

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET
ON PARSHAS TAZRIA-METZORA - 5756

B'S'D'

After the end of World War II, the brilliant and flamboyant Torah sage, Rabbi Eliezer Silver the rav of Cincinnati, visited and aided thousands of survivors in displaced persons camps in Germany and Poland who were waiting to find permanent homes. One day, as he was handing out Siddurim (prayerbooks) and other Torah paraphernalia, a Jewish man flatly refused to accept any.

"After the way I saw Jews act in the camp, I don't want to have any connection with religion!"

Rabbi Silver asked him to explain what exactly had turned him off from Jewish practice.

"I saw a Jew who had a Siddur, yet he only allowed it to be used by the inmates in exchange for their daily bread ration. Imagine," he sneered, "a Jew selling the right to daven for bread!"

"And how many customers did this man get?" inquired Rabbi Silver.

"Far too many!" snapped the man.

Rabbi Silver put his hand around the gentlemen and gently explained.

"Why

are you looking at the bad Jew who sold the right to pray? Why don't you look at the many good Jews who were willing to forego their rations and starve, just in order to pray. Isn't that the lesson you should take with you?"

Perhaps Hashem in His compassion is sending much more to the gossipier than a get-rich-quick scheme. He shows the first-time slanderer to look a little deeper at life. On the outside he may see a dirty wall of a former Canaanite home. Dig a little deeper and you will find gold in them tar walls. Next time you look at a person only superficially -- think. Dig deeper. There is definitely gold beneath the surface. Sometimes you have to break down your walls to find the gold you never thought it existed.

Good Shabbos

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

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Some www sites Shamash Home pg - <http://shamash.nysernet.org>; Jerusalem 1 Home Page - <http://www.jerl.co.il>; YU - <http://yu1.yu.edu>; YHE - <http://www.etzion.org.il>; Chabad - <http://www.chabad.org>; Jewish Comm. Ntwk - <http://www.jcn18.com>; Project Genesis <http://www.torah.org>; Judaism - http://www.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Religion/Judaism; Israel internet - <http://www.ac.il>

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DRASHA PARSHAS TAZRIA-METZORA GOLD IN THEIR WALLS
Volume 2 Issue 28

This week, in reading both Tazria and Metzora, we combine portions that deal with the physio-spiritual plague of tzora'as. Tzora'as is a discoloration that appears in varying forms on human skin, on hair, clothing, and even on the walls of one's home. The afflicted individual must endure a complicated process of purification in order to rejoin the community. The Talmud explains that tzoraas is a divine punishment for the sins of slander and gossip. In fact, the Talmud in Arachin 16b comments that the reason that the afflicted is sent out of the camp was because "he separated friends and families through his words, and deserves to be separated from his community."

Rashi explains that the first form of tzora'as does not begin on the person. Hashem in His mercy first strikes at inanimate objects -- one's possessions. The discoloration first appears on the walls of a home, forcing the affected stones to be removed and destroyed. If that event does not succeed as a wake-up-call, and the person continues his malevolent activities, then his clothing is affected. If that fails, eventually the flesh is transformed and white lesions appear, forcing the afflicted to leave the Jewish camp until the plague subsides and the Kohen declares him acceptable to return.

Rashi tells us that the first stage of tzora'as -- the home -- is actually a blessing in disguise. Tzora'as on a home can indeed bring fortune to the affected. As the Israelites were approaching the Land of Canaan, the inhabitants, figuring that one day they would re-conquer the land, hid all their gold and silver inside the walls of their homes. When one dislodged the afflicted stones of his home he would find the hidden treasures that were left by the fleeing Canaanites.

It is troubling. Why should the first warning of tzora'as reek of triumph? What message is Hashem sending to the first-offender by rewarding his misdeeds with a cache of gold? What spiritual import is gained from the materialistic discovery?

"Ohr Somayach <ohr@jerl.co.il>" Highlights of the Torah weekly port...
Subject: Torah Weekly - Tazria/Metzora
Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion with "Sing, My Soul!" thoughts on Shabbos Zemiros

Summary

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'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.

Metzora

The Torah describes the procedure for a Metzora (a person afflicted with Tzara'as) upon conclusion of his isolation. This process extends for a week, and involves korbanos 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'as, household possessions are removed to prevent them from also being declared ritually impure. The Tzara'as 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 how one regains a state of ritual purity.

Commentaries 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 the 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)

STICKS AND STONES

"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. It shows 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 Lashon Hara, but also against himself. An angel with a 'tape-recorder' stands by the side of each one of us recording our every word.

In order to teach those who speak Lashon Hara 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'as for all to see, until the Kohen actually pronounces the word "Impure!", he is still considered totally pure. Similarly, he cannot regain his former status, even though 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)

Haftorah: Rosh Chodesh - Yishayahu 66:1-24

When Rosh Chodesh occurs on Shabbos, the regular Haftorah is replaced by a special Haftorah - the last chapter of the Book of Yishayahu (Isaiah). This chapter was chosen because of its penultimate verse which links Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh: "And it shall be that, from New Moon to New Moon, and from Shabbos to Shabbos, all flesh shall come and prostrate themselves before Me, said Hashem. (66:23) This verse is also repeated after concluding the reading of the Haftorah. Every New Moon is a summons to Israel to renew and rejuvenate itself. Every Shabbos is a call to show practical proof of our homage to Hashem by ceasing from melacha (prohibited work). But there will come a time when not only Israel will be called to offer their willing service to Hashem... "And I will establish a distinctive sign amongst them and send refugees from them to the nations to ...Yavan, to the most distant lands that have not heard My Fame, nor have seen My Glory, and they will inform the nations of My Glory." (66:19)

Yavan/Greece is the nation charged with the task of elevating the lowly and

un-refined nations through culture. But culture is not an end in itself. It is only a preliminary stage. After Yavan/Greece, it is Shem/the Jews who will show mankind the path to elevate itself to an awareness of what is good and true; to pay homage to what is morally beautiful; to lead the nations to the height of Man's calling.

The 'uniformity' in thought that rules the actions and intellect of Greece is ultimately a fulfillment of Hashem's plan. For through this love of uniformity, the nations will be united and they will finally come to perceive the 'One-ness' of the Creator.

This unified mankind will become the encircling vessel that will contain the pure mincha offering that is the Jewish People. Then the nations will recognize Israel's role as the priests of mankind, just as the Levi'im are the priests of Israel.

The realization of this goal is something absolutely certain. Then every New Moon and every Shabbos will not only bring to Israel a call for renewal of kedusha (holiness) of acknowledging Hashem in free-willed devotion, but all mankind will also hear and heed this call. (Adapted from Rabbi S. R. Hirsch)

Sing, My Soul Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.

Tzur Mishelo Achalnu - The Rock, from Whose food we have eaten
Yibaneh hamikdash, ir Tziyon t'malay, v'sham nashir shir chadash
"May the Sanctuary be rebuilt, the City of Zion replenished and there shall we sing a new song."

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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"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Tazria-Metzorah -

The Laws of "Spiritual" Nature Explain Tum'as Leidah

Parshas Tazria contains the law of Tum'as Leidah [impurity after childbirth]. After giving birth to a male child, a new mother is Tameh [impure] for seven days. However, after giving birth to a female child, a new mother is Tameh for fourteen days.

This is difficult to understand. One would think that after such a blessed event, which the parents have been longing for, the Torah would not want the mother to become Tameh. On the contrary, Tumah [impurity] is usually associated with some type of negative experience -- death, tzara'as (leprosy), etc. What is this concept that at the time of this joyous event of birth, the mother becomes tameh?

Additionally, it is perhaps even more difficult to understand this halacha because it seems chauvinistic. When a woman gives birth to a male, she is tameh for only seven days, but when she gives birth to a female, she is more tameh -- she's impure for fourteen days.

All the expositors of the Chumash try to explain this matter of the Torah imposing a Tum'ah immediately after the birth.

The Netziv in his Ha'amek Davar suggests that the whole concept of the Laws of Niddah - which result in a woman being permitted to her husband, and then prohibited to him, and then permitted again - are in order that (as a result of enforced absence) the woman will become more dear to her husband. Having someone available always can perhaps breed contempt, so the Torah provides us a time of "Niddah".

The Netziv explains that when a woman is pregnant, she usually does not see blood and consequently is not Tameh. Therefore, a person's wife is available to him the whole time, and the concept of the parsha of Niddah has been defeated. Consequently, immediately after birth, the Torah imposes a law of Tumah, to reinstate the concept of separation, so that after the separation, she will be more dear to her husband.

There is a different interpretation that can be said based on a teaching of the Kotzker Rebbe, zt"l:

When Chava, the first mother had her son, Kayin, she gave him that name because she said "Kanisi ish, es Hashem" [Bereshis 4:1] which literally means "I have acquired a man with G-d". Some however say that the word "Kanisi", does not come from the word "kinyan" meaning acquisition; but rather it has the same interpretation as in the expression "Koneh Shamayim v'Aretz" (Creator of the Heaven and Earth), meaning "to create".

Therefore, by saying "Kanisi ish, es Hashem," Chava was saying that when I had this baby I created a human being. I have gone from the role of someone who was created to the role of someone who is herself a Creator. Therefore it is "es Hashem" -- I am a partner, as it were, with G-d.

Chazal say that a person has three partners in his creation -- his father, his mother, and G-d. Chava was affirming this statement by saying "I have created a person together with G-d". What we have here is a situation where a person comes as close to being a Creator as humanly possible. When a woman is pregnant for nine months and then gives birth to a human being, at that moment she is a facsimile of a Ribbono shel Olam.

Therefore, during pregnancy and child birth, a woman is on a very high level. And after child birth? She is no longer pregnant. She is no longer a Creator. She is just a regular human being.

The Kotzker says that we have a rule in the laws of Tumah and Tahara: Tumah comes when there is a removal of holiness. When there is a level of kedusha and that kedusha is removed, in its place -- to fill up the vacuum -- Tumah comes.

Just as there are laws of physics and laws of nature; so too there are laws that govern spirituality. One of the laws of spirituality

is that Tumah comes to fill the void left by the removal of the presence of Kedusha.

While a person is alive and vital, the person has Kedusha -- the person has a Neshama [soul]. When the person dies and the Neshama leaves, the Kedusha leaves. The removal of the kedusha leaves a void and in its stead comes a concept called Tumas Mes.

