids*” that “*can damage paper, leather, cloth, etc.*”; which “*at times produce color bodies, leading to staining which is difficult to remove*. Certain types of fungi - i.e. those that produce branching filaments - are classified as “mold”. When a mold [a microscopic organism] attaches itself to a fabric, it secretes acid-like enzymes that begin to break down the structure of the fabric. The mold then begins to eat away at the broken down fabric. This starts in motion a process that, if not halted, will eventually result in visible damage to the fabric. The damaged area is called “*mildew*”.

Mildew is a *condition*, not a cause. The cause is always *mold*. The mold secretes the acid-like enzymes, making spots on whatever it is attached to. That is ‘mildew’ Mildew is just the visible evidence of the presence and destructive activity of mold. It usually appears – at least initially - in the form of spots. Generally the spots are black. Occasionally, however, they present themselves as white, rust colored, or greenish.

This is Not That

Most people who read Leviticus in English automatically associate the “*plague of mildew*” about which we read in today’s aliyah with mold-generated damage, as described above. This is a natural assumption, but one that is unjustified. The English word “mildew” is merely an English “approximation” for the Hebrew term is *nega tzara’at*, meaning *mark of tzara’at*. The subject of the aliyah is not mold-generated growth – i.e. commonplace “*mildew*” as we know it - but a supernatural condition, brought about not by warm, damp, musty conditions (unlikely to be encountered by the desert-dwelling children of Yisrael), but by the Holy One.

In particular, what is stricken by the Holy One, in connection with today’s reading, is the **garment** of a person in the redeemed community. Why would the Holy One, in loving discipline, with a redemptive purpose, strike the garment of a person in the redeemed community with *nega tzara’at*? What, by striking a person’s garment

with a “mildew-like” spot or splotch, would the Holy One be saying to and/or about that person? What kind of discipline would this be? What would an ugly splotch or spot growing on our tunic or sandals [now, our blue jeans and tennis shoes] mean for us *spiritually*? To answer these questions we must come to an understanding as to what a “garment” is. The word our English words translate as “clothing” or “garment” is *begeg*⁶. This is a masculine noun meaning “*garment, raiment, apparel, or clothing*, in the context of a *covering of nakedness*. This is very important, as we will see throughout the Torah, the prophets, and the apostolic writings of the followers of Yeshua (especially the wedding feast parable of Yeshua and the book of Revelation) an emphasis on the “garments” of the redeemed. Our garments represent outward expressions of our inward spiritual state.

We as a redeemed community are to have *spotless* garments, of pure white linen, representing an inward spiritual state of kadosh – holiness and sanctification to the Holy One. A bride traditionally wears white. Why? To symbolize her purity. So if, when a bride-to-be is putting on her wedding dress, she looks down at the waistline and sees an ugly brownish-green splotch growing there, what happens? In today’s world, it would result in a panicked emergency call to the dry cleaners. But – could contamination of one’s clothes by such a spot also *convey a spiritual message*? And if *tzara’at* on one’s skin comes, as we learned yesterday, as a disciplinary judgment from the Holy One for a person persistently speaking forth *lashon ha ra* [critical, negative speech] about others, what kind of impropriety would cause the Holy One to send the *nega tzara’at* on one’s garments?

Generally, therefore, it appears that the Holy One lovingly strikes a person’s garments and personal belongings with *nega* as a form of discipline designed to root out *a potentially-lethal attitude or sin pattern* which the person has, over a period of time, accepted as a part of his or her life, *but which he or she has attempted to “cover over” and conceal* [*begeg*] *by outward behavior patterns which he or she intends to make others (and sometimes himself/ herself!) think he or she is “holy”*.

Masters of Spiritual Disguise

An extreme physical example of such a cover-up from our secular society would be one who wears sunglasses to hide bloodshot eyes or dilated pupils from alcohol or drug use, or one who wears long-sleeves in order to cover needle “tracks”. A Torah example is the story of Genesis 27, where Ya'akov dresses in Esav’s garments for the specific purpose of deceiving Yitzchak.

In the times of Messiah Yeshua spoke of some of the religious leaders of the day as

⁶ Begeg is *beit, gimel, dalet*), Strong’s Hebrew word #899, pronounced *behg'-ed*.

