

# Isolation for Spiritual Health OR

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DC Beit Midrash

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## Watch out, I think it might be contagious!

### 1. Vayikra/Leviticus 13:45

מה והצרוע אשר-בו הנגע, בגדיו יהיו פרמים ור אשו יהיה פרוע,  
ועל-שפם, יעטה; וטמא | טמא, יקרא.

45 And the leper in whom is the plague, his clothes shall be rent, and the hair of his head shall go loose, and he shall cover his upper lip, and shall cry: 'Unclean, unclean.'

### 2. Vayikra/Leviticus 13:46

מו כל-ימי אשר הנגע בו, יטמא--טמא הוא: בדד ישב, מחוץ למחנה  
מושביו.

46 All the days that the plague is in him he shall be unclean; he is unclean; he shall dwell alone; his dwelling is outside the camp.

### 3. AP Wire, April 5, 2003: Bush OKs Quarantine Authority for SARS

LAURA MECKLER; Associated Press Writer, WASHINGTON

President Bush on Friday gave federal health officials authority to quarantine Americans sick with a new, highly contagious mystery illness. Officials said there were no immediate plans to use the emergency powers.

In an executive order signed Friday, Bush added severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, to the list of diseases for which health authorities have authority to hold Americans against their will.

"If spread in the population," the order says, SARS "would have severe public health consequences."

### 4. Vayikra/Leviticus 13:4

ד ואם-בהרת לבנה הוא בעור בשרו, ועמק אין-מראה מן-העור  
ושערה לא-הפך לבן--והסגיר הפהן את-הנגע שבעת ימים.

4 And if the bright spot be white in the skin of his flesh, and the appearance thereof be not deeper than the skin, and the hair thereof be not turned white, then the priest shall shut up him that hath the plague seven days.

### 5. Chizkuni on 13:46:

His dwelling is outside the camp - Because this disease spreads to people who are around him often.

מחוץ למחנה מושבו, שחולי זה מתפשט על בני אדם הרגילים אצלו.

6. Vayikra/Leviticus 14:8

ח וכבס המטהר את-בגדיו וגלח את-כל-שערו, ורחץ במים וטהר,  
ואחר יבוא אל-המחנה; וישב מחוץ לאהלו שבעת ימים.

8 And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean; and after that he may come into the camp, but shall dwell outside his tent seven days.

7. Midrash Tanchuma, Metzora, Simanim Aleph and Bet

Hamotzi shem ra - one who brings out (causes) a bad name (about someone else)

זאת תהיה תורת המצרע, אל תקרי המצרע  
אלא המוציא שם רע.

Someone who guards his mouth, (Proverbs 21:23)  
shomer mitzarot nafsho - guards his soul from troubles, or guards his soul from tzaraat.

שומר פיו  
ולשונו שומר מצרות נפשו (משלי כא כג). אל  
תקרי מצרות, אלא מצרעת נפשו.

Someone who speaks badly of someone motze ra, finds bad, because bad marks are found on his body.

המוציא שם רע, מוציא רע, שהנגעים רעים  
מוציאין בגופו.

8. Sefer Hachinuch, Tazria, Siman 168 (169)

We are to come to the priest, how stands in for atonement of the sinners, and with the friends of the atoner he might waver in his teshuva (penance?), so he is shut up for a few days so that he can bring the issues to his heart reservedly, and will consider his actions. And sometimes he is shut up twice lest he waver in his teshuva and not do complete teshuva, which could be compared to someone who considered returning part of what they had stolen, and in this case God renews the signs so that he will be shut up again such that he will complete his teshuva and become completely pure.

ויש  
לנו לבוא אל הכהן שהוא העומד לכפרת החוטאים, ועם חברת המכפר אולי יהרהר בתשובה, ויוסגר קצת ימים כדי שישב אל לבו ענייניו במתון, ויפשפש במעשיו, ולפעמים יוסגר שני הסגרין שמא הרהר תשובה ולא תשובה שלימה לגמרי, כאילו תאמר על דרך משל שחשב להחזיר מחצית גזלתו, ואז יחדש בו ה' קצת סימנין שיוסגר שנית אולי ישלים תשובתו ויטהר לגמרי.

9. Devarim/Deuteronomy 32:12

יב ה' בדד ינחנו; ואין עמו אל נכר.

12 The LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with Him.

10. Bemidbar/Numbers 23:9

ט כי-מר אש צרים אראנו, ומגבעות אשורנו: הן-עם לבדד ישכּוּן, ובגוים לא יתחשב.

9 For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, it is a people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

# Metzora @ the DC Beit Midrash

Monday, April 7, 2003; 6 Nissan 5763

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Welcome to the DC Beit Midrash!

The *Chumash* (Five Books of Moses) is divided into 54 portions, which Jews read sequentially each week in services. This Shabbat, we will be reading Parshat *Metzora* from the book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus). Tonight, a member of our community will lead us in a text-study of this portion. The voices of both past and contemporary interpreters will inform our discussion.

Below you will find a summary of this week's Torah portion, along with brief biographies of the commentators cited. The presentation will be followed by *chevruta* (paired) study on a subject of your choice.

## ***This week's parsha (Torah portion): Metzora, Vayikra (Leviticus) 14:1-15:33***

*Parshat Metzora* continues the discussion of skin diseases and the purification rituals for a person cured of them. Attention is given also to the appearance and treatment of fungus or mildew in the home and to the ritual impurity resulting from contact with the discharge of sexual organs.