Therefore, says the Kotzker, the reason a woman is Tameh after giving birth -- despite the fact that the birth itself is a blessed event -- is because a void of Kedusha was created. While she was pregnant and giving birth she was at the height of human spiritual potential -- she was a facsimile of a Creator of Worlds. Now that she is no longer on that level, the Kedusha has been removed. In its place must come Tumah.

The Or Hachayim HaKadosh says that we can now understand why there is more Tumah after the birth of a girl than after the birth of a boy. Not, as some would say, because the Torah is sexist. Not because, chas v'Shalom [Heaven forbid], the Ribbono shel Olam is a chauvinist. On the contrary -- the reason there is more Tumah when a woman is pregnant with a girl is because there was then more Kedusha present. Not only was the woman on the highest spiritual level, because she was being a Creator, but she was creating another potential Creator. She was creating, of all things, a woman who could eventually go on to Create further. In this respect, because a woman carries and nurtures the baby, she has a closer closeness to the Ribbono shel Olam than a man. The removal of a higher level of Kedusha necessitates the arrival of a higher form of Tumah in its stead.

Personalities and Sources

Netziv -- Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin (1817-1893), son-in-law of Rav Chaim Volozhiner and head of the Volozhin Yeshiva for some 40 years.

Kotzker Rebbe -- Rav. Menachem Mendel of Kotzk (1787-1859) One of the leading Polish Chassidic Rebbes.

Or HaChayim HaKadosh -- Rav Chaim ben Attar (1696-1743); Rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva in Livorno, Italy and later Jerusalem. Kabbalist and Talmudic scholar

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"Jeffrey Gross <75310.3454@CompuServe.COM>" "Halachic Topics Related to the Weekl...

SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS TAZRIA-METZORA

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

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

The affliction of Tzoraas comes in punishment for the chatter of gossip and slander (Rashi 14:4)

Lashon Harah Scenarios

QUESTION: Reuven, whose time is precious, asks Shimon for his opinion about a speaker whose lecture Reuven is thinking of attending. Is it permitted for Shimon, who has a negative opinion of the speaker's abilities, to advise Reuven that, in his opinion, he should not attend the lecture? If Reuven

presses Shimon for a reason, may Shimon say specific remarks about the speaker, e.g., "he is boring", "he doesn't say any new ideas", etc.?

DISCUSSION: Chofetz Chaim(1) says that it is prohibited to ridicule a Torah lecture even it is true that the delivery was poor or that the content was lacking depth. By ridiculing the lecture, serious harm can result to the reputation and effectiveness of the speaker. Sometimes a monetary loss can result. Therefore, rules the Chofetz Chaim, this action is prohibited and is considered Lashon Harah.

The Chofetz Chaim does not, however, discuss a situation such as the one spelled out above. Reuven honestly needs to know if it is worth his time to attend the lecture. The information he is seeking from Shimon is pertinent to a decision he must make. Generally, the Halacha is that one may, and should, speak the truth about another when beneficial information is requested. Since Reuven deems this information to be beneficial to him, it seems that it is permitted for Shimon to tell Reuven that, in his opinion, there is no good reason for Reuven to attend the lecture. Although Shimon would not be allowed to ridicule or belittle the speaker himself, he would be permitted to advise Reuven that it may not be beneficial for him to attend. We must, however, stress several points:

Although Shimon may be permitted to divulge this information, Reuven should not accept the information as the absolute truth. Reuven may only be suspicious enough to guard himself.

Shimon should remember that what may seem boring to him, may very well be interesting and enlightening to Reuven, etc.

Shimon's should voice his opinion only if he has no ulterior motive, e.g., a grudge against the speaker; he is jealous of the speaker, etc.

QUESTION: Reuven is being angrily accused by Shimon of causing him harm. May Shimon exonerate himself by pointing at the guilty party?

DISCUSSION: It is clearly forbidden for Reuven to divulge to Shimon the identity of the person who did him harm. Even if Shimon clearly asked "If not you, then who did it?" still Reuven may only declare his own innocence. He may only say: I did not do it.

In a situation where there is only one other person who is a suspect and Reuven's declaration of innocence will directly implicate the other person, it is still permitted for Reuven to say that he is not the guilty party. But this is clearly permitted only in a situation where the alleged harmful action was actually improper. If the harmful action was not improper, e.g. it was done by accident, then it is questionable if Reuven may shift the blame by declaring his innocence(2).

A child should not be asked by his Rebbe or parents to point a finger at a wrongdoer. This lessens the severity of the prohibition of Lashon Harah in the eyes of the child(3). A child who is instructed by a Rebbe or a parent to say Lashon Harah, is not required to listen to them(4). If, however the information is needed for a beneficial and constructive purpose, it is permitted for the child to divulge that information(5).

QUESTION: Reuven, who in the past said Lashon Harah on Shimon, now seeks his forgiveness. If Shimon is unaware what exactly was said about him, is Reuven required to repeat to Shimon what he said about him in order for complete forgiveness to take place?

DISCUSSION: If the Lashon Harah that was said was not accepted by the listeners and no harm was done to Shimon, Reuven does not need to ask for Shimon's forgiveness at all. He needs, however, to repent his sin directly to Hashem.

If the Lashon Harah did cause harm to Shimon, Reuven must seek forgiveness directly from Shimon. If Shimon is unaware what was

said about him, Reuven must tell him(6). If the information will cause Shimon great embarrassment, then Reuven need not elaborate upon the Lashon Harah that was said(7).

HALACHA is published L'zchus Hayaed Doniel Meir ben Hinda.

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* HaRav Yisroel Grumer, Marah D'Asra

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 Chofetz Chaim, Lashon Harah, 2:12.
- 2 Chofetz Chaim, Lashon Harah 10:17 & Be'er Mayim Chaim 43.
- 3 Igros Moshe YD 2:103.
- 4 Chofetz Chaim, Lashon Harah 1:5.
- 5 Like any Lashon Harah which is permitted when it said for a permitted purpose.
- 6 Rabbeinu Yona in Shaarei Teshuva 207, quoted by Chofetz Chaim, Lashon Harah, 4:12
- 7 Mishnah Berurah 606:3

"Project Genesis <genesis@j51.com>", "lifeline@torah.org"
Project Genesis LifeLine - Volume III, Number 27 - Tazria / Metzorah

Please pray for the speedy healing of Esther Miriam bat Aliza Geula and Chaim Efraim Betzalel ben Malka

"If one is poor, and he cannot afford [the regular sacrifice]..." [14:21]

While the first parsha this week, Tazria, concerns the acquisition of impurity, the second reading of Metzorah begins by describing the purification process of the Metzorah, one afflicted with Tzora'as (often [inadequately] translated as "leprosy"). The parsha first describes the regular sacrifice, but then offers a second, less expensive sacrifice for a person who cannot afford the standard obligation.

Rabbi Yisroel Mayer Kagan, the Chofetz Chaim, applies this concept to our

day: to "serve G-d" means something different for each person, dependent on his or her current "wealth." He reprimands those who use the world around them as an excuse to relax. There are some people, he says, who learn Torah and pray to some extent, and tell themselves that if they are really not performing their obligations properly, their friends and neighbors do not even reach their own level of mediocre performance.

He explains that these excuse-makers fail to see that those friends and neighbors are "poor in understanding," meaning that they do not understand their obligations at the same level. If one is poor, he can make do with a less expensive sacrifice, but a wealthy individual who brings the offering of the poor does not fulfill his obligation. So too in the performance of Mitzvos - a scholar is expected to demonstrate extra precision.

There is a flip side to this as well, which also deserves our consideration. Every week, we at Project Genesis receive letters from around the world from Jews who have never studied their own Judaism seriously, and don't know where to begin. They look at our various offerings, and wonder how they can ever understand it all.

First of all, we should be providing more introductory material on our Web site, to help people get started. This is a section that we do hope to create and develop over the coming months, with the generous support of readers and other contributors. Please be patient as we develop this resource.

A new reader should also realize that he or she is not expected to understand everything, and that this represents no failure. A person can only absorb so much, and one without an extensive background can fulfill his

or her obligation with less material and a lesser level of understanding.

There was a Jewish man who was inducted into the Czar's army as a young boy (as was customary at that time), and as a result never received a solid Jewish education. Nonetheless, when he finally left Russia, he settled in New York and began to faithfully attend a local class in Talmud intended for those with a far more extensive background. It was clear that he understood little or nothing of what was being discussed, so some asked him why he bothered to attend.

"In the Tsar's army," he replied, "I was required each morning to recite the names of the members of the royal family, and all the Tsar's closest advisers, all from memory. When I reach the Heavenly Court, at least I will be able to identify the leading members of G-d's 'family,' the scholars of His law!"

Whatever a person understands is valuable, and is a step forward. As with everything else, Jewish studies come "one step at a time!"

ARACHIM has announced upcoming seminars, an advanced seminar in English and Hebrew in Ontario, CA (outside Los Angeles) during Memorial Day (Shavu'ot) weekend and an introductory seminar in Spanish and Hebrew in Mexico on Mother's Day weekend (May 9-12). For full details, please write them at <arachim@jer1.co.il>, or call Arachim in California at (213) 931-3344 or 9575, or in Mexico at 52(5) 359-2815 or 250-1633.

WE'RE MOVING: Project Genesis (and by no coincidence, the Menken family) is planning a move to Baltimore in the coming months. We hope to open an office in Owings Mills in late June or July, using space generously donated by a reader there.

With our new office comes the opportunity for a few select individuals to become part of our organization. We are specifically seeking help

A WEBMASTER, who will be required to design Web pages, and program in PERL, Java, JavaScript, HTML, VRML, and whatever new technologies become mandatory for any high-caliber site. In addition, the WebMaster will be responsible for organizing and directing the volunteer efforts that have brought our Web site to its current level.

An ADMINISTRATOR (to appear as something more exciting on a resume), who will be responsible for bookkeeping, office administration, and much of our correspondence with donors, Jewish foundations, and other Jewish organizations...

Good Shabbos,
Rabbi Yaakov Menken

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""Yeshivat Har Etzion" <yhe@jer1.co.il> STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT DELIVERED BY THE ROSHEI YESHIVA

PARASHAT TAZRIA
SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"A
Nature and Brit Mila

"And God spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to the children of Israel saying, if a woman conceives and bears a male child she shall be impure for seven days; as in the days of her menstrual impurity shall she be impure. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. And for thirty-three days she shall continue in the blood of her purifying; she shall touch no holy thing nor shall she come into the Temple until the days of her purifying are

completed." [Vayikra 12:1-4]

The mention of the mitzva of brit mila (circumcision) here, sandwiched in between the laws pertaining to the purity of a woman who has given birth, is surprising and seems out of place.

