

B'S'D'

To: Parsha@YahooGroups.com
From: crshulman@aol.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON TAZRIA METZORA - 5761
YOM HAATZMA'UT

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From: Eretz Hemdah - Machon HaTorah Ve'Hamedinah To:
Hemdatya@eretzhemdah.org Hemdat Yamim
Parashat Tazria-Metzora Yom Ha'atzmaut

This parasha sheet is dedicated to the memory of Gershon (George) ben Chayim HaCohen Kaplan of blessed memory

The Call of the Homes of the Homeland / HARAV YOSEF
CARMEL

The laws of nigei batim (afflictions of the house), which conclude the discussion of the various forms of tzara'at, open with a prominent but unclear introduction: "When you enter the Land of Canaan, which I am giving you as a possession, and I shall place a tzara'at affliction in the house of the land of your possession" (Vayikra 14:34). What is the connection between receiving the land, a wonderful present, and the dreary reality of tzara'at? Midrash Rabbah (17:1) brings a variety of explanations. One opinion states that Hashem is warning Bnei Yisrael that their quality of life in Eretz Yisrael, including and symbolized by tzara'at, will depend on the level of their conduct. In a similar vein, the Midrash illustrates how tzara'at of the houses can reveal hypocrisy and lies. Neighbors come to borrow something, only to be pushed off with the claim, "we don't have any." When tzara'at hits, the homeowner is required to remove all of the possessions of the house, uncovering what they really did own but concealed. On the other hand, there is an opinion that tzara'at of the house is a good omen. When the homeowner starts removing stones from the house, he finds treasures hidden by the former, Canaanite inhabitants. In order to attempt to reconcile these diametrically opposed approaches, let us examine the Ramban (Vayikra 13:47). Entering Eretz Yisrael raised the spiritual level of Bnei Yisrael. Hashem's presence among them kept their bodies and property in order. The outbreak of tzara'at is a sign that Hashem's presence is being distanced. In other words, it is, specifically, a negative sign, but an important and constructive one, like a headache which warns a person of an accompanying illness. Only in Eretz Yisrael is the Jew spiritually sensitive enough to react in such a way. On the 5th of Iyar, we should be particularly reflective upon this theme. Eretz Yisrael is more than a national homeland and a safe haven for Jews. It is the place where Am Yisrael is supposed to elevate themselves spiritually in a way they cannot in any other place. The message of the matter of tzara'at of the house should serve as both a promise and a warning - a wake-up call to spiritual preservation.

Moresheet Shaul (from the works of Hagaon Harav Shaul Yisraeli zt"l) "The Passersby Didn't Say: >May Hashem's Blessing be on You=" (from "Zeh Hayom Asa Hashem")

The following drasha was said on leil Shabbat, 5 Iyar 5708, hours after the declaration of Israeli independence, greeted by Arab hostility

and weak international support.

At this great moment which we have merited after so many generations of yearning, we said a chapter of Tehillim (129) to try to find some expression to our feelings at this time. [Ed. note - a few psukim of this mizmor, which is a metaphor of the treatment of Bnei Yisrael by the nations of the world, appear below]. "The passersby did not say: >may Hashem's blessing be on you =; we blessed you in Hashem's name" (ibid., 8). Chazal (Shochar Tov, ad loc.) explained this pasuk as follows. The passersby are the nations of the world, who will pass from the world because they did not bless Israel with Hashem's blessing. Not only do they not share the good bestowed upon them in our merit, but they afflict us with taxation, and for that they will pay. We were naive, upon hearing the U.N.'s decision on partition, to think that the conscience of the world was finally aroused, and that they were finally prepared to return our stolen homeland. We thought there were true remorse for the centuries of exile and enslavement and embarrassment about the destruction by fellow nations of six million holy martyrs. Our mistake has been revealed. They did not receive even partial atonement for the great sins they perpetrated or earn their continued existence. They did not bless us with Hashem's blessing on our great day, despite our involvement in every bit of humanity and heavenly blessing in the world. Isolated and alone - not with the aid of the nations, but with the support of tzur Yisrael v = goal - our representatives declared the establishment of the State of Israel. "Much have they afflicted me from my youth but were unable to overcome me. On my back the plowers plowed long furrows. Hashem, the righteous, cut the ropes of the wicked" (ibid., 2-4). The Midrash brings a mashal of an owner (Hashem) of a cow (Yisrael) who lent the cow to the father of ten sons (the nations). Instead of working and resting the cow, as soon as one son tired from plowing, he handed the yoke to his brother in a continuous cycle. Instead of demanding an explanation, the owner went over, broke the yoke, and freed his cow. So will Hashem redeem us. There are three ways to acquire land: money, occupation, and contracts. We have done all three for Eretz Yisrael. While these require the acquiescence of the seller, we have now acquired it in an entirely new way which requires no approval - with our blood. This feeling decreases our joy. It is Shabbat, and we will not eulogize those dear sacrifices with whose blood we have acquired the land, but we must know that this is the strongest form of acquisition. We pray that as we have merited ikvata d = meshicha (the heals of Masiach), so should we merit to be inspired to act on Earth and elevate ourselves on these great days to merit the revelation of the Mashiach and the day when "the saviors will go up to Mt. Zion to judge the mountain of Eisav."

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From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand[SMTP:ryfrand@torah.org] Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Tazria-Metzorah
"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Tazria-Metzorah -
Dedicated This Year Le'eluy Nishmas Chaya Bracha Bas R.
Yissocher Dov - In memory of Mrs. Adele Frand -
Two Birds: One For 'Evil Speech' and One For 'Good Speech'
The pasuk [verse] says, "The Kohen shall command and shall take for the person being purified [from the affliction of Tzora'as] two live, pure, birds..." [Vayikra 14:4]. The Zohar cryptically comments that one bird atones for evil speech and one bird atones for good speech.

The Tzora'as that is spoken of in this week's Parsha is not the physical affliction which is commonly translated as leprosy. Rather, it is a spiritual affliction, which manifests itself in a physical way. Our Sages tell us that the word Metzorah (meaning one who has the disease of

Tzora'as) is a contraction of the words "Motzi Rah" [one who spews forth evil], because Tzora'as comes as a punishment for 'evil speech' (lashon haRah). However, the Zohar is also informing us that the second bird comes to atone for 'good speech'. What does this mean?

The Shemen HaTov offers the following explanation. There are two reasons why a person would be afflicted with Tzora'as: for speaking evil and for improperly using the gift of speech. Improperly using the gift of speech means abstaining from uttering "good speech," when that is called for. Just as speaking gossip can sometimes destroy a marriage, a partnership, or a friendship, so too, sometimes speaking words of encouragement and friendship can take a person who is depressed, lonely and disheartened, and bring him back to life. Sometimes, merely withholding that little compliment, the "Good morning", the "How are you doing?", "Thanks", "Nice Job" can destroy a person. The Zohar is informing us that the sin of Lashon Harah includes both 'Evil Speech' and withholding 'Good Speech'. Sometimes withholding the compliment or the good word can be as destructive as speaking evil.

Perhaps we can expand on this by explaining that these two sins - speaking evil and failing to speak well of someone really stem from the same sin. If we analyze the deeper nature of the sin of Lashon Harah, we discover that these are really two sides of the same coin. If we ever want to discover the root of something in the Torah, an approach to use is to look at the first place that it occurs in the Torah. When we examine what happened in the first place where it is mentioned, we will find the key to understanding what this mitzvah or prohibition is all about.

The first time 'Lishna Bisha' [Evil Speech] is found in the Torah, it comes from the Snake. Chava refused the Snake's suggestion to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, explaining that G-d had forbidden them to eat from it. The Snake dismissed this as a sinister plot on G-d's part. "G-d knows that when you will eat from that Tree, your eyes will be opened and you will become god-like..." [Bereshis 3:5] Rashi elaborates on the Snake's argument: "Every professional hates competition. G-d ate from that tree, and then acquired the knowledge to create the world. He is jealous and does not want you to have the same capabilities as Him.

