

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON PARSHAS TAZRIA - 5757

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[ohr@jer1.co.il](mailto:ohr@jer1.co.il) (Ohr Somayach) [weekly@jer1.co.il](mailto:weekly@jer1.co.il) ( Highlights of the Torah weekly portion) ...

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) ...

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[rmk@torah.org](mailto:rmk@torah.org) (Mordechai Kamenetzky) DRASHA PARSHAS TAZRIA KOHEN - KOHEN - GONE Parshas Tazria deals predominantly with the physio-spiritual plague that primarily affects gossips and rumor mongers - tzoraas. Tzora'as appears as a white lesion on various parts of the body, and the status of the afflicted depends on its shade of white, its size, and its development. The afflicted does not go to a medical clinic to seek treatment, nor does he enter a hospital. He is quarantined and then reevaluated; if condemned he is sent out of the Jewish camp until he heals, a sign that he has repented his slanderous ways. Though a physician or medical expert does not evaluate him, he is evaluated, reevaluated, and his future determined, by non-other than a Kohen. Moreover, the Torah does not keep that detail a secret. In the 47 verses that discuss the bodily affliction of tzoraas, the Kohen is mentioned no less than 45 times! "He shall be brought to the Kohen"; "The Kohen shall look"; "The Kohen shall declare him contaminated"; "The Kohen shall quarantine him"; "The Kohen shall declare him tahor (pure)" (Leviticus 13:1-47). Why must the Torah include the Kohen's involvement in every aspect of the process? Moreover, why does the Torah mention the Kohen's involvement in almost every verse? Would it not have been sufficient to have one encompassing edict: "The entire process is supervised and executed according to the advice of the Kohen."

The parents of a developmentally disabled child entered the study of Rabbi Shlomo Auerbach. They had decided to place their child in a special school in which he would live; the question was which one. "Have you asked the boy where he would like to go?" asked the sage. The parents were dumbfounded. "Our child cannot be involved in the process! He hasn't the

B'S'D' capacity to understand," explained the father. Reb Shlomo Zalman was not moved, "You are sinning against your child. You are removing him from his home, placing him in a foreign environment, and you don't even consult with the child? He will feel helpless and betrayed - I'd like to talk to him." The couple quickly went home and brought the boy to the Torah sage. "My name is Shlomo Zalman," smiled the venerable scholar. "What's yours?" "Akiva." "Akiva," explained Rabbi Auerbach, "I am one of the leading Torah sages in the world and many people discuss their problems with me. Now, I need your help. "You are about to enter a special school, and I need a representative to look after all the religious matters in the school. I would like to give you semicha, making you my official Rabbinical representative. You can freely discuss any issue with me whenever you want." Reb Shlomo Zalman gave the boy a warm handshake and hug. The boy entered the dormitory school and flourished. In fact, due to his great sense of responsibility, he rarely wanted to leave the school, even for a weekend; after all, who would take care of any questions that would arise? (1)

Part of the metzora's (leper's) healing process is banishment from the Jewish camp. However, it is a delicate ordeal, one wrought with trauma, pain, and emotional distress. The Kohen, a man of peace, love, and compassion must be there for every part of the process. He must be there to guide the metzora through the tense incubation period as well as his discharge from the camp. Moreover, he is there again to ease him back into society. The Torah teaches us, perhaps more than 50 times, that every traumatic decision needs spiritual guidance. It can turn a cold-hearted punishment into a process of spiritual redemption. It can transform a tough, seemingly dispassionate decision into a beautiful experience. For when the Kohen holds your hand, even if it is a stricken one, even if he is leading you outside the camp, you are definitely not gone and certainly not forgotten.

1 Adapted from And From Jerusalem His Word, by Hanoch Teller (c)1995 NYC Publishing

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[ohr@jer1.co.il](mailto:ohr@jer1.co.il) (Ohr Somayach) [parasha-qa@jer1.co.il](mailto:parasha-qa@jer1.co.il) ( In-depth questions on Parashat HaShavua w/ Rashi)

Parsha Questions 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 Korbanos. Which are they? 3. What animal does the woman offer as a Chatas? 4. Which of these Korbanos makes her tahor (gives ritual purity)? 5. Which of the Korbanos does the woman offer first, the Olah or the Chatas? 6. Who determines whether a person is a metzora tamei (person with ritually unpure tzara'as) or is tahor? 7. If the Kohen sees that the tzara'as 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'as? 9. Why is the appearance of tzara'as on the tip of one of the 24 "limbs" that project from the body usually cannot be examined? 10. On which days is a Kohen not permitted to give a ruling on tzara'as? 11. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow (e.g., the head or beard), what color hair is indicative of tumah? 12. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow, what color hair is indicative of tahara? 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'as in a garment? 19. What must be done to a garment that has tzara'as? 20. If after washing a garment the signs of tzara'as disappear entirely, how is the garment purified?

Bonus Question: What causes tzara'as? Why do people no longer contract

it?

I Did Not Know That! The tzara'as mentioned in the Torah is a spiritual condition that comes to help a person atone for his sins. Leprosy, a medical condition, comes as a result of inappropriate life styles. Sforno

Recommended Reading List Ramban 12:2 Procreation 12:7 The "Sin" of Childbirth 13:47 The Greatness of Tzara'as Sefer HaChinuch 167 Respect for Kedusha 168 A Gift of Thanks Sforno 12:8 Self Involvement 13:47 Garments

Answers to this Week'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 Chatas. 3. 12:6 - A tur (turtle dove) or a ben yona (young pigeon). 4. 12:7 - The Chatas. 5. 12:8 - The Chatas. 6. 13:2 - A Kohen. 7. 13:5 - The person is tamei. 8. 13:12 - Poor vision 9. 13:14 - The tzara'as 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 when the afflicted person was newly married, 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'as is a punishment for Lashon Harah (evil speech), which creates a rift between people, the Torah punishes "mida k'neged mida" (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.

Bonus ANSWER: When a person commits certain sins, a spiritual impurity occurs. There is a spark of Kedusha within the person that cannot tolerate sin. At one time, the Kedusha within the person would reject this impurity by pushing it to the surface and the skin eruption of Tzara'as would appear. As time went on, the level of Kedusha within people decreased, so that a person no longer has the power to reject the spiritual impurities caused by sin and tzara'as ceased. Alshech HaKadosh

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weekly-halacha@torah.org Parshas Tazria-The Yoledes in Halacha WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5757 COPYRIGHT 1996-7 SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS TAZRIA

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

When a woman conceives and gives birth... (Lev. 12:2)

#### THE YOLEDSES IN HALACHA

**SCHEDULED DELIVERY:** Unless a doctor explicitly orders it for the safety of either mother or child(1), it is prohibited for a woman to schedule the birth of her baby. There are various halachic, kabbalistic and hashkafic reasons offered by early and contemporary poskim for this prohibition: The earlier time may be "in a bad mazal"(2); Inducing an early birth may cause the child to die before his allotted time(3); It is possible to miscalculate the time of conception and erroneously assume that the pregnancy is complete when it is, in fact, in its eighth month(4). Inducing birth would thus cause the baby to be born prematurely. The halachah considers a woman who gives birth to be in "danger". Until her Divinely appointed time arrives, she is forbidden to put herself in danger(5). As the Mishnah(6) states, one enters this world "against his will". To bring a baby into this world before his Divinely appointed time of arrival is to contradict the rabbinic dictum(7).