Of course, we may explain that the Torah is simply presenting a chronological description of events - the seven days of impurity immediately after the birth, followed on the eighth day by the brit mila, and then the days of purifying.

It is also possible that the mitzva is mentioned here because of its importance. After all, this was the first mitzva which God explicitly commanded Avraham Avinu, and it is in fact the first mitzva given to the Jewish People as a whole.

But there is yet a deeper significance to this mitzva. Midrash Tanchuma (Tazria, 5) recounts:

"Once the evil [Roman governor] Turnus Rufus asked Rabbi Akiva, 'Whose deeds are greater - God's or man's?' He replied, 'Man's deeds are greater.' Turnus Rufus asked him, 'Is man then capable of creating heaven and earth, or anything like them?' Rabbi Akiva replied, 'I was not referring to the sphere beyond man's ability, over which he has no control. I refer to those creations of which man is capable.' He then asked, 'Why do you circumcise yourselves?' Rabbi Akiva replied, 'I knew that that was the point of your question, and therefore I answered in the first place that man's deeds are greater than God's.' Rabbi Akiva brought him grains of wheat and some bread, and said: 'These grains of wheat are God's handiwork, and the bread is the handiwork of man. Is the latter not greater than the former?' Turnus Rufus answered him, 'If God wanted you to perform circumcision, why did He not create the child already circumcised while still in the womb?' Rabbi Akiva answered, 'Why do you not ask the same question concerning the umbilical cord, which remains attached to him and which his mother must cut? In response to your question - the reason why he does not emerge already circumcised is because God gave Israel the commandments in order that they would be purified by performing them. Therefore David wrote, 'Every word of God is pure (or, purified).'"

The debate recorded here is a serious and fundamental one that exists between Israel and the nations. The nations of the world see nature as being worthy of admiration. Nature, according to their perception, is the most perfect creation, and man is incapable of attaining anything greater. Their philosophy - to which many still adhere today - holds that man should grow and develop naturally, should be part of nature, should eat only natural foods, and that his 'naturalness' should know no bounds, because everything natural is automatically beautiful and good.

The Torah has a different approach. As Rabbi Akiva taught, nature is not perfect. It contains poisonous substances and includes dangerous beasts. The beauty and perfection of nature are limited, and man must recognize its limitations within the sphere of his natural behavior.

Hence man's obligation to elevate and perfect nature - for example by means of the mitzva of mila - inculcates in his heart the idea that he is a partner of God in creating the world and bringing it to its ultimate perfection, and serves as our response to the nations of the world.

(Originally delivered on Leil Shabbat Parashat Tazria 5753. Translated by Kaeren Fish.)

Is 'eight' a magic number in Sefer Vayikra? Or, is it only coincidental that:

- * In Parshat Shmini - the 'eighth day' is chosen for the dedication of the Mishkan;
- * In Parshat Tazria - the 'eighth day' is chosen for the "brit Milah" of a male child;
- * In Parshat Metzora - the 'eighth day' is chosen for the day on which the cleansed Metzora, Zav, and Zavah bring their special korbanot;
- * In Parshat Emor - the final holiday is "SHIMNI atzeret"?

In last week's shiur, we discussed the biblical significance of the number 'seven'. This week, we return to Sefer Breishit to find the biblical significance of the number eight.

INTRODUCTION

From the above examples in Sefer Vayikra, eight appears to be significant simply because it follows seven:

"Yom Ha'shmini" follows the SEVEN days of the "miluim";
The korbanot on the eighth day of the Metzora and Zav follow their minimum SEVEN day "tahara" period;
"Shmini Atzeret" follows the SEVEN days of Succot.

Brit Milah, however, seems to be an exception. Although the mother is "tamei" for the first seven days after her son's birth (12:2), there does not appear to be any logical connection between these two laws. Furthermore, the original commandment to Avraham Avinu concerning brit Milah on the eighth day is not connected at all to any laws of "tumah" or "tahara". [See Br. 17:7-14.]

Nonetheless, the commandment of Brit Milah - Breishit chapter 17 - is the FIRST time in Chumash where we find special importance given to the 'eighth day'. From a cursory reading of that chapter, the choice of the eighth day appears to be random. However, a careful textual comparison between that chapter and earlier chapters in Sefer Breishit will show an intentional connection between the 'eighth day' and the story of Creation.

A QUICK REVIEW OF SEFER BREISHIT

Recall from our study of Sefer Breishit that God's creation of the universe is presented in Chumash from two perspectives:

- 1) "b'shem ELOKIM" (1:1 -2:4) - God's creation of NATURE, i.e. a structured universe, in SEVEN days ['perek aleph'];
- 2) "b'shem HAVAYA" (2:5-4:26) - God's special relationship with Man, i.e. the creation of Gan Eden, and man's banishment from that environment after he sins.

Owing to the sins of "dor ha'Mabul" (the generation of the Flood), God decided to destroy His creation and begin again with Noah. This also took place from both perspectives:

- 1) b'shem Elokim - BEFORE: 6:9-6:22 / AFTER 9:1-17
- 2) b'shem Havaya - " 6:5-8; 7:1-5/ " 8:18-21

The children of Noah disperse into seventy nations (10:1-32). God's intervention in the building of Migdal Bavel, b'shem Havaya (11:1-10), prevents mankind from uniting for an 'undivine' purpose. God (again b'shem Havaya) then chooses Avraham to become the forefather of a special nation that will unite mankind towards a divine purpose (12:1-16:16).

After commanding him to leave Ur Kasdim and migrate to a special land, God - b'shem Havaya - promises Avraham several times that his offspring are destined to become a special nation in this Promised Land. This promise becomes formalized at Brit Bein Ha'Btarim (15:1-20), a covenant which not only foresees the conquest of the Land of Israel by Avraham's offspring, but also foresees the forging of this nation through bondage in a foreign

Land.

Interestingly enough, from chapter 11 until chapter 16 in Sefer Breishit, we find that God speaks to man exclusively b'shem Havaya. This changes in chapter 17, when God commands Avraham to perform Brit Milah. In this narrative, God introduces Himself as "kel sha-dai" and then, for the FIRST time, He speaks to Avraham Avinu b'shem ELOKIM.

"When Avram was ninety-nine years, God [HAVAYA] appeared to Avram and said to him: "ANI KEL SHA-DAI", walk before Me and be blameless. And I will establish My COVENANT between Me and you... Avram fell on his face, and God [ELOKIM] spoke to him saying... This is my COVENANT with you..."
(17:1-4)

In this covenant, given b'shem Elokim, God -

- a) changes Avram's name to Avraham;
- b) blesses him that he will multiply ("pru u'rvu");
- c) promises that he will become a great nation;
- d) promises him and his future generations Eretz Canaan;
- e) promises to be his God ("I'hiyot l'cha l'ELOKIM");
- f) commands him to circumcise his male children, etc.

To appreciate the significance of this special covenant, we must compare it to the two earlier instances (up until this point in Chumash) when God speaks to man b'shem Elokim:

- (I) After the creation of man on the sixth day (1:27-30);
- (II) After the Flood (9:1-17).

(I) On the sixth day, when man is created b'tzelem ELOKIM, God (b'shem ELOKIM) blesses him that he should:

- a) be fruitful and multiply ("pru u'rvu");
- b) be master and ruler of the living kingdom;
- c) eat from the plants and fruit of the trees.

(II) Some ten generations later, after the Flood, God (b'shem ELOKIM) blesses Noah and his children in a very similar fashion (9:1-7), including:

- a) to be fruitful and multiply ("pru u'rvu");
- b) to be master of the living kingdom;
- c) permission to eat living creatures (not only plants);

God's blessing is followed by a special covenant, also given b'shem Elokim. This covenant, known as "brit ha'keshet" (the rainbow covenant), reflects the establishment of a special relationship between God and mankind: a Divine promise to never again bring about the total destruction of His creation (9:11,15).

The next time that God speaks to man b'shem Elokim is some ten generations later, at Brit Milah. Once again we find God establishing a special covenant with man.

Note the striking textual similarities between "brit Milah" and "brit ha'keshet":

- a) to be fruitful and multiply 9:1 / 17:2,6;
- b) "va'ani hi'nei... briti itach(em)..." 9:9 / 17:4;
- c) "v'hakimoti et briti..." 9:11 / 17:7;
- d) "ha'aterz" // "eretz canaan" 9:13,16,17 / 17:8
- e) "ot brit": "ha'milah // ha'keshet" 9:13,17 / 17:12;

Despite these similarities, "brit Milah" constitutes a much closer relationship. At Brit Milah, the phrase - "I'hiyot lachem l'Elokim" [to be a God to you] - is added. This key phrase is repeated twice, for it emphasizes and defines the purpose of Brit Milah (read 17:7-8 carefully!).

FROM CREATION TO CIRCUMCISION

This background can help us appreciate the significance of brit Milah specifically on the eighth day. Note the progression of God's relationship with man from the perspective of 'shem Elokim':

- 1) The Creation of NATURE in SEVEN days (1:1-2:4);
- 2) The covenant with Noah after the Flood (9:1-17);

3) The "Brit Milah" covenant with Avraham Avinu to be performed on the EIGHTH day (17:1-14).

One could suggest that Milah on the EIGHTH day relates to the elevation of man's spiritual level, ONE step above the level of his original creation in SEVEN days.

Let's explain this, based on the three stages noted above:

(1) During the first seven days, God brought the universe to a stage of development where it appears to 'take care of itself'. Be it vegetation, animal, or man, all species of life secure their existence by their ability to reproduce; they become fruitful and multiply (e.g. "zo'ray'ah zerah", "zachar u'nekeyvah", "pru u'rvu", etc.). Man's mastery of this creation, his desire to conquer and his ability to harness it, are all part of this phenomenon which we call NATURE.

The first chapter of Breishit teaches us that, what we call nature, is not simply an act of chance, rather a willful act of God. [By resting on Shabbat, once every seven days, we remind ourselves of this point.]

