

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT TAZRIA-METZORA · 3 IYAR 5764 · APR. 24, 2004 · VOL. 11 NO. 27

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Tazria

SO FAR AWAY

“The Kohen shall look, and behold! — the affliction has covered his entire flesh, then he will declare the affliction to be pure” (13:13).

Tzara’at, frequently mistranslated as leprosy, was a disease caused by spiritual defects, such as speaking *lashon hara* (slander). (Nowadays we are on such a low level spiritually that our bodies do not reflect the state of our spiritual health in this way.)

The verse here is puzzling for if “the affliction has covered the entire flesh” of the person that must mean that he is far from pure, and yet the Torah tells us that the *Kohen* shall “declare the affliction pure”. How can he be pure if the affliction covers his whole body?

The answer is that he is so far from being cured, having ignored all the warnings to do *teshuvah* repentance, that the disease ceases to perform any further purpose. Thus the Torah specifically says not that the *Kohen* shall declare him pure, rather that “the affliction is pure” — he, on the other hand, is as far from purity as is possible.

• Based on the *Ha’amek Davar* and Rabbi S. R. Hirsch

Metzora

BOOMERANG

“...and he shall be brought to the Kohen.” (14:3).

When a person speaks *lashon hara* it indicates that he has no concept of the power of speech; that he considers words to be insignificant in comparison to actions. As the nursery rhyme says “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. When a person speaks evil, he awakes a prosecutor in Heaven, not only against the target of his speech, but also against himself. An angel stands by the side of each of us recording our every word. In order to teach those who speak slander the power of just one word, the Torah instructs that the offender be brought to the *Kohen*. But, even as he is on his way to the *Kohen*, his body covered with *tzara’at* for all to see, and until the *Kohen* actually pronounces the word “Impure!” he is still considered totally pure. Similarly, he cannot regain his former status, although his disease has healed completely, until the *Kohen* again pronounces him to be spiritually pure. From this, the speaker of *lashon hara* is taught to reflect on the power of each and every word. For with one word he can be made an outcast, and with one word he can be redeemed.

• Based on *Ohel Yaakov*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Tazria

The Torah commands a woman to bring a *korban* after the birth of a child. A son is to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. The Torah introduces the phenomenon of *tzara’at* (often mistranslated as leprosy) — a miraculous affliction that attacks people, clothing and buildings to awaken a person to spiritual failures. A *kohen* must be consulted to determine whether a particular mark is *tzara’at* or not. The *kohen* isolates the sufferer for a week. If the malady remains unchanged, confinement continues for a second week, after which the *kohen* decides the person’s status. The Torah describes the different forms of *tzara’at*. One whose *tzara’at* is confirmed wears torn clothing, does not cut his hair, and must alert others that he is ritually impure. He may not have normal contact with people. The phenomenon of *tzara’at* on clothing is described in detail.

Metzora

The Torah describes the procedure for a *metzora* (a person afflicted with *tzara’at*) upon conclusion of his isolation. This process extends for a week and involves *korbanot* and immersions in the *mikveh*. Then, a *kohen* must pronounce the *metzora* pure. A *metzora* of limited financial means may substitute lesser offerings for the more expensive animals. Before a *kohen* diagnoses that a house has *tzara’at*, household possessions are removed to prevent them from also being declared ritually impure. The *tzara’at* is removed by smashing and rebuilding that section of the house. If it reappears, the entire building must be razed. The Torah details those bodily secretions that render a person spiritually impure, thereby preventing his contact with holy items, and the Torah defines how one regains a state of ritual purity.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

In anticipation of the 56th birthday of the State of Israel which is being celebrated in a few days, we present a quote from Prime Minister Ariel Sharon which was sent to us by Dr. Max Glassman of Toronto and Jerusalem and was included in an address he gave at an Ohr Somayach Forest Hill Toronto Dinner honoring him on his eightieth birthday.

