

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter XXVII: Tazria (Lev. 12:1–13:59)

Essay 8. Minimizing the priest's inconvenience

פְּסוּק "וְהוּבָא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן", וְכִתִּיב אַחֲרָיו "וַיֵּצֵא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־מַחֻזְן לַמַּחֲנֶה", וּפִירֵשׁ רַש"י חוּץ לְשִׁלּוּשָׁה מַחֲנוֹת וְכוּ'. וְאִם כֵּן קָשָׁה דְאִידָּךְ קָאָמַר "וְהוּבָא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן" אִם עֲדִיין הוּא אֲסוּר לִיכְנֹס וְאֶדְרַבָּא צָרִיךְ שֶׁהַכֹּהֵן יֵצֵא לְחוּץ כְּדֵי לְרְאוּתוֹ.

Verse[s] read: “This shall be the ritual for a *metzora*¹ on the day that he is to be purified. **When he has been brought to the priest, the priest shall go outside the camp . . .**” (Lev. 14:2-3). **Rashi explained** the words “go outside the camp”: “**Outside the three camps**² to where [the *metzora*] had been sent during the days he was decidedly a *metzora*.” **If so, it is difficult to understand how it says, “when he has been brought to the priest,”** who is presumably in the camp, **if [the *metzora*] is still forbidden to enter the camp until after he is purified, and to the contrary, it is necessary for the priest to go outside the camp in order to see [the *metzora*].**³

וְגַם לומר שְׁדִין הַמְצוּרָע הוּא לִישָׁב חוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה דְהֵינּוּ חוּץ מִכָּל הָעֵיִרוֹת הַמוֹקְפוֹת חוּמָה. אֲבָל לַפְעָמִים אֲפֹשֶׁר שִׁקְבַע דִּירְתוֹ חוּץ מִהַעִיר בְּמָקוֹם רְחוֹק וְלַפְעָמִים בְּמָקוֹם קְרוֹב. וְהַכֹּהֵן הוּא מְחויֵיב כְּשִׁיקְרָאוּהוּ לְרְאוּת אֶת הַמְצוּרָע לְהִזְקֵק לוֹ תִּיכְף וּמִידָּךְ כְּמוֹ שֶׁפִּסְק הָרַמְבַּ"ם (בְּפָרָק ט' מֵהַלְכוֹת טוֹמְאָת צָרַעַת).

The Torah and Rashi were referring to the Israelite encampments in the wilderness. When we shift to talking about the halacha in the Land of Israel, then **it must be said that the law of the *metzora* is to dwell outside the camp, that is, outside all the cities surrounded by a wall.**⁴ **But sometimes he may determine his dwelling place outside the city in a distant place and sometimes in a close place. The priest is obligated, when he is called, to see the *metzora* immediately and without delay, as the Rambam ruled (in chapter 9, halacha 11, of the Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Impurity of Tzara'at).**

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¹ A *metzora* is a person afflicted with a skin disease, *tzara'at*. Many English translations refer to the skin disease as leprosy and to the person afflicted as a leper. However, this skin disease was not related to leprosy. Rather, it was considered a physical manifestation of a spiritual ailment.

² The three camps refer to: a) the camp of the Shechinah, in which the sanctuary is situated, b) the Levite camp, and c) the camp of Israel, where the ordinary Israelites encamped.

³ The Hebrew literally reads “when he/it has been brought to the priest,” and some translations avoid the problem by interpreting, “when [the report] has been brought to the priest” that the *metzora* is ready for purification. Here, though, the Zera Shimshon reads the Scripture as “when [the *metzora*] has been brought to the priest.

⁴ Keilim 1:7; Rashi Megillah 10b; Tosafot in Arachin 32b.

ואם כן הנייתי אומר שצאף פִּשְׁקָבַע דִּירְתוֹ רְחוֹק מִהָעִיר יִהְיֶה מְחַוֵּיב הַפֶּהָן לִילָף אַחֲרָיו עַד הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר הוּא שָׂם. מִשּׁוֹם הַכִּי קָא מִשְׁמַע לָן קָרָא שְׁמִתְחִלָּה יְבִיאוּ אֶת הַמְצוֹרָע עַד סְמוּךְ לָעִיר, שְׁהַפֶּהָן אֵין לוֹ חַיִּיב אֲלָא לְצֵאת חוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְלֹא יוֹמֵר.

If so, I could have said that even when he has established his dwelling far from the city, the priest would be obliged to follow him to the place where he is. Because of this possible misunderstanding, Scripture teaches us that at first, they will bring the *metzora* adjacent to the city, so that the priest has no obligation but to go just outside the camp, and no further.

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