(2) After the "mabul", God (b'shem Elokim) 'starts over' by re-establishing His relationship with mankind in a covenant with Noach, known as "brit ha'keshet". This covenant reflects a relationship very similar to that in God's original creation in seven days, with some 'minor' changes: Man remains master of His universe (9:2), with a 'small change' in his diet (9:3-5), and a commandment that it is forbidden to murder a fellow human (9:6-7). However, the basic laws of nature remain the same (see 9:8).

(3) Up until Brit Milah, man's relationship with God b'shem Elokim was distant. Although Man was the pinnacle of God's creation with certain minimal expectations of moral behavior, he was basically just part of nature. Man was given power; he acted LIKE God (b'tzelem Elokim), but was not CLOSE to Him.

At Brit Milah, Avraham is raised to a higher level. He and his offspring are chosen to represent God and towards that purpose, they are awarded a special relationship - "li'hiyot lachem l'Elokim". As an "ot", a sign, of this relationship, they are commanded to circumcise their children on the 'eighth day'.

Thus, the EIGHTH day represents the progression of the creation process of SEVEN days to a higher level. [What the Maharal calls "m'al ha'teva - above nature!"]

Just as there was progression during the seven days of creation b'shem Elokim, from "domem" (inanimate / "shmayim v'aretz"), to "tzomayach" (vegetation), to "chai" (animal kingdom), to "adam" (man), so too on the 'eighth day'. The offspring of Avraham has been chosen to take God's creation and elevate it to a higher level.

This interpretation could reflect a statement made by Reish Lakish, explaining the meaning of God's name "kel sha-dai" which is first introduced at Brit Milah(17:1-2):

What's the meaning of "ani kel-sha'dai"? God said: I am the One who said to the world "dai" - [enough, or stop]."

(Yalkut Shimoni siman 81, Chagiga 12a)

[See also the pirush of the "Torah Tmima" on this pasuk.]

This explains the complex opening of the Brit Milah narrative: God, b'shem Havaya - the Name of God which Avraham is familiar with up until this point - informs Avraham that He is "kel sha-dai", the God who had stopped His process of creation after seven days (17:1-2). Now, b'shem Elokim, the Name of God that orchestrated the creation in seven days, has come to establish a covenant with Avraham, to command him with the mitzvah of Brit Milah, to raise him one level higher.

Thus, God's commandment that we perform Brit Milah on the eighth day is not incidental. Rather, it reflects the very nature of our special relationship with God.

BACK TO VAYIKRA

Milah on the eighth day was only one example of this '7/8' relationship in Sefer Vayikra. Based on our shiur, we can now explain the other examples:

SEVEN DAYS "MILUIM" / "YOM HA'SHMINI":

As explained in last week's shiur, the seven days necessary to dedicate the Mishkan reflects the parallel between our construction of the Mishkan to serve God, to God's creation of nature in seven days, to serve Him. [See Thilim 104 - "borchi nafshi...!"] On the 'eighth day', the "shchinah" descends upon the Mishkan, allowing it to become the focal point for the development of the special relationship between God and Bnei Yisrael.

SEVEN DAYS "TAHARA" / EIGHTH DAY "KORBANOT" (Metzora, Zav, Zava): Different types of "tumah" are caused by some abnormal behavior of the body. Seven days of "tahara" are required to return the "tamei" person back to the 'camp' - to his normal existence, his natural habitat. Then on the eighth day, he must bring a special korban to allow his entry into the Mishkan. [Note the parallel between this process, and its korbanot, to that of the kohanim during the seven day miluim and Yom ha'Shmini.]

SEVEN DAYS OF SUCCOT / SHMINI ATZERET:

As agriculture and nature go hand in hand, all of the agricultural holidays follow cycles of seven (see Vayikra chapter 23). In the spring (chag ha'aviv), as the grain harvest begins, we bring "korban ha'omer" and celebrate chag ha'matzot for SEVEN days. Then we count SEVEN WEEKS until the completion of the wheat harvest, bring "korban shte ha'lechem", and celebrate chag ha'SHAVUOT. On succot, "chag ha'asif", at the end of the agricultural year ("b'tzeit ha'shana /see Shmot 23:16), we thank God for our fruit harvest by celebrating for seven days and bringing the "arba minim" to the Mikdash. At the very end of this cycle of agricultural holidays, we add SHMINI ATZERET, a special gathering with no special agricultural mitzvah. It is simply a time to stop and reflect on the holiday season and year that has passed. On this 'eighth day', we focus on the special relationship between God and Bnei Yisrael. [In is understandable why Chazal chose this holiday to celebrate it as "simchat Torah", and to conclude on it our own 'cycle' of reading the Torah every week.]

This special relationship between God and Bnei Yisrael which begins with Brit Milah, reaches its fullest expression with Matan Torah at Brit Har Sinai. In light of these concepts, as we count the SEVEN weeks in anticipation of Shavuot, and in preparation for "chag Matan Torah", the mitzvah of "sfirat ha'omer" takes on additional meaning.

shabbat shalom me nachem

"Menachem Leibtag <ml@etzion.org.il>"LAST YEAR'S SHIUR / TAZRIA-METZORA

INTRODUCTION

The last perek of Parshat Shmini and all of Tazria/Metzora (11:1-15:23) form a unit containing the laws which define various types of 'tumah' (ritual uncleanness) and the various procedures ('torot') necessary to become 'tahor' (cleansed/ from these 'tumot'). As one who becomes 'tamei' is not permitted entry into the Mikdash, this unit can be titled "Bi'at Mikdash" - the laws governing 'entry into the Mishkan'.

These laws apply primarily to the Mishkan, for forbidden entry to the Mikdash is the major consequence of 'becoming tamei'. [See Ramban Hilchot Beit Ha'Bchira VII:11-20 for more

specific detail.)) This unit of 'the laws of tumah and tahara' obviously belongs is Sefer Vayikra, as it deals with laws pertaining to Mishkan. It is located immediately after the story of the death of Nadav and Avihu, as they were punished for improper entry into the 'kodesh'(10:1-5). Because of this connection, these laws of "Bi'at Mikdash" are juxtaposed to that narrative.

["Avodat kohen ha'godel b'yom kipur" (Parshat Acharei Mot 16:1-35) is the actual finale of this unit, as it describes the procedure for proper entry into the 'kodesh'. The significance of that parsha and its connection to the overall structure of Sefer Vayikra will be discussed iy"n in next week's shiur.]

This week's shiur discusses the basic structure of this unit and the significance of its detail.

STRUCTURE

This unit begins with the least severe and most common 'tumah', to the most severe and least common. After defining each type of 'tumah' the Torah explains the necessary procedure to become 'tahor'. [Note: each section ends with a summary phrase, beginning with zot torat...]

This structure will be summarized in the following table:

I. ONE DAY TUMAH- 11:1-47 ("tumah 'kala'" / "tumat erev")

[note pasukim 24,25,27,31,32,39 - "v'tamey ad ha'erev"]

'Tumat Ochlim' - by eating or touching the dead carcass of:

- A. (1-28) forbidden animals and fowl
- B. (29-38) "tumat 8 shrutzim" and related dinim
- C. (39-40) permitted animals that died without 'shchita'
- D. (41-43) creeping animals

'Tahara' for all the above - 'r'chitza b'mayim'

(44-47) - Finale psukim

... ZOT TORAT HA'BHAMA etc.

II. SEVEN DAY TUMAH - 12:1-15:33 ("tumah 'chamurah'")

A. 'Yoledet' (12:1-8)

Tumah -

for boy : 7+33@

for girl : 14+66Γ

Taharah -

korban chatat & olah

...ZOT TORAT HA'YOLEDET

B. 'Tzaraat' (13:1-14:32)

Tumah - (based on inspection by the kohen)

1. on one's body
2. 'beged'

Tahara

1. 7 days of special sprinkling

2. special korban chatat & olah & asham

C. 'Tzaraat HaBayit' (14:33-53)

Tumah - (based on inspection by kohen)

'tumat habayit' caused items in the house to become tumay - (this is more severe)

Tahara - special sprinkling on the house

summary psukim (14:54-57)

... ZOT TORAT... L'TZRA'AT

D. 'Tsh' (15:1-15)

Tumah - 'ZAV'

1. he himself - 7 days
2. items that he touches or sits on etc. - 1 day
3. another person sitting on what he is - 1 day

Tahara

1. washing the items he was in contact with.
2. after 7 days - washing with 'mayim chayim'

3. korban 'chatat & olah'

E. 'Tsha' (15:16-30)

3 levels - 'shichvat zera' - 1 day

'nidah' (normal) - 7 days

'zava' (abnormal) - 7 days + korban

Tumah - for 'nidah' and 'zava'

1. she herself - 7 days

2. items she touches - 1 day

3. another person sitting on what she is - 1 day

Tahara -

korban chatat & olah (for 'zava' only)

Finale and summary psukim (15:31-33)

.. ZOT TORAT ... L'ZAV etc.

NOTES:

1) The first section on "one day tumah" (the last perek in Shmini) may appear at first glance to be dealing with the laws of 'kashrut', as it details which animals are permitted or forbidden to be eaten. However, the main reason that certain dietary laws are mentioned here in Sefer Vayikra is because of their relation to the laws of 'tumah'. This can be discerned very easily by comparing this parsha to the dietary laws in Parshat Re'ay (Dvarim 14:1-21). In that parsha, for example, the laws of "basar v'chalav" are mentioned while the laws of 'tumah' are not.

2) It is clear from the table above that the Torah begins with the least severe category and proceeds to the most severe. Within cases of 7 day 'tumah' there are also cases of one day 'tumah', however those 'tumot' are a 'toladah' (a result) of the more severe 'tumah' being discussed.

3) One would expect to find the laws of 'tumat meyt' (in Parshat Chukat - Bamidbar 19) included in the above unit in Sefer Vayikra. It appears as though that parsha was 'spliced' from this unit and 'transferred' to Sefer Bamidbar. As we shall explain iy"n in our shiurim on Sefer Bamidbar, this phenomena is quite common and will be very significant towards understanding both seforim - "v'akmal".

SIGNIFICANCE

Each of the two major categories of the laws of 'tumah & tahara' outlined above concludes with a 'finale'. These two 'finales' highlight the significance of these laws:

I. 11:44-45

"...v'hitkadishem, v'yehiytem KDOSHIM, ki KADOSH ani" v'lo t'TAMU et nafshoteichem...."

"ki ani Hashem ha'maale etchem m'erezt mitzrayim,

l'hiyot l'chem l'Elokim, v'heyitem KDOSHIM ..."