“The problem started with our generation. Because we were the sons and daughters of rebels we had no Judaism in our upbringing whatsoever. The result was that our generation in a way lost its roots, the first to have done so. What did we know about Jewish wisdom? What did we know about Jewish contributions to the world or about the Jewish presence here in Israel? Very little. Were we taught to be proud that we were Jews, descendants of those Jews who through the ages had fought to the death for their beliefs? No, we were not taught these things. Instead, with our generation there was an attempt to create not Jews but New

Israel Men and Women. In the process we were disconnected from those earlier generations whose Jewishness was inscribed in their hearts.

Would you say that the average Israeli citizen is proud of being a Jew? I don't think so. One can be proud only of what one knows, not of what one does not know. And we, unfortunately, do not know. I was born in Israel. I had all my education here from kindergarten through university. But what did I and others of my generation learn in all those years of schooling that might have made us proud of our Jewishness?

Reaffirming the identity between Israel and Judaism seems to me a prerequisite for survival. Not that all Israelis have to become Orthodox, but that first of all this country must be a Jewish state and Jews must be proud that it is Jewish and they are Jewish.”

Happy Birthday, Dr. Glassman,
Happy Birthday Israel Forever.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

WHY HE STAYED OVERNIGHT

One of the many touching stories told about the late, great Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, *zatzal*, deals with the mystery surrounding the reason why this Torah giant stayed overnight in Tel Aviv, away from the sacred Jerusalem where he was born and lived all his life.

It was on the occasion of the wedding of his nephew, an orphan from both parents, who became his charge. Rabbi Auerbach led him to the *chuppa* which took place in Tel Aviv and stayed overnight in that city. The nephew, who later became the rabbi of the Ramat Chen community in Tel Aviv, did not understand why his uncle did this very uncharacteristic thing until the day that he himself arranged a wed-

ding for an orphaned *chatan*.

“I hope you will conduct yourself with this orphaned *chatan* as I did with you,” cautioned his uncle.

When the nephew failed to comprehend the hint, his uncle explained. A *chatan* and a *kalla* receive many beautiful gifts at their wedding, and one of their happiest moments is when they can show off the gifts to their parents. Since the orphaned *chatan* had no parents to whom he could show those gifts, his uncle, with the proper sensitivity of a great Torah scholar, stayed overnight so that he could provide the newly married couple with this special *simcha*.

לע"נ

הרה"ח ר' דוד בן הרה"ח ר' אהרון ז"ל
ומרת לאה בת ר' שמואל ע"ה
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

Tazria

1. When does a woman who has given birth to a son go to the *mikveh*?
2. After a woman gives birth, she is required to offer two types of offerings. Which are they?
3. What animal does the woman offer as a *chatat*?
4. Which of these offerings makes her *tahor* (ritual purity)?
5. Which of the sacrifices does the woman offer first, the *olah* or the *chatat*?
6. Who determines whether a person is a *metzora tamei* (person with ritually impure *tzara'at*) or is *tahor*?
7. If the *kohen* sees that the *tzara'at* has spread after one week, how does he rule?
8. What disqualifies a *kohen* from being able to give a ruling in a case of *tzara'at*?
9. Why is the appearance of *tzara'at* on the tip of one of the 24 "limbs" that project from the body usually unable to be examined?
10. On which days is a *kohen* not permitted to give a ruling on *tzara'at*?
11. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow (e.g., the head or beard), what color hair is indicative of ritual impurity?
12. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow, what color hair is indicative of purity?
13. If the *kohen* intentionally or unintentionally pronounces a *tamei* person "*tahor*," what is that person's status?
14. What signs of mourning must a *metzora* display?
15. Why must a *metzora* call out, "*Tamei! Tamei!*"?
16. Where must a *metzora* dwell?
17. Why is a *metzora* commanded to dwell in isolation?
18. What sign denotes *tzara'at* in a garment?
19. What must be done to a garment that has *tzara'at*?
20. If after washing a garment the signs of *tzara'at* disappear entirely, how is the garment purified?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Tazria's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 12:2 - At the end of seven days.
2. 12:6 - An *olah* and a *chatat*.
3. 12:6 - A *tor* (turtle dove) or a *ben yona* (young pigeon).
4. 12:7 - The *chatat*.
5. 12:8 - The *chatat*.
6. 13:2 - A *kohen*.
7. 13:5 - The person is *tamei*.
8. 13:12 - Poor vision.
9. 13:14 - The *tzara'at* as a whole must be seen at one time. Since these parts are angular, they cannot be seen at one time.
10. 13:14 - During the festivals; and ruling on a groom during the seven days of feasting after the marriage.
11. 13:29 - Golden.
12. 13:37 - Any color other than golden.
13. 13:37 - He remains *tamei*.
14. 13:45 - He must tear his garments, let his hair grow wild, and cover his lips with his garment.
15. 13:45 - So people will know to keep away from him.
16. 13:46 - Outside the camp in isolation.
17. 13:46 - Since *tzara'at* is a punishment for *lashon hara* (evil speech), which creates a rift between people, the Torah punishes measure for measure by placing a division between him and others.
18. 13:49 - A dark green or dark red discoloration.
19. 13:52 - It must be burned.
20. 13:58 - Through immersion in a *mikveh*.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