Adam had the best situation imaginable. He was sitting in the Garden of Eden. Angels fed him. Nothing could be better! But then the Snake came and argued - "Nah! It's not so perfect. You do not have the Tree of Knowledge; you are not god-like!" The Snake looks at a situation that is virtually perfect and finds fault with it. He focuses on the flaw.

This is the essence of Lashon Harah. Lashon Harah is not so much a crime of the mouth. It is a crime of perception. One can look at one's neighbor and see a nice guy, see talents, see accomplishments, or one can look at the same person and see only his shortcomings and flaws. A person who gravitates to Lashon Harah has a jaundiced eye on the world. The root of this sin is always picking out the bad, rather than the good. The glass is always half empty.

The other classic example of Lashon Harah in the Torah concerns the Spies. They went to Eretz Yisroel. The fruits were huge and delicious. G-d preoccupied everyone with burials so that the spies would not be noticed. What did the spies see? "A land which consumes its inhabitants" [Bamidbar 13:32]. It takes a perverse talent to find the wicked in a virtually idyllic situation.

If that is the case, the Zohar's reference to 'Good speech' and 'Evil Speech' are really references to the same thing. The reason why we speak evil about someone is because we fail to see the good in him. We only focus on the negative. Likewise, when we see a person do something nice, and a mere compliment would cause him to feel good, but we cannot be generous enough of spirit to offer that compliment, this is also because of the same jaundiced approach, the inability to see and appreciate the good. Lashon Harah boils down to a stinginess of perception. It is not so much a crime of speech; rather it is a crime of how one perceives the world.

Rabbeinu Yonah (1200-1263) cites the following parable in his

Sharei Teshuvah on the pasuk "the foolish person points out the evil, but the straight person sees the positive" [Mishlei 14:9]: Two people walked past a carcass. The carcass was putrid. One person said, "That stench is horrible"; the other person said, "Look how white its teeth are". Rabbeinu Yonah says that the first person is called foolish and the second person is called straight. The fact that the first person saw the negative does not mean that he is bad, but he is foolish because a person who only focuses on the negative becomes a negative, destructive, and bitter person. A person who speaks Lashon Harah has the strongest negative impact on himself. Forget about righteousness, forget about right and wrong - such a character trait is simply foolish!

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@aol.com
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org
These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 279, Women's Testimony in Hilchos Niddah. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrand, Copyright © 2001 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Torah.org depends upon your support. Please visit <http://torah.org/support/> or write to dedications@torah.org or donations@torah.org. Thank you!

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2000/parsha/rsob_tazria.html

[From last year]

RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY

BRIT MILLAH - A DIFFERENT TYPE OF MIKVAH

The parshiyot of Tazria and Metzora deal primarily with various tumot (spiritual impurities) that emanate from human beings, beginning with the laws of tumah concerning a woman after childbirth, then the detailed emphasis on the rules of tzaraat, and culminating with the laws of negah. The unifying theme of these tumot is that they all stem from a person's body.

There is one pasuk in parshat Tazria that appears to be unrelated to tumah - the requirement to perform a brit milah (circumcision) on the eighth day. Chazal in Massechet Shabbat (135a) note that it appears strange that the mitzvah of brit milah appears in Parshat Hayoledet together with the laws of tumah vetaharah. Perhaps the Torah is alluding to a significant aspect of brit milah by placing it in the context of tumah vetaharah.

The Gemara in Massechet Chagigah (2b) teaches us that one who is tameh or an arel (uncircumcised) cannot perform the mitzvah of visiting the Beit HaMikdash on the Shalosh Regalim. The reason for the exclusion of a tameh is obvious since the Torah explicitly prohibits him from entering the Beit HaMikdash. An arel is never explicitly excluded from the Beit HaMikdash, yet Chazal had a tradition that he is equivalent halachically to a tameh. This halachah sheds a new light on the mitzvah of Brit Milah. It indicates that it is not merely an action required by the Torah as other mitzvot such as matzah and shofar, but rather it transforms the individual from an arel to a mahul (circumcised), similar to tevilah bemikvah which transforms a tameh into a tahor.

The halachah that prohibits an arel from entering the Beit HaMikdash is indicative of the fundamental distinction between an arel and a mahul in their respective relationships with Hashem. In Parshat Lech Lecha before Avraham is given the mitzvah of brit milah he falls on the ground when Hashem speaks to him. Rashi comments that this phenomenon occurs as well in reference to Bilam. He is described as, "nofel vegaluy eynaim", -the one who falls when he sees. Avraham before brit milah and Bilam the arel cannot stand in the presence of Hashem. The orlah is an impediment to experiencing hashraat hashechinah in the fullest sense. This barrier prevents the arel from ever visiting the Beit HaMikdash.

This barrier of orlah had to be removed before the Jewish people could leave Mitzrayim. The korban pesach, whose blood clearly

demarcated who was a Jew, was off limits to an avel. Becoming part of the nation of Hashem required the ability to experience hashraat hashechinah in the fullest sense.

Brit milah as a prerequisite for a full relationship with Hashem exists not only in the realm of korbanot and the Beit Hamikdash but in our daily avodat Hashem as well. When a brit milah is performed a brachah is given: "keshem shenichnas lebrit ken yikanes letorah lechupah ulemaasim tovim". It appears that there is a connection between the mitzvah of brit milah and all the subsequent mitzvot the child will perform. Brit milah is what enables the boy to live a life of avodat Hashem. Without it, his Torah umitzvot could never be complete because there is a real barrier, a tumah, that separates him from Hashem.

Just as the tameh cannot reach the ultimate heights of spirituality, the avel is limited in his quest and can only become, at most, a "mofel vegaluy eynaim." Tevilah in the mikvah and brit milah, which enable people to come closer to Hashem, are appropriately the two procedures involved in the process of converting to Judaism, and reaching the greatest heights of avodat Hashem.

Parshat Tazria and Metzora teach us how to overcome tumah and attain taharah, enabling us to experience hashraat hashechinah. Brit milah is an integral part of these parshiyot as it too facilitates our ability to reach this lofty goal.

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2000/parsha/rsac_metzora.html
[From last year]

RABBI YONASAN SACKS

"BADAD YEISHEIV": APPRECIATING KEDUSHAS YISROEL

The many restrictions imposed on the metzora, as well as the detailed process of his purification, underscore the uniqueness and severity of tzara'at. Unlike other forms of tum'ah, which prevent an individual from entering various parts of the Beit Hamikdash, the metzora is forced to leave the entire machaneh Yisroel (camp of Israel).

The Gemara (Erachin 16B) links this isolation with the very cause of tzara'at itself. "Ma nishtana metzora sheamra Torah >badad yesheiv michutz lemachaneh moshavo=? hu hivdil bein ish l'ishto, bein ish lerei-eihu, lefichoch amra Torah, >badad yesheiv >" ("Why is a metzora different that the Torah states, >He shall dwell alone; outside the camp shall be his dwelling=? He [through his slander] separated a husband from his wife, a man from his neighbor, therefore the Torah says, >He shall dwell alone.=")

The slanderous metzora, who through his behavior fails to value the harmony of the community, must live in isolation.

The laws governing the metzora, however, extend far beyond his sequester. Based on the verse, "begadav yehiyu prumim verosho yehiye parua veal safam yateh" (Vayikrah 13:45) ("His garments shall be torn, the hair of his head shall be unshorn, and he shall cloak himself up to his lips"), the Gemara explains that a metzora must tear his garment and cover his head, as well as refrain from cutting his hair and greeting others (Moed Katan 15A).

