

## Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet TAZRIA METZORA 5770

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**DAYS OF MEMORY :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

These few weeks are crowded with special days of memory here in Israel. Yom Hashoah, Yom Hazikaron L'Challelei Tzahal, and Yom Haatzmaut all come upon us in swift succession. They are really the framework for the Israeli psyche -political and national- that governs our national mood and policies. The rest of the world does not and perhaps cannot understand where we are coming from.

Yom Hashoah has taught us that if someone arises and, as a policy, intends to exterminate the Jewish people, we will not have any real protectors in the world to arise and forcibly defend us. In the past, our erstwhile friends, whether FDR or Churchill, they did next to nothing to prevent the Holocaust from occurring. It is unlikely that Gordon Brown, David Cameron, Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton is any more reliable.

The leaders of the world, if they are not latent anti-Semites, are overtly unrealistic. They prefer not to get it. So they think that Shiite Iran does not mean what it says when it regularly proclaims our eventual destruction. But Yom Hashoah comes to remind us that reality differs from naïve hopes and ill thought policies.

The fecklessness of the world in the face of militant Islam, unabating terrorism, and rogue nuclear armed states inspires little confidence here in Israel in platitudes and statements about commitments to Israeli security. We may say "never again" but deep down in our hearts we know that "again" remains, God forbid, a distinct possibility.

The world wants us to get over the Holocaust while at the same time creating a scenario that constantly reminds us of the Holocaust. People who are bitten by large dogs do not walk on the same side of the street where ratweilers are present.

The Jewish people have paid a heavy price for maintaining our little state. Tens of thousands of Jews have been killed and continue to die for its preservation. The Arab world has basically never come to terms with the reality of the existence of the State of Israel. Constant war, mindless terrorism, unceasing incitement, never ending accusations, fabrications and biased UN resolutions have been the daily fare of the State of Israel since its inception.

We can never, God forbid, lose a war but we are never allowed to win one either. So Yom Hazikaron L'Challelei Tzahal becomes tragically a regular occurrence in our lives. Golda Meir may have fabulously expressed mourning over the deaths of the Arabs in their struggles against our existence. But the Arabs have never expressed such regrets.

The Ayatollahs of Iran say that they willing to lose fifteen million(!) Iranians in order to eradicate the State of Israel. It is hard to see how one can come to an accommodation with such bloodthirsty uncaring fanatics who value human life, theirs and certainly ours, so cheaply. So Yom Hazikaron L'Challelei Tzahal comes to remind us of the real world and of the heartbreaking cost that Israel paid and pays to survive in that world.

Again, pious platitudes about peace do not change the reality of murderous intent on the ground. We have been down that road too many times in the past to be seduced to go there again.

The miracle of the past century was and remains the reestablishment of Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel. Yom Haatzmaut has to be viewed in that light. The tragedy is that this miracle, unlike Chanukah and Purim, had no religious leadership that could have cloaked it with the necessary ritual that would have made the day so meaningful to all sections of Israeli and Jewish society. Having a barbecue in the park hardly makes it a memorable day, a tradition of observance that can be passed on to later generations.

Those of us who were alive when the state came into being and experienced all the pangs of its establishment are a fast disappearing breed. The deniers amongst us, and certainly in the non-Jewish world, already

distort and falsify the story. The victim has become the oppressor and Goliath struts around the world stage as David. Yom Haatzmaut should come to remind us of the real story, of God's grace unto us in a dismal century, of Jewish heroism and purpose and of triumph against all odds and powerful enemies.

It should also remind the world that even though it is popular and oh so politically correct and progressively noble to damn Israel, in the long run it is very counterproductive to do so. Just ask the Soviet Union! So let us take these days to heart and stand tall for our God and land.

Shabbat shalom.

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### Weekly Parsha :: TAZRIA – METZORA :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The laws of plagues, purity and impurity are purely chukim – laws that defy our limited rational capabilities to understand. But this is perhaps the very message that the Torah wishes us to learn and internalize. Much of life is not rational and does not fit into our accustomed schedules and plans. And even the most hardened secularist and/or rationalist must admit that much of life is inexplicable.

Weird things happen to all of us. There are forces in the world, dreams, inspirations, as well as strangers that suddenly appear that are present in our lives and are real to us though we have no idea how or why they influence us.

The whole subject of purity and impurity occupies great sections of the Torah. In the real but purely spiritual world of the Torah, purity and impurity are sensations that are real and can be felt and experienced. The rabbis decreed that the "land of the nations" meaning the part of the world that is not within the biblical boundaries, carries with it automatic impurity.

The air of the Land of Israel is purity in itself. The rabbis said that the air of the Land of Israel is one of wisdom and knowledge. It is its purity that leads to its atmosphere of true wisdom and knowledge. We are all aware that in cases of illness, God forbid, the medical treatment for the patient is oftentimes the inhalation of pure oxygen. In the world of the spirit, pure oxygen is the air of the Land of Israel.

There are plagues that descend upon individuals. There are other plagues that infest a human being's clothing. And, there are plagues that can infect one's home and dwelling. Thus no part of human existence, that is exempt or immune from the possibility of plagues and impurity.

Many of the family laws of the Jewish home are constructed on the basis of injecting purity into the relationship and into the family and home. There are no medical or physical rationales extant to these laws that are readily justifiable to the rational thinker. But the existence and observance of those laws is unquestionably what has preserved the Jewish home and family structure throughout the millennia.

It is the unseen and intangible that truly carries us through life and its vicissitudes. And that is why the Torah devotes so much space and teachings to such a seemingly esoteric subject. Someone who is shrouded in impurity and whose life is dominated by the plagues that exist all around, will find life unrewarding and depressing.

It is the latent purity and holiness within us that gives us a feeling of nobility and satisfaction in our lives. So, our task in life is to guard ourselves from the plagues that surround us, from the impurities that infiltrate the very core of our being, and to try and breathe the pure air of holiness that the Torah attempts to pump into our very beings.

Shabat shalom.

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**Ohr Somayach Torah Weekly :: Parshat Tazria - Metzora**  
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by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - [www.seasonsofthemoon.com](http://www.seasonsofthemoon.com)

## Overview

### Tazria

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

### Metzora

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

### Insights

#### Incredibly Humble

##### "and cedar wood, crimson thread, and hyssop" (14:4)

"For leprous-looking lesions result from conceit and haughtiness. What is the cure? A person should lower himself like the worm and the hyssop." (Rashi)

The Baal Shem Tov once arrived in Polana for Shabbat in a beautiful carriage. In that town was a certain individual who loved to create trouble. He accused the Baal Shem Tov of lording it up and behaving in a conceited fashion.

The Baal Shem replied to him:

"Once there was a king who let it be known that he was searching for the elixir of eternal life. Hearing about the king's quest, a wise man came to him and said, "I have the elixir of eternal life." "Where is it? Where is it?" said the king in great excitement. "I will pay you anything for it!" Replied the wise man, "You need pay me nothing for it. But it will certainly cost you."

The king's brow furrowed. "Where is the potion?" he demanded.

Said the wise man: "If you humble yourself and distance yourself from all conceit, you will have imbibed the elixir of life."

The king took the wise man's words and fulfilled them to the letter. He behaved like the epitome of humility, to the extent that he actually ceased riding in the royal carriage and followed behind it on foot along with his servants.

However, the more he did to humiliate himself, the more he heard this little voice in his head saying, "You are the MOST incredibly HUMBLE person in the whole world. Look at you! You are a great king and yet you walk on foot behind your carriage. You speak in whispers, carefully weighing your each and every word. Your shoulders are hunched unassumingly. Your glance is always downward and diffident. You are truly FANTASTIC!"

He sought out the wise man and told him of his problem. The wise man explained, "Walking behind the royal carriage was not what I had it mind. I meant you to go up and sit in your carriage, that everyone should continue bowing to you and treating you with royal deference, and, in spite of all that, in your heart of hearts, you should still feel humble and small. That's a much more difficult thing to do."

But that is true humility.

## Penim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

### Parshas Tazria/Metzora

**If a person will have on the skin of his flesh a se'is, or a sapachas, or a beheers, and it will become a tzaraas affliction on the skin of his flesh. (13:2)**

The plagues addressed in our parsha are clearly of a spiritual nature. They are Hashem's punishment for one who perverts his tongue, speaking lashon hora, slanderous speech. A number of halachos concerning tzaraas indicate the supernatural nature of this affliction. A chasan who sees an affliction can have his tumah, ritually impure, status delayed until after the Sheva Berachos, seven-days of nuptial blessings. Likewise, if a plague occurs on yom tov, he is not declared tamei until the conclusion of the festival. Such laws would not apply if the disease were infectious. We wonder why tzaraas does not exist in contemporary times. It is not as if people have stopped speaking lashon hora. Has there been a decrease in sinaas chinam, unwarranted hatred, and rechilus, tale-bearing?

