



Parshas Tazria/Metzora

For the week ending 29 Nissan 5758 *6 Iyar outside Israel
24 & 25 April 1998 *1 & 2 May outside Israel

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

METZORA

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

Insights

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

“The kohen will look and behold — the blemish has not changed its color.” (Lit. “has not changed its eye”) (13:55)

Give me one word in English for the French word “*chic*.” *Chic* is something so quintessentially French that to translate it into English would require a truckload of adjectives.

The characteristics of a nation are evidenced in its language. In every language there are words which cannot be directly translated into any other tongue.

There's a word in Yiddish — to *fargin*. To *fargin* means to feel pleasure at someone else's success without the slightest twinge of jealousy.

Happiness depends on the way we look at life. We can see our glass as half empty or half full. It all depends on how you use your eyes.

In this week's *Parsha*, there is a lengthy description of a spiritual disease called *tzara'as*. One of the shortcomings which brought on this affliction was the failure to *fargin*, a narrowness of the eye, a constriction of the vision.

When a person focuses on reality in the correct fashion, he realizes that there is nothing in this world which is mere coincidence, there is no slapdash extemporizing.

For example, let's say my next door neighbor and I both buy lottery tickets. He buys ticket number 17756233/a/th/567 and I buy ticket number 17756233/a/th/568. Two weeks later, I wake up and hear him shouting at the top of his voice “I won ten million dollars! I won ten million dollars!”

If my eyes are focused on reality correctly, immediately I should feel tremendous happiness for him, because I had no chance of winning the lottery at all. Even though I had the next ticket, it could have been ticket number 00001 for all the difference it would have made.

Happiness is understanding that what Hashem decrees for someone is that person's, and always was his.

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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Parshas Tazria/Metzora — 29 Nissan 5758, 24 & 25 April 1998

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There's no "coming close" to what is allotted for someone else. To think otherwise is self-delusion. Realizing this is one of the secrets of happiness in this world.

Interestingly, the word in Hebrew for both the "affliction of *tzara'as*" and the word for "pleasure" are spelled with exactly the same letters: *nun, gimmel, ayin*. The affliction of *tzara'as* is called *nega*. Pleasure in Hebrew is *oneg*. The only difference between these two words is where you put the letter *ayin*. *Ayin* in Hebrew means "eye." If you put the *ayin* in the wrong place, you end up with a spiritual disease — a *nega*. If you put the *ayin* in the right place — if you put your eye in the right place — you have pleasure — *oneg*. The pleasure that comes from *farginning*. The pleasure that comes from looking at the world through the lens of reality.

WAR OF THE WORDS

"Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: This shall be the law of the Metzora" (14:1)

*Metzo-ra — 'Motzi-(shem)-ra' —
to speak evil of someone
Lit. "to bring out a bad name"*

On tortured steel wheels, the doors of the factory rolled back majestically. There in the steel gray light of dawn stood the machines. One behind the other in a long, long row whose vanishing point was somewhere in the middle of next week. They were dull blue and gray. Majestic and marvelous. All 248 of them. Machine after machine after machine.

The controller led his new employee down the central aisle. They passed them all in reverent silence. After what seemed like an eon, they arrived at the end. They stood together, right at the end of this vast array of industrial power — looking at it.

There it was. As different from the rest of the machines as Moby Dick from other whales. It was huge, awesome, alone and forbidding.

"This is it," said the controller. "This is the one. Without this machine, all the others are worth exactly ... nothing. Nothing at all. On this machine hangs life and death itself."

The tongue is the most powerful machine in the world. In that vast factory called Man, there are two hundred and forty eight machines — each part corresponding to a mitzvah. But the tongue has a power which is greater than them all.

One word can kill at distances beyond the range of the most powerful rocket. One word can cause a plague more noxious than anthrax. And yet, one word can heal with more power than open-heart surgery. One word can do more than the biggest, brightest bunch of flowers in the world.

The world was created with words: "In the beginning G-d created the Heavens and the Earth...." He created the whole of existence with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. And He gave over to man this incredibly powerful machine — the tongue. There is no animal in the world that can speak. They can make noises, it's true. But to date, no whale has published a book of poems.