TEVERIYA – A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT

Tova riyata – a beautiful sight – is the description of the famous city on the shores of Lake Kinneret which is known by the contraction of those two words – *Teveriya*.

The name more familiar to people outside Eretz Yisrael – Tiberius – echoes the Midrashic explanation that the Emperor Tiberius named it in his own honor



during the Roman occupation of the Land.

The Talmudic Sages have another version. The city's name was originally Rakkat but was nicknamed *Teveriya* because it was in the *tabur* – navel – of the Land, a centrality arising from its location in the Galilee where the main Jewish community was concentrated after the destruction of Jerusalem.

AN OFFER THAT WAS REFUSED

The difficulty of repenting when the item one has stolen is no longer in the thief's possession is highlighted in our *gemara* by referring to the response of the Patriarch Avraham to the offer of the king of Sodom for him to accept the spoils of the war which Avraham had won for him. In his refusal to accept any gift Avraham asked only that no claim be made for payment of the food which his servants had eaten during the course of that war and that his allies, Onair, Eshkol and Mamrei should receive their share of the spoils (*Bereishet 14:24*). Rabbi Abba saw in Avraham's request regarding the consumed food a source for his statement that "It is difficult to return stolen property which has been consumed, for even great *tzadikim* felt themselves incapable of doing so."

Maharsha points out that there was certainly no element of theft involved in Avraham's accepting any of the property of the king of Sodom which he had recovered for him by defeating the superior forces of his enemies. Otherwise Avraham would never have asked for his allies to receive a share of these properties. The reason why there was no aspect of theft is that the king had despaired of ever recovering his property, which made it available to anyone who would undertake an effort for recovery. In addition, the king had on his own initiative waived any claim to this property by offering it all to Avraham.

Avraham, however, in his extraordinary righteousness, refused to accept any gifts and abstained from them as if they were stolen property. To repay what his servants had already eaten, however, was too difficult an undertaking. This serves as a guide to understanding how difficult it is for someone who has committed real theft to do proper repentance regarding stolen property he has already consumed. To demonstrate the practical application of the difficulty in returning stolen property, Maharsha refers us to a *gemara* (*Bava Kama 84b*) which tells a story that was the catalyst for an important rabbinical decree. A thief who was seriously considering repenting his ways was discouraged by his wife who warned him that if he made compensation for everything he had stolen he would be left with nothing. When this came to the attention of the Sages they decreed that one should not accept payment from a thief who wishes to repent and no longer has the stolen property in his possession.

• *Chullin 89a*

KASHRUT CARE IN EGYPT

When Yosef, the potentate of Egypt whose true identity was still unknown to the brothers who had sold him into slavery, welcomed those brothers upon their return to Egypt together with his younger brother Binyamin, he ordered the official in charge of his household to prepare a lavish meal for himself and his guests.