The Alshich HaKadosh, zl, explains this pragmatically. When a person performs a mitzvah, the power of the mitzvah creates a Heavenly angel who intercedes on his behalf. Likewise, when he sins, the sin catalyzes the creation of impure forces which advocate negatively against the person. These impure forces punish the transgressor. This is what Yirmiyahu HaNavi means when he says (Yirmiyahu 2:19), "Your evil shall castigate you; your waywardness shall chasten you." It is not I (Hashem) who will punish you. It is your own actions, your sinful behavior, which brings punishment upon you. In other words, our actions are the source of our reward or punishment. We do it to ourselves. Our own behavior catalyzes our suffering and pleasure.

One specific criterion must be in place in order for this to work: the person must be an "adam," an individual who is worthy of being called a man in the true sense of the word. The taint of tumah, ritual contamination, can only be noticed on someone who is basically tahor, ritually clean. One who is not yet "there" does not have to worry about a "taint" of impurity. He is too far gone. A black spot shows up on a white garment. It does not significantly change a garment that is already soiled. The person who is filled with tzaraas, blemishes is not affected by the added tzaraas. He is too far gone. This is why the Torah preempts our pasuk with the word "adam," a person, someone about whom the Torah can refer to as an adam. Yes, in previous generations, when people were on the lofty spiritual plateau of "adam," tzaraas was an effective reminder of their indiscretions. Times have changed - and we have regrettably changed with the times.

The times, however, have not "changed" everyone. Some unique individuals are so inextricably bound with Hashem and His Torah that the mere thought of lashon hora constitutes a tragedy of epic proportions. The Manchester Rosh Yeshivah, Horav Yehudah Zev Segal, zl, was considered the embodiment of the principles which were the hallmark of the saintly Chafetz Chaim. He devised a yearly shemiras halashon calendar, whereby one would study a small amount of the hilchos shemiras halashon on a daily basis. He knew, however, that with all the effort one might expend in the performance of a given mitzvah, success is ultimately predicated upon siyata diShmaya, Divine assistance. This is especially true concerning shemiras halashon, such that a slip of the tongue or a seemingly innocuous remark can be the precursor of lashon hora. Keeping this in mind, the Chafetz Chaim composed a lengthy prayer entreating Hashem for Divine assistance in matters of speech. The Manchester Tzaddik drew on this prayer as he formulated his own - more concise - prayer.

Understanding the difficulty of guarding oneself from the pitfalls of lashon hora, the giants of Torah prayed for siyata diShmaya. The following vignette illustrates this idea. There was a certain talmid, student, at Beth Medrash Govoha who would bring the Rosh Yeshivah, Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, a cup of coffee each day at a specific time. One day, the talmid brought the coffee as usual. Upon returning an hour later, he noticed that the coffee had not been touched. He returned with another steaming cup of

coffee. This one, too, remained untouched. It was not as if Rav Aharon could not drink coffee and learn at the same time. The talmid was concerned, and he asked the Rosh Yeshivah if something was wrong. Rav Aharon replied, "I am aware of a certain family that is making inquiries concerning a young man who had once studied under me. If the family calls me, I will be in a difficult situation. I cannot say an untruth, nor can I say the truth, because it does not speak well of the young man. Therefore, I have accepted to fast today, in the hope that, in the merit of my deprivation, no inquiries will be made of me."

**If a person will have on the skin of his flesh a se'is or a sapachas... He shall be brought to the Kohen... the Kohen shall look at the affliction. (13:2,3)**

Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, was wont to say, "Officially, the Shulchan Aruch consists of four volumes. There really is a fifth volume: that is the one which exhorts us not to be a fool." Some of us spend a lifetime looking all over the world for answers to questions which trouble us, only to discover the answer right in front of us. We refuse to confront reality, because imagination is so much more appealing. It is amazing how often we act irrationally when, with a little forethought, we could have easily found an effective solution to our problem. Chazal relate the story of a kohen who was proficient in discerning the colors of a nega, plague. He was often called upon to determine whether a given skin blemish was, in fact, tzaraas. Regrettably, his success in this field did not put bread on his table. After a lengthy discussion with his wife, he decided to pack his bags and leave his family in search of a livelihood.

The Kohen could not ignore his responsibility to the many Jews who relied on his ability to decide the validity of a skin blemish. Therefore, he decided to instruct his wife in the halachos and how to distinguish between the various colors that manifest themselves on the skin. The first lesson began with the pasuk, "if hair in the affliction has turned white" (13:3). "If you notice that the skin from which a hair grows has become dry," the kohen began, "This is a clear indication that the individual has been stricken with tzaraas. Hashem has created each and every hair separately, each with its own individual root in the skin from where it receives its nourishment. If the source in the skin has dried, the hair which sprouts from it will also die."

When the kohen's wife heard these words, she looked at her husband with shock and skepticism, "Listen to what you are saying," she exclaimed. "There are thousands of hairs growing on a human body, each and every one supervised by Hashem. Each hair nourished from its individual source, overseen by Hashem. If Hashem has provided a source of sustenance for every individual hair on the human body, do you not think that He can provide for us also? I no longer agree to allow you to leave home to seek a livelihood. Hashem will provide for us."

The kohen listened to his wife and remained home. What did she say that was so earth-shattering? Nothing! She caused her husband to open his eyes for a change and look about him. The world was going on. Everything was being sustained. If Hashem could sustain the world, He certainly could support the kohen and his family. We just do not think. We are so obsessed with looking for solutions to self-created problems that we ignore the answer waving to us right in front of our face.

A wealthy man came to the Chafetz Chaim and asked for his advice concerning an inheritance issue. He had six children who were the designated heirs to his considerable estate. "Rebbe, I am not very old, nor am I still a spring chicken. I have to make plans for the inevitable. I would like to add another "heir" to my estate. There is a yeshivah in dire need of financial support. I would like to consider this yeshivah like my seventh child. Could the rav help me draw up a will to this effect?", the man asked the Chafetz Chaim.

"My friend," the Chafetz Chaim said, "Permit me to ask you two questions. I understand that if you have 700 ruble, you would like to give each child 100 ruble and also 100 to the yeshivah. This is a wonderful gesture on your part. But, I seem to have difficulty understanding why you are waiting until you die to give the money to the yeshivah? You have already conceded that the yeshivah is in dire need, and that you have the

wherewithal to assist them, so why wait? Why delay until your death when your children will hire a good lawyer to represent them to invalidate your will?"

"My second question," the Chafetz Chaim continued, "is, whether I am the one who should study Mishnayos for your neshamah; why do you not study Mishnayos for yourself? You are alive. What better time to study Torah than when you are alive! Do you think that everything must be done only after one has left this world?"

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Shlita, drives home the point. We all want to ensure ourselves through others, but what about ensuring ourselves through our own efforts? We worry about tomorrow; we write wills: set aside money: hire a Kaddish, and sit back and wait for the inevitable. What about taking care of ourselves: we should learn the Mishnayos, we should give the tzedakah, we should live today, and not worry about tomorrow. What we do on this world is all that we take with us to the next world. There are no Gemarros there; no money for tzedakah - nothing. We must act in this world if we are going to warrant any reward in the next world.

Returning to our opening paragraph; there is a fifth volume of Shulchan Aruch: not to act foolishly. How often have we decided to do the right thing, only to have our inspiration wane and cool off? The stimulant that sparked our desire for change lost its fire. But, during those few moments, those couple of days that we were "turned on", we felt good about our decision; we wanted to alter our ways; we were ready to ascend to a loftier, closer relationship with the Almighty. What happened? The fifth Shulchan Aruch. We allowed our lack of common sense, the foolishness that prevails in all of us, to overpower the clarity of vision we had for a short time. We ignored the fifth Shulchan Aruch.

**This shall be the law of the metzora. (14:2)**

In the Talmud Arachin 15b, Chazal teach that the word metzora is really an acronym for motzi shem ra, defamer. Chazal use this as an opportunity to elaborate upon the especially heinous nature of lashon hora, slander. Their expressions of revulsion with this sinful behavior not withstanding, perhaps no declaration of aversion is as strong as the comment in the Yerushalmi Peah 1, "Four sins for which Hashem penalizes a person in this world and the principle is set aside for him in the World to Come: idol-worship; immorality; murder; with the sin of lashon hora superseding them all." This statement tells it all. What really can be added? Lashon hora's evil transcends even that of the three cardinal sins.

Why is it then that this is a sin that is prevalent more so than most others? Chazal teach us that everyone in one way or another is somehow pulled into this sin. If it is so baneful, why is it so popular? One would think that the greater the evil, the more reason one would distance himself from the sin. Is there some mystique about lashon hora that attracts so many?

