

## Parashah Tazria

The one that talks about matters related to human birth, skin diseases, and the importance of cleanliness in the ancient Israelite community.

**The Parashah begins by discussing the laws concerning a woman who has given birth.** After giving birth, a woman is considered ritually impure for a specified time, which varies depending on whether she has given birth to a male or female child, twice as long for a girl as for a boy. She is required to bring offerings (including a sin offering!) to the Tabernacle (Mishkan in Hebrew) at the end of this period.

**The majority of Parashah Tazria is dedicated to the identification and purification process for individuals with skin diseases,** often translated as "leprosy" in older texts. A priest (though one without any medical qualifications), known as a Kohen, examines the sick person and the symptoms to find out if they have a contagious skin condition. The sick person is isolated from the community and undergoes a purification process, including sacrifices and ritual washing. This parashah shows the importance of quarantine and public health measures in ancient times.

**The role of the priest (Kohen) is emphasized throughout the Parashah,** highlighting his responsibility in diagnosing and pronouncing people or objects as pure or impure. This shows the priestly role between the people and the Divine in matters of ritual purity.

**Parashah Tazria deals not only with physical cleanliness, but also keeping spiritual purity** and the need to make things right and use cleansing rituals to be accepted within the community.

## Teen Takeaways from Parashah Tazria

1. **Being clean inside and out:** Parashah Tazria talks about staying clean both physically and spiritually. It reminds us that taking care of our bodies and our thoughts is important. When we do this, we can feel closer to our beliefs and values. The priest was involved in this because our spiritual health is just as important as our physical health!
2. **Actions have consequences:** Just like in real life, the portion shows that our actions have consequences. It's a reminder that what we do matters and can affect our relationships and our connection with our faith. Try to have someone you can talk to when something is bothering you, and be that person for someone else.
3. **Supporting one other:** The portion teaches us that we should support one other, especially during tough times. In our community, it's important to be there for friends and family when they need help or when they're going through difficult situations.
4. **Watch your words:** Parashah Tazria talks about the power of our words. It reminds us to be careful with what we say, such as by avoiding gossip and hurtful talk. Our words can impact others deeply, so it's crucial to use them wisely.
5. **Symbols and meanings:** This part of the Torah uses symbols and metaphors to tell stories. It's a reminder that sometimes stories have deeper meanings and that we should think about the lessons behind them. We sometimes find the stories hard to believe, but truth comes in many forms. Perhaps when we are reading stories that seem unbelievable, we should ask ourselves what the message underlying the story is. That is the deeper, more important truth!
6. **Following rules:** Parashah Tazria emphasizes that following the rules set by our faith is essential. Even when some rules may seem strange, they're part of our tradition and identity, and they help us stay connected to our beliefs. But we always have the right to ask questions, and we should. In the end we may end up with a more sophisticated understanding and a more mature faith.

## Summary

Remember that these are lessons that can help **guide you in your faith and life**, but everyone's interpretation and understanding may vary. It's always a **good idea to discuss these ideas with your family, friends, or religious leaders** to gain a deeper understanding.