

This week's torah portion is M'tzarah- ew. As many of you know, the parashah is about impurities, rituals, and a whole bunch of cleaning and washing- just up my mom's alley.

Back then, they did these rituals to keep everyone clean, pure, safe and healthy. But the rituals also took on a more important entity. A rebirth, a new beginning. After being sick, or more importantly, impure, a trip to the mikvah and a few sacrificial birds were all it took to be clean, shiny and new, once again. Nowadays, its just not that easy.

The halls of high schools are some of the most impure places to be. Not only are the "impurities" mentioned in M'tzarah probably happening all around you, but emotional impurities occur too. Worst of all, there isn't a mikvah that will wash the impressions you've made away. Gossip- lashon hora, spreads like wildfire. It can taint the reputation of anybody in its path. The one who spreads it, the one who receives it, and the one who is talked about. If a really juicy and ugly rumor spreads starring you, 2 turtle doves wont grant you atonement from your peers. And 7 days spent outside of camp will only draw more attention to you.

As an expert, working on location, I can assure all of you that the best way to stay emotionally pure is to stay away from the impurities. Like M'tzarah says, if someone is unclean, then so renders others in contact with him, his bed, his seat and his saddle. If you shy away from spreading rumors, listening to rumors and engaging in other emotional impurities, there is no way that you yourself can become unclean.

I ask of you this week to watch what you say, and what others say around you. Try to stay pure, and keep your peers pure too. It is hard not to engage in lashon hora, but if you stay pure, then that's a lot less doves and sheep we'll have to sacrifice. And this time of year, the mikvah is pretty cold.