

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT TAZRIA · 29 ADAR II 5768 · APR. 5 2008 · VOL. 15 NO. 27

PARSHA 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 that cannot be directly translated into any other language. To translate these words adequately usually requires a sentence.

There’s a word in Yiddish (and Hebrew) — 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 Torah portion there is a lengthy description of a spiritual disease called *tzara’at*. One of the shortcomings that 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 that 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 No. 17756233/a/th/567 and I buy No. 17756233/a/th/568.

Two weeks later I wake up and hear him shouting at the top of his voice “I won two million dollars! I won two 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 G-d decrees for someone is that person’s and always was his. 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 ‘blemish of *tzara’at*’ and the word for ‘pleasure’ have exactly the same letters. The blemish of *tzara’at* is called a *nego*. 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 *nego*. But if you put the *ayin* in the right place, if you put your eye in the right place, you have ‘pleasure’ — *oneg*. This is the pleasure that comes from *farginning*, the pleasure that comes from looking at the world through the lens of reality.

• Sources: *Mesillat Yesharim*, *Chidushei HaRim*

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

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.

ISRAEL Forever

THE FIRST MITZVAH

Every Jew attending a synagogue this Shabbat will be aware that this is the finale of the four special additional Torah readings — *Parshat Hachodesh*.

This reading from *Parshat Bo* begins with the first mitzvah given to the Jewish people as a nation, even before they received the Torah. What is so special about this particular mitzvah?

It may be suggested that as our ancestors stood on the threshold of freedom from Egyptian bondage it was important for them to receive a commandment to calculate the passing of time according to a lunar calendar. This

not only distinguished them from the other nations whose calendar was based on the sun, but also called attention to the comparison between the smaller heavenly luminary and the Jewish nation. The moon has no light of its own and merely reflects the light of the sun. In a similar vein the Jewish people receive whatever power they have from the Creator and His Torah.

Learning this lesson from the first mitzvah and applying it to the culture of our people is what will secure Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

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

GUSH CHALAV — TOMB OF AKDAMUT AUTHOR

One of the highlights of the Shavuot morning service is the melodic chanting of *Akdamut*, a lengthy Aramaic poem that praises G-d and describes the reward for the righteous in the end of days.



The author of *Akdamut* is Rabbi Meir ben Yitzchak, a twelfth century *shaliach tzibur* (prayer leader) for his German community, and his tomb is in Gush Chalav, about 2.5 miles north of the Meron Junction on Route 89.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

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*?
11. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow (e.g., the head or beard), what color hair is indicative of ritual impurity?
12. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow, what color hair is indicative of purity?
13. If the *kohen* intentionally or unintentionally pronounces a *tamei* person "*tahor*," what is that person's status?
14. What signs of mourning must a *metzora* display?
15. Why must a *metzora* call out, "*Tamei! Tamei!*"?
16. Where must a *metzora* dwell?
17. Why is a *metzora* commanded to dwell in isolation?
18. What sign denotes *tzara'at* in a garment?
19. What must be done to a garment that has *tzara'at*?
20. If after washing a garment the signs of *tzara'at* disappear entirely, how is the garment purified?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

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.
11. 13:29 - Golden.
12. 13:37 - Any color other than golden.
13. 13:37 - He remains *tamei*.
14. 13:45 - He must tear his garments, let his hair grow wild, and cover his lips with his garment.
15. 13:45 - So people will know to keep away from him.
16. 13:46 - Outside the camp in isolation.
17. 13:46 - Since *tzara'at* is a punishment for *lashon hara* (evil speech), which creates a rift between people, the Torah punishes measure for measure by placing a division between him and others.
18. 13:49 - A dark green or dark red discoloration.
19. 13:52 - It must be burned.
20. 13:58 - Through immersion in a *mikveh*.

