

Psychosomatic (Tazria)

Psychosomatic: adjective: *Psychological cause of physical symptoms or disorder.*

Science has demonstrated that one's mental state can have a direct and negative effect on one's physical well-being. Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Prague, the Kli Yakar (1550-1619) on Leviticus 13:2 states that a person's health may reflect their spiritual condition.

The biblical disease known as 'tzaraat' and commonly mistranslated as leprosy (the only common denominator is, that both are skin conditions) is rabbinically attributed to the act of gossiping. The Kli Yakar adds two more character faults: haughtiness and avarice.

He explains that a function of disease is to bring to the surface various spiritual and character maladies. The Kli Yakar might have called it "Spirituosomatic". He connects the three character defects to the three types of 'tzaraat':

'se'et' = elevated. Whoever is arrogant, whoever aims to raise himself above his fellow; this inner demon is brought to light.

'sapachat' = secondary. The Kli Yakar quotes Maimonides ('The Eight Chapters') that of all one's acquisitions (wisdom, bravery, and positive traits) money is secondary and does not penetrate one's persona as other acquisitions. Whoever is money-hungry – eventually his body will show it.

'baheret' = whiten. When one gossips, he eventually shames his fellow man, 'whitening' his face. The gossip too will suffer the same fate.

Hence the disease is also called 'metzora' from the Hebrew 'motze' and 'ra', meaning to bring out the bad.

May we clean up our spiritual acts before they show on our bodies.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

Dedication

*To the birth of our granddaughter, Hila Renana Spitz, to Zavi and Elchanan.
Mazal Tov!*