

PARSHAT METZORA
LEVITICUS 14:1-15:33
HAFTARAH MALACHI 3:4-24
SHABBAT HAGADOL
10 NISAN 5784/18 APRIL 2024



Purification
Painting by Yoram Raanan

A WHISPER WILL BE HEARD

1. This shall be the *torah* of the *metzora* on the day of his purification...
2. It was debated in the Heavenly Academy: If the white patch precedes the white hair, it is impure; if the white hair precedes the white patch, it is pure. But what if there is doubt as to which came first? The Holy Blessed One said: "It is pure." The entire Heavenly Academy said: "It is impure." They said, "Who shall decide for us? Let Rabbah bar Nachmeini decide." Rabbah bar Nachmeini had once said, "I am unique (יָחִיד) in my knowledge about *tzara'at*." So they sent a messenger to bring him to heaven. (Talmud, Bava Metzia 86a)

Unique – *unus* (one), *unicus* (only, sole)

יָחַד - to be united

Unity – *unus* (one), *unitas* (sameness, together)

יָחִיד - only one, unique

יִחְוֶה

3. Chassidic teaching explains that, in essence, *tumah*, "spiritual impurity," is definable as the "absence of holiness." Holiness is called "life," "vitality"; it is that which is united with and emanates from the source of all life, the Creator. Chasidic philosophy further elucidates that true union with God, true holiness, means that one's own independent existence is in a state of *bittul*, "nullification" to God. On the other hand, that which is distant or separated from its source is called "death" and "impurity...." Spiritually speaking, what is most evil and most impure in a person is, above all, the assertion of self: one pushes God's presence away and creates a void, a vacuum where God's presence should be....That is why, our Sages tell us, arrogance is equivalent to idolatry, for idolatry, in essence, means that something is regarded as independent of the Creator and asserts itself in place of God. (Susan Handelman, *Total Immersion: A Mikvah Anthology*)
4. Crimson thread, wool dyed with pigment made from a simple creature, and hyssop a lowly plant, both symbolize humility. (Yoram Raanan)
5. From the place where we are right
Flowers will never grow.
The place where we are right
Is hard and trampled
Like a courtyard.

But doubts and wondering
Dig up the world
Like a mole,
Like a plow.

And a whisper will be heard
In the place where the House once stood
That was destroyed.
(Yehuda Amichai, "The Place Where We Are Right")
6. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and awe-filled day of God, to turn the hearts of parents to their children. And the heart of children to their parents, lest I come and smite the land with destruction. (Malachi 3:23-24, haftarah for Shabbat HaGadol)