

Tazria

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The laws of spiritual impurity do not have much relevance today for us since we are not really impacted by them. Without a Temple, and without a red heifer with which to purify ourselves, we live in a state of *tumas meis*, impurity from the dead, the most severe form of all.

That doesn't mean we can unnecessarily add to it, which is why *kobanim* still do not go into cemeteries or hospitals (unless they have to). And people still go to the *mikvah* to increase their level of purity even though, practically speaking, that doesn't seem possible.

On the other hand, the *Gemora* says that if a person tries to do a *mitzvah* but is prevented from doing so for uncontrollable reasons, it is counted as if they were successful anyhow (*Brochos* 6a). This would mean that going to the *mikvah* to increase purity could actually do that, on some level, from Heaven's point of view. As it also says, "Someone who comes to purify themselves, they help" (*Yoma* 38b), that is, Heaven helps them succeed at the *mitzvah*.

There is another point to keep in mind, and that is the impact that spiritual impurity has on a person's ability to see truth and live by it. Though you can't see spiritual impurity, you can definitely see its effect from the direction of a person, society, or even the entire world. It is spiritual impurity that makes good look like bad, and vice versa.

As Rebi Alexandri said upon concluding his *Shemonah Esrai*:

"Master of the Universe, it is known full well to You that we desire to perform Your will. What prevents us? The *yeast in the dough* and the oppression of nations."
(*Brochos* 17a)

That is, were it not for the *yetzer hara*, the "yeast" in the dough, our bodies, we would gladly serve God all day long. It's what our souls live for.

But a soul is spiritual and can only overcome the body with acts of will. The body is

physical and our *yetzer haras*, more like bodily instincts, have direct access to it. Where this is a will, there is a way to overcome the *yetzer bara*. Where there is little or no will, the body will just go where it is comfortable.

And just as we are encouraged to be good or bad, depending upon whom we are with at the time, the body is more susceptible to anti-God behavior when exposed to impurity. Just take a look at how Jews behaved when they were in the presence of the golden calf, which is what its builders, the *Erev Rav*, had planned.

It's what they *always* plan, or at least their ministering angel, Armilus. Battles are physically fought on Earth, but they originate in Heaven. And though the angels know the score and what to do, the people they oversee usually do not, and think they are acting as they do for other reasons, even *noble* reasons when the opposite is true.

This is why a person who chooses to do something more "liberal" or "progressive" needs to ask themselves beforehand, "Will this increase God-consciousness, or reduce it?" If the answer is truly the first, then they can act according to Torah and can expect Heavenly assistance. If the answer is no, then obviously they need to find a better path. If they go ahead with their plan anyhow or don't ask the question in the first place, they will become even more encased in spiritual impurity and will become more desensitized to their errors in judgment.

That's how people we would have thought would never stray from Torah do. We're not talking about people who obviously never had a connection to God and Torah, but people whom we took to be devoted to both. Just like a loving couple doesn't start to fight without some divisive reason, people don't stop loving God and Torah unless a spirit of impurity enters them.

The *Gemora* calls it a "spirit of insanity" (*Sotah* 3a). But what the *Gemora* means is out of touch with reality, the definition of insanity. It refers to people with twisted ideas about what life should be about and how it should be lived. . . people who have become intellectually corrupted and spiritually dead.

That part of spiritual impurity still impacts us today, *big time*. So we have to do our best to reduce the spiritual impurity around us as much as possible, and pray to God for help to do the rest because, "Someone who comes to purify themselves, they help."

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