Horav Shimon Pincus, zl, addresses this double-edged question. Why is lashon hora, in fact, such a compelling sin, and why is it so common? He explains that man is called a medaber, animate creation. Indeed, dibur, the power of speech, is essentially the essence of man. A person is comprised of remach eivarim, 248 organs, each one having its own unique qualities which it manifests as a component of the human body. Eyes manifest the power of sight; ears are the organs through which we are able to hear; legs give us the power of movement. The mouth/tongue is different. When a person speaks, he can express what he thinks with his mind, what he sees with his eyes, what he heard with his ears, what he felt with his heart, where he went, whom he met, and the list goes on. The mouth is the essence of man, the capstone of all his organs.

Lashon hora is the expression of an individual's ani, "I/me." When a person speaks lashon hora, he makes a statement about himself. Rav Pincus cites the Shev Shmaita who makes the following comment in the hakdamah, preface, to his magnum opus: If a person were to be able to ascend to Heaven, see and develop an understanding of the workings of Creation and the esoteric secrets of this world, he would not be satisfied until he could return to this world and share with his friends all that he had learned in Heaven. His new-found knowledge has little value if he cannot tell everybody about it. For man not to be able to speak is a form of death. He must speak. That is man's essence.

There is a well-known incident which occurred with the Chafetz Chaim one Purim. One of the students in the yeshivah became inebriated, and during his period of inebriation pleaded with the Chafetz Chaim to promise him that he could sit near him in Gan Eden. Perhaps this might have been a ludicrous request, but it indicates what a student in Radin thought about when he was in a drunken stupor. The Chafetz Chaim attempted to dissuade the student, to no avail. The young man would not budge from his request. After attempts to "ease" the young man out of the house, to no success, the Chafetz Chaim relented, and asked the young man if he could make him a promise. "Yes, Rebbe, anything, as long as I can be near the Rebbe in Olam Haba," he replied. "If you assure me that you will guard your tongue from ever speaking lashon hora, I will guarantee you a place in my vicinity in the World to Come," said the Chafetz Chaim.

It seemed pretty simple; cut and dried. The young man made a request. The Chafetz Chaim responded with the kind of assurance that we all dream about. For what more could one ask? Well, the Chafetz Chaim's response seemed to have a powerful effect on the student's drunken stupor. His mind immediately cleared, and he said, "Rebbe, that is impossible. How can I promise never to speak lashon hora?" "I am truly sorry for you," replied the Chafetz Chaim. "I was prepared to grant your wish if only you could make me this promise. What a wasted opportunity."

What prompted the student's negative response? To be able to be near the Chafetz Chaim in Olam Haba is an unprecedented opportunity. How could he emphatically turn it down? Rav Pincus explains that to promise to refrain from speaking lashon hora meant for this young man that he could no longer open up his mouth. It was inevitable; if he spoke, he would end up uttering lashon hora. There might be variations in the level of malevolence, but it would be lashon hora, no less. To refrain from speaking was tantamount to death. He was not yet prepared to die. The Chafetz Chaim's response, as Rav Pincus sees it: "Such a death is missas neshikah, a kiss from Hashem!"

Now we can understand why this transgression is so prevalent. None of us are prepared to die - to live a life in which we must control our every word. No speech - no life! So, is it so terrible if a person chooses life? We are here to live - not to die. Is that not the purpose of our existence?

One who makes such a statement should have his pedigree researched. Being a Jew means that one is prepared to be mevateil, abrogate, his entire metzius, essence, for Hashem. A Jew does not view himself as an entity in his own right, but, rather, as a Yehudi, soldier in Hashem's Army, a cog in the great wheel of Hashem's universe. He is ready to do whatever the situation demands in order to elevate kavod Shomayim, the glory of Heaven. A Jew who is not willing to nullify his entire being for Hashem has a greater problem than the sin of lashon hora. This is why the sin of lashon hora is more demanding than the three cardinal sins which lead to capital punishment. A person who is immoral, a murderer, or worships idols, is still a Yehudi. He does not reject his Jewish essence by transgressing these sins. A Jew, however, who speaks lashon hora, rejects his Jewish essence, by showing that he is not willing to give up his most identifying Jewish quality, himself, for Hashem.

**You shall separate the Bnei Yisrael from their contamination; and they shall not die as a result of their contamination if they contaminated My Sanctuary that is among them. (15:31)**

The laws concerning tumah and taharah, ritual contamination and purity, are applicable to all Jews and their observance are predicated upon the individual's ability to police himself. The commandment commends the observance of the laws of tumah to the nation's meticulous self-discipline. We are exhorted not only to avoid the existing tumah, but to avoid proximity to it in time and space where and when it is likely to occur.

Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, notes that the mitzvah to distance oneself from tumah is not addressed directly to the nation but, rather, to its spiritual leadership, Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohen who were assigned the task of teaching and training the nation so that they will stay away from anything tamei. He explains that the mission of Moshe and Aharon: to spread the theoretical knowledge and practical observance of the Torah and to labor constantly at training the nation for that purpose, is essentially

and wholly dependent on the assumption that the nation will be aware at all times of the concepts of tumah and taharah. To put it simply: a people that does not restrict themselves in the areas of ritual purity, will ultimately find it difficult to observe the laws of the Torah. I realize that this opens up a Pandora's box concerning shemiras hamitzvos, especially in light of what so many observant Jews are exposed to vis-?-vis the media and the electronic information superhighway. Therefore, I will leave the rest unsaid and allow the reader to use his imagination.

Since a ritually clean nation plays such a crucial role in mitzvah observance, we understand why the law is motivated by the statement, "And they shall not die as a result of their contamination if they contaminate My Sanctuary that is among them." By observing each and every one of the laws of tumah and taharah, each and every member of the nation, from the most distinguished to the common man, is placed into a direct relationship with the Sanctuary and Hashem's Presence that reposes therein. Every law relating to tumah speaks to every member of the nation, declaring that Hashem seeks His place not among the "Moshe and Aharons," not exclusively among the spiritual elite, but, "in their midst," among all Jews. It also intimates quite clearly that the first prerequisite for all moral ennoblement is the free-willed transcendence of one's self beyond the constraints of tumah.

Another powerful lesson to be derived from the fact that Hashem placed His Sanctuary, His place of repose, with all of the restrictions that can be fulfilled only on the basis of purity and free-willed morality, in the midst of the people. It shows us that - yes - it can be done! These laws do not presuppose a utopian, superhuman state which does not exist on earth. People can be moral. They can maintain ritual purity with all its strictures and regulations. Hashem resides among us, even, b'soch tumasam, "In the midst of their defilements (ibid 15:16)." Hashem is quite aware of man's sensual nature, all of the various stimuli that can arouse and tempt him to relinquish his moral constraints. Indeed, it is precisely in light of this tumah aspect of human nature that He gave the Torah as a condition for His Shechinah, Divine Presence, to literally be a shachin, neighbor, standing "beside" human nature in all of its phases - both ups and downs.

Why would Hashem do this? Does it not go counter to what Sanctuary represents? Rav Hirsch explains that this was done so that the Torah which gives meaning to life and illuminates the path one should follow, should stimulate that other aspect of a human being: his neshamah, soul, so that the G-dliness within him will prevail over anything which is fettered by his physical bonds. This will guide him to elevate all aspects of his life, including the most physical ones, to become free-willed, moral, G-d-serving acts, focused on achieving moral success.

There is a flip side to this wonderful opportunity of having the Sanctuary within our midst: we must maintain a high level of morality, and not associate with anything which will bring about tumah. We will either allow for the Torah to guide us to moral and ritual purity, or we will abscond to the tumah which stands in direct opposition to having Hashem's Sanctuary within our midst - either - or. It is that simple.

**Va'ani Tefillah**

**Halleluhu b'seika shofar, Halleluhu b'neival v'chinar.**

**Praise Him with the blast of the Shofar, Praise Him with the lyre and harp.**

David Hamelech goes on to list various musical instruments: wind, percussion, stringed instruments and cymbals, all of which give forth their own unique sound. Together they create a harmonious sound which reaches a final crescendo of praise to the Almighty. The Shlah HaKadosh explains the variety of instruments and the necessity of contrasting sounds all balancing each other. There are sounds that create a somber mood, and there are sounds that invoke joy and celebration. Likewise, these sounds emanate from various instruments which also create variegated moods. When a person serves Hashem through prayer or song, it is essential that he have the proper kavanah, intention, accompanying his service. Music can inspire and have an enormous influence on a person's kavanah, but, it must be balanced. Too much somber music catalyzes depression in tefillah, while music too heavy on the joy and celebration detracts from the

solemnity of the prayer. This is why David Hamelech lists instruments which have contrasting sounds, that create divergent moods - but, when they are opposite each other, they construct a harmonious balance. The Shofar catalyzes trembling and fear, while the lyre and harp are used to inspire joy. This continues up until the varied cymbals whose opposing sounds also balance each other's effect.

l'ilui nishmas hrh'tz R' Chaim Tzvi ben Betzalel HaCohen Katz zt"l niftar 5 Iyar 5755 t.n.tz.v.h.