The common theme linking these halachot implied by the Gemara and stated explicitly by the Rambam (Hilchot Tum'at Tzara'at 10:6) is Aveilut. The metzora is an avel and hence is bound by the many obligations and restrictions of mourning. In what sense, however, is a metzora an avel? Why is it that he must observe the traditions of aveilut?

Each member of Knesset Yisrael possesses a twofold kedushah-as an individual and as a vital part of the collectivity of Bnei Yisrael. A metzora, through his callous slander, severs his bond with the collective kedushah of Bnei Yisrael; it is as if part of him has died. Indeed, the Gemara states that "arba'ah chashuvim kemeis phi ani umetzoraB" (Nedarim 64B) ("four [types of people] are as if they are dead phi a poor man, a metzoraB"). Accordingly, the Torah mandates aveilut; the metzora mourns himself.

The onset of Yom Tov, however, marks a clear contrast between the avel and the metzora. Whereas the commencement of Yom Tov cancels aveilut, the Gemara (Moed Katan 14B), states that "noheig tzara'at = ato b=regel" ("the laws of the metzora apply on Yom Tov"). How do we understand this distinction? The ability of Yom Tov to suspend aveilut stems from the communal nature of Yom Tov: "asi aseh d=rabbim [Yom Tov] v=dachi aseh d=yachid [aveilus]" ("Let the public commandment of Yom Tov come and supersede the individual commandment of mourning"). A metzora, however, has severed his bond to the community. For him, the communal nature of Yom Tov cannot suspend the obligations and restrictions of tzara'at.

The plight of the metzora highlights the privilege and responsibility of kedushat Yisrael. May we be the worthy beneficiaries of this transcendent gift.

[http://www.jpost.com/Editions/2001/04/25/Columns/Shabbat Shalom: Perfecting ourselves, perfecting the world](http://www.jpost.com/Editions/2001/04/25/Columns/Shabbat%20Shalom%20Perfecting%20ourselves,%20perfecting%20the%20world)

By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

(April 25) "When a woman conceives and gives birth to a boy, she shall be ritually impure for seven days, just as she is impure during the time of separation when she has her period. On the eighth day [the child's] foreskin shall be circumcised. Then, for 33 additional days, she shall sit on blood of purity..." (Leviticus 12:2-4)

The major subject of this week's double portion is that of ritual purity and impurity, tuma and tahara, one of the most esoteric and puzzling aspects of our Scriptures for the modern mind. What is additionally disturbing is that, in the very midst of the biblical discussion of a child bearer's state of impurity comes the command of circumcision - a subject which has little to do with the matter at hand. Its proper placement is in the book of Genesis, when the Almighty first entered into a covenant with Abraham through the ritual of circumcision.

Why does the command of circumcision appear between the impure and pure periods following childbirth? Moreover, our Sages specifically derive from this ordinance that the ritual of circumcision overrides the Sabbath: "On the eighth day, (the child's) foreskin shall be circumcised, - even if it falls out on the Sabbath" (B.T. Shabbat 132a). Why express this crucial significance of circumcision - it takes precedence even over the Sabbath - within the context of ritual impurity? Is there a connection?

Targum Yonatan Ben Uziel links the two issues by interpreting: "And on the eighth day, when [she] is permitted [to have sexual relations with her husband], on that [day] is [the baby] to be circumcised."

He is thereby citing the view of our Sages in the Talmud, who understand that the circumcision must be on the eighth day following the birth "so that everyone not be happy while the parents will be sad" if they cannot properly express their affection towards one another. (B.T. Niddah 31b)

IT SEEMS to me that there is a more profound connection. When a woman is in a state of ritual impurity, she and her husband are forbidden from engaging in sexual relations until she immerses in a mikveh. Obviously this restriction demands a great deal of inner discipline. The symbol which graphically expresses the importance of mastering one's physical instincts is the command of circumcision: even the sexual organ, the manifestation of male potency and the unbridled "id," must be tempered and sanctified by the stamp of the divine.

A well-known midrash takes this even one step farther:

"Turnus Rufus the wicked once asked Rabbi Akiva: 'Whose works are better, the works of G-d or the works of human beings?' He answered him, 'the works of human beings...'

"[Turnus Rufus] said to him, 'Why do you circumcise?' [Rabbi Akiva] said, 'I knew you were asking about that, and therefore I anticipated [the question] and told you that the works of human beings are better.'

"Turnus Rufus said to him: 'But if G-d wants men to be circumcised, why does He not see to it that male babies are born already circumcised?' Rabbi Akiva said to him... 'It is because the Holy One Blessed be He only gave the commandments to Israel so that we may be purified through them.'" (Midrash Tanhuma, Tazria 5)

It seems to me that R. Akiva is teaching that the human being is presently part of the world after the original sin, a world which due to human weakness has exiled humanity from the tree of eternal life; Hence death, the result and therefore symbol of human sin, is identified with ritual impurity. The most radical example of such impurity is therefore a human corpse, (avi avot hatumah); an animal carcass, a dead reptile and the blood of the menstrual cycle (fall-out of the failed potential of fertilization) likewise cause ritual impurity.

A woman in childbirth has a very close brush with death - both in terms of her own mortality as well as her child's, especially during the anguished moments after birth before she hears the cry of a healthy, living baby.

G-d's gift to the human being created in the divine image, however, is that in addition to physicality there is also spirituality, in addition to death there is also the opportunity for life eternal, in addition to ritual impurity there is also ritual purity. Hence, the very human life which emerges from the mother's womb brings in his wake not only the brush with death, but also the hope of new life - and while the tuma is for seven days, the tahara is for 33!

The human being has the power to overcome his physical impediments and imperfections, to ennoble and sanctify his animal drives and instincts, to perfect human nature and redeem an imperfect world. Indeed, the very mikveh waters are biblically called the "waters of life" and symbolize rebirth from mortality to eternity.

This was the message which Rabbi Akiva attempted to convey to Turnus Rufus the wicked. Yes, the world created by the Almighty is beautiful and magnificent, but it is also imperfect and incomplete. G-d has given the task of completion and redemption to the human being, who has the ability to strengthen his weakness, repair his transgression - to circumcise his foreskin and thereby sublimate his drives, to sanctify society and to complete or perfect G-d's creation.

Indeed, the works of the human being are greater! And the command of circumcision belongs within the context of impurity and purity. And this is also what our Sages were trying to convey when they taught that circumcision overrides the Sabbath. The Sabbath testifies to G-d's creation of the world - impressive but imperfect, awesome but awful, terrific but tragic.

Circumcision testifies to the human being's ability to redeem himself and perfect the world. Indeed, circumcision overrides the Sabbath.
Shabbat Shalom

From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@ohr.edu] To: weekly@ohr.edu
Subject: Torah Weekly - Tazria/Metzora * TORAH WEEKLY *
WYSIWYG "This is the law of the Metzora." (14:2)

When computers emerged from the dark ages of machine code, the buzz word which sold large numbers of those grey boxes was WYSIWYG. This was not a character with a long pointed hat out of a children's fairy story. It meant "what-you-see-is-what-you-get" -- the way things look on the screen will be the way they look on the paper.

In our world, spiritual events go largely unnoticed. We can't see our dining room table becoming spiritually elevated when we learn Torah on it or welcome guests around it for a Shabbat meal. We can't see the world becoming a holier place when we pray to G-d with devoted concentration. Similarly, we can't see hundreds of thousands of incorporeal beings perishing when a word of slander emerges from our lips.

These events are so removed from our eyes that they stretch our

credulity to the maximum. And yet they are happening around us all the time. This is not a WSYSIG world.

There was a time, however, where spiritual realities were more manifest in the physical world.

