

RED ALERT!

Tazri'a

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DIVREI TORAH

- The most God-like act of all human beings is the act of creating a baby. It brings true joy to the entire family. Our Sages tell us that there are three components in the creation of life: the father, mother, and Hashem. So why then does the mother become Tamei (impure) when she gives birth?

Rabbi Norman Lamm z"l wrote that all creative acts also create a negative component. When Hashem created the world, a byproduct of this act was the creation of evil. The creation of America came at a price of much bloodshed. And the birth of the State of Israel spilled much Jewish blood in its creation. (I believe that each of the Israeli wars are actually battles of a much longer War of Independence, including the current Gaza War.) Rabbi Lamm includes in his discussion the creation of a business, which will produce the cost of ethical integrity, or psychological tranquility.

- My own feeling as to why a birthing mother becomes impure is that in the process of delivering a baby the mother's sanctity will lessen. While

pregnant, the mother develops "double Kedusha", her and the baby in one person. Giving birth decreases the level of her Kedusha, and the lessening of Kedusha creates impurity. Not only does the death of a life create impurity, but so does the lessening of Kedusha. The double length of her impurity when she gives birth to a girl is due to the circumcision of the baby boy. The Brit Mila propels the mother to a pure state so that she could enjoy the Simchah of the Brit.

- When a person displays a skin blotch that might be Biblically tzoraat, he must show it to a Kohen for a decision. Even if a non-Kohen had developed an expertise in determining whether a skin blotch is tzoraat, his decision in the matter is irrelevant to the case. Only a Kohen has the ability to pronounce a person Tamei. I believe this an essential part of the process. Not only does the Kohen have the ability to state aloud whether the person is impure, he is also trained to counsel the person as to what caused this malady to develop. The Kohen orders the person to be isolated and even expelled from the Jewish community so that the person can work on himself, to make corrections to his conduct in social settings within the community. The Kohanim are regarded as the teachers of Torah among the nation and in charge of the religious development of the people.

- Having Aharon the Kohen Gadol, as the decision maker as to a person's purity makes perfect sense because historically Aharon was known as a peacemaker between a Jew and his neighbor, and between a man and his wife. Midrashically, Aharon would even lie in order to create peace among rival neighbors. Lying was normally not permitted, but for the sake of creating peace, it was allowed (within reason). Seeing that Aharon would be involved in the process would be instructive to the possible Biblical m'tzora to learn from Aharon's presence, and seek to improve himself right away. Speaking slander against a fellow Jew is a terrible sin; and yet many people overlook the sin by stating that they are telling the truth, not lying. The truth can also be Lashon HaRa! Now we have a set an interesting dilemma when telling the truth can be Lashon HaRa and telling a lie can be permitted if done to create peace! We better think and think hard before opening our mouths.

- MIDRASH. Rabbi Elazar ben Parta said: Come and see how dangerously damaging Lashon HaRa can be. The ten spies that Moshe dispatched to Canaan spoke Lashon HaRa against a land, against trees and stones, resulting in their death and the ultimate demise of an entire generation of Jewish people. There-

fore we can surmise that speaking negatively about another person is much worse (and can result in a worse punishment.)

Questions by RED

From the Text

1. After how many days from giving birth to a boy may a woman bring a sacrifice to Hashem? (12:2-4)
2. Who determines the status of a Biblical m'tzora? (13:2)
3. What color declares a person impure if it appears on the scalp or beard? (13:30)
4. What colors will make a garment impure? (13:49)
5. What does a Kohen do with a discolored impure garment? (13:50)

From Rashi

6. Which sacrifice does the birthing mother bring first, the Chatat (Sin) offering or the Olah (whole burnt) offering? (12:8)
7. How large must the afflicted area be in order to be considered Biblical tzoraat? (13:24)
8. What color hair is definitely pure? (13:31)
9. Why is the Biblical m'tzora required to be isolated, outside the Camp of Israel? (13:46)
10. The Biblical m'tzora had to proclaim publicly that he was Tamei, impure. Rashi

wrote that this way people will distance themselves from him. The Talmud (Moed Katan 5a) gave two answers to this. One is what Rashi states here. What is the other reason in the Talmud?

From the Rabbis

11. Why is the law of the impurity of a birthing woman the first law for impurity of humans? (Ibn Ezra)

12. What new laws are introduced here by stating that the Brit Mila occurs on the 8th day? (Sifra, Shabbat 132a)

13. What does the word Nida mean?

From the Midrash

14. Is it in accordance with the dignity of Aharon to examine for tzoraat?

From the Haftara (M'lachim Bet)

15. Whom did Elisha cure of tzoraat in the Haftara?

Relationships

16.

a) Elisheva - Pinchas

b) Miriam - Eliezer

c) Itamar - Levi

d) Nadav - Avihu

e) Shem - Ashur

ANSWERS

1. After $7 + 33 = 40$ days.

2. A Kohen

3. Golden

4. Green and red.

5. He isolates it (locks it away) for one week.

6. The Chatat offering is brought first.

7. The size of a GRIS (about the size of a dime.)

8. Black

9. Because his affliction was a punishment for slander, causing separation of people from others in society. Therefore he deserved to be isolated, cut off from society.

10. So that people will pray for him.

11. Because it is the beginning of life.

12. The Brit must be during the day, and not at night. And the Brit must occur on the 8th day, even if it is on Shabbat.

13. Separated. She remains separated from marital relations and may not touch anything that is ritually pure.

14. Yes, because he will be compensated.

15. Na'aman, the general of Aram.

16.

a) Grandmother - grandson

b) Aunt - nephew

c) Itamar was a great-great-grandson of Levi -or- great-grandson (through his grandmother, Yocheved)

d) Brothers

e) Father - son