

PARSHAT TAZRIA-METZORA

LEVITICUS 12:1-15:33

HAFTARAH ISAIAH 66:1-24

29 NISAN 5786/16 APRIL 2026



The Starry Night
Vincent van Gogh

THE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE

1. When you enter the land of Canaan that I give you as a possession and I inflict an eruptive condition upon a house of your possession... (Leviticus 14:34)
2. The so tender and delicate zinc, so yielding to acid which gulps it down in a single mouthful, behaves, however, in a very different fashion when it is very pure: then it obstinately resists the attack. One could draw from this two conflicting philosophical conclusions: the praise of purity, which protects from evil like a coat of mail; the praise of impurity, which gives rise to changes, in other words, to life...In order...for life to be lived, impurities are needed, and the impurities of impurities in the soil, too, as is known, if it is to be fertile. (Primo Levi, *The Periodic Table*)
3. Dissension, diversity, the grain of salt and mustard are needed: Fascism does not want them, forbids them, and that's why you're not a Fascist: it wants everybody to be the same, and you are not. But immaculate virtue does not exist either, or if it exists it is detestable. So take the solution of copper sulfate which is in the shelf of reagents, add a drop of it to your sulfuric acid, and you'll see the reaction begin: the zinc wakes up, it is covered with

a white fur of hydrogen bubbles, and there we are, the enchantment has taken place...
(Primo Levi)

4. Rabbi Shmuel said, the phrase “it was good” [God’s words after creating light, land, sea, plants, animals] refers to the *yetzer tov*/the good desire; the phrase “it was very good” [God’s words after creating the human] refers to the *yetzer hara*/the evil desire. Can then the evil desire be very good? That would be extraordinary! But for the evil desire, however, no one would build a house, plant a vineyard, get married, have children. (Bereishit Rabbah 9:7)
5. Above all that you guard, guard your heart; for it is the source of life. (Proverbs 4:23)
6. There are two ways to address our yetzer hara. The first is suppression (*itkafya*). The second is turning about/transforming the heart (*it'hapkha*). The method of *it'hapkha* sees the yetzer hara as the repository of enormous, undirected powers, with the yetzer tov as being relatively impotent except for its ability to identify the goal to which the powers of the yetzer hara should be applied. (Based on the teachings of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)
7. I didn’t know that one could break one’s brain and that afterwards that got better too. (Vincent van Gogh, in a letter to his brother Theo)