

May 3, 2025 Tazria Metzora  
Leviticus 12:1 - 15:33  
English Reading Leviticus 14:33-15:33  
Dale Brown & Dale Lupu

D'var torah by Dale Brown:

Tazria Metzora , this passage, describes handling of situations where impurity could enter the community through childbirth, skin disease, the appearance of “an eruptive plague upon a house”, bodily discharge, (for males a discharge from his member and for females a discharge of blood).

The drash contains detailed descriptions of what should be done which I will not go over because you just heard them.

I think it is important to note however that not only is the person who has the skin eruption or bodily eruption considered impure, but whatever they touch- and then who ever touches the thing that they touch is considered impure. And has to follow detailed instructions to regain their purity. It sort of reminds me of cooties when I was a child.

So what on earth was I to do with this section of the Torah? I read the commentary- and then I went to the Fabrangen website which has a section of Fabrangener's drashes from the past and discovered that [David Goldston had done an excellent one in 2023](#).

He starts by saying that he feels sorry for anyone who gets this portion for his Bar or Bat Mitzvah. This got me worried. Why on earth had he given it to me?

Then he points out that the purpose of these rules is to keep the community functioning in the face of a Tu muh, ritual impurity. He points out that in order to keep the community functioning, ritual objects and places cannot lose their sanctity. And the torah protects that ritual sanctity through clear rules that are known to

anyone. So the priests have to use their judgement, but in a way that is “transparent” and clear to everyone. This is what we would call the “rule of law” today and was a major advance. And there was just a demonstration last Sunday defending the rule of law where lawyers retook their oath and gathered to strengthen their resolve to maintain the rule of law in this country.

I had the brilliant idea of just borrowing his drash. I thought about it and tried to figure out a way to change it just enough to make it sort of legitimately my own. Then I started calculating who would have been at the service in 2023 and considered pretending it was my idea.

Well, I rapidly realized that I'd bring plagiarism, a major sin, right into our sanctuary. and would be a clear example of sin- and maybe ritual impurity to say the slightest. So I decided to bring his drash to all of you and I have copies. They will be on the Kiddush table.

I gave up on the plagiarism idea and instead started thinking about the possibility of making an analogy between purifying a house that has a plague and either our houses- and certainly there are many “houses” in the United States right now which we desperately need to purify. Well.....the commentary said that some sages doubted that the appearance of a plague on a house ever happened and that they consigned it to a distant past.

I gave up on all of these ideas and instead started thinking about purity. The Torah is talking about ritual impurity Tu'umah - but when I think about purity, I think about it as an old fashioned word. I think about sexual purity and virginity. I think about cleanliness being next to Godliness. Sometimes I find myself thinking about being completely sin-free—a pure soul who somehow managed to spend a day doing nothing wrong and only being sweet and kindly and generous.

Fortunately, Dale Lupu and I were doing the drash together and we had set a time to talk about it. She had read the portion and told me her interpretation. Purity is actually bringing ourselves back to

our actual nature, our soul which Hashem gives back to us every morning in its pure and unsullied state. So she asked me what she will ask us- what do I do to bring myself back? How do I restore myself when I am impure?

Well, you've already seen an example of some of that. I frequently talk myself out of impure and sinful ideas. And I often talk to someone else and by talking it through, am bought back to my better self.

Religious ritual is also helpful. One of the parts of the ritual of purifying a house of a plague is setting a live bird free outside the city in the open country. When I read this in the parsha, I thought of what we used to do during Yom Kippur.

For several years, we took homing pigeons and symbolically put our sins on the pigeon. Then we would take them outside and let them free. They would fly home and the children would cheer and they loved it. As an adult, I would watch them and it really did seem like my sins went away as I watched that pigeon become a small dot in space.

I also found, at least in my 20's and 30's, that our high holy day services led me to some wonderful spiritual experiences where I did in fact turn away from sin and give them up.

Tashlich, watching bread crumbs dissolve makes me feel that my sins are dissolving.

Shabbat restores me to my real self. I light the candles and completely relax. I often have what I call "Shabbat letdown." One Friday night, I was so tired I sat unmoving on the couch. When I went to bed, I slept really deeply and when I woke up, I was restored- no longer irritable, and very calm.

We think this portion is really about how we restore ourselves to holiness, how we dissolve the impurities we have in ourselves and become our real selves - So here are your questions.

## Questions

What are the best practices we have found to restore ourselves to wholeness?

How do we handle it when we feel that we have distanced ourselves from wholeness and want to get back?

### Meditation Exercise: Dale Lupu

After Dale Brown spoke, Dale Lupu led the congregation in a breathing exercise. She explained that one way she understood purity was as a way of coming back into balance - and that the breathing exercise was one way that she came back to balance. In the Torah portion, most of the purity rituals involved pairs of objects. In the same way, breathing has in in-breath and an out-breath. She led a meditation that brought the people who practiced it back to a more "pure" state. After that, the Torah discussion commenced.