This week we read a double Torah reading -- Tazria and Metzora. They both deal with a spiritual affliction called tzara'at which was caused by various kinds of anti-social behavior. Tzara'at was not a physical disease but a malaise of the spirit. It was merely the physical symptom of a chronic spiritual illness. If we do not see such a disease today, it is because our bodies have become so desensitized to our spiritual state that they can no longer act as a barometer to our spiritual well-being.

Someone afflicted with tzara'at is called a metzora. The word metzora is a contraction of motzei ra -- literally "to bring forth evil." This evil was principally the evil of speaking slander. However, tzara'at was also a punishment for other forms of anti-social behavior, notably, bloodshed, false oaths, sexual immorality, pride, robbery and selfishness.

What do these acts have in common? They are all instances of the failure to be sensitive to the needs of others and to share their plight.

The essence of society from the Jewish perspective is not that society should run smoothly for the sake of society, but that each individual should take up the yoke of their neighbor. In other words society exists so that man may exercise his kindness and his caring.

When someone fails in these fundamental areas, he demonstrates that he has failed to understand the purpose of society itself. Thus he has no place in society until he can cure himself of this failing.

It is for this reason that he is exiled until he comes to the realization that WYSIWIG -- what you see is what you get.

Sources: * Talmud Arachin 15b,16a * Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch
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From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] Subject:
Weekly-Halacha - CHILDBIRTH ON SHABBOS Weekly-halacha for
5761 Selected Halachos Relating to Parshas Tazria-metzora
By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel of Cleveland
Heights A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the
week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

CHILDBIRTH ON SHABBOS PREPARATIONS for a SHABBOS(1) DELIVERY

A woman giving birth is halachically considered to be a dangerously ill person, and it is PERMITTED, indeed it is a MITZVAH, to DESECRATE the Shabbos on her behalf. Once a woman is in labor, she, her husband, or anyone else who is in a position to do so, must do everything they can to ensure the SAFETY of mother and baby.

Nevertheless, whatever can be done before Shabbos to minimize the desecration of Shabbos, should be done in advance(2). Indeed, an early authority(3) mentions that a person should pray that his wife not give birth on Shabbos. Accordingly, a woman who enters the early stages of labor before Shabbos, although she would normally delay going to the hospital for as long as possible, should travel to the hospital before Shabbos begins so that she will not have to travel on Shabbos(4).

From a halachic standpoint, there are two basic methods of transporting a woman to the hospital on Shabbos: a) a non-Jewish driver, e.g. a neighbor, ambulance or taxi service may bring her; b) a Jewish driver, e.g., her husband or a neighbor may drive her.

If a woman can be driven to the hospital by a non-Jew WITHOUT compromising her safety or peace of mind, the Halachah requires her to arrange - before Shabbos - for a non-Jew to drive her on Shabbos regardless of the expenses entailed.

As stated earlier, once Shabbos begins, we must do everything in our power to ensure the baby's SAFE delivery. Still, whatever we can do in advance to avoid or lessen the desecration of Shabbos must be done. The following can and should be done before Shabbos begins: The phone

number of the doctor and of a non-Jewish neighbor, ambulance or taxi service should be noted in an easily accessible, non-muktzeh location. When possible, payment should be pre-arranged. Whatever house or garage lights that would be needed to facilitate leaving for the hospital in the middle of the night, should be turned on before Shabbos(5). Personal items the woman will need at the hospital should be packed in a bag before Shabbos. Arrangements for a baby-sitter to stay with other children should be made before Shabbos. If the hospital is outside the techum Shabbos (approx. 4000 feet from the last house in the city), some poskim recommend that one should be mafkir (renounce possession of) all the items that are being taken along to the hospital(6). Other poskim are not particular about this(7).

TRAVELING to the HOSPITAL on SHABBOS with a NON-JEW

As soon as a woman experiences steady contractions, even though she is quite sure that she is far from giving birth, she (or any other person) may call the doctor or the designated driver to take her to the hospital. She should not wait for the latter stages of labor before going to the hospital(8).

When making the phone call(9) on Shabbos to the doctor or the non-Jewish driver, the receiver should be lifted off its cradle in an unusual manner, e.g., with one's elbow or teeth(10) - time permitting. The conversation should be limited to a bare minimum, although it is permitted to say "hello" and "thank you", etc.(11) After the conversation is over, the receiver may not be returned to the cradle unless the phone line is needed for the sake of the patient, or if not hanging up will tie up the doctor's line. Then, too, the receiver should be hung up in an unusual manner, as described above(12).

Any item which the woman will need on Shabbos may be taken along, even if there is no eiruv or if the item is muktzeh. If time allows, the non-Jew should be asked to carry the woman's bag to the vehicle. [Unless an eiruv exists, a sefer Tehillim should not be taken to the hospital on Shabbos, for the merit of keeping Shabbos is greater than saying Tehillim. This should be explained to the woman(13).]

If, during the drive, labor stopped and the woman feels that she does not need to go to the hospital, it is permitted to tell the non-Jew to take her and her companion back home if they cannot return safely and comfortably on foot -which is almost always the case.

If it is the expectant mother's wish and it would help to relax her, her husband or another person may accompany her to the hospital, even if their assistance is not medically warranted(14). The person going along may also bring with him basic food necessities that will be required on Shabbos(15). The non-Jew should be asked to carry the items into the vehicle and from the vehicle into the hospital.

When time allows it, the door to the vehicle should be opened and closed by the non-Jew.

If no baby-sitter for the other children can be found, it is permitted to ask the non-Jewish driver to drive the children to another person's home(16).

TRAVELING to the HOSPITAL on SHABBOS with a JEW

In the absence of any other alternative or when arrangements were not made in advance, it is PERMITTED for a Jew [the husband or any other person(17)] to DRIVE the woman to the hospital himself. A couple who is aware before Shabbos that the driver may be a Jew, should prepare before Shabbos for that eventuality. Therefore: The shortest possible route to the hospital must be checked and planned. Exact change for any possible tolls should be prepared and placed in the car. The car which will be driven must not be blocked by other cars or other obstructions. The dome light bulb in the car should be loosened or removed before Shabbos; the air conditioner, radio and tape recorder should be on the "off" position. Driver's license, registration, and other papers that are required for driving or that will be needed at the hospital should be placed in the car before Shabbos. Where there is no eiruv, clothing, food, and other items that will be needed at the hospital should

be placed in the car before Shabbos. If the hospital is out of the techum Shabbos, any belongings which are in the car [especially those that do not belong to them(18)] that are not necessary for the woman (car seat, tapes, etc.) should be removed from the car(19). If this is difficult to do, then those items [which are theirs] should be pronounced hefker. One who failed to properly prepare himself or the car as outlined above, must nevertheless proceed to the hospital in the safest(20), quickest way he can(21). If he did not unscrew or remove the dome light bulb before Shabbos, then while the door is still open and the light is on, the control knob should be turned [in an unusual manner] so that the light will remain on after the door closes. If he forgot to do that, he should [in an unusual manner] loosen the light bulb, so that the light does not turn on again when the door is opened(22).

One may drive to any hospital that he prefers, as long as the preference is not determined by the desire to save money.

Once he arrives at the hospital emergency room, the car may be placed in the "park" position, but the ignition and the lights may not be turned off (23). [If he failed to loosen the dome light bulb or to follow one of the other options outlined above, then the door may not be closed upon leaving the car, since closing the door will cause the light to be turned off.] He may ask a non-Jew to take the car(24), park it, and return the keys to him after Shabbos.

