

"And the kohen shall look and behold, the affliction has covered his entire flesh, then he shall declare the affliction to be pure; having turned completely white, it is pure." (13:13)

The Commentators have offered many explanations in order to rationalize this perplexing *halacha*. Indeed, if the white plague area covers as much as ninety-nine percent of the body, the individual is deemed *tameh*, contaminated. The moment the affliction reaches its climax of one hundred percent coverage of the body, the person becomes *tahor*, clean. One would venture to say that this law is simply inconsistent with reality. Does one become *tahor* as soon as he is completely *tameh*?

Horav Shimon Schwab, z.l., cites the *Talmud's* exposition on this *pasuk* and offers a profound explanation. In *Sanhedrin 97a* Chazal comment that *Moshiach* will arrive only after the governments of the world become totally heretical. Apostasy filling the world is the cue for *Moshiach's* advent. This *pasuk* is cited as basis for the statement. Just as total *tumah* brings about *taharah*, so, too, will total iconoclasm effect the coming of *Moshiach*.

Horav Schwab lends the following insight into *Chazal's* mystifying statement: *Tumah*, impurity, receives its sustaining power from *taharah*, purity. If no source of purity exists, not even a miniscule amount, *tumah* can not be nurtured. The rationale behind this concept is simple: evil in a pure form cannot exist. It is only able to "survive" if it thrives on good. We find a similar idea regarding *sheker*, falsehood. We are taught that *ohkdr uk iht rea*, "falsehood has no legs/foundation." Deception cannot endure unless it is nourished on some form of truth. We find an example of this in the story of the *meraglim*, Jewish spies, who returned from *Eretz Yisrael*. They first lauded *Eretz Yisrael* as a "land flowing with milk and honey," before they proceeded to misrepresent the facts. They "coated" their disparaging comments about the Holy Land with some truth. Otherwise, their flagrant deception would have been too conspicuous.

This same idea applies to the advent of *Moshiach*. Once the entire government surrenders totally to heresy, it must disintegrate, since there is no source of *taharah* from which it can be sustained. A *malchus rishah*, evil kingdom, that becomes consummately evil, will vanish as smoke dissipates. This is derived from the *halacha* of *tzaraas*. Once the plague manifests itself over the entire body, the *metzora* becomes clean, since this *tumah* has reached its climax.

Horav Eli Munk, z.l., offers a practical explanation of *Chazal's* statement. Hashem's salvation is closest to man when man's ordeal reaches its greatest intensity. The turning point in man's destiny comes when his affliction reaches its apex. This may be noted from *geulas Mitzrayim*, the redemption from Egypt. *Klal Yisrael's* sinking to the lowest level of *tumah* precipitated the immediate *geulah*. Once the *tumah* has spread over the *metzora's* entire body the ultimate climax of his affliction has been attained. The time has arrived for his purification process to begin.