Sometimes a woman requires the services of a specialist for compelling medical reasons. If the specialist will be available only at pre-arranged times, the delivery may be scheduled, but should only be done under the guidance of a rav. Unless it is an emergency, a planned delivery [when permitted] should not be scheduled for Thursday or Friday(8), as no elective surgery may be scheduled on those days(9).

**PREPARATIONS FOR A SHABBOS(10) DELIVERY** We have established that a woman giving birth is halachically considered to be a dangerously ill person, and it is permitted, indeed it is a mitzvah, to desecrate the Shabbos on her behalf. Once a woman is in labor, she, her husband, or anyone else who is in a position to do so, must do everything they can to ensure a successful delivery. Nevertheless, whatever can be done before Shabbos to minimize the desecration of Shabbos, must be done in advance(11). Indeed, an early authority(12) mentions that a person should daven that his wife not give birth on Shabbos. Accordingly, a woman who enters the beginning stages of labor before Shabbos, although she would normally delay going to the hospital for as long as possible, should travel to the hospital before Shabbos begins so that she will not have to travel on Shabbos(13). From an halachic standpoint, there are two basic methods of transporting a woman to the hospital on Shabbos: a) A non-Jewish driver, e.g. a neighbor, ambulance or taxi service may bring her; b) a Jewish driver, e.g., her husband or a neighbor may drive her. If a woman can be driven to the hospital by a non-Jew without compromising her safety or peace of mind, the halachah requires her to arrange - before Shabbos - for a non-Jew to drive her on Shabbos regardless of the expenses entailed. As stated earlier, once Shabbos begins, we must do everything in our power to ensure the baby's safe delivery. Still, whatever we can do in advance to avoid or lessen the desecration of Shabbos must be done. The following can and must be done before Shabbos begins: 1. The phone number of the doctor and of a non-Jewish neighbor, ambulance or taxi service should be noted in an easily accessible, non-muktzeh location. When possible, payment should be pre-arranged. 2. Whatever house or garage lights that would be needed to facilitate leaving for the hospital in the middle of the night, should be turned on before Shabbos(14). 3. Personal items the woman will need at the hospital should be packed in a bag before Shabbos. 4. Arrangements for a baby-sitter to stay with other children should be made before Shabbos. 5. If the hospital is outside the techum Shabbos (approx. 4000 feet from the last house in the city), some poskim recommend that one should be mafkir (renounce possession) all the items that are being taken along to the hospital(15). Other poskim are not particular about this(16).

**TRAVELING TO THE HOSPITAL ON SHABBOS WITH A NON-JEW** As soon as a woman experiences steady contractions, even though she is quite sure that she is far from giving birth, she (or any other person) may call the doctor or the designated driver to take her to the hospital. She should not wait for the latter stages of labor before going to the hospital(17). When making the phone call on Shabbos to the doctor or the non-Jewish driver(18), the receiver should be lifted off the cradle in an abnormal manner, e.g., with one's elbow or teeth time permitting. The conversation should be limited to a bare minimum, although it is permitted to say "hello" and "thank you", etc.(19). After the conversation is over, the receiver may not be returned to the cradle unless the phone line is needed for the sake of the patient, or if not hanging up will tie up the doctor's line. Then, too, the receiver should be hung up in an abnormal manner, as described above(20). Any item which the woman will need on Shabbos may be taken along, even if there is no eiruv or if the item is muktzeh. If time allows, the non-Jew should be asked to carry the woman's bag to the vehicle. [Unless an eiruv exists, a Tehilim should not be taken to the hospital on Shabbos, for the merit of keeping Shabbos is greater than saying Tehilim. This should be explained to the woman(21).] If, during the drive, labor stopped and the woman feels that she does not need to go to the hospital, it is permitted to tell the non-Jew to take her and her companion back home if they cannot return safely and comfortably on foot! - which is almost always the case. If it is the expectant mother's wish and it would help to relax her, her husband or another individual may accompany her to the hospital, even if their assistance is not medically warranted(22). The person going along may also bring with him basic necessities that will be required on Shabbos. The non-Jew should be asked to carry the items into the vehicle and from the vehicle into the hospital. When time allows it, the door to the vehicle should be opened and closed by the non-Jew.

**TRAVELING TO THE HOSPITAL ON SHABBOS WITH A JEW In**

the absence of any other alternative or when arrangements were not made in advance, it is permitted for a Jew (the husband or any other Jew(23)) to drive the woman to the hospital himself. If one is aware before Shabbos that the driver may be a Jew, he should prepare before Shabbos for that eventuality. Therefore: 1. The shortest possible route to the hospital must be checked and planned. 2. The car which will be driven must not be blocked by other cars or other obstructions. 3. The dome light bulb in the car should be loosened or removed before Shabbos; the air conditioner, radio and tape recorder should be on the "off" position. 4. License, registration and other papers that are required for driving or that will be needed at the hospital should be placed in the car before Shabbos. 5. Where there is no eiruv, clothing, food and other items that will be needed at the hospital should be placed in the car before Shabbos. 6. If the hospital is out of the techum Shabbos, any belongings which are in the car [especially those that do not belong to him(24)] that are not necessary for the woman (car seat, tapes, etc.) should be removed from the car(25). If this is difficult to do, then those items [which are his] should be pronounced hefker. One who failed to properly prepare himself or the car as outlined above, must nevertheless proceed to the hospital in the safest, quickest way he can(26). If he did not unscrew or remove the dome light before Shabbos, then while the door is still open and the light is on, the control knob should be turned [in an abnormal manner] so that the light will remain on ! after the door closes. If he forgot to do that, he should [in an abnormal manner] loosen the light bulb, so that it does not turn on again when the door is opened(27). One may drive to any hospital that he prefers, as long as the preference is not determined by the desire to save money. Once he arrives at the hospital emergency room, the car may be placed in the "park" position, but the ignition and the lights may not be turned off. [If he failed to loosen the dome light or to follow one of the other options outlined above, then the door may not be closed upon leaving the car, since closing the door will cause the light to be turned off.] He may ask a non-Jew to take the car, park it and return the keys to him after Shabbos.