FOOTNOTES: 1 Almost all of the following halachos pertain to Yom Tov as well. 2 Mishnah Berurah 330:1. 3 Sefer Chasidim 793, based on the Talmud, Niddah 38a. 4 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 36:7 quoting Ketzos ha-Shulchan. See similar ruling in Igros Moshe O.C. 1:131 concerning a doctor who may be needed for Shabbos duty. 5 Kaf ha-Chayim 330:1. 6 Advice offered by Harav C. Kanievsky (quoted in Toras ha-Yoledes, pg. 25) based on O.C. 401:1. 7 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Minchas Shelomo 1:15; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 40:65). See also Minchas Yitzchak 9:37. 8 Mishnah Berurah 330:9. 9 When possible, the phone call should be made by a non-Jew or a minor. When using a minor, it is better not to use one's own child; see Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 334:54. 10 When these options are not workable, the next best method is to use the telephone with two hands or to have two people dial. See Nishmas Avraham 5, pg. 44-45 for an explanation. 11 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 32:111). 12 It is important to stress, though, that all of the halachos that pertain to making the phone call, hanging up, driving on Shabbos, etc., are to be followed only when time allows. Once heavy labor is under way, everything should be done in the speediest, safest manner, as if the labor is taking place on a weekday. 13 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Toras ha-Yoledes, pg. 94). If the woman insists on taking a sefer Tehillim or any other sefer along, she is permitted to do so. 14 Igros Chazon Ish 1:141; Igros Moshe O.C. 1:132. 15 Minchas Yitzchak 8:30-1. It is questionable, though, if one may take along a siddur, etc. 16 This is permitted both for the safety of the children who will fear staying alone (see Mishnah Berurah 328:38) and for the peace of mind of the mother. 17 Some poskim say that it is preferable to use an observant Jew rather than a non-observant Jew; see Toras ha-Yoledes, pg. 81. 18 See Minchas Shelomo 15. 19 Toras ha-Yoledes, pg. 20, 25, 101. 20 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Nishmas Avraham 5, pg. 176) advises that in order to avoid possible accidents, normal driving procedures should be followed. 21 If time allows, any carrying that needs to be done should be done with a shinui, such as carrying the required papers under his clothing or hat, etc. 22 Some cars are equipped with a switch that does not allow the dome light to go on when the door opens. This is a better option than loosening the bulb, since loosening the bulb may involve the prohibition of soser (demolition). 23 Whenever possible, one should explore before Shabbos the available choices for parking and figure out the best solution for his particular case. 24 Hinting is preferred to asking directly; see O.C. 307:19.

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THE MESSAGES OF MILAH by RABBI SHALOM ROSNER

Parashas Tazria begins with a discussion of Dinei Yoledes. Immediately after childbirth, a woman becomes ritually defiled for seven days (Yimei Tumah), followed by a period of ritual purity (Yimei Tahara), the length of which is determined by the gender of the child.

Juxtaposed directly in between these Halakhos is a pasuk regarding Bris Milah: $\perp V = \text{vayom ha} = \text{shmini yimol bisar orlaso}$ (Vayikra 12:3). Many of the commentators are bothered: what substantive connection is there between Bris Milah and our Parasha? Indeed, to understand our Parasha, it seems that one would not require the inclusion of this seemingly superfluous pasuk.

To answer this question, let us examine the message underlying the mitzvah of Milah, based on the words of Sefer HaChinukh and Rambam. The Sefer HaChinukh (Mitzvah Beis) writes that the message of Milah is one related to self-perfection. G-d specifically left a part of man imperfect, in state where he will have to make himself whole. $\perp V = \text{Ratza li} = \text{hiyos ha} = \text{hashlama al yidei ha} = \text{adam v} = \text{lo baru shalem mibeten}$. Hashem hints to us that just as we have the capability to perfect our physical bodies, we also have the capability to perfect our spiritual souls.

Rambam (Moreh 3:49), on the other hand, presents a different approach. The message of Milah is not one of self-perfection, but of self-sacrifice. $\perp V = \text{ain ha} = \text{mitzva ha} = \text{zu l} = \text{hashlamas chisaron ha} = \text{bria el} = \text{hashlamas chisaron ha} = \text{midos}$. Man is created perfect. Milah is an act of withdrawal, of recoiling, of sacrificing for G-d. It represents total obedience to the Divine Word.

Rav Michael Rosensweig once suggested, explaining our original problem, that perhaps both of the above themes are evident within the mitzvah of Milah. It is, at once, both an act of self-perfection, as the Chinukh portrayed, and an act of self-sacrifice, as Rambam described.

If this is true, then maybe we can now understand why Milah is juxtaposed directly between the Yimei Tumah and Yimei Tahara of a Yoledes. When a woman has a child, she has performed a G-dly act; she has become a partner in creation (Nidda 31A). She has just lived through a tremendously fulfilling experience. At that moment, she must balance this powerful recognition with self-sacrifice, with retreat and a halakhically-mandated separation for seven days. Only after that demonstration can she then reunite with her husband, having a deeper and clearer sense of her role as a creator. She is a creator, acknowledging, though, the difference between a human creator and the Divine creator. She is a creative being, yet she is also a created one. In between these two stages, the Torah places the mitzvah of Milah, a mitzvah which itself embodies the dual aspects that the Yoledes must recognize.

Both of these themes our ability to perfect ourselves, as well as our obligation to sacrifice in service of Hashem must be taken to heart as we inch closer and closer to Kabalas HaTorah.

To submit questions or comments, for subscription and sponsorship information, or simcha announcements, please contact us at (917) 589-1716 or dyolkut@ymail.yu.edu. Mazal Tov to: Tzipora Weinreb & David Wallach; Dina Adelsberg & Meir Reich; Sara Ginsburg & Shmuel Popper; Shanie Dworetzky & Chaim Cillo; on their recent engagements. Mazal Tov to Karen and Chayim Kirschenbaum on their recent marriage.

From: Yated-Usa[SMTP:yated-usa@ttec.com] Subject: Yated USA Columns 04/26/01 Parsha Perspectives Parshas Metzora
FACING THE HARD FACTS
by RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

"This is the Torah of the Metzora on the day of his purification -and he shall be brought to the Kohain." Thus begins this week's Torah portion which details types of the spiritual affliction known as Negah Tzora'as. The affliction can manifest itself in humans as a discoloration of skin, or in property. It can appear as red or green blotches on clothing, or in the walls of the home.

This affliction is direct divine admonishment for social sins that focus on inter-personal relationships, primarily the sins of slander and gossip. The pattern of punishment is fascinating. First, the plague, or Negah appears in the walls of the gossip's home. If there is no

character improvement, it moves a little closer to his body-it appears on his clothes. If the first two heavenly hints have no effect, the slanderer himself is finally afflicted. He is stricken with white patches on his skin and hair. He is banished from society to the outskirts of the Jewish populace. Alone, he is able to sit and contemplate his failed social mores. For every form of this leprosy, be it in the home, on the clothes, or on the person, a Kohain must first see the lesion to ascertain its Halachic classification. This task is limited exclusively to the Kohanim, and no one in Israel, not even the greatest sage, can declare a blemish an official Negah.

Noteworthy, however, is the manner in which the Torah describes the transaction between the Kohain and the afflicted, in each of the three forms of the Negah. In reference to the plagued house, the Torah writes, "the owner will come to the Kohain." Referring to the discolored clothing, the Torah proclaims, "the Kohain shall see the clothing." However, when the person himself is afflicted, the Torah writes, "and he shall be brought to the Kohain." This expression "and he shall be brought" is used both at the beginning of the ordeal, and on the day of purification. He doesn't come to the Kohain-he is brought to him.

When someone has trouble with his home or clothing, he has no problem coming to the Kohain and saying "I have a faulty item." However, when the problem is with himself-he denies it. He will not come to the Kohain. he must be schlepped.

Rabbi Naftali of Ropschitz was sitting in his small office when an obviously troubled man entered. "Rebbe," he cried, "I am here on behalf of a very close friend who committed the following terrible sin." After recounting the sordid details, the Chasid explained, "my friend was so embarrassed about his misdoing that he could not appear in person to find out the method and means of his penitence. He asked me to be his messenger." The Ropschitzer chided the man who obviously was himself the sinner. "Go back and tell your friend he's a fool. Why did he have to trouble a good friend to travel to Ropschitz and share such terrible stories? He could have come himself and said 'my friend committed a terrible sin and was embarrassed to come himself!'"

