

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT METZORA · 5 NISSAN 5774 - APR. 5, 2014 · VOL. 21 NO. 28

PARSHA INSIGHTS

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE

"...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.

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

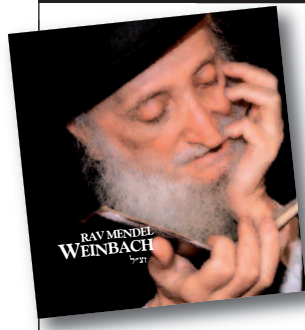
The king took the wise man's words and fulfilled them to the letter. He behaved like the epitome of humility, to the extent that he actually ceased riding in the royal carriage and followed behind it on foot along with his servants.

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 in mind. I meant you to go up and sit in your carriage, so 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.

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Proceeds will be used for the Gemach Charity Fund established by Rav Weinbach, zt"l.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

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.

TALMUD Tips

ADVICE FOR LIFE

Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

BEITZA 7 - 13

“One who digs a hole on Shabbat and needs only the dirt is patur (exempt from punishment according to the Torah).”

Rabbi Aba teaches this on our *daf*. Although digging a hole on Shabbat would normally be considered a *melacha* of the Torah — *boneh* (building) if done inside, or *choresh* (plowing) if done outside — this case is different. Since the digger does not really need the action of the *melacha* — making a hole — but rather needs only dirt from somewhere, this is what is known as a “*melacha sh'eino tzricha l'gufa*” and is not prohibited by the Torah. Although the Sages normally forbade such an action, if it is done for the purpose of enjoying a festive day — such as having dirt for the mitzvah of covering the blood of certain animals that are ritually slaughtered for eating — it is permitted (Tosefot).

• Beitza 8a

“Anytime that our Sages forbade an action due to ‘marit ayin’ (an activity that appears to be forbidden), it is forbidden even in the most private of places.”

Our *gemara* cites this teaching of Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav in posing a question on a previous statement in our *gemara* by Rav Chanan who permits such an action in a private place where no one is watching. Although Rav is an *Amora* and Rav Chanan is also an *Amora* — and therefore of seemingly equal standing and entitled to hold different rulings — our *gemara* holds that Rav's ruling is stronger since he was the “Chief Rabbi” of the entire Diaspora aside from Shmuel (Rashi and Tosefot).

• Beitza 9a

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PARSHA Q&A ?

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 of having *tzara'at*, what is its status prior to the inspection by a *kohen*?
11. What happens to the vessels that are in a house found to have *tzara'at*?
12. Which type of vessels cannot be made *tahor* after they become *tamei*?
13. Where were stones afflicted with *tzara'at* discarded?
14. When a house is suspected of having *tzara'at*, a *kohen* commands that the affected stones be replaced and the house plastered. What is the law if the *tzara'at*: a) returns and spreads; b) does not return; c) returns, but does not spread?
15. When a person enters a house that has *tzara'at*, when do his clothes become *tamei*?
16. What is the status of a man who is *zav* (sees a flow): a) two times or two consecutive days; b) three times or three consecutive days?
17. A *zav* sat or slept on the following: a) a bed; b) a plank; c) a chair; d) a rock. If a *tahor* person touches these things what is his status?
18. What does the Torah mean when it refers to a *zav* who "has not washed his hands"?
19. When may a *zav* immerse in a *mikveh* to purify himself?
20. What is the status of someone who experiences a one-time flow?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

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

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*.
11. 14:36 - They become *tamei*.
12. 14:36 - Earthenware vessels.
13. 14:40 - In places where *tahor* objects were not handled.
14. a) 14:44-45 - It is called "*tzara'at mam'eret*," and the house must be demolished; b) 14:48 - The house is pronounced *tahor*; c) 14:44 - The house must be demolished.
15. 14:46 - When he remains in the house long enough to eat a small meal.
16. 15:2 - a) He is *tamei*; b) he is *tamei* and is also required to bring a *korban*.
17. 15:4-5 - Only a type of object that one usually lies or sits upon becomes a transmitter of *tumah* when a *zav* sits or lies on it. A *tahor* person who subsequently touches the object becomes *tamei* and the clothes he is wearing are also *tmei'im*. Therefore: a) *tamei*; b) *tahor*; c) *tamei*; d) *tahor*.
18. 15:11 - One who has not immersed in a *mikveh*.
19. 15:13 - After seven consecutive days without a flow.
20. 15:32 - He is *tamei* until evening.

Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT METZORA

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

In his discussion of the *Tumah*, or spiritual impurity, which is imparted to males as a result of various bodily excretions, Abarbanel is puzzled by the fact that the concept of *Tumah* is also associated with the emission of semen. The Torah tells us that when a man and woman have marital relations they must immerse in a *mikveh*, or ritual bath, and remain in a state of *Tumah* until evening. How can it be that an act which is one of the most important *mitzvot* of the Torah — both from the perspective of reproduction and the perspective of man's responsibility to fulfill the needs of his wife — result in a state of spiritual impurity?

Abarbanel answers that, in general, bodily secretions whose elimination is not necessary for the health of the individual create a state of *Tumah*. This explains why the elimination of feces, urine, mucus and saliva does not create a state of

Tumah. The elimination of seminal fluid, however, is not necessary for bodily health, and as a result does result in a form of spiritual impurity. In this case, the state of *Tumah* is also a result of the Torah's desire to establish reasonable parameters for marital activity. As holy, natural and important as this activity is, we must always be reminded that we must be the masters of our physical desires rather than being slaves to them. Abarbanel is saying that by imposing this limitation the Torah is preventing us from engaging in the kind of activity that characterizes the immoral behavior of people like adulterers who give themselves over totally to their physical desires. However, because of this importance, the duration of the state of *Tumah* is limited to one day, and there is no required sacrificial offering, unlike other situations where the duration of *Tumah* is seven days with a required sacrificial offering.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

BNEI AYISH — THE JEWISH HEART

In the south of Israel is a rural settlement called Bnei Ayish. The Hebrew letters that make up the second half of this name are abbreviations of the name Akiva Yosef Shlesinger.

A colorful Torah personality who settled in Jerusalem

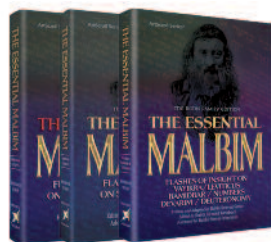


upon his arrival from Eastern Europe, Rabbi Shlesinger wrote a well-known work that he called *Lev Ivri* — Heart of a Hebrew. He is famous for having written a manifesto for the creation of a Jewish state based on Torah Law.

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AFTER-WATERS

From: Ron

Dear Rabbi,

What is the source for 'mayim achronim' – that water that is poured on the hands after a meal and before saying birkat hamazon (grace after meals)? Some people say that it's halacha, but I've been to people where they don't do it. And are women supposed to? Thanks.

Dear Ron,

The Shulchan Aruch states that "Mayim Achronim Chova," meaning that washing one's hands before birkat hamazon is an obligation. Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, zatzal, once told me that women are included in this obligation to the same degree as men.

There are two reasons which are offered:

Just as a soiled kohen is invalid to perform the Temple Service in the Beit Hamikdash, so too soiled hands make a person unfit to say a blessing.

To clean off any "melach sdomit" - "salt of Sodom" – that

might be on the hands. Melach sdomit was a strong salt harmful to the eyes.

Some people have the custom to not wash Mayim Achronim. Since melach sdomit is virtually non-existent today, and the concept of "cleanliness" is a relative matter and most people don't consider their hands "dirty" after a meal, therefore washing them would not be necessary.

I once heard a beautiful explanation of the symbolism of Mayim Achronim: Mayim Achronim washes off the "Salt of Sodom." The people of Sodom were infamous for their stingy cold-heartedness, especially regarding hospitality towards strangers. For example, the people of Sodom surrounded Lot's house and ordered him to send out the wayfarers he was hosting. After a meal, having eaten our fill, we might not empathize with a poor stranger knocking on our door asking for a little food. This quality of cold-heartedness is the antithesis of Judaism, and therefore we "wash it off" – saying: "We want no part of it!"

Sources:

- Chullin 105a,b & Tosafot, Berachot 53b and Tosafot
- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 181:1, 10; M. B. 22

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The Talmud, often referred to as "The Sea of the Talmud", is vast both in breadth and depth. The gemara (Megillah 18b) describes the difficulty of maintaining a hold on all the Torah you learn, quoting Proverbs (23:5): "When you lift (or close) your eyes from it – and it disappears".

Chazal (Eruvin 54b) prescribe a method for gaining a true understanding and making a lasting acquisition of all the material you learn. Rav Chisda is quoted as saying, "The Torah can only be acquired with signs."

Talmud Navigator is an attempt to organize the Talmud in database form, mapping and charting the Talmud by tagging the various components and building blocks of the according to type and hierarchy. It is based on the system outlined by the Ramchal in Derech Tvunos.

This system of textual organization serves as a self-help way to outline the sugya in a clearer fashion. It assists in promoting a better understanding of the flow of the Gemara and in facilitating summary and review. It is also an excellent tool for a less advanced Gemara learner to identify and grasp the logical flow and interconnections of its various components.

Each Thursday we will post a PDF file which maps the gemara studied in that week's Daf Yomi cycle. G-d willing, we plan in the future to make available the Excel file which enables the user to make his own condensed selections of the Gemara. For example: Highlighting the main statements, arguments, questions, conclusions or personalized anchor points of the sugya determined by the learner to facilitate his own review.

Talmud Navigator is prepared by Rabbi Hanoach Zweig and is available at www.ohr.edu

DOING TESHUVAH BEFORE ONE PRAYS

***"G-d open my lips, and my mouth
will relate Your praises." (Psalms)***

The Rabbis explain that it is very important for one to think about repentance (*teshuvah*) before praying. This means regretting his past wrong deeds and resolving never to repeat them. For how can a person stand before his Maker with a request for mercy while he is filled with sin? This can be compared to a boy who has just misbehaved, asking what he will be getting for a present.

In particular, a person should do *teshuvah* for sins he committed through speech, asking himself, "How can I stand before G-d and praise Him with the same mouth that I use to speak *"lashon hara"* negatively about others?"

In this context, the phrase "G-d, open my lips" can be understood to mean that from now on I want the opening of my lips to be the result of contemplating G-d's greatness, and realizing that He hears all my words. With this in mind a person will then open his lips only in praise of G-d, and all his words will be pleasing to Him. This idea is implied in the conclusion of the verse, "and my mouth will praise (only) You."

Bearing this thought in mind throughout the day will help one to always look to glorify G-d's name in all his dealings, and

surely his words will be in accordance with Jewish law, never causing anyone harm.

By putting these thoughts into practice, a person will fulfill the deeper meaning of the verse, "All that is called by My name and for My glory..." (Isaiah 43:7). In other words, one should seek to utilize all things in the world in order to praise the name of G-d and bring Him added glory.

There is another benefit to repenting before one begins asking G-d for his needs. It is well known that G-d rewards those that go in His ways and punishes those that rebel against Him. Thus, as a result of one's sins G-d may withhold a person's request, or even decide to punish him. When one repents from his negative ways his past sins will no longer cause his requests to be rejected.

Based on the above, the commentators answer a fundamental question regarding one of the great philosophic difficulties of prayer. If G-d decided not to grant a person a particular thing, how can praying for it make a difference? The answer is that by doing *teshuvah*, and turning to G-d in prayer, a person changes and is considered a different person. As a new person he may be granted his request since G-d's prior decision was regarding someone else.

@ OHR *Profiles of Ohr Somayach Staff, Alumni and Students*

TALMUD WITH A SMILE

Betzalel (Charlie) Anflek - Fairfield, CT
Master's Degree in Social Work
Multi-Program Alumnus

Betzalel has been an active alumnus, working tirelessly on behalf of Ohr Somayach, for many years. Most recently he helped to publicize the Alumni Dinner.

He followed his more adventurous younger brother, Yedidya, to Ohr Somayach in 1987 after stints as a substitute teacher and bike messenger and an enjoyable but unfocused experience with theater and "loud" music. He enjoyed four years at Ohr Somayach, mainly in Rabbi Pindrus' shiur, from 1987-1991 and afterwards earned his

Master's degree in Social Work.

Besides the usual Ohr Somayach learning experience, Betzalel took advantage of the lighter side of Ohr Somayach as he became a staple on the Purim Shpiel circuit and popularized the Lyle Wexler composition "Shushan" which spent at least a week on the "top ten frum pop songs list". Married in 2002, Betzalel lives in Brooklyn and "rides" the express train known as Daf Yomi while applying his professional skills to help those impacted by Hurricane Sandy.