GENERAL NOTES: A woman in active labor(28) is a niddah and her husband may no longer touch her. If she cannot walk unaided, a woman should assist her. If no woman is available, the ambulance attendant or taxi driver should assist her. If only her husband is available to assist her!, he may do so(29). A hospital does not require eiruvei chatzeiros(30). A woman who gives birth, even to a stillborn child, is considered a "dangerously ill" person for up to 72 hours after giving birth. As long as either the patient herself, the doctor or nurse requests anything on her behalf, the request should ! be fulfilled on Shabbos. Whenever possible, a shinui (action done in an abnormal manner) is required(31). Upon the birth of a male child, the blessing Hatov V'hameitiv of should be recited(32). Although an Hatov V'hameitiv is not recited upon the birth of a female child, the blessing of Shehechyanu is said the very first time a parent sees their daughter(33). When twins (a boy and a girl) are born, only Hatov V'hameitiv is said(34). The husband can be motzi his wife for these blessings. A woman who gave birth on Friday night and was unable to say or hear Kiddush, should say the Friday night Kiddush on Shabbos day, omitting Va'yechulu(35). Ordinarily, one who misses a tefillah due to an emergency, makes up that missed tefillah during the next tefillah (tefillas tashlumin). However, a husband who was preoccupied with his wife's labor and childbirth throughout the time period allotted for any given tefillah(36), is not required to make up the tefillah which he missed(37).

FOOTNOTES: 1 Chazon Ish is quoted (in a written responsum by Harav Y. Y. Kanievsky, published in Kryana Deigrata) as ruling that once two weeks into the tenth month have passed, labor may be induced. 2 Rokeach (Kohes 3:11). 3 Arizal quoted in Sefer Hakaneh. See also Ravad's preface to Sefer Yetzira. 4 Harav Y. Kamenetsky (written ruling published in Am Hatorah vol. 2 # 12); Harav M. Hershler (Halachah Vrefuah vol. 2 pg. 64). 5 Igros Moshe YD 2:74; Harav Y. Kamenetsky (ibid). 6 Avos 4:24. 7 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Toras Hayoledes pg. 11). 8 Some poskim forbid Wednesday as well - See Mishnah Berurah 248:4. 9 Harav Y. Kamenetsky (ibid); Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky (Kryana Deigerta); Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchasa 32:33. If, however, the doctor's surgery day is only on one of

those days, it is permitted - Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa! h 32: fn 97.) 10 Almost all of the following halachos pertain to Yom Tov as well. 11 Mishnah Berurah 330:1. 12 Sefer Chasidim 793, based on the Talmud Niddah 38a. 13 Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchasa 36:7 quoting Ktzos Hashulchan. See similar ruling in Igros Moshe OC 1:131 concerning a doctor who may be needed for Shabbos duty. 14 Kaf Hachayim 330:1. 15 Advice offered by Harav Chaim Kanievsky (quoted in Toras Hayoledes pg. 25) based on OC 401:1. 16 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Minchas Shlomo 15; Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa 40:65). See also Minchas Yitzchok 9:37. 17 Mishnah Berurah 330:9. 18 When possible, the phone call should be made by a non-Jew or a minor. When using a minor, it is better not to use one's own children - See Shaar Hatzion 334:54. 19 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa 32:111). 20 It is important to stress, though, that all of the halachos that pertain to making the phone call, hanging up, driving on Shabbos, etc., are only to be followed when time allows it. Once the labor is fully underway everything should be done in the speediest, safest manner, as if the labor is taking place on a weekday. 21 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Toras Hayoledes pg. 94). If the woman insists to take a Tehilim or any other sefer along, it is permitted to do so. 22 Igros Chazon Ish 1:141; Igros Moshe OC 1:132. 23 Some poskim say that it is preferable to use an observant Jew than a non-observant Jew - Toras Hayoldes pg. 81. 24 See Minchas Shlomo 15. 25 Toras Hayoledes pg. 20, 25, 101. 26 If time allows, any carrying that needs to be done should be done with a shinui, such as carrying the required papers under his clothing or hat, etc. 27 Some cars are equipped with a switch which does not allow the dome light to go on when the door opens. This is a better option than loosening the bulb, since loosening the bulb involves the prohibition of soser. 28 There are various definitions in the poskim for "active labor", see Badei Hashulchan 194:30. 29 See Aruch Hashulchan YD 195:25-27 and Igros Moshe YD 1:90. 30 Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Nishmas Avrohom 4 pg. 63) based on Biur Halachah 370:3 and Mahrsham 6:17. 31 OC 330:4. 32 OC 223:1. 33 Mishnah Berurah 223:2. 34 Toras Hayoledes pg. 176. 35 OC 278:8. 36 If, however, he was occupied with her labor for only part of the zman tefillah, but forgot to daven when he had the chance, he must then make up that lost tefillah. 37 See Mishnah Berurah 71:4; 93:8.

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Peninim on the Torah Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland Parshas Tazri'a  
When a woman who conceives and gives birth to a male...on the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. (12:2,3) The commentators, each in his own unique manner, offer various reasons that one is required to

perform the bris milah on the eighth day. One of the fundamental reasons is to make sure that the child has lived through a Shabbos. The kedushah, sanctity, of the seventh day/Shabbos infuses a holiness into the child which prepares him for entrance into Klal Yisrael. Horav Mordechai Gifter, Shlita, notes that while on the one hand we infer the remarkable kedushah of Shabbos, we also note that milah bizmanah, a circumcision performed at the designated time, the eighth day, overrides Shabbos. One may desecrate Shabbos in order to perform a bris milah. This indicates the awesome significance of bris milah. Even the fundamental mitzvah of Shabbos, which proclaims and attests that Hashem is the Creator and Ruler of the universe, is secondary to bris milah. Because bris milah has long been considered the seminal rite of passage for a Jewish child, Jews --regardless of their commitment to religious observance-- have upheld this mitzvah, even under the most challenging circumstances. A number of stories of faith and courage demonstrate Klal Yisrael's singular devotion to this particular mitzvah. There is one story that took place during the Holocaust that characterizes the Jew's commitment to bris milah and to the affirmation of Judaism that accompanies it.

While a Jew is often confronted with challenges to his faith, during times of persecution and pain his conviction is tested to a greater degree. The period of the Holocaust, in whose specter we all live, was a time during which the conventional challenge to our belief was magnified to great proportion. Indeed, the victims of the Holocaust exhibited a tenacious dedication to the eternal bond between Hashem and Klal Yisrael. Their spirits rose to such heights that they gave new meaning to the term, kiddush Hashem, sanctifying Hashem's Name.

The Blushover Rebbe, zl, who was a witness, related this story. The Rebbe was sawing wood, a member of a slave-labor contingent of the infamous Janowska Road Camp. It was the morning of Hoshanah Rabbah, when suddenly terrible screams filled the forest. The workers soon found out that the Nazi's had declared an Aktion, wholesale slaughter of infants and young children. Heartrending cries emanated from the mothers and their little children, as the Nazis cruelly tore them away to be massacred like sheep in a nearby clearing. The procession of weeping, heartbroken mothers and their doomed children was passing by the Rebbe's contingent. Suddenly, one woman, desperately holding on to her infant, abruptly cried out, "Jews, have mercy, give me a knife!" The Rebbe, assuming she wanted to commit suicide, attempted to discourage the woman from killing herself. One of the Nazi beasts observed this interchange and came over, extending his penknife to the distraught woman. The fiend thought he would have some fun watching the Jewish woman take her life. That is not what happened, however. Holding the knife in her hand, the woman placed her child on the ground and quickly circumcised her son. In an emotion-filled voice, she loudly recited birkas ha'millah. The murderer looked on in complete shock at what had taken place before his eyes. He turned to the woman and asked her to explain her strange action. "Today my son turned eight days old, the time at which a Jewish boy is to be circumcised and brought in as a member of our people. Soon he will be murdered, but he will die as a Jew." Only a couple of hours later, the woman's words rang true as the mother and her infant were led to slaughter. Every time the Blushover Rebbe, zl, served as a sandek at a bris he would relate this story with tears streaming down his face, filled with pride at the superhuman strength of a simple Jewish mother on the way to her death. The spiritual heroism which our people exhibited during those tragic times should serve as inspiration to us, as well as a declaration to the world of a nation that did not go to their death as "sheep to the slaughter."

