

Parshas Tazria

For the week ending 5 Nissan 5757
11 & 12 April 1997

Overview

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'as* (often mistranslated as leprosy) -- a miraculous disease 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'as* or not. The Kohen isolates the sufferer for a week. If the disease 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'as*. One whose *Tzara'as* 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'as* on clothing is described in detail.

Insights

WHO'S FIRST?

"When a woman conceives..." (12:2)

If Man is worthy - if he makes his soul the essence of his being - then he precedes all Creation. For it was the spirit of Man that hovered over the depths even before the creation of light. But if he is not worthy - if he glories in his physical dimension - then in terms of the *physical* precedence of Creation, even the mosquito preceded him...

For this reason the Torah deals with the laws of purity in Man after the laws of purity in animals: Just as the *physical* creation of Man follows that of the animals, so his laws are explained after the laws of the animals. This applies only when man behaves as nothing more than a sophisticated animal. However, if man relegates his physical side to his soul; if he fulfills the purpose of Creation by recognizing and serving his Creator, then he precedes all Creation.

(Based on the Midrash and Rashi)

TWO SIGNS

"And on the eighth day, the flesh of the foreskin shall be circumcised." (12:3)

The greatness of Shabbos can be seen from the fact that a boy is not given *Bris Mila* until he is eight days old - until he has experienced Shabbos. In other words, the reason that *Bris Mila* is performed on the eighth day after birth is so that he can experience Shabbos before the *Mila*. Only by passing through the holiness of Shabbos, can he reach a level where he becomes fit to enter into the holiness of the Jewish People through *Bris Mila*.

(Yalkut Yehuda)

MORE THAN SKIN DEEP

"And on the eighth day, the flesh of the foreskin shall be circumcised." (12:3)

The custom at a *Bris* is to say to the parents "Just as he has been brought into the Covenant (*Bris*), so should he be brought to Torah, marriage and good deeds." Just as he has been brought into the *Bris*, which is now an inseparable part of him, thus also should all the other *mitzvos* of the Torah form an inseparable part of him.

(Iturei Torah)

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Haftorah - II Kings 4 - 5

MUSCLE-BOUND

Just as this week's *Parsha* deals with the spiritual affliction known as *tzara'as*, so too the Haftorah's subject is Na'aman, a foreign general in the army of King Amram. Na'aman treated Jews contemptuously, but Elisha showed him however strong a person is, life and health are a gift from Hashem.

PRIDE AND PRESCIENCE

"Let him come to me now, and he will know that there is a prophet in Yisrael." (5:8)

Our Sages teach us that one of the causes for the leprous-like spiritual disease called *tzara'as* is haughtiness and pride.

Therefore, its cure is that the one who is afflicted should humble himself.

It was for this reason that the prophet Elisha commanded "Let him come to me please." Meaning that even though I can cure him from afar, since his *tzara'as* is an affliction of his ego and he views himself as a great man and a fearsome warrior, he can only be healed by humbling himself. It will be a great affront to his dignity to be summoned by me.

Even after Na'aman came to Elisha, Elisha did not greet him personally, but rather he sent him as messenger with instructions how to cure himself.

All this was to bring him to a level of humility that would make it possible for him to be cured.



INSIGHTS INTO THE ZEMIRO
SUNG AT THE SHABBOS TABLE
THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS.

TZUR MISHELO ACHALNU

צור משלו אכלנו

THE ROCK, FROM WHOSE FOOD WE HAVE EATEN

"May the Sanctuary be rebuilt,
the City of Zion replenished
and there shall we sing a new song."

יבנה המקדש,
עיר ציון תמלא,
ושם נשיר שיר חדש

Yibaneh haMikdash,
ir Tziyon t'malay,
v'sham nashir shir chadash

The Midrash calls attention to a connection between the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the songs of praise sung by Israel to its G-d. In *Tehillim* 147, which we say each morning, we quote King David's words that "it is good to sing to our L-rd ... Hashem builds Jerusalem and gathers in the dispersed of Israel." Jerusalem, concludes the *Midrash*, will only be rebuilt with the praise and *zemiros* we sing to Hashem.

There is also contained in this phrase the idea that when the final redemption takes place none of the old songs will be adequate for expressing our joy and a "new song" will have to be composed.

Our singing of *zemiros* today is only a rehearsal for the "new song" which will herald the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdash*, soon in our days.

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