"... l'havdil bein ha'tamey u'bein ha'tahor..."

This finale connects the theme of Sefer Shmot, that God took us out Egypt in order that we become His nation, to the laws of 'tumah & tahara'. To become His nation, we must be like Him. Just as He is "kadosh" (set aside, different), we must also be "kadosh".

Man's spirituality begins with his recognition that he is different than animal. Although they are similar in many ways (just shecht a korban and examine the animal's limbs and inner organs to find out), man must realize that he was set aside by God for a higher purpose. God blessed man with special qualities in order that he should fulfill that purpose.

[See Rambam: Moreh N'vuchim I.1 regarding the definition of "t'zelem Elokim". It is not by coincidence that the Rambam begins Moreh Nvuchim with this concept.]

The laws of 'tumat ochlim' teach Am Yisrael to differentiate between man and animal, and between different types of animals. By doing so, man will learn to differentiate between divine and

mundane, between "tamey & tahor", and finally between good and bad, right and wrong etc.

Before entering the Mishkan, man must be extra careful of this distinction. Not only if he accidentally eats the meat of a forbidden animal, even if he only touches its dead body he must cleanse himself and delay his entry by an additional day.

II. 15:31

"v'hizharten et bnei yisrael m'tumatam, v'lo yamutu b'tumatam, b'tamum et mishkani asher b'tochum".

The seven day 'tumat' (the severe 'tumah'), deal with cases related to man's ability to give birth (yoledet, zav, nidah, zava etc.) and the 'spiritual disease' of tzaraat.

If touching a dead animal should increase man's awareness of his divine nature, even more so emission and loss of a potential life source from his own body. A waiting period is necessary for man to reflect on the meaning and the potential of life before he can enter the Mikdash.

Likewise in the case of a 'disease' on one's skin or house recognized by the kohen, indicating a certain flaw in one's spiritual behaviour. Man needs time to introspect on his own behaviour, to contemplate what he has done wrong, before he can return to his community. He must also bring a special korban before he can enter the Mikdash.

These laws all require one must be very careful when encountering the Divine. Therefore, the Torah warns us:

"v'hizhartem et Bnei Yisrael" (see Ibn Ezra)

[you shall warn Bnei Yisrael, keep them separated...]

To be worthy of entering the Mishkan requires a constant awareness of one's surrounding and environment. This should also lead to a constant awareness of the purpose of one's own life.

Seven days obviously relates back to the creation by God in seven days. It is that understanding and constant awareness of the hand of God in creation that will lead man towards a more spiritual and moral existence.

shabbat shalom, menachem

B = H = Torah Studies
Adaptation of Likutei Sichos
by Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of Great Britain

Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion
Tazria-Metzora

Tazria

The previous Sidra, Shemini, contained the laws of ritual cleanliness and purity as applied to animals. This week's Sidra applies the same concepts to men and women.

In the Midrash, Rav Simlai draws an analogy between the fact that animals were created before man, and that they were legislated about before him. What is the substance of this analogy?

Was man created last because he was higher or lower than the animals?

In answering the question, the Rebbe traces the connection between Rav Simlai's opinion and his character, and examines an important distinction between innate and acquired virtue, or between the excellence which is inherited and that which is earned.

It is a question that has perplexed many thinkers: Who is better, the man who is born righteous or the man who has made himself righteous?

The Rebbe considers in depth the role of effort in the religious life.

THE NAME "TAZRIA"

The names of the Sidrot, as has been mentioned before, are not merely labels to differentiate one from the next. Every name in Hebrew, the holy language, is an indication of the nature of that which is named.

The names of the Sidrot tell us of their essential content. Thus we find that a number of Sidrot are not called by their opening words, as is usually the case, but by some later word which more perfectly expresses their theme.

An example of this occurs with this week's Sidra. After the general introduction ("And the L-rd spoke to Moses saying. . .") the first word is "woman" (ishah): "If a woman be delivered and bear a male child." And yet we do not nowadays call the Sidra "Ishah" but "Tazria" ("be delivered").

What, then, is the concept implicit in the word Tazria that sums up the content of the entire Sidra?

There is also a difficulty posed by Rashi's comment on the words "If a woman be delivered." Quoting the Midrash, he says, "Rav Simlai said: Just as the formation of man took place after that of the cattle, beast and fowl, when the world was created, so the law regarding him is set forth after the law regarding cattle, beast and fowl (contained in the previous Sidra)."

Thus the new theme that our Sidra takes up, by contrast with the previous chapters, is law relating to humans, as opposed to the laws relating to animals. Thus the word ishah ("woman") is not only the first individuating word in the Sidra: It also seems highly appropriate to its subject-matter - legislation relating to humans.

How is it that "Tazria" embodies more completely this idea of "the law of man?"

MAN'S PLACE IN CREATION

Rav Simlai, in his comment quoted above, uses the phrase "just as" rather than "because."

In other words, the law of man follows that of the animals, not because he was created last, but for the same reason that he was created last.

What was this reason?

Various answers are given in the Midrash and the Talmud.

One is: So that if a man's mind becomes too proud he may be reminded that even the gnats preceded him in the order of creation.

Alternatively, so that heretics should not be able to say that the Holy One, blessed be He, had a partner (namely, Adam) in creation.

Again, man was created last so that he might immediately enter upon the fulfillment of a precept. He was created on Friday so that he could immediately sanctify the Shabbat. Lastly, it was so that he might go "into the banquet" straight away; that is, all nature was ready for his use.

But the commentators have noticed that all these reasons, while they apply to man being last in creation, do not explain his being last in legislation. What is the meaning of Rav Simlai's analogy, "just as?"

The Alter Rebbe, in his Tanya, explained that in one sense man is lower than all other creatures, even beasts which are unclean; lower even than the gnat. For not only does he sin, whereas they do not. But he can sin, whereas they cannot. In potentiality as well as in actuality, sin is a reality for man but not for animal.

The Order of Learning

The usual order to take in learning Torah is to progress from the simple to the complex, from the light to the weighty.

This applies to what is learned: A child of five begins with the Chumash, moves to the Mishnah at the age of ten, and so on. It applies also to the depth of learning:

First comes acquaintance with the text and only afterwards come the questions, the dialectics, the in-depth study. And it applies to the manner of learning.

We do not reach at once the highest level of Torah study for its own sake, like David who "elevated the Source of the Torah on High, and

united it with the Essence of G-d." Instead, "when a man does it (studies), in the first place he does so with himself in mind."

On the other hand, when the Torah was given, the order was reversed. Its devolution from the spirituality of G-d to the physical situation of man was, as it were, a descent from higher to lower.

In the passage in Proverbs which describes the wisdom of the Torah, it first says: "Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight." Only subsequently were "my delights with the sons of men."

The Torah reached down from the heights of G-d to become the possession of man. And we in our learning retrace its path, ascending from our physical situation to spiritual closeness with G-d.

This order of learning is mirrored in the structure of the Torah itself.

This is why the laws concerning animals are placed first. To sanctify the animal world, by distinguishing the impure from the pure, is relatively simple. The problem of sin does not arise in their case. But for man to sanctify himself, given his capacity for wrongdoing, is far harder. Thus the laws of human conduct come last. Not because of man's innate superiority to the animals, but because of his deficiencies.

This, too, is Rav Simlai's opinion as to why he was created last: "So that if he becomes too proud, he may be reminded that the gnats preceded him in the order of creation."

RAV SIMLAI - THE MAN AND HIS OPINIONS

We can now see the connection between Rav Simlai's comment, that just as man was created last so his legislation comes last in the Torah, and the character of Rav Simlai himself.

A virtue can be possessed in two ways. It can be won by effort, or it can be innate or fortuitous. Each has its advantages. An innate or unworked-for virtue has no natural limits. It is like the difference between talent and expertise. An inborn talent may be unlimited; expertise, painfully acquired, can never quite match it. But in its inwardness, the virtue reached by effort surpasses the virtue which is innate. One is always more closely involved with what one has earned than with what one has been given.

This distinction underlies the two contrasting explanations of man's place as the last of the works of creation: The first that he is the highest, the second that he is the lowest, of creatures.

In innate capacities, he is the highest. From birth, before he has begun to serve G-d, he is nonetheless possessed of a soul which is literally a part of G-d. This he retains, together with an underlying faith, even if he turns away from the Divine will. But in those virtues which he acquires through the effort of service, at the outset he is no better than the rest of creation.

In fact, what is most readily apparent is his physical nature, his lack of restraint, his capacity for sin. The powers of the soul are as yet undisclosed. They need to be brought to the surface by effort in the service of G-d. Hence the second opinion, that man was created last to be reminded that even the gnat is in this one respect prior to him.

The connection between this view and its author is this: Rav Simlai did not have an illustrious ancestry.

The story is told in the Talmud that he came to Rabbi Jochanan and asked him to teach him the Book of Genealogies. But Rabbi Jochanan refused, because (according to Rashi) his lineage was undistinguished. Therefore Rav Simlai, unable to lay claim to inherited virtue, appreciated the value and importance of effort and acquired virtue.

This explains his reading of the order of creation. When man is created, he has no acquired distinctions except the disposition to sin. He was made last because at that stage he is the lowest of beings. This also explains why human law should be called Tazria ("be delivered"). For the process from conception to birth is a symbol of effort, of bringing to fruition, in other words of "labor"

in both its senses.

There is an additional symbolism in the phrase "if a woman be delivered."

The male and female elements in procreation represent respectively the "spiritual awakening from above" (i.e., the Divine initiative) and "from below" (the human initiative). And service, effort, struggle are the forms which the human initiative takes.

The Two Faces of Man

There is a principle expressed in the Lecha Dodi prayer that "last in action, first in thought." Thus man, who was created last, was the original intention behind the whole enterprise of creation.

Both opinions agree with this, that man is the apex of created life. But one side of the argument sees his stature in terms of his innate essence: His Divine soul. The other sees it in terms of his potential achievement through the effort of serving G-d, while viewing man in himself as the lowest of beings. This view, which is Rav Simlai's, sees the two faces of man ("Adam" in Hebrew). On the one hand he is formed from the dust of the earth ("Adamah"); on the other, he is capable of becoming Divine ("Adameh la-Elyon" - "I will resemble G-d").

This is his essential capacity - to transform himself completely, from a natural to a spiritual being.