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ravfrand@torah.org] Rabbi Frand on Parshas Tazria  
 This dvar Torah was adapted from Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Parsha  
 Perceptions Series on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 1102 - Tazria /  
 Metzorah - Series III. Good Shabbos!

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The end of parshas Tazria deals with Tza'ra'as [the spiritual blemish often (mis)translated as leprosy] that appears on clothing. The pasuk [verse] says, "The kohen will see the garment after it was washed, [vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno] and he sees that the nega [blemish] has not changed, the garment is unclean, you should burn it in fire." The pasuk uses interesting language: "vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno," which means that the appearance of the nega has not changed. This is actually an idiomatic expression. The word "ayno" literally means "eye," and the expression literally means "the blemish has not changed its eye." I saw a beautiful insight, quoted in the name of the Chidushai HaRim. The Gemara in Meseches Ayrachin tells us that there are a number of avayros [sins] which can cause tza'aras. The most commonly known avayrah is loшон horah [evil tongue; slander]. However, the Talmud in Meseches Ayrachin also says that the punishment of tza'aras comes "al tzoras ho'ayin." Tzoras ho'ayin [literally - narrowness of eye] does not only mean a person who is tight-fisted or cheap. A tzar ayin is a person who never sees the good side of anything and always sees evil. It is the opposite of a generosity of spirit. It is a stinginess, not only regarding money, but regarding viewing life, in general. A tzar ayin is a person who does not like to see other people's success. The only success that he is interested in is his own success. If that is the sin that causes tza'ra'as, then the tikun [correction] that causes the tza'ra'as to go away, is the person doing teshuva [repenting] and switching from being a tzar ayin to a tov ayin. That means that one who is like a student of Bilom HaRoshoh, who Chazal tell us had this trait of tzoras ho'ayin, of stinginess of spirit, must change to become from the students of Avrohom Avinu - to become a tov ayin [one with a good eye]. If the tza'ra'as stays the same and does not get better, the garment is unclean and the person does not have a tikun for his avayrah. The Chidushai HaRim says that when the pasuk says, "vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno" - "and behold, the tza'ra'as did not change its appearance," there is a double meaning. "Lo hofach hanega es ayno" - His ayin [eye] did not change. In order to do teshuva, this person's ayin must change. He must change from being a tzar ayin to being a tov ayin. The pasuk is hinting to us, "Vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno." His ayin did not change. He has the same stinginess, the same unwillingness to share and be generous. "Ayno," here, does not merely mean that the appearance did not change, but the ayin did not change. The tzoras ayin, the avayrah that brought on this terrible punishment is still in place.

The Chidushai HaRim continues with a classic chasidishe vort: The word "nega" is really the same word as the word "oneg." What is the entire difference between the word "oneg" - pleasure and the word nega [in the Hebrew lettering]? The only difference is the placement of the [letter] "ayin." The "nun" and the "gimel" are in the same place. The only difference is whether the "ayin" is at the beginning or at the end. What is the difference between "nega" and "oneg?" What is the difference between a person having tza'ra'as and a person having pleasure? It all depends on the placement of the "ayin." That is this person's problem. The problem is with the "ayin." His problem is with his perspective and his approach to life. His problem is with his ayin, so his tikun must be "hofach hanega es ayno." He must change his "ayin." He must take the "ayin" from the word "nega" and make it into "oneg." However, if someone is so stingy of spirit that he can not be gracious, he can not see the good side of life, then he remains a metzorah and "henay lo hofach hanega es ayno" - the nega remains and he must burn the garment because he is incapable of changing his "ayin." He is incapable of changing his perspective.

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Business-Halacha - Hilchos Choshen Mishpat - Volume I : Number  
10 Week Of Parshas Tazria 5757 - The Halachos Of Lending Money

Question: What are the guidelines and practical ramifications of the Mitzvah in the Torah of "Im Kesef Talveh Ess Ami" (You Shall Lend Money To My People) (Shemos 22:24)?

Answer: A. There is a Positive Commandment in the Torah to lend money to anyone who needs it. This applies, whether the recipient is a wealthy person who is having a cash-flow problem, or a poor person, according to the financial ability of the lender, and for as long as possible. Lending objects is not a specific, individual Mitzvah, rather it is included in the general Mitzvah of being kind to others. The Mitzvah to lend money is even greater than the Mitzvah to give Tzedakah, because a person is much less embarrassed to receive a loan than to receive Tzedakah. Also, by giving a loan you can help a borrower retain control over his business investments and give him the opportunity to stand on his own two feet and not have to accept hand-outs from others.

B. The lender has a right to demand proper collateral for his loan to guarantee that it will be paid back in a timely manner. If the lender is not satisfied with the guarantees provided, he has no obligation to lend, even if the borrower is a poor person. It is essential that a person keep in mind when faced with this situation that all of his actions must be L'Shem Shomayim (For The Sake Of Heaven).

C. If two people approach you for a loan and you are only able to lend to one of them, you should give precedence to the poorer person.

D. A relative generally takes preference over anyone else, if both borrowers are financially equal, even if the other person requesting the loan is a Talmid Chochom (A Torah Scholar). However, if the relative is wealthy and the other person is poor, the poor person takes precedence. Also, if you know that your relative would be able to borrow from another source, and the other person has no other source to borrow from, the other person would take precedence, even if your relative was poor.

E. The Halachah that a relative takes precedence over others, only applies when you are lending your own money. If you are a trustee over a communal loan fund, it is absolutely forbidden to give your relative preference over others. The loans should be offered to all equally as predetermined by the fund, whether it be on a first come first served basis, or based on need. This applies even if the trustee was the one who set up the fund and donated a large amount of his own money to it.

F. If you have been approached by a number of people for loans, and one needed a very large amount, to the extent that if you would lend him what he is requesting you would be unable to lend the others at all, it is preferable to provide a few loans of smaller amounts than to give it all to one person. If the person requesting the larger amount needs it to avert financial disaster, and the others just need the money to increase their cash-flow and make things easier for them, the full amount should be given to the one who requires the larger amount to prevent him from going under.

G. If you told someone that you would lend him money or objects, or if you decided to separate a percentage of your income to start a free loan fund (Gemach), it is considered as if you had taken a vow to this effect and it is forbidden to change your mind.

