

# THE ELUSIVE QUALITY OF PURITY

**M**any think that purity means a total separation from the full experience of life. Or there are those who, in their zealotry for purity, are terrified of life. Some, despairing of ever attaining purity, turn their backs on it. There are still others who sincerely desire purity, yet because of the confusion that abounds in the world, are led to the most impure places. The truth is, goodness, happiness, and living a fully satisfying life are synonymous with purity. If we could just remove the barriers that prevent true spiritual perception, we would realize that there is nothing our soul craves more than purity. However, we live in a world of free choice, which means that the existence of purity implies that there is also impurity. Impurity is what stands between us and anything truly good, preventing us from feeling our own innate spark of holiness. What is purity, and how can we attain it?

Purity is the restoration of the original pristine condition of the soul, and reflects a spiritual level that is subtle and refined. It is characterized by a clear and settled mind, order, pleasantness and joy – a state of inner calm that is alien to most of us in today's world. Only through purity are we capable of bonding with holiness, coming close to the Divine, and attaining the deepest most fulfilling spiritual connection. Purity is important for the entire world as well: It is a prerequisite for the descent of *shefa*, the Divine influx of abundance. When the Temple stood in Jerusalem, purity was a central factor in our life, since the Holy of Holies contained the point from which all blessing flowed into the world. The sweetness of those days existed because the Jewish people were able to maintain a high level of purity through the Temple service. As a result, their relationship with God was much closer and more intimate. Every Jew yearns to return to this state.

The problem is that if we allow impurity to overwhelm us, the subtle voice of purity recedes and becomes fainter, until we lose the sensitivity to recognize it. Then it is possible to doubt that it even exists – but it is the source of our very life and vitality.

God knows we live in a physical world, which means an existence that vacillates between purity and impurity. Thus, the Torah was given as the only compass to guide us through the cycles of pure and impure states inevitable in a material world. It gives us the ability to distinguish between the two realms. This is crucial knowledge, since nothing hinders blessing and connection to God more than impurity. However,



impurity can only grasp onto the physical, the external dimension, because in the highest worlds, which are solely spiritual, impurity has no existence.

Impurity is related to disorder, as when things don't go our way. It is also linked to all traits that assert ego: anger, arrogance, and their branches. One way a person's level of purity can be detected is through his or her personality traits. All obstacles and delays to serving God come as a result of impurity, which enclothes the soul like unclean garments. One of the most difficult aspects of *teshuvah* involves the work of removing these spiritual garments and acquiring beautiful clean clothes for the soul.

### THE ORIGIN OF PURITY

Rebbe Nachman teaches that purity has existed in the world since the beginning of Creation (*Likutey Moharan* 51). Before the world was created, the designation "pure" was irrelevant, since there was nothing but God's singular and Infinite Light – complete goodness. The moment Creation emerged, with the potential for evil as well as good, purity also came into being. Thus, purity is bound up with our ability to choose between good and evil: to connect "upward" towards God, the Infinite Source of goodness and holiness, or "downward" into physicality – a dead end. Purity stands as the midpoint between holiness and impurity. Through this point, impurity can be rectified and restored to holiness. However, this process depends upon our power of free choice.

Purity is also related to the unity of Creation, because when everything is unified, free will is nullified and the concept of purity ceases to exist. Everything is then holy and above duality, as before Creation. It is only when we are far from Oneness that evil and impurity emerge.

### PURITY AND DAAT

Knowledge and awareness of God's unity in Creation is called *Daat*. Purity is intrinsic to *Daat*, since only through a pure and holy mind, can we be open to this level of perception. Furthermore, the intellect is actually a vital element in purifying our physical bodies: when the mind is in charge of the body, instead of the opposite, a person can purify himself through his thoughts and actions. It is through this *Daat* that we will be redeemed in the future.





## PURITY AND MIKVEH

There is another dimension to the purification process: water. Since the Torah describes water as preceding the ten Divine sayings through which the world was created, it is fundamental to all Creation. Through water, we are able to link ourselves to our Source. This is because water is connected to deep knowledge of God's unity – *Daat*. Purity is attained through the water of the mikveh. Ultimately, all impurity is cleansed through immersing in a mikveh; it is the final step before redemption from all physical and spiritual problems. Since all impurity results from thinking that this world is the only one, it can be nullified when the whole body is immersed in the mikveh's water. Through entering the mikveh and closing your eyes to this world, you are merged with *Daat* and the World to Come. For the moment your physical body is hidden beneath the water's surface, you become nullified and bound to the dimension of "before Creation" – the mystery of God's unity.

Since the water of the mikveh is connected to the realm above, it possesses the power to transform us into a new spiritual creation with every immersion. It is also able to release a tremendous flow of blessing and healing into the world. Thus, Rebbe Nachman teaches that mikveh saves from all troubles (*Likutey Moharan* 56:7). Mikveh is also an essential means for *teshuvah*, since it removes obstacles and opens up the path of return.

Purity is the key to a fulfilling and rewarding existence in this world. On the simplest level, we need to utilize our power of free choice by turning aside from evil and impurity and directing ourselves towards goodness, wherever it may be found. Because we have the Torah as a guide, there doesn't need to be confusion with each step we take. Furthermore, leading a pure life doesn't mean removing oneself from life; rather it means making confident choices in the right direction.

In the future, evil, opposition and tears are destined to be eliminated. This will come about through a revelation of *Daat*. God's unity will be perceived by all humankind, and the spirit of impurity will be removed completely from the earth (Zechariah 13:2). Then, "God will be One and His Name One."

May we see it soon and in our days, *Amen*. 