The Torah understands the human psyche all too well. People tend to say, "it's not my fault, it's my boss's fault;" "it's the Rabbi's fault;" "it's the kid's fault;" "it's my spouse's fault." Presenting the blemishes of the house and clothing posed no problem for the Metzora. After all, the blemish was not on him. For such a purpose, the Metzora would go willingly to the Kohain. However, when the lesion appeared on him, a sign that something was definitely his fault, coming on his own accord became much too difficult. Unfortunately, he then must be brought! Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky is the author of the Parsha Parable series.

From: RABBI JONATHAN SCHWARTZ jschwartz@ymail.yu.edu To: chaburah@hotmail.com Subject: Internet Chaburah -- Parshas Tazria/Metzora -- Yom HaAtzmaut

Prologue: He has left the camp and now wants to re-enter it. The Metzora had upset the homeostasis of the camp and thus, as the Torah tells us at the end of Parshas Tazria, his place is outside the camp of Klal Yisroel. As the Torah introduces the process of Tahara for the Metzora, the Possuk tells us that on the day of HIS Tahara, he shall be brought to the Kohein. Rav Moshe Feinstein (Darash Moshe II) asks how an individual's Tahara can happen, if indeed he is not engaging in the process, rather is brought (VHuva) to it? Rav Moshe (and interestingly, his student Rav Nissan Alpert in Limudei Nissan Parshas Tazria) notes that the beauty of Tahara, and Mechilla in general, is its ability to happen so long as a man is willing to engage in the process somewhere along the way. The Torah tells us that a man can become a Metzora and achieve personal Tahara even when he initially was brought (VHuva) to the Kohein as long as he recognizes that he must affect his own change through his initiation of the Tahara process.

However, it is possible to learn another critical lesson from these Possukim. In fact, the Torah of the Metzarah in his purest form is when he is brought to the Kohein. This individual, who through his activity attempted to create a schism within Klal Yisroel, begins his process of Tahara by correcting that Schism. Now, Klal Yisroel brings him to the Kohein. Klal Yisroel recognizes that he needs to have a personal Tahara and that personal Tahara affects the entire camp. The Torah of the Metzarah begins when he fixes the rip to that code he broke, when he is brought to the Kohein to repair the rip of Tzaraas caused by the schism he tried to place within Klal Yisroel.

With the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, we have no Metzarah and no Tahara process. There is no means for the process of reconnection after one has fallen off the path by bringing Korbanos. Still, Judaism continues. Teshuva still exists and grows stronger. Sometimes we can merit things in great pieces and not even realize it. The power, is in the community. This week's Chaburah examines the issue of Yom Haatzmaut from this perspective. It is entitled:

Moshiach Zol Schoen Kumin??: The Yom Haatzmaut debate Controversy seems to be commonplace in Eretz Yisroel. It seems to be expected to have occasional discussion and even disagreement about political, social or economic issues. What makes these conversations even more special, is the religious tone that they often take on within daily conversation. "Avira D'Eretz Yisroel Machkim", and as such, an intellectual debate can ensue on most issues which, in turn can be infused with a sense of Kedusha. One major area of general debate that exists within the country today concerns the status of the country today. In the Tefilla L'Shalom Hamedina (a prayer composed by the members of parliament) a reference to the creation of the state as the beginning of the redemption, "Aschalta D'Geulah," has reigned. Satmar Chassidim (see VaYoel Moshe Mamar I & II) maintain that there is no proof that the creation of the state has the status of the beginning of the Geula. Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook (Rav Schachter, personal communication) has maintained that the signing of the Balfour Declaration itself had the status of Aschalta D'Geula. Are there any Halachic ramifications to the status of Aschalta D'Geula?

The first reference to Aschalta D'Geula appears in Megilla (17b). There the Talmud notes that war is the beginning of Geula (Aschalta D'Geula). The poskim note that this is a Halachic concept. Some (Megillas Setarim, Esther 9:19) note that this has ramifications for setting up a holiday in celebration of Aschalta D'Geula. Others (Shut Minchas Elazar IV:5) maintain that one cannot Daven to stop wars that are considered Aschalta D'Geula. Doing so, would be Davening to prolong the Galus and push off the Geula.

In reference to the issue of setting up a Yom Tov for the Aschalta D'Geula, the Talmud notes (Rosh Hashanna) that Megillas Taanis (a compilation of days one may not fast in commemoration of special events on the Jewish calendar) was nullified (except for Chanukah and Purim). The Pri chadash (Orach Chaim 496) determined that this statement meant that it is no longer acceptable to create a national holiday once the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed. The Chayei Adam (End of Hil. Purim) and the Malbim (Commentary to Esther 9:19) interpret this to mean that a city or a family could set up a Yom Tov to recall a Nes but a whole nation cannot.

Assuming the above argument, a question can be raised as to how Purim remained on the Jewish calendar? To that the commentaries (Sfas Emes, Purim, 5634, 5638, 5643; Megillas Setarim, Esther 9:19) explain that Purim was a preparation for the building of the second Beis Hamikdash. As such it had the status of Aschalta D'Geula, requiring a status of Yom Tov.

Chanukah too, was a celebration of rededication to the Beis HaMikdash. The commentaries (Ramban to Parshas Naso) explain that there is a Mitzva Deoraisa to celebrate each time the Beis HaMikdash is

rededicated as it is the Aschalta D'Geula of man's Tachlis in the world. And in times of destruction, one can (although is not required to) celebrate what once was, as a Zecher to Aschalta D'Geula (See Sefer Eretz HaZvi, (R. Schachter) Siman 12).

When it came to setting up a Yom Tov for the dedication of Medinat Yisroel, many maintained that the dedication was clearly a Nes and deserving of a Yom Tov (Shut Kol Mevasser I:21). However, if it were to be set up as a Yom Tov for the entire nation, how would one get around the problem of the Pri Chadash? To that HaGaon HaRav Hershel Schachter (B'ikvei haTzoan 32) suggests that the issue returns to the discussion of Reishis Semichas Geulaseinu. If one sees the Medina (as Rav Schachter suggests it is) as Aschalta D'Geula, then it would be more correct to celebrate Yom Haatzmaut with some form of Yom Tov than it would be to celebrate Lag BaOmer. Still, the obligation would be voluntary, not obligatory (Chiyuv). However, according to the Satmar, the lack of Aschalta D'Geula would prevent the setting up of a Yom Tov on Yom Haatzmaut.

Battala News Mazal Tov to Mr. And Mrs. Aryeh Mandel upon the birth of a baby boy. Mazal Tov to Dr. and Mrs. Avigdor Vic rosenberg upon the birth of a babyboy. She'yizku l'Gadlam l'Torah L'Huppa U'Maasim Tovim, V'yichnisam l'Breesh Shel Avraham Aveinu B'Zmanam.

From: Yeshivat Har Etzion's Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash [SMTP:yhe@vbm-torah.org] To: Yhe-sichot@vbm-torah.org Subject: SICHOT61 -25: Parashat Tazria-Metzora Student Summaries of Sichot of the Roshei Yeshiva SICHOT OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"A EVIL SPEECH Summarized by Matan Glidai Translated by Kaeren Fish

The fact that two parashot of the Torah deal with tzara'at (usually translated as "leprosy," although the Torah refers to the physical manifestation of a spiritual disease), which is the punishment for "lashon ha-ra" (speaking badly of others), testifies to the importance that the Torah attaches to this subject. Lashon ha-ra is the only transgression that carries an immediate punishment. Let us examine some of what our sources have to tell us about the sources and severity of this sin.