Sources: The above Halachos are discussed at length in the Tur (Choshen Mishpat 97) and in the Shulchan Aruch (ibid.) They are also discussed in the Rambam in the first Perek (Chapter) of Hilchos Halva'ah (The Laws Of Lending). Additionally, many of the above points are mentioned in the first six chapters of Sefer Ahavas Chesed by the Chofetz Chaim.

This list will be the final Business-Halacha class until after Pesach. The next new class will be sent out Wednesday, May 7. Next week we will run an article by Rabbi Aaron Tendler discussing the Mitzvah of "VeHigadita L'Binchah" - Retelling The Story Of Exodus To Our Children.

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...Over the last two weeks we have been reading about a spiritual state of being which the Torah calls "tum'ah". It is not possible to accurately translate the term "tum'ah". Mostly it is defined as "spiritual uncleanness", although that is not a totally correct interpretation of the idea. I personally prefer to explain "tum'ah" as a condition that happens to a person when he or she is not properly in harmony with G'd's plan for Man. There are various rules dealing with the consequences of "tum'ah" and one of them is that the person who became "ta'meh" - which is the adjective form of the noun "tum'ah" -- had to avoid physical contact with people who were not "ta'meh".

In today's Parsha we read about a special form of "tum'ah" which came as a result of a skin disease called 'tzara'at', the description of which makes it sound like a form of leprosy. "Tzara'at" was a very potent form of tum'ah and the infected person was actually sent to live outside of the community. According to our Tradition, 'tzara'at' was visited upon those who spoke libel and "lashon harah". It was not only a punishment for the guilty person, it was also a warning to all others not to behave in the same way. I find it very interesting that the Kohen was commanded to help the afflicted person and to make every effort so that the person could avoid being declared a "tam'eh". Logically one could have said that since this disease was a divine punishment, then anyone who tried to help this person would be the equivalent of one who helped a criminal escape from prison. Furthermore it would also follow logically that a physician who heals a leper (or anyone whose illness is understood to come from G'd) is violating G'd's plan, rebelling against the way G'd rules the universe -- a blasphemer. The refusal to heal would then become the logical religious position. It is in fact one to which some religions, even today, adhere -- at great cost to their adherents, and at even greater cost to their children. Judaism however, does not believe this and this is the lesson that I want to share with you both today. What the Torah wants from us is a sense of balance. Yes, on the one hand, it is true that everything that happens, even the bad things, are part of some great Plan that at its source lies the Will of G'd. Yes it is true that pain and suffering can be a punishment from G'd. But on the other hand, we also believe that our overriding obligation as human beings and as believing Jews is to become G'd's partners in creation -- actively applying our learning and our skill to intervening and improving upon the world as we find it. So where a Jew finds illness, she is commanded to heal. Where a Jew finds hunger, he is commanded to feed. Where a Jew finds suffering, we are commanded to identify with the sufferer and to alleviate their pain.

According to the Midrash, the reason that the Torah compares people to trees is because "just as the tree, if not weeded, fertilized and plowed, will not grow and bring forth its fruits, so with the human body." The fertilizer is the medicine and the means of healing, and the tiller of the earth is the physician.

Similarly the Talmud understands the biblical injunction "not to stand (idly) by the blood of your brother" as mandating medical care. ...Perhaps Judaism's rejection of the 'logical' position mentioned before reflects a different idea of how G'd and people relate. Rather than viewing G'd as an unchanging monarch and humanity as the passive recipient of whatever happens, the Jewish view is much more that of a family in which both partners take an active role in developing their relationship and in making their house a home. Judaism understands that we human beings must play our part role in making our house -- this earth -- a home. By caring for its occupants, we demonstrate not blasphemy, but love -- both for G'd and for His creatures. ... Shabbat Shalom.

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mj-ravtorah Shiur HaRav Soloveichik ZT'L on Tazria/Metzora tazria

Chazal have observed that Negaim, bodily afflictions such as leprosy, are the punishment for moral deterioration. For example nrgain are mentioned relative to Loshon Harah, illicit relationships among other sins.

The Rav quoted a Midrash from the beginning of Sefer Vayikra on the verse Adam Ki Yakriv Mikem (Vayikra 1:2): When the Jew is bringing a Korban, sacrifice, the Torah uses the word Mikem, from within you. However when the Jew sins the word Mikem is not used, as it says Adam Ki Yihye B'or Bsaro Seays O Sapachas O Baheres. The word Mikem is not mentioned.

This Midrash is consistent with the statement of Rabbi Simlaey, brought by Rashi, at the beginning of Tazria that man was created last and his punishment was mentioned first. Man has two possible extremes. If he is worthy then he is considered the greatest of all creations. If he is not worthy he is lower than the simplest of animals. Moshe Rabbeinu, the Neviim, Chazal were all human beings, yet they reached amazing heights of Kedusha and closeness to Hashem. They epitomized the notion of Adam Ki Yakriv Mikem, the Kedusha emanated from the depths of their souls. The first part of Sefer Vayikra through Parshas Shemini describes how a Jew reaches the level of Mikem, how he dedicates himself to be a Korban to Hashem, by living Torah, Mitzvos and Gemilas Chesed. The Rambam at the end of Hilchos Shemittah Vyovel says that the close relationship to Hashem is not restricted to the Bnay Levi. Any Jew can aspire to be close to Hashem, to become a living Korban Oleh, to reach higher levels than the angels.

On the other hand, man can be a great artist, scientist, engineer, politician etc., and still be a spiritual and moral leper. Leprosy is more spiritual than physical. For example the Navi describes Naaman as a person who was considered great by his peers. Yet ethically and morally he was bankrupt, a leper.

Each Jew has something inherited and intrinsic within him that can lead to greatness and spiritual heights: the concept of Mikem. When the Jew sinks to the level of metzora, he is clearly not exhibiting Mikem. When a Jew sins, he does so due to external influences. His spiritual makeup is inconsistent with and incapable of internally generating the sin.

The Rambam uses this concept of Mikem to explain the Halacha of Kofin Oso Ad Sheyomar Rotzeh Ani. For example, under certain circumstances a man is required to divorce his wife. If he refuses, Beis Din has the authority to give him lashes until he agrees to grant the divorce, How can Beis Din force him if we know that a divorce obtained via coercion (Get Meuseh) is not valid? The Rambam explains that the internal personality of the Jew wants to comply with the dictates of Beis Din. However, external forces, the Yetzer Hara, force him not to comply. Beis Din gives him lashes to make him forget about the Yetzer Hara and allow his internal feelings to express themselves and comply with the Beis Din and comply with the wishes of Beis Din.

Chazal comment that as part of the service of the Sair Hamishtaleach on Yom Kippur, the Kohen would recount the various sins and "place them" on the head of the Sair Hamishtaleach, that this Sair represents Esau. The Kohen asks Hashem that he forgive the people, Kaper Na. Why not use the term Selach, or Mechal? The Rav explained that Kaper means to wipe away easily. Hashem has many different "detergents" through which to remove the blemish of sins, which would not necessarily be comfortable for the sinner to go through. The Kohen asks that Hashem simply wipe the sins away, for they are on the surface and have not been absorbed into the fabric of the Jew. The sins are not consistent with his internal makeup. They were not done voluntarily by the Jew, rather they were externally forced on him. The sins are the realm of Esau, the Sair, hence we return them to their rightful owner, wiping away their residue from the Jewish People without leaving a lasting blemish. Indeed, the entire concept of Teshuva is built upon the idea that the sin was only skin deep and readily cleansed through repentance. This is the concept of Adam Ki Yihye Nega Tzaraas B'or Besaro. The sin, the "tzaraas", is limited to the skin, and not deeply embedded into the personality of the sinner. Hence, Kapparah, simple rinsing to cleanse the sin is possible.

