

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT TAZRIA-METZORA · 1 IYAR 5766 · APR. 29, 2006 · VOL. 13 NO. 27

PARSHA INSIGHTS

LETTING IN THE LIGHT

“If a tzara’at affliction will be in a person...” (13:9)

The business of living in this world is about being able to see through the physical to the spiritual.

In this week’s parsha, we learn of the spiritual afflictions of *tzara’at* and *nega*. These appeared on the skin of a person. In Hebrew, the word “skin,” *ohr*, if written with an *aleph* instead of an *ayin* means “light.” These two words are pronounced almost identically. In other words, the “skin” of the world, the way the world looks from the outside, is that it seems as though things just run by themselves devoid of an Unseen Hand. The “skin” of the world obstructs the Light. Nature is like a skin that obstructs the perception that everything in the world is miraculous, that everything is a manifestation of the Light.

Every week, we are afforded an opportunity to make the “skin of the world” transparent, to see beyond to that Light. This opportunity is called Shabbat. G-d called Shabbat “pleasure”. The pleasure of Shabbat is not just

delicious food such as *cholent*. The real pleasure of Shabbat is the opportunity to re-orient our world-view, to see the Light.

Some of the causes of a *nega* and of *tzara’at* were selfishness, stinginess and speaking negatively about others. When a person feels that others have things they

don’t deserve, it leads to ‘nega-tivity’ (Pun fully intended!). Selfishness and speaking slander reveal a lack of trust in G-d’s providential guidance. Shabbat reverses these flaws. Shabbat teaches us that G-d is running the world, and whatever I have is because He wants me to have it, and whatever I don’t have is because He doesn’t want me to have it.

If you take the spiritual affliction that manifests itself in the skin that is called *nega* and re-arrange the letters, you can form the word *oneg*, meaning, “pleasure.” By re-arranging our view of the world, we can turn *nega* into the *oneg* of

experiencing the Light.

Similarly, if you rearrange the letters of *tzara’at*, you can form the word *Atzeret*, another name for Yom Tov, the holy festivals of the Jewish People, which afford yet another unique glimpse of the Light.

By re-arranging our view of the world, we can turn *nega* into the *oneg* of experiencing the Light.

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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 *kohen* diagnoses 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.

ISRAEL Forever

A CAUSE FOR JOY

“Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad with her, exult with her exultation all who mourned for her.” (Yeshayahu 66:10) This wonderful vision of the future will be heard this Shabbat when we read the special *haftarah* reserved for a “double header” of the Sabbath and Rosh Chodesh.

Our Talmudic Sages derive from the above passage the warning that only those who mourned for Jerusalem will be privileged to share in her joy.

The month of Iyar is also a period of mourning, not for

the destruction of Jerusalem but for the death of 24,000 disciples of Rabbi Akiva, which the Talmud describes as virtual world destruction. The restoration of the world was effected when Rabbi Akiva taught five new disciples who became the pillars of Torah study.

In our own times the Holocaust took a heavy toll of the *yeshivot* in Europe. The cause for joy for those who mourn that destruction is the proliferation of *yeshivot* in Israel and throughout the world whose powerful Torah study is the best guarantee of Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE SAGES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

“...ALL YOUR ACTIONS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO HEAVEN.”
— RABBI YOSHI (AVOS 2:12)

One should intend to be healthy and strong in order that he should have a spirit capable of knowing G-d, for it is impossible to understand wisdom if one is hungry or ill, or if one of his limbs aches. If he follows this course all his life he is constantly serving G-d, even in his business activities and his marital relations, for his motive is always to achieve the whole-



someness required to serve G-d. If he sleeps in order to rest his mind and body and so will avoid illnesses that prevent him from serving G-d, his sleep is also considered a positive act of service.

Solomon wisely put it: “Know Him in all your ways”.

• Rambam (*Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Dayot 3:3*)

PARSHA Q&A ?