(Excerpted from Harvey Fields, *A Torah Commentary for Our Times*, p 120)

## ***This week's sources:***

### **Chizkuni**

**mid-13<sup>th</sup> century**

Rabbi Chizkiya ben Manoach, France, mid-thirteenth century. Also spelled Hizkuni, with variations on both. His Torah commentary was only printed after he died. He quotes some midrashim which appear nowhere else. He also, like Rashi, translates obscure Hebrew words into the French of his day.

(Adapted from <http://www.kolel.org/pages/glossary/H.html>.)

### **Ibn Ezra**

**late 11<sup>th</sup> century**

The Golden Age of Spain produced some magnificent Jewish scholars. One of these was Abraham Ibn Ezra. Born in 1089, Ibn Ezra was a friend of Judah HaLevi. Tradition maintains that Ibn Ezra married Judah HaLevi's daughter. Ibn Ezra was a poet, astrologist, scientist, and Hebrew grammarian. All the Hebrew grammar books to that time had been written in Arabic including Saadia Gaon's famous work. When he discovered that the Jews of Italy didn't understand Hebrew grammar, he wrote an excellent book in Hebrew which became a best-seller. It elucidated for Jews living in Christian Europe Hayyuj's tri-letter root theory. Ibn Ezra also introduced the decimal system to Jews living in the Christian world. He used the Hebrew alef to tet for 1-9, but added a special sign to indicate zero. He then placed the tens to the left of the digits in the usual way. Ibn Ezra's most famous work was his commentary on the Bible. Unlike Rashi, Ibn Ezra didn't want to use midrash in his explanations. He concentrated on the grammar and literal meaning of the text. His most controversial beliefs were all couched in very careful language; scholars suspect that Ibn Ezra did not believe that the Torah was written by Moses on Mount Sinai. He found seams and grammatical problems which indicated that the Torah was written over a period of time. He didn't dare proclaim this opinion openly; it would have meant his death. However, there are hints of his suspicions within his commentary. He carefully used the phrase, "And the intelligent will understand" whenever he discussed a controversial insight.

### **Sefer Hachinuch**

"Sefer HaChinuch" is a unique work in many ways. Firstly, it was published anonymously and scholars throughout the ages have not succeeded in unearthing the humble author. The book dates to 13th century Spain and is a comprehensive description of the 613 commandments, arranged according to their appearance in the Pentateuch. The description of each commandment includes (a) the concept of the Mitzvah and its Biblical source, (b) the philosophical underpinnings of the commandment, and (c) a brief summary of the laws governing its observance. An English translation of this important work is available.

([www.hillel.org](http://www.hillel.org))

(over)

## **Midrash Tanchuma**

*Midrash* comes from a Hebrew root which means "to search out, to investigate." Thus, this is a Jewish method of exegesis which sought to discover deeper meanings in the text beyond the literal one. Since the rabbis greatly venerated every letter of the Hebrew Scriptures as of Divine origin, every detail was seen to be significant. There are many different collections of Midrash. Sometimes Midrash is used with the legal portions of the Torah (*halacha*) and sometimes it is used with the non-legal portions (*aggadah*), such as stories about the main protagonists in the Bible. Midrash Tanchuma is a collection of *aggadic* midrash. Different Midrashim were written down at different times, over a period of almost a thousand years, from 300 - 1200 CE. The compilers of the different collections of Midrash are generally unknown.

## **The Associated Press (AP)**

In May 1848, 10 men representing six highly competitive New York newspapers met to discuss pooling resources to collect the latest news from Europe. The newspapers at that time competed by sending reporters out in rowboats to meet the ships as they arrived in New York harbor. Competition had grown fierce and too expensive—the time for a news cooperative had come. It was named The Associated Press.

The Associated Press cooperative was effective. Its roots quickly spread, from one correspondent in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to correspondents in the United States in Boston, Philadelphia, Washington and later to the Midwest. By the end of the 20th century, the AP is sending more than 20 million words per day. As technology improves the way AP collects and disseminates news, the number of bureaus swells to cover every state and statehouse in the United States and more than 90 bureaus overseas. Some 3,500 AP staff members help serve 15,000 news outlets in more than 110 countries.

(www.ap.org)

## ***This week's teacher:***

### **Shira Hannah Fischer**

**shira@post.harvard.edu**

Shira Fischer is an avid ice-cream eater, philologist, and Torah chanter. In her spare time, she works for the National Academy of Sciences and teaches at the Melton Adult Mini-School at the DCJCC. She spent last year in Israel as a Dorot Fellow, studying Jewish texts at the Conservative Yeshiva, the Hartman Institute, and Hebrew University. Along with her long-time hevruta (study partner), Erin Leib, Shira is a founding mother of the DC Beit Midrash.

## ***This week's food sponsor:***

### **Matt Horowitz**

## ***This week's food shlepper:***

### **Jeremy N. Kadden**

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Wanna teach, think about teaching, or suggest a teacher? [jnovoy@post.harvard.edu](mailto:jnovoy@post.harvard.edu)

Wanna sponsor food? [Ariellabock@hotmail.com](mailto:Ariellabock@hotmail.com)

Questions, feedback, wanna join our email list? Anything else? Email [DCBeitMidrash@hotmail.com](mailto:DCBeitMidrash@hotmail.com)

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