The Midrash (Midrash Rabbah Tazria 15:9) classified 3 different root causes for sin: Seays is Bavel etc., Sapachas is Maudy etc. and Baheres is

Yavan etc., Nega Tzaraas is Edom as mentioned in the Parsha. The Rav analyzed the different characteristics of each.

Seays according to Chazal is Gavoah (Shavuos 6b), heights, a swelling and inflation of self importance. Malchus Bavel epitomized Seays, based on the verse "Aych Shavas Noges... Shavs Madheva" (Isaiah 14:4). In an attempt to deify himself, Nebuchadnetzar placed a statue and forced all to bow, which led to the story of Chananyah Meshael and Azaryah. The attribute of Gaavah is the root cause of evil. (The Rav commented that his life experiences and the people he had come in contact with reinforced this notion.)

Chazal say that Yeravam became a pariah because of Gaavah. Yeravam placed the golden calves in Dan and Beer Sheva in an attempt to prevent the people from going up to the Beis Hamikdash for the three festivals. He was fearful that the people would return to Rechavam, King of Judah, and forsake him. The Midrash says that Hashem, (kvayachol), grabbed hold of Yeravam's clothes and told him to repent. If he repents then Ani Vattah Uben Yishai Netayel Bgan Eden, i.e., I (Hashem), you (Yeravam) and King David will stroll through Gan Eden.

Chazal were of the opinion that Yeravam was among the greatest Torah scholars of his or any generation. He was the first to uncover new topics of Torah, unknown to the leaders of previous generations, including David Hamelech. How could someone so great in Torah come to place golden calves for the people to worship? Yeravam gave in to his sense of Gaavah. He reasoned that in addition to the problem of the people going to Jerusalem, he himself could not go. The Gemara says (Sanhedrin) that all who entered the Beis Hamikdash had to stand except for the kings from the house of David. Yeravam felt that if he would enter the Beis Hamikdash he would be embarrassed in front of the people by Rechavam being allowed to sit while he must stand. This Gaavah led him to erect the golden calves. Hashem told Yeravam that he should repent and go to Jerusalem and break his foolish Gaavah. If he is willing to bring this small personal sacrifice his ultimate reward and place in Jewish History, in the destiny of Klal Yisrael symbolized by the term Gan Eden, will be the greatest of all. Greater than Rechavam Shlomo and even David himself. As Hashem told him, the group would consist of Hashem first then Yeravam and followed by David. Yeravam asked Umi Berosh, who will be first? Hashem answered Ben Yishai, the kings of the house of David. Why did Yeravam ask who would be in the lead if Hashem told him that the order in Gan Eden would be Hashem followed by Yeravam and David? Hashem told him that the price for this ultimate greatness is to allow Ben Yishai to be in the lead in the short term. Because Yeravam had to have immediate gratification. He was unwilling to look at the future picture that would ultimately cast him above David himself.

Had Yeravam acquiesced and repented, his ultimate status in Jewish History would have surpassed all others. Had he made this small sacrifice, perhaps we would have mentioned the songs and prayers offered by Yeravam, Instead of mentioning the songs of David in Hallel and on Yom Kippur. All he had to do to ensure his place in Jewish History, in Gan Eden, was look past the need for immediate gratification and be willing to stand in the courtyard of the temple while Rechavam sat. However Yeravam could not bring himself to see the future. He was blinded by his haughtiness and need for immediate acceptance. He became the ultimate loser.

This is what Chazal meant when they interpreted the term Madheva mentioned above. According to one opinion it means Medod Vehavay, "measure and bring", i.e. measure things based on their temporal, current practicality and indulge in immediate gratification. Such people do not see the future picture. Their vision is limited to the immediately expedient, they need the tangible reward on the spot. Such people constantly fail in life. They are the Yeravams of the world who give up eternal glory for the insignificant present,

Orthodox parents often push their children into secular endeavors at the expense of Torah studies, in the belief that this will ensure economic success and stability for their children. They do not see the long term goal of raising children imbued with Kedusha and solid in their commitment to Judaism and eager to participate in enhancing the Torah quality of the Jewish community.

They are teaching their children to value only what is expedient. Many a child has strayed because of the Medod Vehavay philosophy.

It has become fashionable for a Jew to look for "Tachlis". There are 2 types of Tachlis, that which the Rambam considers the highest calling, to seek out the ways of Hashem. The other kind is to practice only what is immediately practical for the moment without long range planning. This is the approach of Esau, he is willing to give up his birthright and the service of Hashem for the immediate gratification of a bowl of lentil soup. This is the other interpretation of Madheva given by Chazal, that of the golden heads. Daniel told Nebuchadnetzar that he is acting for immediate gratification of finding his pot of gold. He does not look at the future, beyond his immediate desires. The Rav mentioned that previous generations of Jews did not practice the Medod Vehavay, measure and bring attitude, of today's Jewry. They recognized the words of Chazal that true blessing and wealth does not come from things that can be counted, but rather from performing the mitzvos and planning for the future. They rejected Medod V'havay.

The second affliction is Sapachas this Maudi. The Midrash describes Maudi with this term, referring to Haman who was from Maudi and who slithered on his belly along the ground like a serpent. We might have pictured Haman as a confident arrogant person, Rather, Chazal paint Haman as a timid person who lacked self confidence and depended on ingratiating himself with those in power to gain it for himself. Chazal relate that when Haman wanted to become prime minister he attempted to gain favor from Esther, the newly appointed queen. He wondered from which nation did she come. If she is a Jew, then she would definitely help a relative gain power, as he was from Esau, Halo Ach Esav L'Yaakov. In his blind attempts to ingratiate himself into a position of power, he overlooked the reality that Halacha Esav hates Yaakov, and that if Esther were indeed Jewish they would be natural enemies.

Seays and Sapachas are the opposite extremes of the same affliction. Often people in positions of power lack self confidence. They portray themselves as a Baal Gaavah, as Seays, but in reality they are closer to the flip side, of Sapachas, a slimy slithering individual. The Rav categorized the representatives of the United Nations as outwardly exuding Seays, while attempting to ingratiate themselves with others for their selfish indulgence.

The Jew should strive for the middle ground and emulate the ways of Hashem. There are 2 words in Hebrew that express the same notion: Gaavah and Gayus. The former is reprehensible while the second is the attribute of Hashem, Gayus Lavaysh. This implies a self confidence and self respect that does not require reassurance of an ego by others. Haman pursued Kavod. Kavod in general is not an evil notion, for Hashem is described as Melech Hakavod. When one lives a life of Torah and Chesed and raises his/her children to follow in his footsteps and has yearnings for Kedusha, Kavod comes as a natural result. When one pursues Kavod for the sake of Kavod it runs away from him. Gayus means adopting a philosophy of life and sticking to it no matter what the world around says.