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## Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas Tazria-Metzorah

### The Torah Rewards Faithfulness

When a woman finishes the purification period following childbirth, she brings a year old sheep as a burnt offering and a type of bird (a young dove or a turtledove) as a sin offering. The Baal HaTurim points out that on every other occasion when this option of bird offerings are mentioned in the Torah, the turtledove (tor) always precedes the young dove (ben yonah). Only here do we find the 'ben yonah' mentioned before the 'tor'.

The implication, says the Baal HaTurim, is that in this case, for some reason, it is preferable to bring a 'ben yonah' rather than a 'tor'. Why?

The Baal HaTurim offers a fantastic insight. Normally, when birds are brought as sacrifices, the person is obligated to bring a pair of birds. Childbirth is an exception, as only a single bird is required. Turtledoves (torim) always live in pairs. They always mate for life with the same partner. Therefore, if a person would take a single 'tor' as his sacrifice, he would in effect be breaking up the "marriage" of two turtledoves. One of the pair would be killed and the other half of that pair would remain alone for the rest of its life, without a mate. Therefore, by childbirth, where only one bird is used, the preference is to use a 'ben yonah'.

Rav Simcha Zissel notes: If the Torah is so sensitive that it does not want people to cause unnecessary suffering to birds, imagine how the Torah feels about causing unnecessary pain to human beings. He further notes that we see from here how much the Torah appreciates and rewards faithfulness and loyalty. In Parshas Be'Haloscha when the Almighty wishes to chastise Aharon and Miriam for speaking inappropriately about their brother, He describes Moshe with the words "b'chol Beisi ne'eman hu - In all My House he is the most faithful." Moshe is not called the most righteous or the wisest, but the most faithful. Ne-emanus [faithfulness] is the highest complement the Almighty can give a person. Faithfulness means being trustworthy and loyal. This is a quality that people do not appreciate anymore, but the Torah appreciates this attribute very much.

The Torah rewards the loyalty of the turtledoves one for another, and changes the order, in a sense recommending that when only one bird sacrifice is required, the choice should be the young dove (ben yonah) rather than the turtledove (tor).

### The Metzorah Needs A Double Atonement

At the conclusion of The metzorah's [spiritual leper] period of impurity, he must bring both a guilt offering (korban asham) and a sin offering (korban chatas). Both of these sacrifices provide atonement. Why are these two different offerings both necessary for his atonement? Usually, either an asham or chatas is required, but not both.

The Ramba"n found the double requirement of asham AND chatas by a metzorah to be noteworthy. The Ramba"n suggests that the two offerings atone for different aspects of the sin. The asham atones for the original sin that the metzorah committed which caused him to receive the Divine Punishment of leprosy in the first place. The sin offering, on the other hand, may be for sins he committed while he was already a metzorah. Maybe in his pain, he blasphemed G-d or complained about His punishment. Those complaints require independent atonement.

Perhaps we can appreciate the Ramba"n's suggestion better if we recognize that Tzaraas was a horrible disease. It was a spiritual disease that manifested itself in physical symptoms but the physical symptoms were horrible. And it was not only horrible physically but it was horrible

socially as well. It required the person to be "banished from the camp." Normally, we have a tradition that when someone is sick, we visit him - the mitzvah of Bikur Cholim. In the case of the metzorah - on the contrary - we are not allowed to visit him. He is exiled from society! "He must dwell alone, outside the camp" [Vayikra 13:46].

Certainly, during this very painful, lonely, and bleak period of his suffering, this person may be tempted to utter some blasphemous thought: "G-d why on earth are You doing this to me?" It is almost inevitable. Therefore the Ramba"n suggests that the sin offering that the metzorah brings is for the blasphemous thoughts which he has perhaps uttered against the Almighty during the period of his enforced isolation.

Life is not all smooth. There are many situations in life which can get extremely difficult and painful. One can sometimes wonder "Why me? Why is this happening to me? I don't deserve this! G-d is not Just." We must try to avoid such thoughts. It is difficult. It is very difficult, but we must literally perish the thought. We must be believers, descendants of believers. Whatever the Almighty does to us or to the Jewish people, He is not doing it because He hates us, but because He loves us.

The classic commentaries explain that G-d is doing us a favor with the laws of Metzora and Tzaraas. We are doing something wrong and G-d sends us messages that we should improve our ways. First, it starts with our houses, then it gets a little closer to home, it attacks our clothing. If we still do not get the message, then it comes to the person's body. However, this is not a punishment - it is a message.

Whenever a person must go through these types of troubles, he needs to think: The Almighty wants me to improve, to get better.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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## Parshas Tazria-Metzorah: Holistic Healing By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (matzav.com)

Tzora'as, the main discussion of the portions of Tazria and Metzora is an affliction that discolors human skin, clothing, hair, beards and even homes. The laws of tzora'as are detailed, complex and intricate. There are Talmudic tractates that deal with the proper procedure for purification and a litany of laws that must be followed flawlessly. The ramifications of tzora'as have more than physiological implications, they have a great theological impact as well.

The discoloration of skin does not necessarily reflect a chemical impropriety or a nutritional deficiency. It is a heavenly sign of a spiritual flaw, primarily related to a deficient speech pattern. It is a disease that afflicts a gossip. The one in question must go to the kohen (priest) who instructs him in the proper procedure to rid himself of both the blemish and the improper behavior that caused its appearance. The Torah tells us that the fate of the stricken man is totally dependent upon the will of the kohen. The kohen is shown the negah (blemish) and has the power to declare it tamei (impure) or tahor (pure). In fact, even if all signs point to the declaration of impurity, if the kohen, for any reason deems the person tahor or refuses to declare him tamei, the man remains tahor. He is not tamei until openly and clearly labeled as such by the kohen.

Yet the verse seems a bit redundant. "And the kohen shall look at the negah affliction on the skin and behold it has changed to white and appears deeper than the skin of the flesh - it is a tzora'as and the kohen shall look at him and declare him tamei" (Leviticus 13:3). Why must the kohen look twice? The Torah should tell us that the kohen shall look at the negah, and if the affliction is white and appears deeper than the flesh of the skin, then the kohen shall declare him impure. What purpose is served by looking again?

Rabbi Abraham Twerski tells the story of a young man who came to the chief Rabbi of Vilna, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky with a request. As this young man's father was applying for a Rabbinical position in a town

that the sage was familiar with, he asked the rabbi for a letter of approbation on his father's behalf.

Rabbi Grodzinsky felt that the candidate was not worthy of the position, but instead of flatly refusing, he just said that he would rather not mix into the Rabbinical affairs of another city and was sure that the council of that city would make a fair and wise decision.

Rabbi Grodzinsky did not realize the tirade that would be forthcoming. The young man began to spew insults and aspersions at him. The sage, however, accepted them in silence. After a few minutes of hearing the abusive language, Rabbi Grodzinsky excused himself and left the room.

Students who witnessed the barrage were shocked at the young man's brazen audacity. They were even more surprised that the Rav did not silence the young man at the start of the barrage.

Rabbi Grodzinsky turned to them. "You cannot view that onslaught on its own. You must look at the bigger picture. This young man was defending the honor of his father, and in that vein I had to overlook his lapse."

The kohen who is instructed to deal with the stricken individual should not only look at the negah. He must look again. He must look at the man. Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of D'vinsk explains that even if the negah has all the attributes that should lead to a declaration of tumah, there are other factors that must be weighed. If the man is a groom, about to wed, impurity must not be declared. It will ruin the upcoming festivities. If there are other mitigating circumstances, then a declaration of contagion must be postponed.

Perhaps the Torah is telling us more. It is easy to look at a flaw and declare it as such. But one must look at the whole person. He must ask himself "how is my declaration going to affect the future of this person." He must consider the circumstances that caused the negah. He must look again - once at the negah - and once at the man.

There are those who interpret the adage in Pirkei Avos (Ethics of the Fathers), "judge all (of the) people in a good way," as do not look at a partial person: rather, judge all of the person — even a flaw may have a motivation or rationale behind it. The kohen may look at the negah, but before he pronounces tamei he must look again. He must look beyond the blemish. He must look at the man.