לע"נ

מרת לאה בת ר' שמואל ע"ה
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

- Status of the 30th day of the *nezirut* period regarding haircut and becoming ritually impure
- Nazir in the graveyard
- Making a vow of *nezirut* while ritually impure
- The sacrifices of the nazir
- Impact of the husband's nullification on the *nezirut* vow of his wife
- Whether the nazir is considered a sinner
- Queen Helenie's vow regarding her soldier son
- Conflicting testimony regarding length of commitment to *nezirut*
- Chain reaction of *nezirut* vows
- Woman who violated *nezirut* requirements before knowing of her husband's nullification
- The husband who said "me too" to his wife's *nezirut* vow

A CONFLICT OF TESTIMONY

Two pairs of witnesses appear before the rabbinical court to testify regarding the number of *nezirut* periods a certain Jew has committed himself to. One pair claims that his vow was for two periods while the other claims that it was for five.

The ruling of Beit Shammai is that since there is a conflict in the testimony we do not accept the testimony of either pair and there is no obligation for any *nezirut*. Beit Hillel's position is that since there is a consensus regarding a minimum of two periods there is an obligation to observe that number.

Tosefot raises the question as to why no consideration

is given in this *mishna* to what the vow-maker himself says. If he remains silent when witnesses testify to five periods of *nezirut* his silence constitutes an admission and creates a commitment.

A number of answers are giving by Tosefot:

- 1) The accused vow-maker contradicts the testimony of both pairs, leaving us with no option other than relying on the witnesses.
- 2) He declares that he does not recall how much he committed himself to.
- 3) Both pairs came simultaneously so that his silence cannot be interpreted as consent since he sees no need to contradict witnesses who are already contradicting each other.

What the SAGES Say

"If every nazir is considered a sinner why does the Torah use this term specifically in regard to the nazir who became ritually impure through contact with the dead? Because he piled one sin on the other."

• Rabbi Elazar Hakapar - Nazir 19a

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MAGEN DAVID

From: Marsha in Australia

Dear Rabbi,

Is the familiar six-pointed star called the Star of David indeed associated with King David, or for that matter is it an original Jewish symbol at all?

Dear Marsha,

There is no mention of this symbol in the Torah or any of the Talmudic literature. In addition, unlike the menorah, which is mentioned and also found in many archeological findings in buildings and on coins, the Star of David is not found in any ancient Jewish artifacts. This would seem to indicate that this widespread symbol of Judaism used today is not uniquely or originally Jewish.

Some possible exceptions that I can't confirm might include a Babylonian relief purportedly depicting Nebuchadnezzar capturing King Zedekiah. Above the head of Nebuchadnezzar is the winged sun disc of the Babylonian empire while above the head of King Zedekiah is an encircled Magen David. If this is correct, it might identify the Magen David as a Jewish, or at least a Judah symbol. However, on the other hand, the relief is not a Jewish source. There also seems to be a relic referred to as the seal of Joshua Ben Asayahu found in Sidon from the Second Temple period in the 6th century BCE that purportedly contains the symbol. Finally, I have seen this symbol carved in a frieze on a fourth-century CE synagogue at Capernaum (Kfar Nachum) in Israel. However, since it is accompanied by both a five-pointed star and possibly a swastika there is no indication that it is of Jewish origin.

The six-pointed star also seems to have a very long history in India and the Far East. This usage and that as the Star of David may have similar origins, or they may have developed independently since the superimposing of inversed triangles is geometrically rather simple (unlike this sentence).

While the Talmudic literature does not mention the Magen David as a symbol, the term is discussed as a concept. The gemara uses this terminology when referring to G-d's shield of protection over David and his descendent Messiah (Pesachim 117b). This is the source for the blessing recited after reading the haftarah on Shabbat: "Gladden us...with the kingdom of the house of David...let no other inherit his honor...for You swore that his heir will not be extinguished...Blessed are You,

G-d, Shield of David (Magen David). This concept and phrase are based on verses in which David praises G-d for shielding him from harm (II Sam. 22:36, Ps. 18:36).