When Kavod is the goal of a person, we must recognize it and not give in to him. When Haman ordered all to bow to him, Mordechai refused to and stuck to his principles. When Achashverush asked Haman's idea of Kavod, Haman replied with his own twisted notions. Someone who epitomizes Sapachas looks for material things like the royal horse and garments to be dressed by royal servants and for his greatness to broadcast. However Mordechai looked askance at Haman's notion of Kavod. He immediately returned to his sack cloth and prayer upon his return from Haman's Kavod. Haman could not tolerate the thought that Mordechai might be gloating over his humiliation and that he received the Kavod that he, Haman, sought after all his life.

Modern Jews pursue Haman's Kavod. For example they want to be the guests of honor at a banquet and to be celebrated by the royal servants (toastmasters) who cry out their virtues and proclaim Kacha Yayaseh Laish Asher Hamelech Chafeytz B'Yikaro! As Reb Bunim M'Peshischa said, The Jew should walk around with his hands simultaneously in 2 pockets. On the one hand he should view himself as great and reaching heavenly heights. On the other hand he should recognize that he is Afar V'ayfer.

The Gemara describes that there was a disagreement in the heavenly court if Baheres preceding Sayar Lavan renders someone unclean. Hashem said that the person is pure while the Malachim said not pure. Angels have the attribute of Din while Hashem advances the attribute of Chesed and to look positively on man in such situations. Rabbah Bar Nachmaini was selected to arbitrate the dispute. He said that the person is Tahor in this case. A heavenly voice rang out blessing him. The point of the story is that man on the one hand can reach such heights that he is asked to resolve heavenly disputes, while on the other side he is no more than dust. Moshe was the greatest of all men yet he suffered the same fate of all men. The recognition of this duality is what Chazal meant by true Kavod.

The third type of leprosy is Baheres, which symbolizes Malchus Yavan, because through its decrees it blinded (with bright light) the Jewish People. The Midrash relates that when the Jews brought Bikurim an ox would lead the procession. The ox symbolized agricultural might, Rav Tevuos B'Koach Shor. The horns of the ox were covered with gold. Hellenizers inscribed in the horns that the people had no interest in a share in Hashem the Gd of Israel. To the Hellenizers, only the external superficial had meaning. They wanted to remove the internal faith of the Jew and modify it to suit their external practicalities. The Gemara (Erchin) relates that there was a mortar and pestle made from copper used in the Mikdash that dated from Moshe. This mortar and pestle was used to grind the incense very fine, and was used Erev Yom Kippur to re-grind the incense extra fine, symbolizing the need for the Jew to grind away his vulgar habits and return to Hashem. The Hellenizers re-covered the mortar and pestle with gold, after which it no longer was capable of grinding the incense. Eventually the gold was removed and it once again fine-ground the incense. Modern Hellenizers attempt the same thing. They say that there is no reason to keep Shabbos any longer with all its laws. It is more practical to ride to shul or to turn on and off lights. Fires were not started in ancient times because it took too much effort. This is the attitude of Baheres which is similar to the Hebrew Bahir or full of light. It is at best a skin deep association with Judaism.

Leaders who are great speakers are often examples of Baheres. They attempt to captivate with superficial oratory. Compare Bilam with Moshe: Bilam was a great speaker, he wove wonderful blessings with his words. Yet he was still a Rasha and all his words of blessing did not reflect as much love towards Bnay Yisrael as Moshe calling Bnay Yisrael Mamrim. Often it is profane to attempt to express deep rooted emotions through the inadequate medium of the spoken word. Truly strong feelings towards another are often apparent without ever being expressed. Moshe was a Kvad Peh because he could not bring himself to express his true love of Bnay Yisrael for fear of being unable to fully capture his emotions in words. The greatness of Gedolei Yisrael was never measured by superficial characteristics, e.g. their dress or oratory ability etc. The Rav characterized truly great Rabbanim as those that spoke little but carried great authority. Gedolei Yisrael were revered by Klal Yisrael because of their powerful inner radiance and strength of purpose that was apparent to all who came in contact with them. The Rav cited as examples Reb Chaim and Reb Yitzchak Elchanan as Rabbis who were universally accepted and revered based on their inner radiance and greatness. They were not gold plated but made of solid gold.

The Midrash describes Malchus Edom as Nega Tzaraas, which is the combination of the above 3, Seays, Sapachas and Baheres. The common denominator among these is that they are not Mikem, they are externally thrust upon the Jew by the nations of the world. However in the time of Mashiach, Hashem will wipe away all these Tumos easily and gently, Vzarakti Alaychem Mayim Tehorim Utehartem, Hashem will sprinkle water on you and you will become pure.

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DRASHA PARSHAS METZORA STRANGE ALTAR-FELLOWS 4/18/97

Parshas Metzora deals with the purification process of the person afflicted with tzora'as. After the disease healed, the formerly afflicted person is instructed to bring a sacrifice that includes two very diametrical items. "And he shall take two birds, cedar wood, crimson thread and hyssop (Leviticus 14:4)." The Torah details the offering and all of its intricacies, leaving the commentaries to ponder the symbolism of the wood of the tallest of trees bound together with the lowly moss of the hyssop. Rashi explains that, "the hyssop symbolizes the humility that the metzora should have," and the cedar," he explains, "is a symbolic reminder that he who holds himself as high as the cedar tree should learn to lower himself like the hyssop." However, wouldn't hyssop alone teach us this characteristic or at least symbolize humility? What point is there in bringing cedar? And, in fact, if bringing moss represents the need for humility couldn't the offering of cedar represent the need for pride? Perhaps there is another explanation for the two attributes to be joined.

A few years after Rabbi Shneur Kotler succeeded his late father Reb Ahron as the Rosh Yeshiva of the Lakewood Yeshiva, the Yeshiva's enrollment began to expand. No longer was Reb Shneur able to sit and study in the large Yeshiva all day. He was suddenly forced to raise funds day in and day out often leaving early in the morning and returning home way past midnight. A brief respite was the annual convention of Agudath Israel at which nearly 1000 laymen and rabbinical leaders would gather for a long weekend to discuss the state of Torah affairs. My grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, the oldest member of the Council of Torah Sages would often highlight the keynote session on Saturday night. As the eldest of the world's Torah sages, Reb Yaakov would find a way to sneak up to the dais, usually through a back door, to avoid having the entire crowd arise upon seeing his presence as is required by Jewish Law. Yet this year things were different. Reb Yaakov engaged the much younger, Reb Shneur in conversation outside the large ballroom and waited until everyone took his or her seats. Then he took Reb Shneur by the hand and said, "I think it is time we took our seats." He proudly held Reb Shneur by the arm and escorted him to the dais as the throng of people rose in awe. Reb Shneur, stunned by Reb Yaakov's departure from his trademark humility asked him why he did not go through the back as was his usual custom. "Reb Shneur," he explained, "your Rebbitzen (rabbi's wife) is sitting in the auditorium. The entire year she sees you in a much-dishonored light. You run from donor to donor in order to keep the Yeshiva open, you have hardly any time to prepare your lectures, and all she sees are people knocking on your door with their problems. Yet she stands beside you faithful and unwavering. It is time that she sees that you get a little kavod (honor).