Matzav.com



### פרשת השבוע - פרשיות תרוע ומצורע

גליון זה קדוש כדון שאר דברי תורה המודפסים, נא לנהוג בו בקדושה ואחר מכן להניחו בגניזה

מאמרו של הגאון רבי זבדיה הכהן שליט"א, חבר בית הדין הרבני בתל אביב, עבור "הלכה יומית"

השבת, נקרא את הפרשיות העוסקות בסוגי הצרעת בגופו של האדם, שאת, ספחת, בהרת, נגעי הראש והזקן, צרעת הבגד וצרעת הבית. ודרשו רבותינו במדרש תנחומא, על הפסוק "זאת תהיה תורת המצורע", ללמדך, שהמספר לשון הרע נגעים באים עליו, 'ה מצורע', נטריקון, (כעין ראשי תיבות), "מוציא שם רע". ומסופר על רבי ינאי שהיה יושב בביתו ושמע רוכל שמכריז בקול רם, "מי רוצה לקנות סם חיים?" מיד עטו עליו כל מי ששמעו אותו, ורוצו לקנות סם שמאריך את החיים. יצא גם רבי ינאי בין כל האנשים, ובקש גם הוא לקנות מהרוכל סם חיים. הוציא הרוכל ספר תהילים, וקרא באזני כולם את פרק ל"ג: "מי האיש החפץ חיים אוהב ימים לראות טוב, נצור לשונך מרע ושפתיך מדבר מרמה, סור מרע ועשה טוב, בקש שלום ורדפו". הרי שהרוצה להאריך ימים ולקבל איכות חיים טובה, עליו לשמור פיו ולשונו משקר ומרמה, ומלשון הרע, ואז יזכה לאריכות ימים. וכבר אמרו בעלי החכמה, כל עוד שהאדם לא הוציא את המילה מפיו, הרי שהוא שולט על המילה, אבל מהרגע שהמילה יצאה מפיו של האדם,

כבר אין לו שליטה על המילה והיא שולטת עליו. ולכן כמה זהירות מוטלת עליו בטרם נוציא כל מילה של חולין מפיו, ובפרט לדבר על אדם אחר, כיון שאין לנו שום ביטוח מה יהיו התוצאות וההשלכות של דיבור זה

מסופר על רבן שמעון בן גמליאל, שאמר לעבדו, קנה לי את החלק הכי טוב שיש בבהמה. הלך העבד, וקנה לו לשון. לימים אמר לו, לך קנה לי את החלק הכי גרוש שיש בהמה, הלך העבד וקנה שוב לשון של בהמה. התפלא רבן שמעון בן גמליאל על עבדו ואמר, תחילתי! הלשון היא החלק הכי טוב או הכי גרוש? אמר לו העבד, הלשון, אם משתמשים בה לטובה בדברי תורה אמת ומוסר, הרי שהיא החלק הכי טוב, אבל אם משתמשים בה לדברים בטלים, שקר לשון הרע ורכילות, הרי שזהו החלק הכי גרוש שמוביל למחלוקת, סכסוכים, ואף לאבדון חיים. כך שלא לחינם אמר דוד המלך בתהילים, מי האיש החפץ חיים אוהב ימים לראות טוב, נצור לשונך מרע ושפתיך מדבר מרמה, סור מרע ועשה טוב בקש שלום ורדפו. דברים אלו לא נאמרו למליצה בלבד אלא ממש לחיי היום יום

שנינו בפרקי אבות "סייג לחכמה שתיקה", ואמר רבן גמליאל, כל ימי גדלתי בין חכמים, ולא מצאתי טוב לגוף אלא שתיקה. אשרי מי שישם דברים אלו בחייו הפרטיים, ולא ידבר שום מילה מיותרת שלא לצורך על חבירו, אשתו, או בניו, או שכניו, ועל כל אדם אחר, ואפילו לדבר דברים טובים על חבירו שלא לצורך לא ידבר, שהרי כבר אמרו חז"ל מתוך שבחו מגיע לגנותו, ובסוף נכשל בשקר בלשון הרע ורכילות, ומעשים בכל יום שמתחילים לדבר בשבחו של אדם, ובסוף מתוך שיחה יתירה מגיעים גם לדבר בגנותו

משל יפה הביאו בזה, על האריה מלך החיות שהיה רעב, וכמה ימים לא מצא לעצמו טרף, וריח רע כבר נדף מפיו, עד שהחליט לעשות מעשה, בדרוכו ליער, פגש חמור שמן ובריא, והחליט לטרפו, אך לא יכול היה סתם לטרפו ללא סיבה, התחכם האריה ופנה לחמור, אמור לי איזה ריח יש לי בפה? הריח החמור את פיו של האריה נרתע לאחוריו וקרא, איזה ריח רע יש למלך בפה!, כעס האריה מלך החיות ואמר היך מורד במלכות, ומבזה את המלך, אני גוזר את דיך למוות! ומיד טרף את החמור, והשביע בכך את רעבונו. לאחר כמה ימים שוב היה המלך רעב, ושוב יצא אל היער, ופגש שם צבי נחמד למראה וטוב למאכל, עצר אותו האריה ופנה אליו בשאלה, אמור לי איזה ריח יש לי בפה? הצבי, שכבר שמע את קורותיו של החמור מלפני כמה ימים, פחד על נפשו וידע שאם יאמר למלך את האמת הרי שהוא שם נפשו בכפו, לכן שיקר ואמר למלך איזה ריח טוב יש למלך בפיו, כעס המלך ואמר לצבי היך משקר למלך, שהרי פי מדיף ריח רע לכל עבר, וכולם חשים בכך, והרי המשקר למלך אחת דינו למיתה, ומיד הוציא את פסק דין המוות לביצוע מייד, וטרף את הצבי לארוחת הצהריים. עברו יומיים ושוב היה האריה מלך החיות רעב, ושוב יצא אל היער, למצוא טרף לנפשו, והפעם פגש את השועל, ובקש ממנו להריח את פיו ולדווח לו על התוצאות, השועל שהוא הפקח שבחיות, כבר שמע את מה שקרה לחמור ולצבי, וידע שכל מה שיאמר בין לטוב ובין לרע יהיה לו לרועץ, התחכם השועל ואמר למלך. אדוני המלך! כבר כמה ימים שיש לי שפעת, ואני מצונן, ואיני יכול להריח שום דבר, יסלח לי אדוני המלך על שאין ביכולתי לעשות את רצונו ואיני יכול להריח את פיו של המלך. שמע זאת המלך ועזבו לנפשו, וכך ניצל השועל הפקח ממלתעותיו של האריה הרעב

כך הנמשל, אדם המדבר לחינם ללא צורך על חבירו בין לטוב ובין לרע, הרי שבסופו של דבר יינזק ושום טובה לא תצא לו מזה, ולכן ישתדל כל אדם כשבאים לדבר אתו על אחרים, להיות תמיד 'מצונן', ולא לשמוע ולא לדבר על אחרים, בין לטוב ובין לרע, שהרי מוות וחיים ביד הלשון, והשומר פיו ולשונו שומר מצרות נפשו

שבת שלום

### [Rav Kook List]

#### Yom HaShoah: Nations Who Forget God Psalm 9: Nations Who Forget God

The Sages expressed mixed feelings towards the Persian people. On the one hand, Rabban Gamliel admired them for their modesty and refined manners. But the Talmud also quotes the opinion of Rav Yoseph, who condemned the Persians as a people "consecrated and destined for Gehinnom." Why such bitter words for a refined and cultured people?

Destined for Gehinnom

When we see a primitive people who rob and plunder, we attribute their actions to their savage and uncultured nature. But when dealing with a civilized nation, we expect that such a nation will recognize the value of just and equitable dealings.

When a highly developed society is gripped by a belligerent spirit of conquest and oppression, like the Persians who subjugated the Jewish communities under their control, then they are destined to be judged harshly by the Eternal Judge.

The expression "consecrated and destined for Gehinnom" indicates that this judgment is not due to a primitive nature, but rather the result of a willful choice. The cultured Persians should have chosen the path of goodness, but instead chose the path of violence and persecution.

#### Forgetting God

This idea may also be heard in King David's call for Divine justice against evil nations:

"The Eternal has made Himself known, executing judgment... The wicked will return to the grave - all nations who forget God." (Ps. 9:17-18)

This portrayal of "nations who forget God" indicates that in fact these nations ought to remember God. They have the potential and sophistication to know God and emulate His ways of kindness and justice. But instead they chose to pursue a path of moral treachery, so they are called "nations who forget God."

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I on Berachot 8b (1:111))

Comments and inquiries may be sent to: [mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com](mailto:mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com)

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### Haftorah Parshas Tazria & Metzora M'lochim II 7:3 by Rabbi Dovid Siegel

This week's haftorah tells us of the miraculous defeat of the camp of Aram. In the merit of King Yehoram's retraction from assassinating the Prophet Elisha, a prediction was made for an indescribable surplus of food during a most severe famine. Although the camp of Aram had laid a heavy siege against Israel, Hashem came to their rescue and produced deafening sounds which overtook the entire camp of Aram. Aram interpreted these sounds as coming from powerful armies who had come to the assistance of the Jewish people in their siege. Aram was so overtaken by this fear that they immediately abandoned their tents and fled for their lives, leaving behind all their provisions and possessions.