"Slaughter and prepare" (*Bereishet 43:16*) is interpreted by this Sage as instructions to show his guests the place in the animal where the slaughtering was performed, and to remove in their presence the *gid hanashe* (the sinew of the vein on the hollow the thigh). The removal of this latter item was necessary, explains the *gemara*, according to the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda (*Chullin 100b*) that the *gid hanashe* was already forbidden to the descendants of Yaakov from the time that a wound was inflicted on that part of the patriarch's body in his battle with the patron angel of Esav (*Bereishet 32:33*).

Tosefot raises an interesting question. The *gemara* concludes that *gid hanashe* must already have been forbidden based on Yosef's insistence on having it removed to satisfy his brothers' kashrut requirements. But is it not possible that even if *gid hanashe* only became forbidden when the Torah was given, as is the position of the Sages who disagree with Rabbi Yehuda, the sons of Yaakov followed in the path of the Patriarchs and observed the laws which would eventually be given in the Torah? After all, wasn't his concern to show them that a valid slaughtering had been done based on their observance of laws of *shechita* which were only to be commanded in the Torah?

One of the resolutions offered by Tosefot is that Yosef did not show them the slit throat of the animal to prove that a proper *shechita* had been performed but rather to show that it had been slain, a step which was required even by Noachide Law which forbids eating the flesh of an animal before it is dead. This approach can be explained with the point made by Ramban in his commentary on Chumash (*Bereishet 26:5*) that our forefathers observed the commandments which would later appear in the Torah only while in Eretz Yisrael. They could therefore dispense with the need for *shechita* in Egypt but were obligated to avoid eating the *gid hanashe* which had already been forbidden. (In regard to whether Noachide Law prohibited eating the flesh of an animal which dies without being slain, see Rashi on the fourth line of *Chullin 92b* and the commentary of Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Chayot on our *gemara*.)

• *Chullin 91a*

THE TEMPLE MOUNT

From: Yitzchak M.

*Dear Rabbi,
I heard that water was pouring from the "Foundation Stone" on the Temple Mount. What is that all about? What can we learn from it? Is there any mention of this in our sources? By the way, a friend of mine told me of an Arab in preparation for conversion who saw and confirmed it.*

Dear Yitzchak M.,

In the Messianic era, says the Talmud, a trickle of water will begin flowing from the site of the Holy Temple. This trickle will grow and grow until it becomes a gushing river. The Talmud cites a verse in Zecharia (13:1): "On that day a spring will be opened for the House of David and for the residents of Jerusalem." The book of Joel (4:18) also declares, "And it will be on that day...a fountain shall issue from the House of the L-rd." Maharsha explains that this river symbolizes King David's dynasty: Like a river flowing on and on, David's kingship will continue forever.

According to reports, a mysterious trickle of water was rumored to have begun from under the rock in the Mosque of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount. Even if true, this may not necessarily be significant.

For one, while the Talmud relates that a trickle will emerge from the site of the Temple, it's not certain that the Dome of the Rock is indeed built upon the Temple site. In "Beit Hamikdash Hashlishi," Rabbi Shalom Dov Steinberg brings strong evidence that it is not. Among other indications, electromagnetic scans under the Temple mount reveal very deep hollows consistent with those described as having been under the Temple. These hollows, however, are not under the Dome of the Rock; rather they are under the unbuilt section opposite the Western Wall.

Interestingly, this fits with our tradition, recorded almost 2000 years ago in the Zohar, that no building will ever be built on the site of the Sanctuary except for the Temple.

Sources:

- *Yoma 77b, 78a; Maharsha, ibid.*
- *See also Ezekiel 47:1-12; Zecharia 14:8*
- *Responsa of Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch 3:39*
- *Zohar, Pikudei, p. 480*

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

A MIXED BLESSING

Question: A woman who had suffered greatly from a bad marriage finally succeeded in ending her misery through divorce. As soon as she received the long awaited "Get" document of divorce she happily made the blessing of "Shehechiyanu". Should the witnesses and rabbinical judges present say "amen" to such a blessing?

Answer: Although we see that this blessing is said on holidays when eating a new fruit or wearing a new garment we only find that it applies to expressing appreciation for the good that one receives and not for the elimination of a bad

situation. Just as it is not appropriate when being freed from prison to make such a blessing, the woman escaping the "imprisonment" of a bad marriage must express her gratitude to Heaven in some way, but not through this particular blessing reserved for happy occasions with no background of tragedy.