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir of Gur (1799-1866) explains that sometimes people become so humbled to the point of forgetting that they can actually achieve wonderful accomplishments. Often, humility breeds self-effacement that may lead to despair. Of course Rashi is correct in explaining that those who are haughty as the cedar must humble themselves as mass, but one must also bear in mind an equally important fact - that at times after one has been humiliated as low as the hyssop he must rise in his own eyes to the height of a cedar and proudly exclaim that he can and will accomplish the lofty and far reaching goal to which he or she aspires. And those are goals that only the cedar's limbs can touch. So, perhaps the lowly hyssop must be bound with a seemingly mismatched and more supercilious counterpart, the cedar. Because when they are offered hand-in-hand, they may have a lot to learn from each other.

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ravfrand@torah.org Rabbi Frand on Parshas Metzorah  
 A Plague Turns Into a Blessing ----- On the verse [pasuk], "When you come to Land of Canaan which I give to you for a possession, and I will put a plague of Tzaraas in a house of the land of your

possession [Vayikra 14:34]," Rash"i quotes the famous Medrash Rabbah that this was in fact good news for the Jewish people. Why would the appearance of Tzaraas on their houses be good news? If Tzaraas is found on the walls of the house, one is required to demolish the house! How many of us would look at that as good news? The answer is, as Rash"i says, that the inhabitants of the Land of Canaan hid great wealth and treasures in the walls of their houses. If a person would get a plague of Tzaraas on his house and follow the halacha of tearing it down, he would find a fortune inside. Therefore, this was good news. Many of us have, no doubt, been bothered by the following question: If G-d wants me to receive a present, this is a very strange way for Him to go about giving it. We all know that Tzaraas comes as punishment for a sin. The Talmud [Eruchin 16a] lists a number of sins for which Negaim come. They come for slander, they come for being stingy, etc. So which way is it? Is Tzaraas coming for a sin or is it coming as a way to provide a treasure? Would it not be more logical and sensible that there should be a halacha that when one puts up his Mezu zah in Eretz Yisroel it is necessary to bore into the door post, so he could find his treasure that way? It is certainly a very strange teaching of our Sages that I should find my treasure specifically when I am in the midst of suffering a punishment which I deserve. Additionally, we find that the language of the portion of 'Nigei Batim' (Plagues on houses) is different from the language used by the Torah in connection with other types of Tzaraas. There are three types of Tzaraas. One type appears on the house, one type appears on clothes, and one type appears on the human body. Concerning the negah of the house, the Torah says "And I will put a negah on the house of the land of your inheritance" [14:34]. By the other cases it says, "And the garment will be brought..." or "And the person will be brought..." The Torah speaks in third person -- the Jew will find that he has a Tzaraas. Only by the house does G-d speak in first person -- "I will put..." The Rambam tells us [Hilchos Tumas Tzaraas 16:10] that the three categories of Tzaraas (house, clothing person) have an order to them. The purpose of Tzaraas was to remove a person from the sin of Lashon HaRa. If a person would speak Lashon HaRa, first he would get Tzaraas in his house. If he would persist in speaking Lashon HaRa, it would begin to affect his clothing. If he persisted in his evil ways, it would affect his body. Rav Bergman, in his Share Orah, says a principle that we have mentioned a number of times in this shiur: We find, at the end of the Tochacha in Bechukosai, that the Torah concludes with words of consolation [Vayikra 26:42]. ("And I will remember my covenant with Yaakov, and even my covenant with Yitzchak, and even my covenant with Avraham, and the Land I will remember.") However, the Tochaha in Parshas Ki Savo does not end with any words of consolation. The Zohar says that they asked in the Beis Medrash what the reason was for this discrepancy. Rav Shimon Bar Yochai answered that in the Tochacha of Parshas Bechukosai, the thrust and theme of that chastisement was "Your dealings with Me is with 'keri,' so too, my dealings with you will be with a fury of 'keri.'" In other words, if you think things are just 'happening' (mikreh); if you don't take Me seriously; if you don't believe in Divine Providence, then the response will be that I too will deal with you such that you will be subject to all the evils that "nature" can offer. I will stand, so to speak, at the sidelines. On the other hand, the Tochacha of Parshas Ki Savo constantly says, "I will do this to you; I will do that to you; etc." When it is G-d Himself that is handing out the punishment, the relationship between the Jewish People and their Creator has not been severed. G-d is punishing, but there still is a relationship. It is analogous to the case where the father knows the child is doing bad and spans him. He punishes him, but the relationship is still there. Sometimes, however, there comes a situation where the father walks out of the room and says, "I am going to teach this child a lesson, let whatever happens to him, happen. Let him play with matches and get burnt. I will show him, by leaving." This is the Tochacha of Parshas Bechukosai ('keri'). This is a far worse curse; therefore it needs a consolation. This is the difference between nigei batim and all other Negaim. With nigei batim, where one has just strayed and spoken Lashon HaRa, perhaps occasionally, G-d says "Our relationship is still there" -- I will personally punish. "I will place the nega..." But if one

persists and goes further and further away; then it will no longer be "I will place..." It will be that the plague will come, but the relationship will no longer be there. Now we can begin to understand how there can be a treasure in a punishment. Chaza"l tell us that when Samson was in the house of the Philistines and his two eyes were taken out, Samson prayed to G-d: "With the merit of the loss of one of my eyes, let me bring down the house upon the Philistines; and with the merit of the loss of my other eye, let me have the merit to enter Olam Haba." This is amazing. The Talmud tells us [Sotah 9b] that "Samson went after his eyes..." He sinned with his eyes and as a result of that, he lost his eyes. How then, does he come and claim to have merit based on the loss of his eyes? Rav Bergman says, herein lies a great principle. If G-d gives a person a punishment and he responds to that punishment, then he is turning the punishment into a merit. That is what suffering and punishment is all about. The purpose is to strengthen the relationship between G-d and man. If Samson responded and knew that he did Teshuva for the sin that he did with his eyes, he could then come back to G-d and say "with the fact that I lost my eyes and I realized the lesson in that and am thereby turning it into a merit for myself, with that merit grant me the ability to kill the Philistines and get into Olam Haba." With this we can now understand how the Nega Tzaraas can be hiding a treasure. We had asked, if it comes from a sin, how can it be the source of a treasure? The answer is that with the nega of Nigei Batim, which is the first level of Loshon HaRa that a person commits, there is still a personal involvement of G-d. ("And I will place...") If a person then responds, and as the Rambam says, rectifies his ways, he can in fact turn that punishment into a merit. Therefore, it is appropriate for this correct response to merit the treasures that the inhabitants of Canaan left behind.

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