During this very same night four lepers decided to surrender to Aram in desperate hope of sparing their own lives. They were pleasantly surprised when they discovered a completely deserted camp, replete with all the needs for the famine-stricken Jewish nation. The lepers initially hoarded some of the loot but after brief consideration rushed over to the Jewish camp and informed them of their discovery. After a brief investigation of the authenticity of the story, the Jews ran to the scene and returned with an enormous surplus of food.

It is interesting to note that the heroes of this incident were lepers. The haftorah begins with, "And four men were lepers at the entrance of the city's gate." They were situated outside of the city's wall in fulfillment of the Torah's obligation of ostracizing lepers from their entire community. More interesting is our realization that this imposition became quite advantageous to them., Because they were outside of the city they had free access to the camp of Aram. This led to their attempted surrender which yielded their unbelievable findings. All of this ultimately brought the greatest benefits to the Jewish people. This chain of events seems to suggest that the punishment of leprosy can at times be a blessing. If one properly learns his lesson, his painful experience of leprosy can prove to be a real favor from Hashem, a blessing in disguise.

Our Chazal teach us that Hashem sends leprosy to one who is stingy with his possessions and greedy for money. The four lepers in our Haftorah had a previous record of seeking and obtaining possessions in most inappropriate ways. Rashi points out that they were the family of Gechazi who had previously misrepresented the prophet Elisha in pursuit of a

handsome reward. When the prophet discovered this atrocity he severely admonished his servant with strong words of rejection. After this family had been ostracized for some time they began realizing their fault and were open to rectifying it. Through Hashem's response in their darkest moment of despair they began appreciating kindness and the virtue of sharing. Their willingness to reconsider their ways resulted in a most unique opportunity to rescue the entire Jewish nation from starvation and death. They put their newly learned virtue to work and shared with everyone their unbelievable treasure. Yes, punishment is sent to us for the good and if we respond properly it can yield indescribable favor from Hashem.

This very same thought is found in today's Parsha regarding the appearance of a leprous spot on the wall of a home. The Torah says, "And I will give you a leprous spot in the house of your inherited land." (Vayikra 14:34) Our Chazal draw focus to the peculiar word, "give" rather than "send" which suggests that leprosy is some form of gift. They explain that in fact this leprous spot was a hidden blessing. Over the past forty years the Emorites buried treasures inside the walls of their homes. Knowing that the Jewish people were soon to occupy the land they permanently concealed their wealth to insure that the Jews never benefit from it. Chazal continue that Hashem sent this "gift" of leprosy to appear on the walls of these homes. During one of the purification stages the homes were torn down and a hidden treasures discovered.

This bizarre experience taught the leper a most meaningful lesson. As mentioned earlier one of the main causes of leprosy is stinginess. During the painful demolition of his contaminated home the leper began to realize and understand the extent of his inappropriate behavior. And in the midst of contemplating and reconsidering his wrong doings a treasure suddenly appeared. Hashem reminded the leper that wealth truly comes from above and inspired him to graciously share this gift with everyone in need. Although initially the leprosy was punishment for his stingy and greedy behavior it actually became a blessing in disguise. Once the leper learned to appreciate and share Hashem's wealth with others, his punishment was transformed into a heaven-sent present. Through his leper spot, untold treasures were discovered and after properly learning his lesson the leper was eager to share his wealth with everyone he knew.

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#### Weekly Halachah

**Rabbi Doniel Neustadt** ([dneustadt@cordetroit.com](mailto:dneustadt@cordetroit.com))

**Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit**

#### Money Issues

Question: Is it an obligation to lend money to another Jew, or is it merely an optional act of chesed?

Discussion: The mitzvah of lending money to another Jew in need is a mitzvah chiyuv, an obligatory mitzvah, similar to any other mitzvah in the Torah. One who has money that he could lend, and refuses a direct request to lend another Jew money, transgresses the mitzvah of im kesef talveh es ami, which Chazal interpret as an obligation on the lender.1

One is exempt from the obligation to lend money only when the lender truly believes that he will not be repaid, either because he does not trust the borrower to pay back or because he does not believe it possible that the borrower will have the means with which to pay him back. Still, if he could assure himself of repayment by obtaining collateral from the borrower, he is required to do so and may not refuse the latter's direct request for a loan.2

Question: If a lender feels that he cannot lend money to a potential borrower because he does not trust him, may he avoid insulting him by telling him that he has no funds available?

Discussion: In such a case, he may respond that he has no money to lend. The real meaning of his response is that he has no money to lend to him, which is a true statement and not considered a lie at all.

The same holds true when someone that you do not trust asks to borrow a car or any other item that you do not want to lend to him. You may say that the car is not available or you may use any other excuse which will not offend the person asking for the item.<sup>3</sup>

Question: Is it permitted to pressure another person to sell you an item of his that you desire, but that he is not interested in selling?

Discussion: No. The tenth Commandment, Lo Sachmod, “You shall not covet... anything that belongs to your fellow,”<sup>4</sup> forbids pressuring or even coaxing a fellow Jew to sell an item belonging to him, even if the buyer is willing to pay whatever price the owner stipulates.<sup>5</sup> Should the owner relent under pressure and agree to sell the item, it is forbidden for the buyer to consummate the purchase.<sup>6</sup>

It is only forbidden, however, to exert pressure on the owner; it is permitted to ask once or twice<sup>7</sup> if he would consider selling the item for a certain price. But a dignitary, e.g., a rav or a rosh yeshivah, is forbidden even to ask — if there is a chance that the owner will agree only because he is embarrassed to refuse the request of such an important person.<sup>8</sup>

Question: In which other situations does Lo Sachmod apply?

Discussion: Lo Sachmod also applies when one pressures a fellow Jew<sup>9</sup> to:  
\* sell him an item which he will use for a mitzvah, e.g., an esrog or a menorah.<sup>10</sup>

\* rent or lend him an item.<sup>11</sup>

\* give him a gift or reward.<sup>12</sup> Thus, it is strictly forbidden for a groom to pressure his future father-in-law to give him a car or any other additional item that was not agreed upon at the time that the match was finalized.<sup>13</sup>

\* exchange one item for another, even for one of lesser value.<sup>14</sup>

Lo Sachmod applies only to another person’s property or items. There is no prohibition against pressuring someone to teach him Torah or a secular subject,<sup>15</sup> to give him charity or do him a favor, or to marry his son or daughter.<sup>16</sup>

It is questionable whether or not Lo Sachmod applies to one who pressures his partner to buy him out.<sup>17</sup> A rav should be consulted.

Question: Does Lo Sachmod apply when one pressures another to buy something that he does not want to purchase?

Discussion: The poskim debate whether or not pressuring another person to purchase something that he clearly does not want, by giving him an overly aggressive sales pitch, for example, is a violation of Lo Sachmod. Some poskim hold that the Torah prohibits coveting any item or object that belongs to someone else, including his money.<sup>18</sup> Pressuring him to purchase something that he clearly does not need or want, but that he purchases only because he is embarrassed to decline or is unable to resist the pressure, is a transgression of Lo Sachmod of another person’s money. Other poskim, however, maintain that Lo Sachmod applies only to coveting a specific piece of another person’s property or rare item that is not readily obtainable. It does not apply to someone else’s commonplace item or to his money.<sup>19</sup> As we are dealing here with a possible Biblical prohibition, one should be stringent and avoid any situation which could be a transgression of Lo Sachmod.<sup>20</sup>

Question: If a boy or girl under bar/bas mitzvah age damages another person’s property, is he or she obligated to make up the loss?

Discussion: According to the strict letter of the law, a minor is not responsible for his actions and is not required to pay for any damage that he caused. The same holds true for a minor who stole — he is not required to repay the money or replace the stolen object (if the stolen object is no longer around). The parents, too, are halachically exempt from paying for damage or theft by their minor children. Still, the poskim recommend <sup>21</sup> that upon reaching adulthood, a person should compensate for any damage or theft he was responsible for when he was a minor.<sup>22</sup>

1 Ahavas Chesed, Halva’ah 1:1.  
2 Ahavas Chesed, Halva’ah 1:8 and Nesiv ha-Chesed 13.  
3 See Shalmei Moed, pg. 537, quoting Rav Y. Y. Kanievsky and Rav S.Z. Auerbach. See also Titen Emes l’Yaakov 5:15 for several sources for this ruling.  
4 Shemos 20:14.

5 It is questionable, however, if Lo Sachmod applies when the buyer raises his bid each time he pressures the seller; see Halichos Chayim, vol. 2, pg. 168, quoting Rav C. Kanievsky. For a clarification of this issue, see Toras ha-Adam l’Adam, vol. 3, pg. 109.

6 C.M. 359:10. According to Teshuvos Sha’arei De’ah 1:149, it is questionable if the owner, too, is permitted to go through with the sale, since he will be causing the buyer to violate a Biblical prohibition. See, however, Shevet ha-Kehasi 3:329, who permits it.