SERVICE AND CREATIVITY

The name "Tazria" therefore symbolizes "avodah," man's service of G-d. It also suggests the importance of that service. For when a woman conceives a child and it grows in the womb, an entirely new being is brought into existence. The birth of the child merely reveals this creation, which was wrought at the moment of conception. And when man enters on the life of service, he too creates a new being: Natural man becomes spiritual man, Adamah (the dust of "the earth") becomes Adameh la-Elyon (a semblance of G-d). And his Divine soul, which was innate, becomes also inward, because it has changed from being a gift to being something earned.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. VII, pp. 74-79)

METZORA

Metzora begins with the laws concerning the purification of the leper.

The Sidra begins with the question, why should we call this Sidra Metzora, "the leper," a name with unpleasant connotations? Especially when an earlier generation of Rabbis called it, neutrally, Zot Tihyeh ("This shall be . . ." the law of the leper).

To understand the significance of leprosy as discussed in the Sidra, we must remember that it is considered, by the Torah and the Rabbis, not only as a disease but as a punishment specifically for the sin of slander. It was the punishment that Miriam was given for the tale-bearing against Moses (Bamidbar, ch. 12).

A leper was isolated from the rest of the people once his illness had been diagnosed, and made to live outside the camp. Since the disease had a spiritual as well as a physical dimension, this was not simply a hygienic precaution, but had a moral purpose.

Likewise his purification was a recovery of spiritual as well as physical health. It is the spiritual dimension of this cleansing procedure that the Rebbe analyzes.

TWO NAMES

The Sidra Metzora has not always been so-called. Earlier Rabbis, like Rabbi Saadia Gaon, Rashi and Rambam, called it by the preceding words of the verse, Zot Tihyeh ("This shall be").

Only in more recent generations has it become the custom to call it Metzora.

But Metzora means "the leper": A name with unpleasant associations. Indeed, to avoid this, it is referred to in many places as Tahara, "Purification." Why then is it called by this seemingly inappropriate name, especially when there existed beforehand a name for the Sidra with none of these associations?

"He Shall Be Brought"

Before we can solve the problem, we must notice two further difficulties in its opening passage, "This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall go forth out of the camp. . . ."

Firstly there seems to be a contradiction here. On the one hand, the leper is to be "brought to the priest." On the other, the priest is to "go forth out of the camp" and come to him. Who is to go to whom?

In fact, it is the priest who comes to the leper, for the leper was not allowed to come within the three camps. What then is the meaning of, "he shall be brought to the priest?"

Secondly, why was the leper to be "brought?" Why does the Torah not say "he shall come?" The use of the passive verb "brought" suggests that his meeting with the priest was against his will.

In answering the first question, the commentators explain that although the leper was indeed to stay outside the camp, he was to be brought to the edge of it, so as to avoid burdening the priest with a long journey.

But this explanation is not easy to understand. Although the leper was, because of his affliction, commanded to remain outside the camp, there was no obligation on him to go far away from it. He could stay near its boundaries. And since the instruction about the cleansing procedure was directed to all lepers, including those who were situated near to the camp, the explanation of the commentators does not remove our puzzlement.

REPENTANCE: THE FIRST STAGE

To arrive at an inward understanding of the question, we must consider what Rashi says on the phrase, "All the days wherein the plague is in him... he shall dwell alone." Rashi comments, "(Even) people who are unclean (for reasons other than leprosy) shall not abide with him ...because he, by slanderous statements, parted man and wife, or a man from his friend, (therefore) he must be parted (from everyone)."

We can say, then, that he is excluded from the three camps because of his association with strife and dissension. His slander causes men to be distant from one another, whereas the idea of holiness is unity. He has no place, therefore, in the holy congregation. But what is more, he is to be separated even from the other categories of unclean people, as Rambam says, his slander is progressive.

At first it is turned against ordinary people, then against the righteous, then against the prophets, and finally against G-d himself, and he ends by denying the fundamentals of faith. This is worse even than idolatry, for the idolater does not deny G-d, he merely denies His uniqueness.

Nonetheless as the Alter Rebbe wrote as a point of Halachic law as well as an inward Chassidic truth, "It is certain (that every Jew) will in the end return in repentance."

This explains the phrase "he shall be brought to the priest." The form of the verb carries with it an assurance for the future that even he who stands outside the three camps, who is isolated by his sin, will in the end turn to the Kohen in repentance. And this was the man whose very nature was to resist this return to oppose holiness, and join forces with the heathen world "outside the camp." This is why he "shall be brought" - in the passive - for his return is contrary to his will.

The Second Stage

The initiating cause in the awakening of the desire to return is not to be found in the man himself, but in the promise of G-d that even if it requires "a mighty hand ...I will rule over you."

But if at first the impetus to return breaks in on him from the outside, it is the Divine will that ultimately it should become part of his deepest nature. Thus there is the further assurance that not only will he repent, but he will experience repentance as the truest expression of his own personality in all its facets: Will, intellect and feeling.

In the light of this we can see why, after the Torah stated that the

leper "shall be brought to the priest," it continues, "And the priest shall go forth out of the camp."

The first stage of repentance, of "cleansing," is the sudden revelation of G-d coming in, as it were, from the outside. Because it has not yet become part of his own personality, this revelation is unrelated to the personal situation of the man. He is "brought" out of himself and his environment. But afterwards the priest comes to him: That is, his situation becomes important again, as he strives to translate his revelation into a cleansing of the whole circumstances of his life. And since the "cleansing" extends even to his environment, he achieves something that even the perfectly righteous could not: He sanctifies what lies "outside the camp," where the righteous man has never been.

Thus we say that repentance done from great love turns even willful sins into merits, it sanctifies even what lies outside the will of G-d.

The Earlier Generations and the Present

Now, finally, we can see why an earlier age called this week's Sidra Zot Tihyeh, "This shall be..." rather than, as we now call it, Metzora, "the law of the leper." Only in the Time to Come will we witness the ultimate transformation of darkness into light, of evil into goodness.

Thus the earlier generations, when this Time was as yet distant, they sensed more readily the idea that evil is conquered by something outside itself than that it should transform itself from within. They belonged to the stage where the leper is "brought," against his will, to be cleansed, rather than to the second stage where the cleansing comes from within his own situation "outside the camp." So they did not call the Sidra, "the leper," because in their eyes he was not cleansed as himself but rather despite himself. Nonetheless, they knew the promise of the Future, and thus they called the Sidra "This shall be." In other words, the "law of the leper" - the time when the leper of his own accord becomes part of G-d's law - was something that would be, in the World to Come.

But we, standing already in the shadow cast by the approaching Messianic Age, can make of "the leper" a name for a section of the Torah. We can already sense the time of the revelation of the good within the bad, the righteousness within those who stand "outside the camp." The light is breaking through the wall that separates us from the Time to Come: The light of the age when "night will shine as day."

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. VII, pp. 100-104)

Mordecai Kornfeld <kornfeld@netmedia.co.il> Intriguing glimpses into the
The Weekly Internet

P * A * R * A * S * H * A - P * A * G * E
by Mordecai Kornfeld
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This week's issue has been dedicated by Dr. Neil Rosenstein of Elizabeth, N.J., in memory of his late father, Emanuel Rosenstein Z"L, whose second Yahrzeit is on the 5th of Iyar, 5756.

Parashat Tazria, 5756

THE PUZZLE OF KARACHAT

This week's Parasha discusses the rather esoteric laws of an affliction referred to by the Torah as "Tzara'at." As these laws are no longer practiced, many people are completely baffled by the entire subject. Unlike many other topics in the Torah, a large proportion of the Tzara'at laws are written explicitly in the Torah, with the Oral Torah supplying only a relatively small amount of details (Gemara Chagigah 11a). Nevertheless, there are numerous aspects of these laws which remain

shrouded in mystery. Let us take a closer look at one of these enigmatic laws -- that of Karachat ("baldness"). In order to understand the puzzle presented by Karachat, we will first have to lay down some general background information about Tzara'at.

Firstly, let us define the basic terms of this week's Parasha. "Tzara'at" is a type of disease. It can affect not only people, but clothing and buildings as well. Tzara'at is expressed externally on the skin (or surface) of the affected person (or object) in the form of an infected area, that appears different from the area surrounding it. The Torah refers to this infected area as a "Negga" (pl. "Neggaim"). A Negga takes on any of a number of different forms, depending on the surface upon which it appears.

There are numerous halachic implications to Tzara'at. A person -- or object -- which contracts the disease becomes Tamei (ritually unclean), and is prohibited from partaking of sacrificial foods, from entering the precincts of the Beit HaMikdash, and even from entering walled cities. Other restrictions apply to him as well.

The Oral Torah's discussion of the laws of Tzara'at can be found in Torat Kohanim (henceforth T.K. -- a Tannaitic halachic commentary on the book of Vayikra), and in the Mishnah and Tosefta of tractate Neggaim.

II

Let us examine the nature of a Negga that appears on otherwise normal skin (a Skin-Negga, or "Baheret"). As the first Mishnah in Neggaim explains, such a Negga takes on the form of a bright white spot on the skin.

bald; he is ritually clean." Only if a bright white lesion appears in that area, is it considered to be a Negga. In other words, once the hair falls out of a person's scalp, the "Karachat" that remains is judged as a non-hairy area of skin, and the rules of regular Skin-Neggaim apply to it once again. (See Rashi to 13:40; Mishnah Neggaim 6:8 and 8:5. (There is one slight difference between the Neggaim that affect a Karachat and those of normal skin, see Mishnah Neggaim 3:5.)

Now we are ready to discuss the difficulty that presents itself when reading the verses that deal with Karachat. As mentioned above, in the case of a Nettek, the hair loss itself is considered a Negga. Now, however, the Torah tells us that hair loss by itself is "merely balding" and is *not* considered a Negga! How can these two facts be reconciled? When is hair-loss a Negga of Nettek, and when is it Karachat, or a mere balding? This is the enigma of Karachat.

The first part of the answer to our question is relatively simple. As Raavad (to T.K. Perek 10:5) points out, baldness is considered to be a Negga by itself only if the hair loss was not brought about by some external factor -- e.g., a bruise, a depilatory chemical (or electrolysis), etc. If the baldness *did* occur due to an external stimulus, however, then it is labeled "Karachat." The newly exposed skin is treated as normal, non-hairy skin as far as Tzara'at is concerned.

The Raavad's assumptions about Nettek and Karachat can indeed be corroborated by statements made in T.K. (Parsheta 5:4 and *ibid.*, Perek 10:6). It is hinted at in the Mishnah (Neggaim 10:10) as well. The logic behind this distinction is obvious. If a person loses hair due to a known, external cause, this loss of hair can hardly qualify as a Negga and an expression of the Tzara'at malady. In fact, *all* of the commentators seem to agree to this distinction between Nettek and Karachat.

What, then, is left to be explained? The verse now makes perfect sense -- Karachat (not a Negga) is when an external factor causes one's hair to fall out, while a Nettek (a Negga) is when the hair falls out by itself! The difficulty that remains is that in T.K., Perek 10:6, we are explicitly taught that there is such a thing as a Karachat ("mere, innocuous baldness") in which the loss of hair occurs *without* external intervention, or naturally ("Bi'dei Shamayim")! If the hair fell out naturally, why is it considered a Karachat? Why isn't it classified as a Nettek? There is apparently a further distinction between Nettek and Karachat. What is that distinction?

Among the early commentators we find several solutions to this

This is the appearance of Neggaim that appear on "regular" skin. As T. K. (Parsheta 5:9) points out, however, a Negga of this sort does not cause Tum'ah if it appears under the hair of a person's scalp or in his beard. Rather, another type of Negga can cause Tum'ah if it appears in one of these areas -- a Negga which the Torah refers to as a "Nettek" (13:30).

What does a Nettek look like? Is it a white lesion, like a Skin-Negga? The Torah does not describe the appearance of a Nettek at all, but the early commentators discuss the issue. The Ramban (13:29) relates the word "Nettek" etymologically to the verse (Yehoshua 4:18), "The feet of the Kohanim were withdrawn (Nitku)." The word "Nettek" thus means "removal"

or "departing." A Nettek, explains the Ramban, is simply a loss (= removal) of hair from a place which is normally covered with hair. If a person experiences a loss of hair in the scalp or beard, he has contracted the Negga called Nettek. A Nettek involves no change of skin color at all according to this interpretation. Allusions to the Ramban's approach may be found in the language of the Torah itself (13:31 - "There is no black hair in [the Nettek]"), and in T. K., Parsheta 5:7 and *ibid.*, Perek 9:7. Nearly all of the early commentators accept this view.

III

Let us now move on to the subject of Karachat ("baldness" -- not to be confused with the same word in 13:55, which has an entirely different meaning). In 13:40-41 we read that if a person develops a bald spot, whether it is in the front or in the back of his scalp "he is [merely]

problem. We will present here three different approaches which may be used to deal with this question.

IV

(1) The Rash (R. Shimshon of Sens, 12 cent. France), in his commentary to the Mishnah (Neggaim 10:10) develops the following thesis. If hair falls out in a permanent manner, the bald spot is not a Negga, but rather simply Karachat (benign baldness). Only if it falls out temporarily, is it considered to be a Nettek (and to create Tum'ah). The source the Rash adduces for his thesis is a variant reading in T.K., Perek 10:6, as well as an implication suggested in the wording of the Mishnah in Neggaim 10:10. The logic of this suggestion is easily understood. If hair is lost only temporarily, the skin that is exposed is not considered to have changed its status to regular, "non-hairy" skin. Therefore, the lack of hair in the exposed spot is clearly an irregularity, since it occurs in a normally hairy area. When the hair loss is permanent, however, the newly exposed skin has changed its status. It is no longer a hairy area, but regular, hairless skin. Since there is nothing unusual about the lack of hair on this skin, it should not be considered a sign of Tzara'at.

The Tiferet Yisrael (19th cent. Germany) in his introduction to Neggaim (par. #8) points out a difficulty with the Rash's approach. Is the Kohen a prophet, he asks, that he can determine if the victim's hair loss will some day be reversed? If the baldness occurs naturally, how can it ever be ascertained whether it is temporary or permanent, and hence whether it is a Nettek or a Karachat?

Actually, the Ramban (12th cent. Spain) to Vayikra 13:29, who quotes the Rash's opinion, was bothered by this question several centuries before the Tiferet Yisrael. He avoids the question by pointing out that when the Torah speaks of Karachat it refers to the loss of hair as "Yimmaret." The Ramban relates this word to the word "Memorat" (in Melachim I 7:45), which means "shining or polished." If a person's scalp takes on a shiny veneer, then his hair must have been completely uprooted and will never grow again, the Ramban asserts. If not, than part of the roots of the hairs remain, and they will eventually regrow.

(2) The Raavad (to T.K., Parasha 5:1 and T.K., Beraita of Rebbi Yishmael, #5) develops another approach. He asserts that Nettek is baldness in the *middle* of the head -- i.e. a bald spot surrounded by a row of hair. Karachat (benign baldness), however, is the baldness formed by a *receding* hairline (at the front or at the rear of the head). As he

explains, receding hairlines are quite common and natural, and can by no means be considered an "affliction" or "disorder." Only a bald spot in the *middle* of a head of hair could possibly be considered a Negga. (The Ramban (13:29) quotes this opinion as well, without mentioning the Raavad by name.)

We may suggest textual support for the Raavad's thesis. The Torah makes a point of describing two types of innocuous baldness -- that occurring at the front of the head and that occurring at the back of the head. (The Torah even gives the two distinct names -- frontal baldness is called "Gabbachat" while rear baldness is called "Karachat!") Why should the Torah divide these two occurrences into separate categories? Since when is the head considered to be comprised of two separate halves? According to the Raavad, we can better understand this arrangement. The Torah is informing us that the rules of Karachat (innocuous baldness) can only apply in *two* instances -- when the hairline recedes from the front, and when it recedes from the back. If baldness occurs anywhere else on the head, it is not classified as Karachat, but as Nettek!

(3) Finally, the Rambam, in Hilchot Tzara'at 5:8, offers a third explanation. According to the Rambam, "If all of someone's hair falls out of his head, whether it is due to illness or because of a blow or because he ingested or smeared a substance which causes the hair to fall out, even if the hair is destined to grow back again, *since all of the hair of his head is lost* for the moment, he is known as a "Kere'ach" [= a man with Karachat], or a Gibbe'ach [= a man with Gabbachat]." Apparently, the Rambam is of the opinion that Karachat (innocuous baldness) occurs only in the event of *total* hair loss. If only some of a person's hair falls out, then, it is a Nettek and is considered to be a Negga. (Although much remains to be clarified about the Rambam's opinion, such as the logical justification of his proposal, his sources, etc., we will have to leave that for another occasion.)

Hence, the Rash, the Raavad, and the Rambam offer three distinct propositions to solve the riddle of Karachat.

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Asher Breatross <ash@interlog.com>"Dvar Torah <dvar Torah@torah.org>"
Parshas Tazria-Metzora
HOUSE NEGAYIM PUNISHMENT OR PRIVILEGE?
By Asher Breatross

This Dvar Torah is in memory of my Zeydie (Grandfather) R' Mordechai Yosaif Ben R' Binyamin Michoel ZTL, whose Yartzheit falls on the 30th of Nisan, the first day of Rosh Chodesh Iyar. My Zeydie, who continues to exert a tremendous influence on my life, was a product of the vanished world of Lithuania. He imparted to me, through his self sacrifice for Torah and Mitzvos, a taste of the holy environment of Lita that was so mercilessly destroyed.

The second of this week's two Parshiyos, Metzora, contains a discussion about Nigeyi Batim, a type of Tzara'as (loosely translated as leprosy) that affected houses. This Dvar Torah will discuss the causes of this affliction, commencing with the Rashi at the beginning of this section, and

will also consider the placement of this section in the Parsha.

Rashi says the reason this affliction came was that the original Canaanite inhabitants of the home hid treasures of gold in the walls of their houses for the forty years that the Jews were in the desert. Through this disease, one would have to smash the walls to remove it and consequently, the treasure would be discovered.

The Siftei Chachamim says that the source for this Rashi is the fact that the verse (14:34) uses the past tense "and I put" instead of the future tense phrase of "It shall be". As an additional explanation the Torah Temima notes that the word used by the Verse "Venasati" (and I will give) which is used to indicate a "gift" of something good.

The Siftei Chachamim commentary then says that this is the cause of house plagues. However, what is the reason for plagues on clothing, which were discussed in Parshas Tazria? The reason is that when the Jews came to Israel, they would not know which clothes were used for idolatry. The plague attacked the garment that was used for such purposes, thereby necessitating its destruction. At the same time, a dual purpose was achieved since idol worship paraphernalia were destroyed.

Alternate explanations for this affliction emerge from the commentaries. R' Yonasan Ben Uziel says that this affliction comes as a result of the sin of robbery. R' Yonasan Ben Uziel learns this way because of the word "Venasati"

(and I will give). He interprets this word to connote something good, as explained above, but from a different perspective. As a result of the robbery that has been committed by this homeowner, an element of impurity resides in the person's home (presumably because the stolen items are hidden in his home). In order to destroy this impure element, the walls and eventually the house is destroyed to force the revelation and return of the stolen goods. Thus the good is the elimination of this impurity. [As an aside I feel that the "impure spirit" that R' Yonasan Ben Uziel is discussing is more than an abstract element that is floating around the home. As a result of the homeowner's criminal activities, a certain negative environment is created, for when the head of the household engages in robbery, it has a negative influence on the rest of his family's respect for the law. The affliction deals with this problem by rooting it out completely.]

The Da'as Zekeinim says that the reason for this affliction is that it is a warning to repent. One's house is afflicted first. If the victim does not repent then his clothing are struck. If he still does not get the message then he himself receives the plague on his body.

In explaining this portion of the Torah the Kli Yakar has a number of questions. He wonders why regarding this affliction alone, does the Parsha introduce it by saying it will apply only when the Jewish people enter the land of Israel. Also, once it is introduced in this manner, why does the verse also add that land of Israel is the land that is given to our people as an inheritance? A third question is that the verse describes the plague as occurring in a "house in the land of your inheritance". The verse should have said "in your houses", and left it at that.

The Kli Yakar explains that this affliction is a punishment for stinginess. The verse notes that for the plague to be diagnosed the one "that owns the house" must tell the Kohain/Priest about the affliction. From this wording the Kli Yakar explains that this person's sin was that he did not use this house to benefit others as well. G-d gave him the house and he should be open handed just as G-d is with him. This explains the introduction for this affliction. It is not through the strength of the Jewish people that they acquired the land of Israel, but rather as a gift and an inheritance. G-d gave it to us on certain conditions. One of these conditions is that we do not act in a selfish manner. If the homeowner does not fulfil this

obligation he eventually will be driven from his home.

The Kli Yakar then says that another reason for this affliction is that the Canaanites built houses for idolatry. Since the identity of such places may not be clear, or the subsequent Jewish owner of such a house could be reluctant to destroy it, the affliction comes to do the work.

The Kli Yakar then quotes a Medrash that teaches that afflictions for houses is an illusion to the destruction of the Holy Temple. The connection is that just as plagues on houses come to destroy houses that were erected for idolatry, once the Holy Temple was defiled through the placement of idolatry in it, it became eligible for destruction because of this sin. Thus, just as the homeowner had to tell the Kohain/Priest about this affliction, G-d told Yirmiyahu the Prophet, a Kohain, about the impending destruction.

Reverting to Rashi's original explanation, since the Canaanites hid treasures in their homes, why weren't all the houses in Israel that had these treasures affected? The Kli Yakar explains that if we say that the purpose of this affliction was to eliminate idolatry then only one who merited to fulfil the commandment of the destruction of idolatry would be entitled to compensation for his losses in fulfilling this commandment. [This explanation will not seem to apply according to the view that this plague came to punish for miserliness. It is inappropriate that one who is selfish and is driven from his house is given a treasure as part of the punishment.]

Alternatively, even if we say the plague comes to punish stinginess, there is a possibility to say that the hidden treasure explanation will apply. Harav Eiger, who is quoted in the Itturei Torah, says that this plague is a punishment for stinginess because when the homeowner refuses to lend utensils because he claims that he does not possess them, the treatment for the plague compels him to remove all his belongings, so that everyone can see his true nature.

Rav Eiger then says, in relation to the explanation given by Rashi, that the plague contains an element of kindness in it. It is analogous to the case of a king who was walking accompanied by his servant. A villager attacked the king and threw dirt and mud at him. The servant wanted to punish the villager but the king thought there was a better way to educate him. The villager was brought to the palace and was taught how to be a refined individual. Once the process was completed he was brought before the king to be introduced to his benefactor. When the villager realized who was responsible for his improved status in life he was embarrassed, and greatly regretted what he did. Similarly, consider the person who acts in a stingy manner. When he is punished, and at the same time has access to the hidden treasure, he (hopefully) realizes the source of and reason for his punishment and reward, and this will cause him to improve himself.

As to why the Canaanites were not afflicted with plagues in their houses, the Tiferes Yonasan, who is quoted by the Itturei Torah, stresses the wording at the beginning of this Parsha, namely, that the plague will occur in "the house of your possession". The land of Israel is our inheritance from the beginning of the world and a person cannot defile that which does not belong to him. That is why the Pasuk also says that the one who owns the house has to come to the Kohain. The true owner of the land is the Jewish people and their property is susceptible to such afflictions only if they do not act properly.

I mentioned above that the plagues, since they are intended to induce its victim to repent, come in a particular order, with the plague on the house designed to come first. Consequently, why is the affliction on houses, of the three types, mentioned last.

The Ohr Hachayim says that the affliction of houses comes last because it only applies once the Jewish people live in Israel. This is indicated by

the introduction to the Parsha which says it applies when the Jewish people enter Israel. Similarly, the Tosefes Bracha says that this plague comes last since it comes more infrequently, since it only applies to houses in Israel, while the other two types could apply even before the Jews came to Israel.

However, since the plague of garments is supposed to come before the person's body is directly affected, why does it come second? In fact, the Torah talks about the plagues that apply to people, then clothes are discussed and then the purification process is discussed. The Ohr Hachayim answers that if it was mentioned first one would think that this affliction was for a lesser sin and the affliction on people was for something more severe. The Torah reversed the order to teach that they were both for the same type of conduct.

A final question is why this plague was placed in Parshas Metzora, after the description of the purification process, rather than in Parshas Tazria, after the description of the other two types of plagues. The Abarbanel explains that the purification process is a miracle since its elements are able to purify the recipient of this affliction. The Torah then comes to tell us about another sort of miracle, which is the affliction on houses. The Torah teaches us that when we come to Israel, where G-d maintains constant vigilance and which is the land that is given to us as our possession, G-d will reveal his presence to us in many ways. One of the ways is through this affliction. Just as G-d performs the miracle of the purification process he will perform the miracle of this affliction to remind us of his Hashgacha (providence) over us and of our unceasing obligation to act decently to one another.

In these difficult times in Israel may we all merit miracles in that land that will reveal to the world G-d's protection of this gift to us and which will thereby strengthen our possession over all of it.

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Subject: enayim l'torah -- tazria-metzora

Enayim L'Torah
Parshat Tazria-Metzora
Publication of Student Organization of Yeshiva University

Mazal Tov?
by Rabbi Chaim Bronstein

Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'if a woman has conceived seed, and born a male child: then she shall be impure seven days; as in the days of her menstrual impurity shall she be impure.' (12:2)

The relationship between birth and Tum'ah (ritual uncleanness) as expressed in the beginning of Parashat Tazria is paradoxical. Tum'ah is usually associated with death, whereas here, the Torah connects it with new life. Indeed the Avi Avot HaTum'ah, the paradigm of all ritual defilement, is a corpse. Rabbi Lamm has explained that even Tum'at Niddah mentioned at the end of the verse relates, if not directly to death, then to an unfulfilled chance at life, which is also a form of death. How, then, can the birth process

result in Tum'ah?

The Sifra on our pasuk notes "Hi T'mei'ah, ve'ein ha'vlad tamei." (1:8) (The mother becomes ritually unclean but not the infant). This compounds the paradox, for the baby is clearly the cause of her Tum'ah, yet its own status is Tahor (ritually clean).

The K'li Yakar addresses the issue of Tum'ah and birth in the context of Eve's primordial sin in Gan Eden. Her transgression and that of her husband brought about not only the pain of childbirth, but also Tum'ah and death. Birth is now accompanied by trauma and Tum'ah, culminating not in everlasting life but, ultimately, in death. In this context the parents can be seen as taking the place of Adam and Eve. The birth they brought about results in Tum'ah, but the child is passive and remains untouched.

Another approach would be to connect birth with death from the parents' perspective. While there is no more joyous experience than the birth of a child, there is, as well, no more profound change than the transformation of a couple into parents. This is true not only in terms of newfound responsibility but in certain movement along the cycle of life and death. The couple that has brought new life into the world has moved one step closer to realizing their life's purpose, and, hence, to their own end. That existential realization, the connection between life and death, may be sufficient to bring about Tum'ah.

I once heard Rav Dovid Lifshitz ZT"L explain that the obligation to make the bride and groom merry does not imply, merely, that one should celebrate the new couple's marriage with them. The requirement is, actually, to cause them to celebrate, almost, as it were, to cheer them up. Why is this necessary on the happiest day of the couple's lives? The answer Reb Dovid continued, can be found in Sheva Brachot. "V'hitkin lo mimenu binyan adei ad" - God fashions from each couple, as He did the original man and wife, an everlasting structure. The marriage is an occasion of both great joy and great solemnity as the bride and groom realize that their marriage will have profound ramifications on their future and on the future of generations to come. To consider that one's actions will resonate beyond one's lifetime, even to the very end of time, could cast a pall over the most joyous wedding. Hence the need to make the bride and groom happy.

"Tein cheilek l'shiv'ah v'gam lish'monah" (Kohelet 11:2). The verse from Kohelet cited by the Midrashim instructs us to prepare for the natural span of life symbolized by the number seven (as in the cycle of days and years) and also to acknowledge that our lives will transcend mortal existence (symbolized by the number eight) and to live accordingly. The concurrent realization of our finiteness, yet of our infinite potential, finds expression in the Torah's paradox of life as a harbinger of death.

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Tazria - Metzora

Selected, arranged and translated by Rabbi Dov rabinowitz

"When a woman becomes pregnant and gives birth ..." (12,2)

Rash"i quotes Rabbi Simlai: 'Just as man was created after all the animals, beasts and birds, so his statutes are taught after those of the animals, beasts and birds.' (This refers to the laws of kosher and non-kosher animals at the end of the previous parsha DR.)

The gemorra (Sotah 5a) quotes Rabbi Ze'ira "Flesh has 'and it will be healed' written by it, man does not have 'and he will be healed' written by him." This refers to the point that everywhere in our parsha where the affliction of tzara'as is related to 'a man', there is no mention of it being cured (in the same possuk DR); where it is related to 'flesh', the cure is mentioned immediately (13,18). The Chassam Sofer explains that when

a person is haughty, he sees himself as 'a man' then he is beyond cure, but one who is humble, and sees himself merely as 'a piece of flesh,' then it says 'and he will be healed.'

Now we find that Chazal tell us (Sanhedrin 35a) that man was created last so that if he is conceited, he is told 'even a bug was created before you.' However, the gemorra brings another opinion that he was created last so that he could immediately partake of a banquet. Rash"i explains that he would find all his requirements available, and could partake of whatever he wished.

The Chassam Sofer elaborates on this dichotomy. Since Adam was prohibited from eating meat, we can understand that the plants were created before him in order that he could immediately partake of a banquet. But the precedence of the animals was only because of 'even the bugs were created before you.' Thus if a person is humble, and sees himself merely as a lump of flesh, then his very act of deprecation raises him to a lofty status; all the plants were created in advance only for the purpose of being available for his feast. But if he is arrogant, and considers himself to be 'a man' this degrades him to the status of being after the bugs.

"And he will tell the Cohen saying 'like the appearance of an affliction appears to me in the house.'" (14,35)

Rav Yonasan Eibeshitz (Tiferes Yehonasan) explains that this is because the affliction of a house comes mostly because of the arrogance of the person who owns it. The way to cure it is thus that he should humble himself. Even if he knows for certain that it really is an affliction of tzara'as, he should present it to the Cohen as if he were in doubt, and was asking the Cohen to rule for him.

There is an additional facet that the whole concept of tzara'as is innate in an organic, living person because of his natural constitution, ... but it is uncharacteristic of an inanimate house. ... In fact it would not have happened to the house at all, but rather to the person, had it not been sublimated to the house through HaShem's benevolence, so that the person would be warned, and pay attention to what he is doing.

Thus the possuk says that it 'appears to me in the house.' What appears in the house, should really be happening 'to me.'