According to legend, David battled with a shield that either had this symbol on it, or was constructed in this shape as two triangular pieces of leather stretched over a circular frame. Another idea connecting the symbol to David is based on the Hebrew spelling of his name 'dalet', 'vav', 'dalet'. In ancient times the 'dalet' was triangular-shaped (similar to the Greek delta) and "vav" implies a connection. David's name in Hebrew, then, can be represented symbolically as two interconnected triangles. However, these ideas are just lore and conjecture and are based on imagination more than on fact.

Exactly when, how and why the symbol became incorporated into Judaism is unclear. Nevertheless, a Shield of David has been found on a Jewish tombstone in Southern Italy dating as early as the third century CE. A Tanach dated 1307 belonging to Rabbi Yosef bar Yehuda ben Marvas from Toledo, Spain, is decorated with a Shield of David. In 1460, the Jews of Hungary received King Mathios Kuruvenus with a red flag on which were two Shields of David. A Hebrew prayer book printed in Prague in 1512 has a large Shield of David on the cover with the phrase, "Each man beneath his flag according to the house of their fathers... and he will merit to bestow a bountiful gift on anyone who grasps the Shield of David." In addition, flags with the Shield of David apparently adorned the synagogues of Prague.

The Magen David is also mentioned in Jewish mystical texts of the Middle Ages. The earliest is Eshkol Ha-Kofer by the Karaite Judah Hadassi, in the mid-12th century CE: "Seven names of angels precede the mezuzah: Michael, Gabriel, etc. ... And likewise the sign, called the Shield of David, is placed beside the name of each angel." Some Kabbalistic amulets use the symbol to arrange the Ten Sefirot, including in the six points the six Hebrew letters of "Melech David", "Yerushalayim" or the 7-lined prayer "ana b'koach" (using the middle of the symbol as the seventh point). Rabbi Isaac Luria, the Arizal, made a kabbalistic connection between the Star of David and items of the Seder plate by aligning the three *matzot* at the top point, the 'zeroa' (shankbone) and 'beitza' (egg) on the upper right and left, the 'maror' (bitter herb - lettuce) in the middle, the 'charoset' (mortar-like mixture) and 'carpas' (leafy vegetable) on the lower right and left, concluding with the 'chazeret' (horseradish) at the bottom.

WHO GETS THE DRINK?

Question: I recall learning in the Talmud that if my father asks me to bring him a drink of water and my mother asks me to do the same for her, I must give precedence to my father because my mother is obligated to honor her husband in this manner. A situation once arose where my father asked me to bring a drink for my mother and my mother asked me to bring a drink for my father. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: How wonderful to hear of a case where each parent is more concerned about the other than about him/herself!

In his new work “*Borchi Nafshi*”, Rabbi Yitzchak

Zilberstein writes that this very interesting question was once put to his brother-in-law, Hagaon Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky. Although it might seem on the surface that you must first serve your father as in the Talmudic case, the ruling in his case is that you must obey your father and bring that first drink to your mother.

The logic behind this is the Talmudic dictum that “the fulfillment of a person’s wish is the greatest honor one can give him.” Fulfilling your father’s wish is a greater honor for him than the drink and you must therefore obey him and make both parents very happy.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

THE COLLECTOR’S SHARE

One of the legendary *tzaddikim* of an earlier generation was Rabbi Nachum of Horodenka. Amongst all of his righteous deeds were the efforts he made to provide support for the poor Jews in his community, even if it meant going from door to door to collect money for them.

On one occasion a wealthy Jew whom he solicited was

so upset by Rabbi Nachum’s appeal for funds that gave him a slap on the face.

“That was for me,” calmly responded this saintly individual. “But what are you giving for the poor?”

The message was clearly understood by the slapper and he made a substantial contribution to Rabbi Nachum’s fund.

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