



### Chag HaPesah

In last week's Parasha, we learn about the laws of someone who the Kohen has identified as having Tzaraat on their body. While many translations call Tzaraat "leprosy," the Torah actually calls Tzaraat a "plague" from the Hebrew root "Nun, Gimmel, Ayin" (Vayikra 14:4). This same root is otherwise used in the Torah only in the context of the death of the firstborn of Egypt, when we brought the Korban Pesah (Shemot 11:1). The Ramban suggests that there is an inherent connection between the purification process of someone with Tzaraat and the Mitzvah of Korban Pesach. Both of these Mitzvot serve as a vehicle of rehabilitation; one on the personal level, the other on the national level.

The Metzora has done something in his community to cause him to be cut off. He has either spoken Lashon Ha'ra (slander) against someone else to lower them in his eyes or he has shown haughtiness in order to raise himself up in the eyes of others. After the Kohen identifies Tzaraat on someone's body, the Metzora is removed from the camp. Then the Metzora must go through a process of purification. This involves taking two birds. One bird is *killed* and its blood is spilled into a basin of water. Then a hyssop plant, a scarlet thread, and a piece of cedar wood are dipped into this basin of blood. The other bird is then *set free*. After the Metzora is returned to the camp he still must remain outside of his house for seven days.

According to the Ramban (Sefer Vayikra 14:4), the process of purifying someone with Tzaraat reflects the same elements and ideas of the Korban Pesah.

After years of being immersed in an Egyptian society of Avoda Zara (idolatry), the Jewish people were finally ready to be set free by Hashem. After being commanded to slaughter a sheep, a hyssop plant was then to be dipped into the blood and used to paint the doorposts of the home. After the Firstborn of Egypt were killed on the night of Pesah, and the B'nei Yisrael emerged from their homes alive, they were set free and given the Torah by Hashem. To commemorate our freedom, and our commitment to serving Hashem, we celebrate Pesah as an eternal remembrance of what Hashem did for us, and we "cut ourselves off" from any idolatrous identity. We remove Chametz from our homes for seven days and become closer to Hashem through the Mitzvot of the Chag.

What the Ramban is explaining is that while the Metzora is being rehabilitated on a personal level, the entire B'nei Yisrael was rehabilitated on a national level on the night of Pesach. Just like the Metzora must allow a side of himself that sinned to be reborn, so too were the B'nei Yisrael reborn on the night of Pesach. While one nation of Egyptians perished because of their attachment to their idolatrous values, another nation of slaves emerged as *Hashem's* firstborn. *One bird is killed, the other flies free...* Just like the Metzora lets go of his *personal* identity of haughtiness and slander, reconnecting to his community after seven days, so too do the B'nei Yisrael let go of our *national* identity as slaves to idolatry and the securities of the physical world, as we attach ourselves to Hashem -the only true source of security in this world.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Kasher V'Sameach,

Rabbi Schwartz

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