It is therefore obvious that those hearing this blessing made in an improper occasion should not respond with the "amen" intended for properly pronounced blessings.

- *From the ruling of Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein, rav of the Ramat Elchanan community in Bnei Brak*

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PARSHA Q&A ?

Metzora

1. When may a *metzora* not be pronounced *tahor*?
2. In the *midbar*, where did a *metzora* dwell while he was *tamei*?
3. Why does the *metzora* require birds in the purification process?
4. In the purification process of a *metzora*, what does the cedar wood symbolize?
5. During the purification process, the *metzora* is required to shave his hair. Which hair must he shave?
6. What is unique about the *chatat* and the *asham* offered by the *metzora*?
7. In the *Beit Hamikdash*, when the *metzora* was presented “before G-d” (14:11), where did he stand?
8. Where was the *asham* of the *metzora* slaughtered?
9. How was having *tzara’at* in one’s house sometimes advantageous?
10. When a house is suspected as having *tzara’at*, what is its status prior to the inspection by a *kohen*?
11. What happens to the vessels that are in a house found to have *tzara’at*?
12. Which type of vessels cannot be made *tahor* after they become *tamei*?
13. Where were stones afflicted with *tzara’at* discarded?
14. When a house is suspected of having *tzara’at*, a *kohen* commands that the affected stones be replaced and the house plastered. What is the law if the *tzara’at*: a) returns and spreads; b) does not return; c) returns, but does not spread?
15. When a person enters a house that has *tzara’at*, when do his clothes become *tamei*?
16. What is the status of a man who is *zav* (sees a flow): a) two times or two consecutive days; b) three times or three consecutive days?
17. A *zav* sat or slept on the following: a) a bed; b) a plank; c) a chair; d) a rock. If a *tahor* person touches these things what is his status?
18. What does the Torah mean when it refers to a *zav* who “has not washed his hands”?
19. When may a *zav* immerse in a *mikveh* to purify himself?
20. What is the status of someone who experiences a one time flow?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Metzora’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 14:2 - At night.
2. 14:3 - Outside the three camps.
3. 14:4 - *Tzara’at* comes as a punishment for *lashon hara*. Therefore, the Torah requires the *metzora* to offer birds, who chatter constantly, to atone for his sin of chattering.
4. 14:4 - The cedar is a lofty tree. It alludes to the fact that *tzara’at* comes as a punishment for haughtiness.
5. 14:9 - Any visible collection of hair on the body.
6. 14:10 - They require *n’sachim* (drink offerings).
7. 14:11 - At the gate of Nikanor.
8. 14:13 - On the northern side of the *mizbe’ach*.
9. 14:34 - The Amorites concealed treasures in the walls of their houses. After the conquest of the Land, *tzara’at* would afflict these houses. The Jewish owner would tear down the house and find the treasures.
10. 14:36 - It is *tahor*.
11. 14:36 - They become *tamei*.
12. 14:36 - Earthenware vessels.
13. 14:40 - In places where *tahor* objects were not handled.
14. a) 14:44-45 - It is called “*tzara’at mam’eret*,” and the house must be demolished; b) 14:48 - the house is pronounced *tahor*; c) 14:44 - The house must be demolished.
15. 14:46 - When he remains in the house long enough to eat a small meal.
16. 15:2 - a) He is *tamei*; b) he is *tamei* and is also required to bring a *korban*.
17. 15:4-5 - Only a type of object that one usually lies or sits upon becomes a transmitter of *tumah* when a *zav* sits or lies on it. A *tahor* person who subsequently touches the object becomes *tamei* and the clothes he is wearing are also *tmei’im*. Therefore: a) *tamei*; b) *tahor*; c) *tamei*; d) *tahor*.
18. 15:11 - One who has not immersed in a *mikveh*.
19. 15:13 - After seven consecutive days without a flow.
20. 15:32 - He is *tamei* until evening.