7 But asking three times is considered exerting pressure and is forbidden; B’tzeil ha-Chochmah 3:43 (and hashmatos). If, however, a change in the owner’s situation indicates that he would reconsider, he may be approached again; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Mamon Yisrael, pg. 75).

8 Rabbeinu Yonah, Sha’arei Teshuvah 3:43.

9 If the item belongs to a non Jew or to a non-Jewish partner, Lo Sachmod does not apply; see Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav, O.C. 440, Kuntress Acharon 11 and Pischei Choshen, Geneivah 1, note 28.

10 B’tzeil ha-Chochmah 3:43.

11 See Sedi Chemed (Kelalim, Lamed 130, s.v. v’chideish) and Sefas Emes (Likutei Sefas Emes 17) who debate this issue. Rav C. Kanievsky is quoted (Toras ha-Adam l’Adam, vol. 3, pg. 118) as ruling stringently.

12 R. Yonah, Sha’arei Teshuvah 3:43; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Mamon Yisrael, pg. 73). See Teshuvos Eretz Tzvi 3:6 and Shevet ha-Kehasi 1:379.

13 Chafetz Chayim, Sefer ha-Mitzvos, Lo Sa’aseh 40. See Even Yisrael 8:105.

14 Rambam, Sefer ha-Mitzvos, Lo Sa’aseh 266 and Chinuch 416.

15 Aruch ha-Shulchan, C.M. 359:10.

16 Aruch ha-Shulchan, C.M. 359:11.

17 See B’tzeil ha-Chochmah 3:47 and Toras ha-Adam l’Adam, vol. 3, pg. 108, who debate this issue.

18 Pischei Choshen, Geneivah 1, note 26. See explanation in Toras ha-Adam l’Adam, vol. 3, pgs. 103-104.

19 Eretz Tzvi 4, quoting Rav A.M. Alter of Ger. See explanation in Imrei Yaakov on Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav, Geneivah 5.

20 Rav C. Kanievsky, quoted in Toras ha-Adam l’Adam, vol. 3, pg. 104.

21 Lifnim mishuras ha-din.

22 Entire Discussion based on ruling of Mishnah Berurah 343:9. See Pischei Teshuvah, C.M. 349:1.

**Let’s Talk Turkey – ...and Prairie Chicken and Muscovy Duck.  
By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff (ymkaganoff@012.net.il)**

Last week I presented two questions that I did not answer:

Question #1: “While camping in Western Canada, we saw thousands of wild, roaming birds called “prairie chicken.” They were clearly different from the familiar, common chicken, but appeared so similar that I was tempted to bring one to a shocheit to prepare for us. Halachically, could I have done this?”

Question #2: “Someone told me that a variety of duck, called the Muscovy duck, is raised in Israel for its kosher meat and liver although the American rabbonim prohibit eating this bird. How could this be?”

Last week’s discussion prompts us to ask the following:

Question #3: According to the popular story or legend, Benjamin Franklin advocated that the United States choose the turkey, which is also native American, as its national bird, rather than the bald eagle. He preferred the turkey’s midos and felt that it better reflects American values. However, if turkey is indeed indigenous only to North America, how can it have a Jewish tradition that it is kosher?

**IDENTIFYING AS KOSHER**

We learned last week that whereas the Torah identified kosher animal and fish through specific attributes called simanim, it specifically listed the bird species that are non-kosher, implying that all other birds are kosher. Indeed, the Gemara records that someone familiar with all the avian non-kosher varieties may identify all other fowl, even those unfamiliar to him, as kosher, and teach this to others. Since it is not always practical to find someone familiar with all 24 varieties of non-kosher birds, the Mishnah provided four simanim. A bird with all four simanim is definitely kosher,

whereas one with some of these simanim may or may not be kosher. Any bird without any of the simanim is certainly non-kosher.

#### WHAT ARE THE FOUR SIMANIM?

The Mishnah reports that any bird that is doreis is not kosher. There are several different ways to explain the meaning of the word doreis, most meaning that the bird uses its claws in a distinctive way when it preys or eats. The other three simanim describe physical characteristics of the bird, not feeding habits. They are:

- (1) The bird has a crop, an expandable food pouch for storing undigested food.
- (2) The inner lining of its gizzard (the pupek) can be peeled.
- (3) It possesses an "extra claw," a term that is interpreted by different Rishonim in diverse ways.

#### SIGNS OF DOREIS

We find three distinctive features that demonstrate whether a bird is doreis. The first, recorded by the Mishnah, is that any bird that when sitting on a rope or stick, places two of its claws on one side of the rope or stick, and the other two on the opposite side, is definitely doreis and non-kosher. The second is that a bird that swallows its food in mid-flight is not kosher (Chullin 65a). The third is that any bird that has webbed feet and a wide beak is certainly not doreis (Baal HaMaor). Since this information will become significant as we proceed, allow me to explain these avian characteristics.

#### SEPARATES ITS CLAWS

The Mishnah teaches, "Rabbi Elazar the son of Rabbi Tzadok says, 'Any bird that separates its legs is non-kosher'" (Chullin 59a). The Gemara explains that you stretch a length of rope for the bird to walk or rest on: A bird that places two claws of its leg on one side of the rope and two on the opposite side is non-kosher because this indicates that it is doreis. If it places three claws on one side of the rope and one on the other, it is probably kosher (Chullin 65a).

The morning I wrote these words, I visited someone who owns a pet cockatiel, a small Australian parrot, and noted that the bird clenched the sticks it stood on in the classic doreis position of two claws fore and two aft. I found this surprising since the cockatiel's diet of seeds combined with its owner's observations of its docile behavior make it difficult to imagine that this bird is doreis. However, one could explain this Mishnah in the following fashion:

The Mishnah does not clarify how often a bird needs to be doreis to be non-kosher. The Gemara describes a variety of bird called a "marsh chicken" that was assumed to be kosher until the Amora, Mareimar, noticed it being doreis (Chullin 62b). Rashi notes that we could observe a bird for quite some time without seeing it doreis and only catch it being dories after a while! Thus indeed, the marsh chicken was non-kosher the entire time although they did not know. For this reason, Rashi concludes that we do not rely on our observation that a bird is not doreis; instead, we do not consume fowl unless we have a mesorah that this variety does not doreis.

Thus, one approach to explain why the cockatiel spreads its foot across a rope or branch non-kosher style is that although the cockatiel is doreis, it does this so rarely that we may never notice.

#### WEBBED FEET

As I mentioned earlier, many Rishonim cite a tradition that a bird with webbed feet and/or a wide beak is definitely not doreis. Following this approach, someone discovering a bird that possesses all of the following body simanim: it has a crop, a gizzard that can be peeled, an "extra claw," webbed feet, and a wide beak, can assume that this bird is kosher.

It is noteworthy that while many early authorities quote Rashi's opinion that we do not rely on our observation to determine that a bird is not doreis, they also quote the tradition that a bird with webbed feet and a wide

beak is not doreis (Rosh, Chullin 3:59 and 60; Issur VaHeter 56:18; Shulchan Aruch 82:2, 3). Obviously, they understood that a bird possessing webbed feet and a wide beak has a mesorah that it is not doreis, and is kosher if it has the other body simanim -- even though no one recalls a specific mesorah on this bird. In other words, Rashi did not declare that no birds can be eaten without a mesorah -- he only contended that we do not rely on our observation that a bird is not doreis. This is indeed the Shulchan Aruch's ruling on this subject, as well as many later halachic authorities, both Ashkenazic and Sefardic (Yam shel Shelomoh; Pri Chodosh; Pleisi, Kuntros Pnei Neshet, located after his commentary to Yoreh Deah 82; Shu"t Sho'eil Umeishiv 5:1:69).

#### MESORAH IS ABSOLUTE

I am unaware of any authority who disagrees with the above conclusion prior to the time of the Rama (Yoreh Deah 82:3). The Rama, however, records an accepted minhag prohibiting consumption of any bird without a known mesorah that it is kosher. Most authorities assume that as a result of this ruling Ashkenazim do not consume any fowl lacking a known mesorah to be kosher, although some contend that no such minhag exists (Yam shel Shelomoh, Chullin 3:115; Pleisi; Shu"t Sho'eil Umeishiv 5:1:69). (It should be noted that the Taz cites Rashi as the source for the Rama's minhag. Although the obvious interpretation of the Taz's comment is that he feels that Rashi rejects the approach that webbed feet and wide beak are valid proof that the bird is not doreis [Minchas Yitzchak 2:85], his comments can be interpreted in a different way.)

#### MUSCOVY DUCK AND THE CIVIL WAR

By definition, a non-migratory bird native to the Americas, Australia, or New Zealand cannot have an ancient mesorah ascertaining that it is a kosher species since no one resides there who could possess such a mesorah. Does this mean that according to the Rama, any bird native to the Americas cannot be eaten? Some poskim indeed held this position regarding the Muscovy duck, a bird that, notwithstanding its name, is a Mexican native. (No one is certain why this duck is named after frigid Moscow, when it is indigenous to a much warmer climate.)

A rav in Civil War era New Orleans, Rabbi Yissachar Dov Illowy, who was extensively involved in kiruv rechokim over a hundred years before the field became popular, discovered that members of his community were raising this duck for food and that the local shochatim were shechting it. Rav Illowy notes that the Muscovy appears to have all the simanim of any common duck, including the webbed feet and wide beak that indicate it is not doreis. Nevertheless, he maintained that since this bird has no mesorah, it cannot be eaten as kosher. He then sent the shaylah to Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch and to Rav Nosson Adler, both of whom agreed with Rav Illowy's decision.

Notwithstanding this psak, the Muscovy apparently became a popular food in many kosher communities, both in the Union and the Confederacy, and eventually in Europe also. Later its liver became popular when prepared as foie gras, a delicacy once made exclusively from goose liver. (Nowadays foie gras is commonly produced from the liver of the mullard, a crossbreed of the Muscovy with the pekin, an established kosher variety of duck.) Indeed several prominent later authorities, including the Netziv, Rav Shmuel Salant, and Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank ruled that the Muscovy duck is indeed kosher since observant Jews had been consuming it (Shu"t Har Tzvi, Yoreh Deah #75). How could they permit a bird that clearly has no mesorah?

The Netziv ruled that, since observant Jews were already consuming Muscovy, they can be considered kosher for three reasons:

1. They are fairly similar to varieties of duck that possess a mesorah that they are kosher and could perhaps be considered the same min as far as halacha is concerned. One should note that the halachic definition of a min is highly unclear, although one matter is certain: It has little relationship to any scientific definition of what is considered a species.
2. They will freely breed in the wild with varieties known to be kosher ducks, even when other Muscovies are readily available. This factor is

significant because the Gemara rules that two species, one kosher and the other non-kosher, will not reproduce together (Bechoros 7a). Although there is debate over whether this rule applies also to birds or only to land animals, several authorities contend that it also applies to birds (Shu"t Chasam Sofer, Yoreh Deah #74; Shu"t Avnei Nezer, Yoreh Deah #75:4 and many others). According to this approach, since a Muscovy readily mates with varieties of known kosher duck, one may assume it to be kosher.

3. The Rama's minhag prohibiting consumption of fowl without a mesorah applies only to a newly discovered bird and not to a variety that observant Jews are already eating (Shu"t Meishiv Davar 2:22).

#### ANOTHER NATIVE AMERICAN

Of course, this leads to our discussion of the turkey, also a native American that appears to have found its way to the Jewish pot since its introduction to Europe in the Sixteenth Century. The Kenesses HaGedolah, authored in the Seventeenth Century, is the earliest source I found discussing the kashrus of the turkey, and it is apparent from his comments that Jews were already eating it. Although one would imagine much discussion on the kashrus issues of this bird, every other teshuvah I have seen discusses not whether the turkey is kosher, but why, and each is written hundreds of years after turkey consumption became commonplace in the kosher world.

For those who question whether the turkey was commonly eaten in this earlier era, I refer them to the comments of the Magen Avraham (79:14), who assumes that a passing reference to a "red chicken" by the Shulchan Aruch refers to the turkey, providing us with fairly clear evidence that in his day the turkey was commonly found in Jewish domiciles. The Magen Avraham makes no reference to any controversy regarding the kashrus of this bird, which was already a well established member of Jewish households.

#### TURKEY VS. DUCK

From a strictly anatomical perspective, the Muscovy duck can rally better proof to its kosher status than can a turkey. Whereas the Muscovy duck needs to contend only with the ruling of the Rama that it bears no mesorah, it certainly has the wide beak and webbed feet that the Rishonim accept as proof that it is not doreis. Thus, according to all authorities prior to the Rama, one could consume Muscovy based on its possessing kosher simanim. Rav Hirsch and the others who prohibit it did so because they accepted the minhag recorded by Rama not to rely on simanim.

On the other hand, the turkey is faced with more of an uphill battle anatomically.

It does not have webbed feet or a wide beak – thus, to permit it because of simanim we must ascertain that it is not doreis -- and Rashi rules that we do not rely on observation to determine that a bird is not doreis. Yet, the common practice of hundreds of years is to consider it kosher!

#### TALKING TURKEY

I have seen numerous attempts to explain why indeed we consume turkey, of which I will share only some. Many authorities thought that the turkey had a mesorah from India as a kosher bird (see Kenesses HaGedolah 82:31 and several others quoted by Darchei Teshuvah 82:26). Of course, this was based on a factual error -- the Yiddish and Modern Hebrew name for turkey is "Indian chicken," and it is so named in many other languages, based on the same confusion that resulted in the islands of the Caribbean being called the "West Indies." Notwithstanding that these names merely reflect Columbus's impression that he had discovered an area near India, the confusion led some to conclude that the Indian Jews possess an ancient mesorah that the turkey is kosher.

Others contend that the practice of eating turkey predates the Rama's ruling that we consume only birds that have a mesorah. Thus, one could say that it was grandfathered into kosher cuisine.

Still others contend that although we usually do not rely on our observation that a bird is not doreis, since thousands of Jews have raised turkeys and

never seen them doreis, we can be absolutely certain that they do not and we can therefore assume them to be kosher because of simanim (Darchei Teshuvah 82:26 quoting Arugos HaBosem).

A different approach is that although the Rama required mesorah to permit the consumption of fowl, once observant Jews have accepted to eat a certain variety of bird, one may continue this practice (if it is not definitely non-kosher). Once Klal Yisroel has accepted a bird that appears to be kosher, we assume that it is kosher even if we do not, and cannot, have a mesorah on its kashrus (see Taz 82:4). The Netziv justifies the consumption of the Muscovy duck because of the fact that turkey is accepted to be kosher even though it has no mesorah either!

To answer our original questions, the Muscovy duck has not escaped contemporary controversy, some rabbonim and hechsherim, particularly in Eretz Yisroel, permitting it; others forbidding; while still others will consider it kosher but not mehadrin. I have been told that the North American hechsherim do not treat it as kosher.

Regarding the prairie chicken, it is assumed to be non-kosher, or more accurately, without either mesorah or acceptance that it is kosher, and therefore I am unaware of anywhere that it is slaughtered as a kosher bird.

#### TURKEY VS. EAGLE

Did Benjamin Franklin really want the turkey to be the symbol of the United States of America?

In a letter to his daughter, Ben wrote:

"For my own part I wish the eagle had not been chosen the representative of our country. He is a bird of bad moral character. He does not get his living honestly... He is therefore by no means a proper emblem for the brave and honest... The turkey is in comparison a much more respectable bird, and withal a true original native of America... He is... a bird of courage and would not hesitate to attack a grenadier of the British Guards who should presume to invade his farm yard with a red coat."

To reinforce good old Ben's argument, we note that whereas the turkey seems to have all four simanim of a kosher bird, the eagle has none (according to Rashi's opinion). The Ramban explains that the Torah forbade the non-kosher birds because the Torah wants us to avoid the bad midos that they exhibit. One could assume that the kosher species may exhibit admirable traits that the Torah wants us to emulate. Certainly, the courage to observe mitzvos in times of adversity is a virtue worth emulating that we should contemplate the next time we eat turkey.

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#### Ohr Somayach :: TalmuDigest :: Sanhedrin 65 - 71

For the week ending 17 April 2010 / 2 Iyyar 5770

by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

#### The Unlearned Lesson •Sanhedrin 71a

A rebellious youngster who showed a strong tendency towards crime by repeatedly stealing money from his father in order to gluttonously consume meat and wine is put to death as a preemptive measure to ensure that he will not end up as a murderer.

Rabbi Shimon's position is that the implementation of this Torah law never took place. This thirteen-year-old must be brought to the court by his father and mother for first disciplining him with lashes, and upon his subsequent regression bring him once again for execution. It is therefore unlikely that parents will initiate his execution for the crime of stealing from them to indulge himself. Then why did the Torah provide us with a purely theoretical chapter such as this?

The cryptic answer given is "in order to learn from this and be rewarded." Maharsha explains that the boy's parents are not capable of appreciating a preemptive death for their son and will delude themselves that he will change his ways. The Torah therefore teaches them that he will inevitably degenerate into a murderer and is deserving of death. This will motivate the parents to discipline this errant child and they will be rewarded for properly training him.

"In our day," added Maharsha centuries ago, "parents pay no attention to this lesson and cover up for their child even when he deserves severe punishment, with the result that delinquent youngsters spend most of their days devoid of Torah."

**What the Sages Say**

"The tree from which Adam sinfully ate was a grapevine because nothing brings so much weeping to the world as does the consumption of wine."

•Rabbi Meir - Sanhedrin 70a

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Please address all comments and requests to Hamelaket@Gmail.com