“whited sepulchers” [NIV, whitewashed graves].

*Woe to you, Sofrim and Perushim, hypocrites!
For you are like whitened tombs which outwardly appear beautiful
but inwardly are full of dead men's bones,
and of all kinds of things which render one tamei.
Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men,
but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

[Matthew 23:27-28]

In another place we read:

*In the hearing of all the people, he [Yeshua] said to his talmidim,
"Beware of the Sofrim, who like to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces,
the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts;
who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers:
these will receive greater condemnation".*

[Luke 20:45-47]

Based upon these teachings of Yeshua one could easily surmise that splotches of *nega tzara'at* on one's garments would be related to *hypocrisy* and *hidden sin* – i.e. things we try to cover up with outward shows of piety- just as *tzara'at* lesions on one's skin are related to *lashon ha ra*?

When one lives in the Holy One's presence, under His *Radiant Cloud*, one cannot long cover up selfishness and “hidden sin”. That is what the Infilling of the Holy Spirit is supposed to be like, isn't it? The Holy One is more concerned with the condition of our hearts and the purity of our thought-life than with all the stuff others might see us doing “for the sake of His Kingdom”. He wants to make sure we recognize that it is not fitting for a “holy nation”, called to be a “light to the gentiles” to try to fool ourselves and the world by hiding bad attitudes and selfishness in one's heart behind visible acts of piety.

The “garments” [*mitzvot*] which we as members of the Redeemed Community are called to “put on” *should* accurately reflect who we are. They should not be used to *present a false image or mirage* – a picture which we want others to see but which does not reflect who we really are. Considering the consequences - to us and to the world – of our misrepresenting our King so badly, would it not be the grace of the Holy One to reveal such hypocrisy through *nega tzara'at* - on our clothing or elsewhere?

Why Are You Looking At Me Like That?

Please take care not misunderstand or misapply this teaching. Alas, it is easy to do both! Keep in mind at all times that it is not the job of anyone in the Redeemed Community - including you or me - to go around with a critical eye, judging the

worship practices and religious observances of everybody he or she knows, and declaring **nega**. **Nega tzara'at**, like **tzara'at** lesions on the skin, is intended to be self-diagnosed.

The responsibility of a priest - and we are, after all, a kingdom of priests - is to respond mercifully, caringly, and appropriately to all who recognize **nega** or **tzara'at** in their own lives, and who come in repentance seeking cleansing.

As Shaul of Tarsus said, “**let no man judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration, or a Sabbath day.**” **Colossians 2:16**. Do you judge others on the basis of such external factors? Do you judge persons more “observant” of Torah than you in regards to such externals as “legalistic”, and those less observant of Torah than you in regards to such things as “lawless”?

Shaul also said: “**Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels** [mere messengers – heavenly or earthly] **declare you disqualified you from the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by the ligaments and sinews, grows as the Holy One causes it to grow** [a clear reference to the prophecy of Ezekiel 37 – the dry bones prophecy].” **Colossians 2:18**.

Let no man judge you on externals Beloved. But likewise, *be sure you judge no one else on such things*. The point of being a priest of the Holy One is not to become a *judge*. It is to act as a benevolent *mediator* and *teacher*. Offer the gift of life – the cleansing waters of Torah – and not the dagger of death, to all who come your way.

You check your garments for **nega tzara'at**, and I'll check mine.

The Holy One's Specific Instructions Regarding Material Things Affected by Nega Tzara'at

Tumah at advanced levels always manifests itself in a visible *sign*. What is the sign of active **nega tzara'at** in a garment of wool, linen, or leather - or, for that matter, in any other material possession? The Holy One identifies that sign a noticeable area of discoloration in the item which is either *bright red* or *bright green*. If such a phenomenon is observed, the Holy One tells us to show the item to the kohen, who will examine [Hebrew *ra'ah*] it, and if it is indeed a bright red or green discoloration, he will *sagar* – i.e. *shut up in isolation* and/or *wrap up/put a compress on the affected area* - for seven days. After the seven days has passed,

the kohen will inspect the item again, to see if the area of discoloration has expanded, shrunk, or remained the same. If the area of discoloration has expanded, indicating an active infestation of toxic *tumah* - like the ‘raw flesh’ indicator for a spot or sore on the skin - the item is both toxic and unsalvageable, and is to be burned. If the area of discoloration has not expanded, however, it is a sign that the *tumah* is not aggressive, if active at all. The item is therefore scrubbed, and *sagar*-ed again for another seven days.

After the second seven-day *sagar*-ing period, if the area of discoloration that was scrubbed has faded, the item is *tahor*, and, after the affected area has been removed/cut out, and the item has undergone a mikveh, it can be returned to use. If, however, the discoloration has returned, despite scrubbing, it is a sign that the *tumah* infestation is still active, and the item is both toxic and unsalvageable, and must be burned.

Applying the Revelations of Today’s Aliyah to A World Without a Physical Functioning Mish’kan

Alas, today the Radiant Cloud does not presently dwell in the midst of our camp. We have no *Mish’kan* and no functioning Aharonic Priesthood. The cultures in which we live are definitely not the Torah-based communities envisioned by Torah. Though millions in our world claim to be indwelt by the *Ruach HaQodesh*, all too often the *Manifest Presence* of the Almighty is nowhere to be seen. *Ergo*: neither we, nor anyone we know, is likely to develop *tzara’at* skin lesions or *nega tzara’at* spots on their garments in the environment in which we live anytime soon.

So what do we do with the Torah truths we read at the conclusion of parsha *Tazria* today? Is today’s study just an academic exercise? Some say “yes”, and turn the page. I say “*not so fast*”. The Holy One’s words are life, and contain life and power. The life and the power they contain is not limited to Torah-observant communities with functioning Aharonic Priests and visible pillars of fire and cloud. The life and power that the Holy One breathed into Torah is always applicable, always *tov* - i.e. good, and continually producing concentric levels of good things in our lives, like a pebble thrown into a pond not only disturbs the surface where it makes contact, but also produces ripples after ripple, all the way to the shore]. Hence even though our garments may not sprout “mildew”-looking growths if we persist in lives of hypocrisy and/or false humility, we can be assured, by the principles set forth in today’s torah, that *the Holy One will not allow us to get away with such things forever*. The Holy One may not strike us we who claim to be His with *tzara’at lesions*, or cause our garments to erupt with “mildew”-like growth – but because we are His, He will reveal hidden sins of which we refuse to let go after He has warned us to do so.

Our Bridegroom-King loves us, so He always gives us a number of chances to acknowledge our sins and submit them to Him for cleansing. If we do not heed His calls, however, and if we choose to cling to our secret sins instead of running to Him, all the while putting on a show of piety for the world to see – well, if we do that *He will most certainly expose us publicly in one way or another*. You can take it to the bank. So walk circumspectly, Beloved. Deal with the secret sins, the hidden self-righteousness and pride, deep within. Do not worry about “who’s doing what to who” out in your neighborhood or in the political or economic culture in which we temporarily reside. Let the Holy One take care of that. Our time is better spent focusing on cleansing our lives of hidden sins – before the Holy One publicly exposes them so we have to deal with them in humility rather than in pride.

The spiritual forms of *nega* and *tzara’at* employed by the Holy One today are even more devastating than lesions and spots. As Job taught us:

*He leads Kohanim away stripped, and overthrows the mighty.
He removes the speech of those who are trusted,
And takes away the understanding of the Zakenim.
He pours contempt on princes and loosens the belt of the strong.
He uncovers deep things out of darkness and brings out to light the shadow of death.*
[Job 12:19-22]⁷

Let us *humble ourselves before the Holy One*, and be healed. It is time to return to a *lifestyle built upon the reverent fear of our Holy God*.

Questions For Today’ Study

1. Let us explore this Hebraic concept of “garments” – which can reveal who you are, conceal who you are, or actually project a false image you want others to believe represents who you are -- through consideration of the garments/clothing prevalent in today’s society. For the types of clothing a person, or a generation, or a society, wears, says a lot about who they are (or want others to believe they are). In the 60’s we wore tattered jeans, “love beads”, tie-die T-shirts, Nehru jackets, and sandals. In the 70’s we wore the “layered look”, complete with leisure suits and elevator lift shoes. In the 80s we wore suspenders, button-fly jeans, and bulky team-emblem jackets. In the 90’s girls bared their midriffs and wore mini-skirts, very short shorts, and dresses slit up the side, while boys wore caps pulled down tight over their heads, tight T-

⁷ See also Malachi 2:2-3, where the Holy One says to the *Kohanim*: “*If you will not sh’ma, and if you will not lay [it] to heart, to give glory unto my name, says the Holy One of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: indeed, I have cursed them already, because you do not lay [it] to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, [even] the dung from your solemn feasts; and [one] shall take you away with it.*”

shirts, and baggy pants. In the 00's and teens most dress according to our favorite nostalgia movement, deliberately choosing to wear clothes from whatever previous era suits their fancy at the time. Each popular fashion has its message. Each garment you buy is a billboard. So . . . what are *you* advertising?

[A] Your “garments” consist of the clothes you wear. What do the clothes you like to wear say about who you are?

[B] What is it about the clothes you like to wear that causes you to like them?

[C] Is there anything about the clothes you like the most that is inconsistent with your redeemed nature?

[D] What “message” do the clothes you like to wear send to those who see you?

[E] Is any part of the “message” those clothes send inconsistent with who the Holy One created you to be?

2. Let us move now beyond discussions of physical “clothing” to the realm of spiritual “clothing” – i.e. religious activity done in public (activities we often call “worship”, prayers spoken in public, etc., giving of alms/tithes, communal fasts, etc.). Read Matthew 6:1-18 (that portion of the Sermon on the Mount where Yeshua specifically deals with such “spiritual garments”. Then read Luke 20:45-47, where Yeshua warns the people concerning some whose spiritual garments conceal and distort their personality, and Matthew 23:23-28 where Yeshua pronounced judgment on such persons. Write a one page essay discussing what spiritual garments we should and should not ‘put on’, and what the garments we should put on should reveal about us.

3. Looking at the specifics of today’s aliyah we read:

*The garment also that the **nega** of tzara’at is in,
whether it is a woolen garment, or a linen garment;
whether it is in warp, or woof; of linen, or of wool;
whether in a skin, or in anything made of skin;
if the nega is greenish or reddish in the garment . . . it is the nega of tzara’at,
and is to be shown to the Kohen.*

*The Kohen is to examine the nega, and isolate the nega seven days.
He is to examine the nega on the seventh day.
If the nega has spread in the garment . . . , the nega is a destructive **nega**. It is **tamei**.
He is to burn the garment . . . in which the nega is: for it is a destructive **nega**.
It is to be burned in the fire.*

*"If the Kohen examines it, and, behold,
the **nega** hasn't spread in the garment . . . ;
then the Kohen is to command that they wash the thing in which the nega is,
and he is to isolate it seven more days.*

*Then the Kohen is to examine it, after the **nega** is washed;
and, behold, if the **nega** hasn't changed its color,
and the **nega** hasn't spread, it is **tamei**; you are to burn it in the fire.
It is a **tzara'at** spot, whether the bareness is inside or outside.*

*If the Kohen looks, and, behold, the **nega** has faded after it is washed,
then he is to tear it out of the garment . . . ,
and if it appears again in the garment . . . it is spreading.
You are to burn with fire that in which the **nega** is.
The garment . . . that you are to wash,
if the **nega** has departed from them,
then it shall be washed the second time, and it will be **t'hor**."*

[A] What two colors indicate that “**nega**” is spreading and must be shown to the priest?

[B] Under what circumstances does Torah direct that the article stricken with **nega** be washed?

[C] Under what circumstances does Torah direct that the article be *burnt*?

[D] List the various types of material that this passage says can be affected by **nega**, and to which these instructions apply.

5. In II Kings 5 Na'aman, an Aramean God-fearer through whom the Holy One had given victory to the people of Aram, has just been miraculously healed of *tzara'at*. Now we read “the rest of the story”. Through the most unlikely of encounters, Gehazi’s secret sin is about to be revealed. Perhaps the whole incident was less about Na’aman and his *tzara'at* than it was about Gehazi, the servant and confidante of the prophet Elisha, and his secret sin of covetousness.

*He [Na’aman] returned to the man of God, he and all his company,
and came, and stood before him;
and he said, “See now, I know that there is no God in all the eretz, but in Yisra'el:
now therefore, please take a present from your servant.”*

*But he [Elisha] said,
“As the Holy One lives, before whom I stand, I will receive none.”
He urged him to take it; but he refused.*

*Na`aman said, If not, yet, please let there be given
to your servant two mules' burden of eretz;
for your servant will henceforth offer neither korban olah
nor sacrifice to other gods, but to the Holy One .*

*In this thing the Holy One pardon your servant:
when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there,
and he leans on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon,
when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon,
The Holy One pardon your servant in this thing.*

*He [Elisha] said to him “Go in **shalom**.” So he departed from him a little way.
But Gechazi the servant of Elisha the man of God, said,*

*“Behold, my master has spared this Na`aman the Arammian,
in not receiving at his hands that which he brought:
as the Holy One lives, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.
So Gehazi followed after Na`aman.*

*When Na`aman saw one running after him,
he alighted from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well?
He said, All is well. My master has sent me, saying,
Behold, even now there are come to me from the hill-country of Efrayim
two young men of the sons of the prophets;
please give them a talent of silver, and two changes of clothing.
Na`aman said, Be pleased to take two talents.
He urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing,
and laid them on two of his servants; and they bore them before him.*

*When he came to the hill, he took them from their hand,
and bestowed them in the house; and he let the men go, and they departed.
But he went in, and stood before his master.
Elisha said to him, “Whence come you, Gehazi?” He said, “Your servant went no where”.*

*He [Elisha] said to him, “Didn't my heart go with you,
when the man turned from his chariot to meet you?
Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments,
and olive groves and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maidservants?
The tzara'at therefore of Na`aman shall cleave to you, and to your seed forever.”
He [Gehazi] went out from his presence a **metzora** - [as white] as snow.
[II Kings 5:15-27]*

[A] How would you describe what happened in Na'aman's *spirit* as a result of his healing?

[B] What do you think Yeshua was saying when he referred to Na'aman in Luke 4:27 [Read Luke 4:16-27 to put the reference in context].

[C] What did Na'aman want with “as much earth as two mules could carry”?

[D] What activities back home did Na'aman see as inconsistent with what he had experienced while in Israel?

[E] What parting blessing did Elisha give to Na'aman the Syrian?

[F] Continue reading in II Kings 5, verses 20-26. What sinful oath did Gehazi make?

[G] How do you think what happened with Gehazi relates to today's Torah parsha?

6. Our B'rit Chadasha reading for today is from Luke 12:22-31. Yeshua is speaking to His talmidim:

*"Therefore I tell you, don't be anxious for your life,
what you will eat, nor yet for your body, what you will wear.
Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing.
Consider the ravens: they don't sow, they don't reap,*

*they have no warehouse or barn, and God feeds them.
How much more valuable are you than birds!*

*Which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to his height?
If then you aren't able to do even the least things,
why are you anxious about the rest?*

*Consider the lilies, how they grow. They don't toil, neither do they spin;
yet I tell you, even Shlomo in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
But if this is how God clothes the grass in the field,
which today exists, and tomorrow is cast into the oven,
how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith?*

*Don't seek what you will eat or what you will drink; neither be anxious.
For the nations of the world seek after all of these things,
but your Father knows that you need these things.
But seek God's Kingdom, and all these things will be added to you.*

- [A] What is Yeshua teaching about in this passage?
[B] How did Gehazi “mess up”, according to Yeshua’s teaching of Torah?
[C] To what two created things does Yeshua refer in order to illustrate His point?

*May the marvelous love of the Holy One invade your life today,
and may your garments be made spotless, as white as fine linen.
And at the wedding banquet may you be granted a place very, very near the Master.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 119:113-120 [Samech]

*I hate the double-minded, but I love Your Torah.
You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word.
Depart from me, you evildoers,
For I will keep the commandments of my God!*

*Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live;
And do not let me be ashamed of my hope.
Hold me up, and I shall be safe,
And I shall observe Your statutes continually.
You reject all those who stray from Your statutes,
for their deceit is falsehood.
You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross;
Therefore I love Your testimonies.
I My flesh trembles for fear of You,
and I am afraid of Your Judgments.*