In discussing the various levels of tzara'at, the Rambam (Hilchot Tumat Tzara'at 16:10) notes that they correspond to different stages of speech defined as lashon ha-ra. He explains that if someone sits together with evil people, even if at first he talks with them about innocent matters, he will eventually come to speak lashon ha-ra about righteous people. Indeed, this is a common phenomenon ϕ people tend to seek out bad points in others who appear better than them in order to ease their own consciences; this way, they will be able to say, "See ϕ he's not so great either."

The Meshekh Chokhma (Parashat Beshalach, s.v. "Ve-hamayim," Shemot 14:24) explains that although the punishment for actual transgressions is more serious than the punishment for demonstrating bad character traits and negative social behavior (such as lashon ha-ra, gossip, etc.), G-d is more exacting concerning bad character traits when the whole generation is involved. The destruction of the Second Temple, for example, occurred in a generation that was G-d-fearing, studious and punctilious in religious observance ϕ but baseless hatred was rife among them. Likewise, the great flood came specifically as a response to the generation's sin of theft ("chamas"), although they transgressed in many other areas too. (The Meshekh Chokhma lists several other examples of national punishments in response to bad character traits.)

In his introduction to Sefer Bereishit, the Netziv writes that the Second Temple was destroyed because people were intolerant, accusing anyone whose avodat Hashem (Divine service) was different from their own of being either a sectarian or an apostate. In contrast, the

Patriarchs were called "upright" because they related lovingly and respectfully even toward pagans.

The Gemara (Bava Metzia 30b) teaches that Jerusalem was destroyed only because the courts would rule in exact accordance with the letter of the law, and would not demonstrate any leniency or understanding, going "beyond the letter of the law." The Ramban, too, discusses the prohibition of being a "scoundrel within the bounds of the Torah" ϕ someone who observes the letter of the law but not its spirit. (He learns this concerning the mitzvot between man and G-d from the command, "You shall be holy," and concerning interpersonal mitzvot from the command, "And you shall perform the right and the good.")

Each mitzva has a formal halakhic dimension as well as an ethical dimension. Jerusalem was destroyed because its inhabitants were careful to fulfill only the dry halakhic requirements, paying no attention to the ethical aspect. A person who is strict in his observance of every detail of the laws of lashon ha-ra and gossip, but does not behave towards others as he should (for example, he is jealous of them or behaves selfishly or arrogantly), is a "scoundrel within the bounds of Torah." For this reason, it is sometimes preferable to learn a book of "mussar," such as Mesillat Yesharim, than to study the Chafetz Chaim's halakhic work on the laws of lashon ha-ra. The Chafetz Chaim's work is undoubtedly very important, demonstrating as it does that even the laws of lashon ha-ra are composed of intricate details. Nevertheless, one should not be misled into believing that the careful observance of these formal details is the whole picture ϕ the ethical dimension should always be kept in mind.

(This sicha was delivered at seuda shelishit, Shabbat Parashat Tazria-Metzora 5753 [1993].) Yeshivat Har Etzion's Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash <http://www.vbm-torah.org> Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash Alon Shevut, Gush Etzion 90433 E-mail: Yhe@vbm-torah.org or Office@etzion.org.il

From: RABBI PINCHAS WINSTON winston@torah.org Subject: Perceptions - Parashas Tazria/Metzora

Conception, Perception, and Better Reception For more information regarding Rabbi Winston's books, tapes, and speaking tours -- including the new novel, "Not Just Another Scenario," go to: www.thirtysix.org. Upcoming Speaking Engagements, b"H: September 13: Potomac, MD; May 15: Toronto; May 20: New York; Shavuot (May 28 & 29): London, England,

TAZRIA G-d told Moshe and Aharon, "When a person has a blotch, a discol-oration, or spot on his skin like the curse of leprosy, then he should be brought to Aharon the priest, or to one of his descendants." (Vayikra 13:1-2)

And, the Arizal explains, the connection to Bris Milah does not end there. Milah, says the Arizal, saves one from encounters with spiritual impurities and Tzora'as. For, Bris Milah promotes humility as well, since it leaves a "sign" of "ownership" to G-d, or commitment to the Master of the Universe.

According to the Arizal, there are three forms of pride that lead to a person's undoing, and, to different kinds of tzora'as. The first level of pride is one that a person hides to himself, so that on the surface he appears to be humble to all those who know him.

However, every negative pride will surface somewhere at some point in time, in some way, and, says the Arizal, lead to "se'eis," the first kind of tzora'as mentioned. This type of tzora'as is "stuck" within the skin, and, is not noticeable to all, just to the person who has become afflicted.

The second level of pride is one that leads a person to lord himself over those like him, but not over those who are wiser, more powerful, or more influential than he is. He will, eventually, do that which will cause him to become afflicted with "sepachas," which is a word that indicates "joining," as in, "... Join me (sepachani) into one of the priestly divisions

..." (I Shmuel 2:35).

The third form of pride is what leads to the kind of chutzpah which allows a person to act brazen before anyone and everyone, regardless of how much greater the person may be than he is. He is inflicted with "beheres," which is called "Beheres Azah" -- the "Brazen Spot."

Thus, even the slightest pride does not go unnoticed by G-d, for, as Dovid HaMelech wrote:

G-d will have reigned, He will have worn grandeur ... (Tehillim 93:1) -- which means that G-d hates all forms of pride, for it is grandeur that is befitting only His kingdom, for, only G-d can possess it and yet remain humble as well, as it says:

Rebi Yochanan said: Wherever you find the greatness of The Holy One, Blessed is He, there you will find His humility ... (Megillah 31a)

We remind ourselves of this each day right before the Shemonah Esrai, when we recite:

"For this, the beloved praised and exalted G-d ... Who humbles the haughty and lifts the lowly."

(The people on that fateful Titanic voyage would have done well to learn this lesson. Had they understood how G-d feels about haughtiness and too much self-belief, they probably would never have made comments about the unsinkableness of the Titanic, or, held a banner over its bow that said, "A ship that even G-d can't sink.")

Woooooe, them's fightin' words.)

Back to the Bris Milah connection. Bris Milah also possesses the potential to help a person to become humbled. I say "potential" because we see that from the beginning of the Jewish people until today, chutzpah is still very much a possibility amongst the circumcised. After all, we ARE called a "stiff-necked people"!

Nevertheless, that is the inherent power within Bris Milah, and thus, when people attempt to ban Bris Milah --

Anti-Circumcision Association Scores a Victory January 6, 2001

A small laconic announcement reached the press several weeks ago that the Supreme Court from now on will allow urologists to perform bris milah in hospitals. Most people who read the announcement probably passed right over it without comprehending its significance. However, this announcement signals a chilling turning point in the fight of anti-bris milah groups against the universal acceptance of halachic-mandated bris milah among the Jewish people in Israel, which should alarm every one of us. It is most likely the harbinger of worse things to come.

At the age of 58, one Shimon Elmakor tried to sue his father for circumcising him as a child. While the Supreme Court threw his case out, two years later another suit was brought by the "Association Against Making Incisions in Infants" in which they sought to prohibit circumcision. The suit was based on the claim that injuring a helpless baby negates his lawful rights.

Although the Supreme Court also rejected this suit, the plans of the anti-circumcision caucus continued unabated. A new anti-circumcision association called "Mila Tova" was founded by a resident of Nes Tziona who explained that he was shaken to his roots when viewing the circumcision of his grandson. He proclaimed that the "old-fashioned" method of circumcision implemented by mohelim must be eliminated since they do not conform to modern medical standards. He specifically mentions that "pria" is unnecessary and should be eliminated, and the only circumcision which should be done is that which is carried out in hospitals all over the western world on the second or third day after the child's birth.