Man alone in all of existence is the Speaker. He has been entrusted with a machine more powerful than the atom, and more dangerous. For with one word he can destroy worlds and with one word he can create them.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DADDY!

"A woman, when she will give birth..." (12:2)

When a firstborn child comes into this world, two creations take place: The child, and the parents. The three-way team of Hashem and the parents create the child, but the child also "creates" the parents. Up till now they were merely people. Now they are parents. The Midrash says if man is worthy "he precedes all of creation." How can man precede all creation if he was created last — on the sixth day?

In Jewish law, the father bequeaths to his firstborn a double portion. Why? Because it is this child who made his father into a father.

The Jewish People are called "*my son, my first born, Israel*" because it was the Jewish People who made Hashem, so to speak, into the Father of the world. For it is they who testify to His existence.

All Israel are Hashem's first born. If, by our actions, we make the name of Heaven dear in this world, if people look at us and see that there is a G-d who rules, then we are considered worthy. And then we "precede all Creation." When we make Hashem the Father of the world, we become worthy of being the "firstborn."

Sources:

A Rose By Any Other Name - Mesilas Yesharim, Chidushei HaRim

War Of The Words - Chafetz Chaim

Happy Birthday, Daddy! - Meshech Chochma

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Haftorah: Shmuel 20:18-42

“Yonasan said (to David): Tomorrow is the New Moon, and you will be missed because your seat will be empty.”

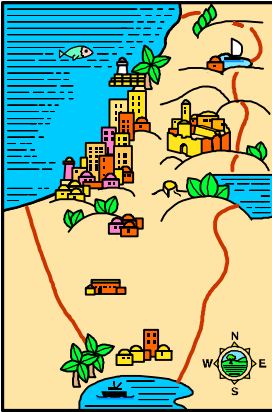
We read this Haftorah when Shabbos falls on the day before Rosh Chodesh, the New Moon. The Jewish People are compared to the moon. Just as the moon grows to fullness over a period of fifteen days and then wanes for fifteen days, similarly there were fifteen generations of physical and spiritual growth from Avraham to David's son Shlomo, and from Shlomo there was a descent of fifteen generations until the monarchy

ended with the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* and the Babylonian Exile.

However, just as the heavens do not remain dark forever and the moon re-appears, so will the line of David re-appear with the *Mashiach* in the time of the redemption. For this reason in the monthly prayer of *Kiddush Levana* (Sanctification of the Moon) we include the verse “*David, King of Israel, lives and endures!*”

LOVE OF THE LAND

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



A DESIRABLE PORTION

“My eye gives you counsel,” Hashem says to us through King David (*Tehillim 32:8*), and our Sages in the Midrash interpret this as a Divine “wink of the eye” in regard to *Eretz Yisrael*.

A king once made a feast for everyone in his palace. When the serving plate was brought before them, the king winked a hint to his favorite guest to take a particularly good portion. When he realized that the hint was not understood, the king took the portion with his own hands and presented it to his beloved.

In similar fashion, when Hashem divided His world amongst the nations, each of them selected a land double the size of *Eretz Yisrael*. Hashem winked to the Jewish People to choose *Eretz Yisrael* but they were reluctant to do so because it was so much smaller than all the other lands. What did Hashem do? He took *Eretz Yisrael* into His hand and presented it to His favorite people.

This is what the Prophet Yirmiyahu alludes to when he says in Hashem's Name (*Yirmiyahu 3:19*) “I presented you with a desirable land.”

Yalkut Shimoni Tehillim 32

What do
you do with
Torah
Weekly?

Yaakov D. Katz wrote:

I use the pieces in Ohr Somayach to tell over to a group of high school age Russian boys whose group I supervise on Shabbos. They are especially fond of the Yiddle Riddles from “Ask the Rabbi”.

Working in a small special ed elementary level Yeshiva, I sometimes use your vertelach for material when I have to cover classes.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you for the professional (and entertaining) job that you do in preparing all the Torah mailings every week.

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