Tazria

1. When does a woman who has given birth to a son go to the *mikveh*?
2. After a woman gives birth, she is required to offer two types of offerings. Which are they?
3. What animal does the woman offer as a *chatat*?
4. Which of these offerings makes her *tahor* (ritual purity)?
5. Which of the sacrifices does the woman offer first, the *olah* or the *chatat*?
6. Who determines whether a person is a *metzora tamei* (person with ritually impure *tzara'at*) or is *tahor*?
7. If the *kohen* sees that the *tzara'at* has spread after one week, how does he rule?
8. What disqualifies a *kohen* from being able to give a ruling in a case of *tzara'at*?
9. Why is the appearance of *tzara'at* on the tip of one of the 24 "limbs" that project from the body usually unable to be examined?
10. On which days is a *kohen* not permitted to give a ruling on *tzara'at*?

Metzora

1. When may a *metzora* not be pronounced *tahor*?
2. In the *midbar*, where did a *metzora* dwell while he was *tamei*?
3. Why does the *metzora* require birds in the purification process?
4. In the purification process of a *metzora*, what does the cedar wood symbolize?
5. During the purification process, the *metzora* is required to shave his hair. Which hair must he shave?
6. What is unique about the *chatat* and the *asham* offered by the *metzora*?
7. In the *Beit Hamikdash*, when the *metzora* was presented "before G-d" (14:11), where did he stand?
8. Where was the *asham* of the *metzora* slaughtered?
9. How was having *tzara'at* in one's house sometimes advantageous?
10. When a house is suspected as having *tzara'at*, what is its status prior to the inspection by a *kohen*?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

Tazria

1. 12:2 - At the end of seven days.
2. 12:6 - An *olah* and a *chatat*.
3. 12:6 - A *tor* (turtle dove) or a *ben yona* (young pigeon).
4. 12:7 - The *chatat*.
5. 12:8 - The *chatat*.
6. 13:2 - A *kohen*.
7. 13:5 - The person is *tamei*.
8. 13:12 - Poor vision.
9. 13:14 - The *tzara'at* as a whole must be seen at one time. Since these parts are angular, they cannot be seen at one time.
10. 13:14 - During the festivals; and ruling on a groom during the seven days of feasting after the marriage.

Metzora

1. 14:2 - At night.

2. 14:3 - Outside the three camps.
3. 14:4 - *Tzara'at* comes as a punishment for *lashon hara*. Therefore, the Torah requires the *metzora* to offer birds, who chatter constantly, to atone for his sin of chattering.
4. 14:4 - The cedar is a lofty tree. It alludes to the fact that *tzara'at* comes as a punishment for haughtiness.
5. 14:9 - Any visible collection of hair on the body.
6. 14:10 - They require *n'sachim* (drink offerings).
7. 14:11 - At the gate of Nikanor.
8. 14:13 - On the northern side of the *mizbe'ach*.
9. 14:34 - The Amorites concealed treasures in the walls of their houses. After the conquest of the Land, *tzara'at* would afflict these houses. The Jewish owner would tear down the house and find the treasures.
10. 14:36 - It is *tahor*.

- When the weekday meal extends into Shabbat
- Covering the loaves and making *kiddush*
- The need to follow *kiddush* with a meal at the same place
- Whether changing the place of eating or drinking necessitates making a new blessing
- When two blessings can be made on the same cup of wine
- Text of *havdalah* when holiday follows Shabbat
- Order of blessings in regular *havdalah*
- Why we make a blessing on the wine used for *birkat hamazon* aside from the one we already made
- The candle used for *havdalah*
- The “son of saints” and how many “separations” are mentioned in *havdalah*
- The effect of Shabbat on the preceding meal and on *ma’aser* (tithing)
- Making up for *kiddush* and *havdalah* not made in time
- Eating and drinking before *havdalah*
- Rules regarding the cup of wine used for *birkat hamazon*
- *Kiddush* at night and in the day (the “great *kiddush*”)
- *Kiddush* on wine or bread
- If eating before *havdalah* rules out making it afterwards

ALL THE DIFFERENCES IN THE WORLD

H*avdalah*, that special praise to G-d which a Jew says in his prayers and repeats over a cup of wine at the conclusion of Shabbat, is based on our Sages’ interpretation of the Torah command to “Remember Shabbat to sanctify it” as requiring us to declare the holiness of the day with *kiddush* at the beginning and *havdalah* at its end.

The essence of this praise is a declaration of the separation that G-d made between Shabbat and the weekdays, and we do this by listing three classical separations. First and most important is the “separation between the sacred and the secular” which is reiterated at the conclusion of the blessing as “between the seventh day and the six days of labor” and focuses on the difference between Shabbat and the weekdays. The

other two separations mentioned are those “between light and darkness” and “between Israel and the nations”.

There were Talmudic Sages who expanded the number of separations to seven. They added the separations “between pure and impure”, “between the waters above and the waters below” (at the time of Creation), “between the *kohanim* and the Levites” and “between the Levites and the Israelites”.

As regards the text of the conclusion, there was a minority opinion that it should praise G-d as “the Sanctifier of Israel”. This was rejected, however, in favor of “Who separates between the sacred and the secular” which is a reaffirmation of the separation mentioned at the outset as the essence of this declaration.

• *Pesachim 104a*

WHAT THE Sages SAY

“The first three days of the week are considered as being *after* the Shabbat before them, while the last three are considered as being *before* the Shabbat following them. This allows one who did not make *havdalah* on *Motzei Shabbat* to still make it during the first three days following.”

• *Rabbi Zeira - Pesachim 106a*

CANNABIS-ING THE GRASSROOTS

From: Several Readers

Several readers collectively raised many comments/objections regarding our recent article entitled "Merry Wanna?" I would like to present this canvass of opinion below, together with my responses.

Dear Readers,

Some commented that cigarette smoking is also addictive and should be prohibited for the reasons given regarding marijuana.

Response: While cigarette smoking is addictive, and some of the reasons may apply, such as it being unhealthy and might distress parents, these considerations are generally less severe than with marijuana. The other reasons such as leading one to felonies and reducing one's ability to learn Torah and perform *mitzvot* don't seem to apply at all.

Others countered that according to the reasons against marijuana, cigarette smoking should be prohibited because it endangers health. If so, they questioned, why do so many observant people smoke? A similar point was raised regarding the social drinking of alcohol or the lack of exercise and healthy diet that is, according to these readers, common among the Orthodox.

Response: Just because religious people may or may not do something doesn't necessarily mean they're right. As the saying goes, "Don't judge Judaism according to the Jews". We certainly expect people to practice what they preach, but the reality is that people often fall short of the mark. We all have room to improve. Therefore, according to what I wrote in the article, cigarette smoking, and even casual drinking of alcohol not in the context of a *mitzvah*, should be avoided. Similarly, in the past we have written about the importance of exercise and maintaining a healthy diet.

Some readers raised the point that marijuana should be forbidden on the grounds that it is illegal. On the other hand, some posited that since it is legal in some places, our attitudes towards it are cultural and subjective. Therefore, positing that it is prohibited according to the Torah appears arbitrary.

Response: The first point is true; in addition to the reasons stated in our article, a Jew may not transgress the law of the land. Therefore, the use of an illegal drug involves an additional Torah prohibition of transgressing the law of the land. On the other hand, a country whose legal system permits it doesn't mean it's permitted for a Jew. The Torah law has to be abided by, even if it seems impertinent in context, or even if it's permitted by society at large. This applies to all the laws of the Torah.

One reader asked whether marijuana might be permitted as a pain-killer.

Response: The use of marijuana in medical treatment and pain relief is an exception beyond the scope of our article, and what we wrote does not necessarily apply to such a case. It would appear that this would have to be addressed on an individual basis, and there might be reason to permit it, as in the use of morphine, etc.

One reader objected to our use of the case of the rebellious son, considering it extreme and creating too harsh a tone for the modern person, and particularly for today's youth who are accustomed to using drugs and don't see anything wrong with it. Similarly, he found our tone "dogmatic, insensitive, depressing and punitive". While he may have agreed in general about the prohibition, he claimed that the way the subject was presented was not conducive to *kiruv*.

Response: Admittedly, the reference to the rebellious son seems severe, and that law itself was perhaps never even realized. Still, the idea was just to set a precedent for the severity with which the Torah views addictions that might bring one to crimes such as theft and murder, which are all too often connected with drugs. Certainly, while actually working with youth involved with drugs, one must be original, creative, sensitive, positive and encouraging. However, the point of the article was not to treat addicted youth but to put forth a brief educational summary of the Torah's attitude toward drug use in general, and marijuana in particular, to the general public, which is one not primarily of drug users. Those who are users and take issue with what we wrote are kindly requested to contact their local *kiruv* rabbi.

One person, who identified himself as a rabbi, argued that our reasons for prohibiting are not conclusive, and that occasional use, without telling parents, obtained from a safe source, for the purpose of relaxing should be fine. And in fact, he claimed, many *tzaddikim* throughout history did so.

Response: 1] The overwhelming majority of occasional users eventually use more drugs more often. 2] Is it appropriate for leaders to encourage youth to do such things and hide them from mom and dad? 3] At some point in the chain, a safe source is in contact with the drug culture. Shall we encourage one Jewish child or person's relaxation to the detriment of his friend? 4] The person offered no support for his outlandish claim that many *tzaddikim* have smoked marijuana throughout history.

One modern commentator suggested that one of the ingredients of the anointing oil listed in the Torah, "*kaneh bosem*" which literally means "fragrant reed", was cannabis. As far as I know, this idea is purely conjecture based on the reference to fragrance, and the purported phonetic similarity between otherwise different languages, i.e. "*kaneh bosem*" = cannabis. While this may be possible, it is only one opinion, is inconclusive and is not, as far as I know, based on traditional sources. In any case, "*kaneh bosem*" was only one ingredient mixed into oil and anointed. It was not in the incense, nor is there any mention of it being smoked.

THOSE DISTURBING MACHINES

Question: At the entrance to the synagogue in which I pray on weekdays there is a big sign urging people to turn off their cellular phones before entering. Although most of the worshippers respect this request, there are some individuals who ignore it and their cellular phones sometimes go off in the middle of the *amidah*! What is the right thing to do to remedy the situation?

Answer: The *halacha* clearly states that talking in the midst of the chazan's repetition of the *amidah* service is a grave, unforgivable sin, and those who do so should be rebuked. (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 124:7*).

This warning can certainly be applied to one who allows

his talking machine to disturb the worshippers in their silent prayers by sounding off with its musical greeting!

As we pointed out in an earlier article regarding cellular phones going off in the middle of a lecture, we must try to favorably judge one whose phone rings at an inappropriate time by attributing this to some accident or forgetfulness. But if this happens more than once the offender needs and deserves a strong rebuke from the other worshippers.

While we are on the subject, don't forget that talking during the repetition of the *amidah* service and during the reading of the Torah must also be discouraged in the strongest fashion.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

HAVING AN IMPACT

“We desperately need a kidney donor!” This was what the director of “Chai Lifeline” in New York, Rabbi Sholom Meir, heard from a rather exciting caller. He explained that although his organization dealt with a wide variety of medical and social services in the Jewish community, it did not deal with transplant candidates.

After repeated calls from the same party pointing out the urgency of the situation, the rabbi suggested that he place an ad in the local Anglo-Jewish weeklies asking for

kidney donors. Of the dozen responses the most suitable candidate turned out to be a 60 year-old man. When asked what motivated him to make this offer, he gave the following explanation:

“I never succeeded in becoming a wealthy man and always felt sorry that I could not contribute enough to the various appeals for funds to have any real impact on the cause at hand. Now I feel that I can have a real impact on someone's life and after discussing it with my wife I decided to offer my kidney.”

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