In other words, this founder of this association would agree to a secular form of circumcision totally unconnected to the religious nature and requirements of the ceremony as has been practiced by the Jewish people throughout generations. Mila Tova is demanding that hospital-sanctioned circumcision be permitted for establishment-approved doctors with experience in doing circumcisions.

Mila Tova has a list of urologists who perform circumcision according to western standards. They apply a desensitizing ointment and after it takes affect, give a shot to anesthetize the area. After a few minutes, they do the circumcision...

-- especially as the Torah commands it to be performed, then, they not only break Torah law and the covenant of Avraham Avinu, but, they unleash terrible Negative Forces into the world and onto mankind, and help the world work itself towards self-destruction.

METZORA If a woman discharges blood for many days when it is not her time for menstruation, then, for the duration of the flow she will be like a menstruant -- ritually un-clean. (Vayikra 15:25)

Unlike most of the divrei Torah of Perceptions over the years, this one will be more halachic, because of the relevancy of the matter. For many, the following may already be known; for others, it may help to explain a seemingly complicated halachah.

According to the Torah, if a woman menstruates (even just a little), she remains spiritually impure for seven full days. That night, which begins a new Jewish day (after three medium stars have appeared in the sky) -- the eighth day -- after HALACHICALLY confirming that she is no longer menstruating, she is allowed to go to the mikvah to become ritually purified. She will remain so until the next menstruation.

However, according to the Torah, this is true only eleven days of the month during which she can expect to menstruate, based upon previous experience. If, however, she were to have a flow of blood outside this period of time, that is, during the remaining eighteen days of the month ... "... it is not her time for menstruation..." -- then, the law changes, and the halachos of a "Zavah" ("Flow"), to which the Torah referred to above, apply instead.

To become a "Complete Zavah," she has to have seen a flow of blood during this period of time, and, on three separate and on consecutive occasions. Then she must wait until the flow has ceased, and, after HALACHICALLY confirming that it has, she must then count seven "clean" days before going to the mikvah on the eighth night to become purified once again.

Thus, the basic difference between "Niddah" and "Zavah," at least in terms of duration, is that, a normal "Niddah" will last at least seven days, whereas a "Zavah" will last at least ten days.

In Temple times, this could make a big difference, because, neither woman could enter the Temple until ritually purified from their impure state (or a man from his). However, a difference of three, four, five, or whatever days could make all the difference in the world when the Temple still stood, and thus, a woman had to be VERY careful to keep track of which period of time she was going through to know how to count the days.

However, today we have no Temple -- may it return speedily in our days -- and not one woman today can tell you which part of the month she is presently in -- Niddah or (potential) Zavah. Without a Temple, it became somewhat irrelevant to keep track.

But not completely irrelevant, for, there is still the issue of physical intimacy of husband and wife, and in many instances, some women will not go into holy places while in such a state of spiritual impurity, etc. For this reason, a kind of halachic stringency was enacted where, all flows of blood are treated like that of the Zavah.

Thus, today, when a (married) woman menstruates, she only begins counting "clean days" after she has HALACHICALLY confirmed that the flow has completely ceased. When that is the case, then, she counts seven "clean days," after which time -- on the eighth night -- she can immerse in a halachic mikvah, and become purified once again, some TWELVE to FOURTEEN (on average) days later after first menstruating.

To say this has been a brief explanation of a very detailed and central law of Judaism is a gross understatement, and, a competent Halachic authority must be consulted for further clarification.

However, we are now well into the period of year referred to as, "Sefiros HaOmer," a period of time during which we also count days, like the Niddah, Zav, and Zavah.

It is not a coincidence. For all three states, Niddah, Zav, and Zavah are the result of the eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. In fact, after their interaction with the snake, Adam and Chava had the status of being a "Zav" and "Zavah," and, procreating in that state, says the Arizal, was what gave rise to Kayin and the first murderer in the history of mankind!

Thus, though individuals in such a state of spiritual impurity count only for themselves, the nation as a whole, during this time, count for all of us and mankind in general. All year round, and especially without a Temple in our midst to remind us, we live with the illusion of being spiritually pure, when, in fact, we are far from it.

Counting "Sefirah" at this time reminds once again of the true state of mankind, with the hope that such recognition will arouse a longing for greater states of spiritual purity, and, a return to the perfection of mankind in the Garden of Eden. Then we can be truly prepared to receive the Torah on Shavuot.

... Rabbi Winston has authored fourteen books on Jewish philosophy (hashkofa). If you enjoy Rabbi Winston's weekly Perceptions on the Parsha, you may enjoy many of his books. Visit the Project Genesis bookstore - Genesis Judaica - <http://books.torah.org/authors/winston/> for more details! Torah.org depends upon your support. Please visit <http://torah.org/support/> or write to dedications@torah.org or donations@torah.org . Thank you! Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B learn@torah.org Baltimore, MD 21208 (410) 602-1350 FAX: 510-1053

yomtov@torah.org Subject: YomTov - Giving Thanks for Doors Opened

YomTov Week of Parschas Tazria-Metzora Topic: Giving Thanks for Doors Opened

Scavenger hunts usually do not find their way on to the Shabbos preparation "To Do" list maintained by my family. Yet, last week, my wife spent the better part of Friday afternoon running from grocery store to supermarket in the pursuit of . . . dough. We had both forgotten what was unique about this Shabbos. By the time we realized we needed dough, it was too late in the afternoon to start whipping up our own batch, so we had to go with the ready-made sort. After a few stores, my wife was successful and she happily returned home with a more-than-slightly frozen dough. Why, do you ask, we were looking for dough? In two words, the answer is "SCHLISSEL CHALLAH."

A custom of old is discussed in a number of places. The Sefer Ohev Yisroel writes there is a custom, the first Shabbos after Pesach, to pierce the Shabbos challah, the loaves, with a key. One reason for this stems from events that occurred in the days after Yehoshua (Joshua) took over the leadership of the nation of Israel. Sefer Yehoshua (5-11,12) states: "and they ate of the old grain of the land on the next day after Pesach, unleavened cakes, and parched grain in the same day; and the manna ceased on the next day after they had eaten of the old grain of the land; nor did the people of Israel have manna any more; but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year."

Not long after entering the land of Israel, at the time of Pesach, the nation of Israel was no longer provided with manna from heaven. The nation began to eat from that which grew naturally in the land of Canaan, the land of Israel. At that point, the nation of Israel had to depend on G-d for the provision of sustenance in a new fashion. Until now, it had been miraculous. Now, each person had to labor and toil and work the land so that their families would be provided for. Sustenance was on the minds of everyone.

There is a metaphorical description of that place in heaven from where blessings come. G-d's blessings, such as health and wealth, are stored behind gates. On the high holidays, we ask G-d to open the gates of heaven for our prayers. At this time of year, right after Pesach, we ask G-d to recall how He opened the gates of sustenance for the entire nation of Israel in the days of Joshua after Pesach. By impressing a key into our challah, we are asking that we too should have the key we need to open the gates of sustenance properly placed and turned for us. The "schlüssel," which is the Yiddish word for "key," should unlock the gates of sustenance for us just as it was for the nation of Israel after their first Pesach in the promised land.

Our entry into the land of Israel brought our nation into a new status. We now had to work for our livelihoods, and our success would not come without divine providence. Whereas the divine providence had been outward and miraculous, now it would be more covert, hiding under the cover of what we term "nature." With Yom Ha'Atzmaut, Israeli Independence Day, before us, this is a lesson to keep in the forefront. Just as our initial entry into the land of Israel brought the nation of Israel to a new level of appreciating divine providence, so too should the events surrounding the birth of the nation of Israel. Some events were clearly miraculous, others appeared to be natural. Regardless of how the events played out, we must remember, be thankful, appreciate, and pray for the continuance of G-d's heavenly assistance, in sustaining us as individuals and a nation, physically and spiritually.

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From: prero@torah.org[SMTP:prero@torah.org] To: