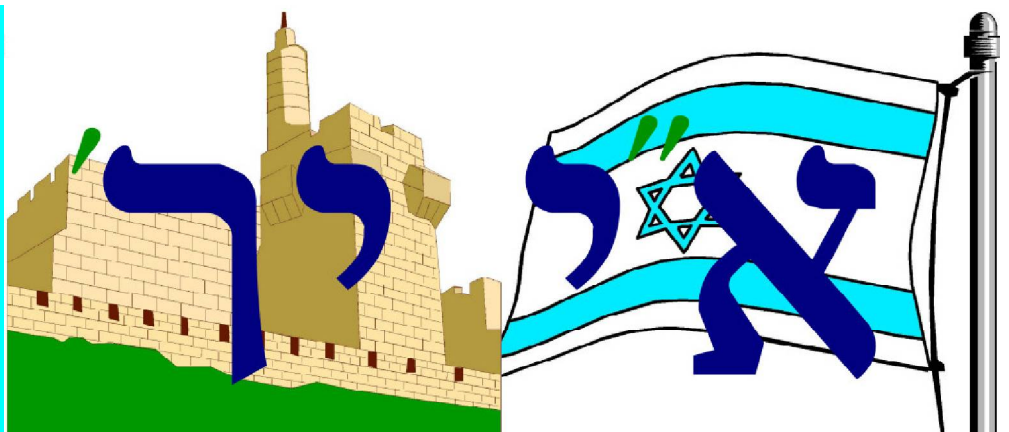


PHILOTORAH

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואיֵהי אבותינו שתשלח מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים, רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף לפצועי המלחמה, ולנפגעי מעשי טרור ואנטישמיות בישראל ובכל מקום שהם - עם שאר חולי ישראל. אמן.

May HaShem protect our soldiers; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima to the many injured; may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel; may He end these wars with total success and peace for Medinat Yisrael and Klal Yisrael wherever we are.



יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואיֵהי אבותינו, שְׁכֶשֶׁם שֶׁזָכְנוּ לְאֶתְחַלְתָּא דְגְאוּלָּהּ, כֵּן גִזְכָּה לְשִׁמְעַת קוֹל שׁוֹפְרוֹ שֶׁל מְשִׁיחַ בְּמַהְרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ



Yom HaZikaron - Monday night - Tuesday, April 24-25
Yom HaAtzma'ut - Tuesday night - Wednesday, April 25-26


וּלְקוֹז לְמִטְוֶה שְׁתֵּי-צַפְרִים וְזִיּוֹת טְהוֹרוֹת

YERUSHALAYIM ^{times for} TAZRI'A-M'TZORA-R"Ch


א' אייר ה'תשפ"ו • April 17-18, '26

 **6:34PM** PLAG **5:48PM** •  **7:48PM** R' Tam **8:22PM**

Use the Z'MANIM link for other locales



**Last opportunity for
Birkat Hallanot this year
- FRI, 30 Nisan (April 17)**





Shabbat Rosh Chodesh

There's an old riddle, which you might ask at your Shabbat table this Shabbat.

Rosh Chodesh is always on the first of a month and on the thirtieth (when there is one). But when is Rosh Chodesh on the fifteenth?

The answer is this coming Friday, the 30th of Nisan, the first day of Rosh Chodesh Iyar. And it coincides with the fifteenth of the Omer. And if you think the riddle was misleading, go back and read it carefully. When is Rosh Chodesh on the fifteenth? It did not say 'of the month'. The riddle is harder when you ask it any other day, so asking it on the day that is the answer might make it too easy. But maybe not.

- We have Shabbat-R"Ch either twice or thrice each year. To be statistically specific, there are two Shabbat-R"Ch in 52.33% of years, and three in 47.67% of years. Remember that for these stats, R"Ch can be Friday-Shabbat, Shabbat alone, or Shabbat-Sunday.

On most Shabbat-R"Ch, we have two Torahs, and for Shabbat-R"Ch Tevet (Shabbat Chanuka), Shabbat-R"Ch

Adar and Adar Bet (Sh'kalim), and Shabbat-R"Ch Nisan - we have three Torahs.

Note that when Rosh HaShana is on Shabbat-Sunday, then that is technically Shabbat-R"Ch Tishrei, but I'm not including Tishrei in these stats because the Rosh Chodesh aspect of Rosh HaShana is hardly noticeable.

Also note that R"Ch Kislev and R"Ch Sivan are never on Shabbat.

Kiddush L'vana

Minhag Yerushalayim is to say KL at the first opportunity, following three full days from the molad. The molad this month is early Friday morning, April 17th. This means that the first op for KL is Monday night, April 20th, after dark - leil 4 Iyar.

Those who follow the seven-days-after-the-molad opinion, will have their first op on Motza'ei Shabbat, Acharei-K'doshim, April 25th.

Those who say Kiddush L'vana on Motza'ei Shabbat will have their first op on that same night - Motza"Sh Parshat Acharei-K'doshim, April 25th.

[Everyone covered? We hope so.](#)

Yom HaZikaron

The day before Yom HaAtzmaut is YOM HAZIKARON, the day on which we mourn and remember our fallen soldiers and all lives lost by terror.

This year, Yom HaZikaron begins on Monday evening, April 20th - sirens at 8:00pm - and continues through Tuesday the 21st (4 Iyar) - sirens at 11:00am.

At the time I'm writing this, I don't know if there will be any change as to sirens, because of the war we are in or not.

The seriousness of the day points out the great cost The State of Israel and the Jewish People have paid for its independence and sovereignty, but also adds deep meaning and significance to Yom HaAtzma'ut, the celebration of the establishment of the State - a great gift from HKBH.

Yom HaAtzma'ut

HEI (5) IYAR can fall on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday, or Shabbat.

(LO AGaH - like the 7th day of Pesach.)

However, if 5 Iyar falls on Friday or Shabbat, Yom HaAtzmaut is pulled back (preponed) to Thursday (the 3rd or 4th of Iyar). And, if it falls on a Monday, it is postponed to Tuesday, the 6th of Iyar.

Only when 5 Iyar is a Wednesday - as it is this year - does Yom HaAtzmaut remain on the 5th of Iyar.

The moving of Yom HaAtzmaut is done to avoid Chilul Shabbat during its celebrations and ceremonies (or those of Yom HaZikaron) around the country.

The decision of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel to keep the religious observances on the same day as the national observances should be seen as an act of ACHDUT of AM YISRAEL, to unify the Jewish People in their HAKARAT HATOV to HKBH for the Jewish State and its significance for all of the Jewish People. May the Medina be a significant milestone on the road to the GEULA SH'LEIMA.

The State of Israel is not perfect (yet). And from a Torah perspective it is further from perfect. BUT...

We have so, so, very much to thank HKBH for what we have. My personal number one is the fact that with the establishment of the State, Jews anywhere in the world have a place - The Place - to come to, to be welcomed like part of the family, like we all belong - for the first time in almost 2000 years. And there is much more.

Shabbat is the national day of rest.

Chagim are national holidays.

Kashrut is the norm.

Remember: Not there yet, but on the way. For all of it.

The official exchange of greetings encapsulates the specialness of the day:

MO'ADIM L'SIMCHA

LIG-ULA SH'LEIMA

Tazri'a-M'tzora

Rosh Chodesh

	Taz	M'tz	T&M
of 54 sedras in Torah	27th	28th	-
of 10 in Vayikra	4th	5th	-
lines	128	159	287
rank	48th	40th	-
Parshiyot	9	7	16
P'tuchot	5	4	9
S'tumot	4	3	7
P'sukim	67	90	157
rank (Torah/Vayikra)	48/8	42/5	-
Words	1010	1274	2284
rank (Torah/Vayikra)	48/8	39/4	-
Letters	3667	4697	8364
rank (Torah/Vayikra)	48/8	39/4	-

MITZVOT

Tazri'a: 9 - 7 pos. and 2 prohibitions

M'tzora: 11 mitzvot; all positive

Other sedras with mitzvot asei and no

lo taasei - Pinchas 6, Chukat 3,

Vayeilech 2, B'reishit 1, Lech L'cha 1

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya

- 13+12+6=31 p'sukim
- 12:1-13:23

[P> 12:1 (8)] Perek 12, the shortest in the Torah with 8 p'sukim (not that we are responsible for the chaptering of the Torah), deals with "birth". A woman becomes "ritually unclean" following a (normal) birth - one week for a boy - and on the 8th day the boy is circumcised - and two weeks for a girl. This period of TUM'A is followed by a special "waiting time" of 33 or 66 days for boy or girl respectively, after which the mother is to bring the korbanot of a YOLEDET. The whole issue of the "ritual impurity of a woman having given birth" constitutes a mitzva [166, A100 12:2], as does the bringing of the sacrifices [168, A76 12:6]. (Mila itself is counted in Lech L'cha.) This portion of the Torah is also the source of the general prohibition of eating "sacred meat" while in a state of "ritual impurity" [167, L129 12:4].

TAHARA & TUM'A To oversimplify, one aspect of the rules of ritual purity and impurity for a Yoledet (a woman who has given birth) is to show the sharp contrast between life and death. This can be seen in the Tum'a of a dead body, in the laws of Nidah, the rules of pregnancy, as well as the Yoledet. A woman's period signifies that life has not begun within her - there is TUM'A. A pregnant woman has life developing within her - TAHARA. When that life emerges into

the world, she is no longer carrying that extra life - TUM'A.

Another aspect of the procedures for the new mother is geared to help her recoup her physical, psychological and emotional identity and well-being.

[P> 13:1 (8)] After the parsha of BIRTH, the Torah moves on to the topic of NEGA'IM (various skin afflictions). The rest of Tazri'a and most of M'tzora deal with this topic.

A person with an affliction that MIGHT be Tzora'at (in one of its many forms) is to be examined by a kohen (expert in the laws and identification of N'GA'IM, with, perhaps, a medical degree and specialty in dermatology, as well). Under certain circumstances, the kohen might declare the afflicted person a M'TZORA rendering him immediately TAMEI (ritually unclean). Or, a kohen might order a one week quarantine with an additional examination to determine the status of the individual, to take place on the seventh day of said quarantine. That second inspection can result in the person being declared "clean" or "Tamei", or an additional week of quarantine can be ordered.

[P> 13:9 (9)] A kohen must examine a case of suspected Tzora'at. He looks for changes in coloration of skin and hair, raised or sunken appearance of the blemished area, increase, decrease or no change in size, and other signs. Sometimes he declares immediate Tzora'at. Sometimes "ritual purity" is declared immediately (in which case a

trip to the pharmacy for a salve might be the best thing). And sometimes a quarantine is declared.

The expertise of a kohen in the area of Nega'im is both an art and a science. And more. Dozens of shades of white and other colors must be distinguishable to the inspecting kohen. An error in perception of a white like the shell of an egg as opposed to the color of the thin membrane under the shell (for example) can make the difference between declaring the examinee Tahor or Tamei. Only certain times of the day are permitted for examining a NEGA, because of the different effects of light and shadow.

The laws of Nega'im are difficult and complex. In addition to everything else, the kohen has to know the psychology of the cases and be sensitive to the personal situations of the afflicted. One example is that a new bride or groom is not examined by the kohen, so they cannot be declared TAMEI. That could spoil their moods, to say the least.

A look at some of the Mishnayot in TAHAROT, even without going in depth, can give one an appreciation of what is involved in this topic. Once again, learning comes to the rescue and allows us to get "involved" in mitzvot even when they aren't active.

[P> 13:18 (6)] The Torah presents further details on what the kohen looks for when inspecting boils and similar afflictions on the skin. The elaborate checking and time delays from inspection to inspection serve to give the afflicted person ample time for introspection. A NEGA on the outside

mirrors a character blemish or a religious shortcoming on the inside. While the kohen examines the external, the Metzora does a thorough job of seeing his own inner being.

MITZVAnotes

Why all the detail? Why are there so many different types of NEGA'IM? Perhaps it is because WE are all different. So many different types of people. So many different temperaments. So many different sins. And so many different personal reactions to our individual situations. We need to feel this individuality. It helps us be responsible for our own deeds. One imagines that the kohen-examiner played the role of counselor too, maybe sensing a disturbed soul that needs TIPUL along with the NEGA.

Levi - Second Aliya - 5+11=16 p'sukim - 13:24-39

[S> 13:24 (5)] This portion discusses burns on the skin and different colorations within the affected area. Keep in mind that a blemish of any sort is NOT Tzora'at unless declared so by a kohen. It could look like Tzora'at, but it isn't unless declared "Tamei" by a kohen. In fact, two people can have identical N'GA'IM and one can be declared a M'tzora, the other not so. And the treatment of each case is completely different as a result.

[P> 13:29 (9)] This next portion deals with

yet another type or two of N'GA'IM - sores on the head, neck, or face, and blotches on the skin. As was mentioned before, we are dealing here with a complex issue of a bridge between the physical and the spiritual. Or, to put it differently, of physical manifestations of spiritual problems.

To help understand this idea better, think of the following analogy: There are physical afflictions and psychological problems that people can suffer. Sometimes, each type is treated independently. But sometimes, a trained professional in the field will see the physical and psychological problems as being connected. In those cases, it is very important for the professional to decide what gets treated and what will improve when the other does, even without special attention.

One example is mental stress which causes a rash or an asthma attack. Manage the stress and the physical symptoms can disappear (sometimes).

This was only an analogy, but this is one of the lessons, of Torat HaM'tzora, the laws of N'GA'IM. The connection of Mind, Body and Soul...

The laws regarding the state of ritual impurity resulting from Tzora'at constitute a positive commandment [169, A101 13:29]. In other words, we would be doing the wrong thing to ignore these laws and details (when they are active). There is a specific prohibition of cutting

the hair of a Tzora'at area on the body [170, L307 13:33]. Among other reasons, this would remove an important indicator for the kohen-inspector (and more importantly, perhaps, for the afflicted person.)

Let's run with the analogy. If a doctor feels that a rash on a patient who came to him might be the result of stress and tension in the workplace, then it would serve no purpose to merely treat the rash. In fact, the rash might clear up after some stress-reduction measures without treating the rash itself. In the case of N'GA'IM, it would be prohibited to treat the NEGA with physical means. Welts, burns, blemishes, boils, etc. might go away after T'shuva and the Tzara'at purification procedures. How can a korban heal an affliction? How can T'shuva heal it? Same question as, How can psychological counseling cure asthma. But it can (sometimes) and so can all of the "remedies" in this week's sedra. Mind, body, soul - they are all connected and inter-related.

[S> 13:38 (2)] In this small parsha, the Torah gives an example of a rash of white spots erupting on the body. In this case, the rash is just a rash. and the afflicted person is TAHOR. Check with his family doctor.

Shlishi - Third Aliya 15 p'sukim - 13:40-54

[S> 13:40 (7)] Certain cases of baldness

are discussed in the first part of this portion. Usually, baldness is just baldness. But occasionally, the skin that is exposed when the hair falls out is blemished in specific ways which might mean Tzora'at.

A person who has Tzora'at, tears his clothes, lets his hair hang loose, and must announce in public that he is TAMEI. The proper conduct of the M'tzora is a mitzva [171, A112 13:45].

[S> 13:47 (13)] The rest of this Aliya deals with infection of Tzora'at on garments. Wool, linen and leather are the materials that are subject to Tzora'at HaBeged. This also constitute one of the 613 mitzvot [172, A102 13:47].

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 5+12+8=25 p'sukim - 13:55-14:20

The fourth Aliya is always the bridge Aliya between combine sedras

The topic of "afflictions of garments" continues into this Aliya, for the duration of the Tazri'a part of the double reading. The fact that there is such a thing as an affliction of a garment tells us something. We are dealing with different ways that G-d communicates his "displeasure" with us, as individuals. Today, we might say, His communication is more subtle - but we must see it... and react appropriately.

On that note... In the VIDUI text, we find "stubbornness" mentioned twice - KISHINU OREF (we have been stiff-necked) and AL CHEIT... B'KASHYUT OREF. One of the definitions of this

sin is the refusal to associate things that happen to us with our behavior. Passing off something bad that happens as "things happen" or coincidence is part of the problem of stubbornness. Not that we know why something happens. We don't. But bad things that happen should move us to self-examination, to introspection. And those thoughts should lead us to improvement in areas of character traits and behaviors of ours that need improvement.

[P> 14:1 (20)] The afflictions presented in Tazria are immediately dealt with by the procedures for purification described in Parshat M'tzora.

The beginning theme of M'tzora is the "ritual purification" of one afflicted with Tzora'at, and certain other conditions that render a person TAMEI. These procedures constitute a positive mitzva [173, A110 14:2]. Two birds are to be taken, a ceremony is performed with them, one bird is slaughtered, and the other is set free. The person immerses in a mikve, he cleans his garments, and he shaves all the hair on his body [174, A111 14:9]. The rules of ritual immersion in general, come from this context [175, A109 14:9].

The purification process is completed after bringing various korbanot, following a seven-day period and the other procedures, as mentioned above [176, A77 14:10].

SDT: Notice how the M'tzora is isolated from others during the time he is ritually unclean. That gives him time to examine himself, his deeds,

his thoughts. But as part of the process of purification, as part of the process of having a second chance in the world, he is ministered to by a kohen who becomes the first contact in his renewal procedure. There is a significant psychological factor in the topic of N'GA'IM.

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 12 p'sukim - 14:21-32

[P> 14:21 (12)] A person who cannot afford the animals for the sacrifices, is to bring one lamb and two birds as his offering. The Torah describes the rituals involved in these offerings.

It is not important how much the sacrifice is worth on a dollars and cents basis (shekels and agorot), but what is relative to the means of the atoner.

Thus ends the section of the Torah dealing with afflictions to the individual. ZOT TORAT... this is the body of law of one afflicted who cannot afford the full set of korbanot.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 21+19=40 p'sukim - 14:33-15:15

[P> 14:33 (25)] The Torah next discusses Tzora'at that can afflict a person's house. This can only be in the Land of Israel, in a house made of specific materials, and under specific conditions [177, A103 14:35]. Once again, it is the kohen who makes the determination as to whether Tzora'at does exist, or a professional

house painter should be consulted. In the case of a "house plague", there are procedures to be followed and purification processes, including korbanot to be brought.

SDT: Not only does a person's body contain elements of spirituality, but so does his home - but only in Eretz Yisrael. Although we do not 'practice' this whole topic today, the lessons of the bridge and connection between the physical world and the spiritual one should not be overlooked. A person whose home is a meeting place for Torah scholars, a launching pad for acts of charity and kindness, a training ground for a new generation of sensitive, feeling, enthusiastic Jews, such a home cannot be infected by spiritual plague. A home devoid of spirituality is a prime target for Nig'ei HaBayit. In this case, it is not the anti-rust and anti-mold paint that makes the difference. It is the values that a Jew lives by and their effect on the next generation.

This parsha concludes with a summary of the different types of NEGA'IM.

We also find a curiosity among these p'sukim - specifically, two consecutive p'sukim of three words each. Unique in the Torah.

[P> 15:1 (15)] Next the Torah speaks of the status of a man with an "unnatural discharge" (probably a form of venereal disease). In such cases, the Torah view matters as a combination of physical symptoms with spiritual causes - in the

case of ZAV and ZAVA, most probably attributable to sexual misconduct. The one afflicted is himself "Tamei" as well as causing other people and objects to become "ritually impure" through contact, both direct and indirect [178, A104 15:2]. The one afflicted, must bring special korbanot after a purification process [179, A74 15:13].

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 13+5=18 p'sukim - 15:16-33

[S> 15:16 (3)] There is also a "ritual impurity" (of a lesser degree i.e. one-day type) in cases of a normal seminal emission [180, A105 15:17].

A menstruating woman becomes "ritually unclean". This is counted as a positive mitzva [181, A99 15:19]; the prohibition "other side of the coin" to this mitzva is in Acharei.

[P> 15:19 (6)] A woman with an unnatural discharge has a specific set of rules. In the case of a ZAVA, there are differences in her status depending upon how many sightings of blood there are, and how frequent.

[S> 15:25 (9)] The longer-term ZAVA is presented in its own parsha, a S'TUMA that can be seen as a sub-parsha of the previous P'TUCHA that introduced the topic of ZAVA. These rules and procedures constitute a mitzva [182, A106 15:19].

The requirement of the korbanot at the conclusion of the period of impurity is a mitzva [183, A75 15:29]. The people of

Israel have a great potential for attaining spiritual heights. They have an equally great potential for descending to low levels of spiritual impurity.

There are five sedras whose names dropped the HEI from the word they are named for - Mishpatim, Sh'mini, M'tzora, Matot, D'varim.

Maftir in 2nd Torah

- 7 p'sukim

- Bamidbar 28:9-15

Chapters 28 and 29 in Bamidbar (Parshat Pinchas) deal with the daily and Musaf korbanot in the Mikdash. The two Shabbat p'sukim followed by the five that deal with Rosh Chodesh combined for the Maftir of Shabbat Rosh Chodesh.

Note that when any holiday is on Shabbat, the maftir is only about the Musaf of the holiday, and Shabbat's Musaf is not mentioned. The plain reason is that the two p'sukim about Shabbat Musaf are not continuous in the Torah with any other Musafim besides that of Rosh Chodesh. And the skipping that would be necessary on any of those other days is not sanctioned. But perhaps, we can see something additional in the Shabbat - Rosh Chodesh situation, namely that Shabbat Rosh Chodesh is not just Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh that coincide, but it is a fusion of the two days, each of which represents a different facet of K'dushat Z'man - Sanctity of Time.

Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh cover everything. Shabbat is the culmination of the week. It belongs to the week. Its Musaf is an extension of the daily korbanot - two lambs. Rosh Chodesh is the starting point for all the holidays. Each and every holiday exists because the first day of the month of each holiday was sanctified as Rosh Chodesh. No Rosh Chodesh - no holiday in that month.

Rosh Chodesh is linked to the holidays by its Musaf, as Shabbat is linked to the days of the week. Two bulls, one ram, seven lambs plus one sin-offering goat - identical to some of the holidays and similar enough to the rest.

Haftara - 24* p'sukim - Yeshayahu 66:1-24

The Haftara for Shabbat-Rosh Chodesh, the last chapter of Yeshayahu, preempts the regular Haftara (usually). The obvious reason for the choice is found in the next to the last pasuk, which mentions both Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh. This pasuk is reread after the last pasuk, so that the book of Yeshayahu - and this Haftara - can end on a brighter note than its real end provides. This chapter, as all chapters in Yeshayahu from 40 and on, contains a message of consolation. Specifically, this chapter tells us that G-d cannot be contained in the physical Mikdash, nor is He interested in sacrifices that are not offered with sincerity and accompanied by T'shuva. This message is appropriate

always, and the association with Shabbat - week in & week out - Rosh Chodesh - month in & month out, fits well.

The pasuk that we read twice at the end of the haftara joins Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh in a way that we do not find for any of the holidays: "And it shall come to pass, that every new moon, and every Shabbat, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, says HaShem."

Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara
by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler**

Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)

REISHIT TZ'MICHAT GE'ULATEINU

YOM HA'ATZMA'UT

On this special Shabbat, a day when we are privileged to read two parshot - Tazri'a and M'tzora - and to mark Rosh Chodesh of Iyar, we find much material to discuss regarding both of the Torah portions and concerning the significance of the month. However, I have decided to "pass over" these opportunities, favoring, instead, the chance to focus on the holiday that is NEVER observed on Shabbat - but IS celebrated this week. It is for this reason, that I begin this article by sending the warmest

MAZAL TOV wishes to all who will be rejoicing on the 78th Yom Ha'Atzma'ut of the State of Israel this coming week!

And it is for the same reason that my message this week will focus on the "non-Shabbat" haftara, the haftara of Yom Ha'Atzma'ut.

In 1949, the first year after the establishment of the State of Israel, the Rabbanut instituted the reading of the eleventh and twelfth p'rakim of Sefer Yishayahu for the haftara of Yom Ha'Atzma'ut. They chose this specific selection, as its depiction of the Messianic Era is one that is unparalleled in all of Tanach. Clearly, the Rabbis of the last generation saw the establishment of a Jewish State as nothing less than REISHIT TZ'MICHAT GE'ULATEINU - "the first flowering of our redemption".

Yeshayahu's vision of an idyllic world that is portrayed in these p'rakim - its picture of a peaceful world realized through the leadership of a king from the Davidic dynasty - may not be yet reached, but throughout those years of struggle, Jews remained confident that G-d's promise would, ultimately, be fulfilled. This prophetic vision includes the establishment of a just and righteous society, one inspired by a divine spirit of wisdom and understanding and by a leader who would judge the destitute with righteousness and who would strike

down wickedness. And when Yishayahu paints the portrait of a world where natural enemies - the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid - would live in peace, we understood all too well that the ultimate goal and the ultimate blessing would be that of peace.

However... the haftara does NOT begin with the depiction of this idyllic world! It actually begins with the last three verses of the tenth perek, a chapter in which the navi relates the many misdeeds and failings that Israel committed during the era of the first Beit HaMikdash. In fact, these final verses that open the haftara, begin, quite poetically, with a portrayal of Sancheriv's victorious march through the Judean cities that he had conquered! The opening words, OD HAYOM B'NOV LA'AMOD, describe the powerful Assyrian army standing at the outskirts of Yerushalayim (Nov), with her general contemptuously waving his hand over the Holy City and boasting of his inevitable victory!

Given this truth, why would our scholars, celebrate the REISHIT TZ'MICHAT GE'ULATEINU by opening Yeshayahu's wonderful prophetic description of Y'mot HaMashi'ach with the frightening depiction of the enemy's victory?

Actually, our Rabbis had good reason to do so.

The Rabbanut understood well that this portrayal clearly reflected the widespread attitude of the Arab enemy in 1948, boasting - contemptuously "waving their hand" - that they would soon push the outnumbered and ill-equipped Jews into the sea. Our scholars recognized how well the second and third verses of the haftara reflected the miracles of 1948, in which Yishayahu prophesies how Hashem will bring down the haughty enemy and crush those who hoped to destroy G-d's nation. It is for this reason, that the ancient Tana'itic scholars established the reading of this haftara for the eighth day of Pesach - for they also saw this nevu'a as a fitting message for the final day of Chag HaGe'ula! And Israel's Gedolei HaRabbanim of 1948-9 saw the very same message.

The eighth day of Pesach is seen as a Chag HaGe'ula for Jews in the Diaspora... but today, the fifth day of Iyar must be regarded as the Chag HaGe'ula for ALL Jews around the world.

It is, after all,

Reishit Tz'michat Ge'ulateinu! ✨

The fun way to go over the weekly sedra with your children, grandchildren, Shabbat guests

TZAV-HAGADOL

• so too, the two riddles • plus one new picture riddle and one word one

Besides the Shabbat before Pesach, what Shabbat is called Shabbat HaGadol?

Great riddle to ask at your Shabbat table - on any Shabbat of the year. The answer is Every Shabbat. Check the wording of R'TZEI in Birkat HaMazon.

ARBA KANFOR without the IT

Tzitzit without the it is the TZITZ of the Kohen Gadol.

Its beginning is our standing end

The first pasuk of the haftara of Shabbat HaGadol, V'ORVA LASHEM... is what we say at the end of the Amida.

CHAMISHA MI YODEI'A? Who knows FIVE. In the Hagada, the answer is the five Chumashim of the Torah. In Parshat Tzav, the answer is ZOT TORAT... This is the Torah (teaching) of - the Olah, the Mincha, the Chatat, the Asham, the Zevach HaSh'lamim. Five types of korbanot that follow the words ZOT (or V'ZOT) TORAT

TAZRI'A - M'TZORA ROSH CHODESH



Upper-left: Birth of a baby boy <> knife for Mila, handle engraved with BRIT KODESH (too small to see - take my word for it) <> birth of baby girl <> under each pic is the period in days of Tum'a and Tahara following the birth <> dove and lamb are korbanot of a Yoledet <> if the woman cannot afford a lamb, she brings two doves (the letter O is for the word O (ALEF-VAV, meaning or) <> Lower-right is a shield used by mohalim during a Mila - until this point, the pix have been for Perek 12 (shortest perek in the Torah, 8 p'sukim) <> TAZ - (nickname of the Looney Tunes

character, the Tasmanian devil) <> RHEA (large South American bird) <> MITZ (as in juice) ORA (besides the person Ora, the first three letters of ORAnge) all spell out TAZRI'A M'TZORA <> NEGA on body (arm) <> and on garments (wool and leather) <> and on house <> chameleon for the changing colors of Nega'm that guide the kohen in his determinations <> razor for shaving the metzora after his period of Tum'a <> eyes with one eyebrow missing because the metzora shaves all his body hair, including eyebrows (he hasn't finished yet) <> two kosher birds but not eligible for the Altar (sparrows in this pic) are used in the purification process of the metzora <> as are the EIZOV (hyssop, zahtar) <> and cedar branch <> three lambs are for the korbanot of the purified metzora <> Rav Kook, a kohein, with glasses, because of the many references to the kohein looking at the various blemishes to determine NEGA status <> 'pound sign' (has many other names, including - hash, number sign, tic tac toe, octothorpe) for the warp and woof of the weave of fabric (wool or linen) that can be afflicted <> and a diagram of the weaving pattern referred to several times in the sedra as SH'TI & EIREV (weft is another name for woof) <> traffic light stands for the the colors red, yellow, and green - all mentioned in the sedra <> right ear lobe, right thumb and right

big toe are involved in blood and oil applications (old meaning of the word, no relationship to cellphone apps) of the purification process of the metzora <> question mark between light green and red on one side and deep green and red on the other, are for the different opinions as to what Y'RAKRAK and ADAMDAM mean <> the tops of the letters of the word CHODESH is for ROSH CHO-DESH <> Pooh's friend Eeyore is for the month of IYAR <> 26-9-22 is not a date but rather the numbers that represent the letters of the English alphabet: 26 is for Z, 9 is for I, 22 is for V. Together, they spell ZIV, another name for Iyar <> Two classic Unexplaineds

לע"נ
הרב יעקב צבי ב"ר דוד אריה ז"ל
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

Holiness and Childbirth

TAZRI'A-M'TZORA

The sidrot of Tazri'a and M'tzora contain laws which are among the most difficult to understand. They are about conditions of "impurity" arising from the fact that we are physical beings, embodied souls, and hence exposed to (in Hamlet's words) "the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to".

Though we have immortal longings, mortality is the condition of human existence, as it is of all embodied life.

Rambam explains: We have already shown that, in accordance with the Divine wisdom, genesis can only take place through destruction, and without the destruction of the individual members of the species, the species themselves would not exist permanently... He who thinks that he can have flesh and bones without being subject to any external influence, or any of the accidents of matter, unconsciously wishes to reconcile two opposites, namely, to be at the same time subject and not subject to change. (Guide for the Perplexed, III:12)

Throughout history there have been two distinct and opposing ways of relating to this fact: hedonism (living for physical pleasure) and asceticism (relinquishing physical pleasure). The former worships the physical while denying the spiritual, the latter enthrones the spiritual at the cost of the physical.

The Jewish way has always been different: to sanctify the physical - eating, drinking, sex and rest - making the life of the body a vehicle for the Divine Presence. The reason is simple. We believe with perfect faith that the God of Redemption is also the God of Creation. The physical

world we inhabit is the one God made and pronounced "very good". To be a hedonist is to deny God. To be an ascetic is to deny the goodness of God's world. To be a Jew is to celebrate both creation and Creator. That is the principle that explains many otherwise incomprehensible features of Jewish life.

The laws with which the Parsha begins are striking examples of this:

When a woman conceives and gives birth to a boy, she shall be T'MEI'A for seven days, just as she is during the time of separation when she has her period... Then, for thirty-three additional days she shall have a waiting period during which her blood is ritually clean. Until this purification period is complete, she shall not touch anything holy and shall not enter the Sanctuary.

If she gives birth to a girl, she shall have for two weeks the same T'MEI'A status as during her menstrual period. Then, for sixty-six days after that, she shall have a waiting period during which her blood is ritually clean.

She then brings a burnt-offering and a sin-offering, after which she is restored to "ritual purity". What is the meaning of these laws? Why does childbirth render the mother T'MEI'A (usually translated as "ritually impure", better understood as "a

condition which impedes or exempts from a direct encounter with holiness")? And why is the period after giving birth to a girl twice that for a boy?

There is a temptation to see these laws as inherently beyond the reach of human understanding. Several rabbinic statements seem to say just this. In fact, it is not so, as Rambam explains at length in the Guide. To be sure, we can never know - specifically with respect to laws that have to do with K'dusha (holiness) and Tahara (purity) - whether our understanding is correct. But we are not thereby forced to abandon our search for understanding, even though any explanation will be at best speculative and tentative.

The first principle essential to understanding the laws of ritual purity and impurity is that God is life. Judaism is a profound rejection of cults, ancient and modern, that glorify death. The great pyramids of Egypt were grandiose tombs. Arthur Koestler noted that without death "the cathedrals collapse, the pyramids vanish into the sand, the great organs become silent." The English metaphysical poets turned to it constantly as a theme. As T. S. Eliot wrote:

*Webster was much possessed by death
And saw the skull beneath the skin ...
Donne, I suppose, was such another ...
He knew the anguish of the marrow
The ague of the skeleton ...*

- Whispers of Immortality, T. S. Eliot

Freud coined the word thanatos to describe the death-directed character of human life. Judaism is a protest against death-centered cultures. "It is not the dead who praise the Lord, nor those who go down into silence" (Psalm 114). "What profit is there in my death, if I go down into the pit? Can the dust acknowledge You? Can it proclaim your truth?" (Psalm 30). As we open a Sefer Torah we say: "All of you who hold fast to the Lord your God are alive today" (D'varim 4:4). The Torah is a tree of life. God is the God of life. As Moshe put it in two memorable words: "Choose life" (30:19).

It follows that K'dusha - a point in time or space where we stand in the unmediated presence of God - involves a supreme consciousness of life. That is why the paradigm case of Tum'a is contact with a corpse. Other cases of Tum'a include diseases or bodily emissions that remind us of our mortality. God's domain is life. Therefore it may not be associated in any way with intimations of death.

This is how R' Yehuda HaLevi explains

the purity laws: A dead body represents the highest degree of loss of life, and a leprous limb is as if it were dead. It is the same with the loss of seed, because it had been endowed with living power, capable of engendering a human being. Its loss therefore forms a contrast to the living and breathing. (Kuzari, II:60)

The laws of purity apply exclusively to Israel, argues HaLevi, precisely because Judaism is the supreme religion of life, and its adherents are therefore hyper-sensitive to even the most subtle distinctions between life and death.

A second principle, equally striking, is the acute sensitivity Judaism shows to the birth of a child. Nothing is more "natural" than procreation. Every living thing engages in it. Sociobiologists go so far as to argue that a human being is a gene's way of creating another gene. By contrast, the Torah goes to great lengths to describe how many of the heroines of the Bible - among them Sara, Rivka, Rachel, Chana and the Shunamite woman - were infertile and had children only through a miracle.

Clearly the Torah intends a message here, and it is unmistakable. To be a Jew is to know that survival is not a matter of biology alone. What other cultures may take as natural is for us a miracle. Every Jewish child is a gift of God. No faith has taken children

more seriously or devoted more of its efforts to raising the next generation. Childbirth is wondrous. To be a parent is the closest any of us come to God Himself. That, incidentally, is why women are closer to God than men, because they, unlike men, know what it is to bring new life out of themselves, as God brings life out of Himself. The idea is beautifully captured in the verse in which, leaving Eden, Adam turns to his wife and calls her Chava "for she is the mother of all life".

We can now speculate about the laws relating to childbirth. When a mother gives birth, she undergoes great risk. Throughout the centuries, childbirth has been a life-threatening danger to mother and baby alike, and even today there are ever-present risks for many. Furthermore, during the process of childbirth, a woman is separated from what until now had been part of her own body (a foetus, said the rabbis, "is like a limb of the mother") and which has now become an independent person. If that is so in the case of a boy, it is doubly so in the case of a girl - who, with God's help, will not merely live but may herself in later years become a source of new life. At one level, therefore, the laws signal the detachment of life from life.

At another level, they surely suggest something more profound. There is a

halachic principle: "One who is engaged in a mitzva is exempt from other mitzvot." It is as if God were saying to the mother: for forty days in the case of a boy, and doubly so in the case of a girl (the mother-daughter bond is ontologically stronger than that between mother and son): I exempt you from coming before Me in the place of holiness because you are fully engaged in one of the holiest acts of all, nurturing and caring for your child. Unlike others you do not need to visit the Temple to be attached to life in all its sacred splendour. You are experiencing it yourself, directly and with every fibre of your being. Days, weeks, from now you will come and give thanks before Me (together with offerings for having come through a moment of danger). But for now, look upon your child with wonder. For you have been given a glimpse of the great secret, otherwise known only to God.

Childbirth exempts the new mother from attendance at the Temple because her bedside replicates the experience of the Temple. She now knows what it is for love to beget life, and - in the midst of mortality - to be touched by an intimation of immortality.

Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) In Judaism we often sanctify the physical world. Where in your life can you elevate an everyday act into something holy?
- (2) How might seeing every childbirth as a miracle change the way we think about families and parenting?
- (3) A new mother is exempt from the Temple because she is already experiencing holiness. What does this teach us about where to find God?

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Message from the Haftara

*Rabbi Katriel (Kenneth) Brander
President and Rosh HaYeshiva
Ohr Torah Stone Institutions*

All Who Mourn for Jerusalem...

SHABBAT ROSH CHODESH

This year, as Parshat Tazria-Metzora coincides with Shabbat Rosh Chodesh, and the weekly haftara gives way to the closing chapter of the Book of Yishayahu, it is impossible to hear Yeshayahu's stirring words of consolation this season without feeling their weight.

Two and a half years have passed

since the horrors of October 7th. We have lived through wars fought on multiple fronts - in Gaza and Lebanon, Syria and Iran. Homes destroyed across the north, south, and center of Israel. Families cycling through bomb shelters and reserve duty. Non-stop shiva calls. And, as this haftara falls just before Yom HaZikaron, military cemeteries that have grown far too large. Yishayahu's vision of comfort is addressed precisely to this kind of grief - and it places a profound and demanding condition on that comfort.

The prophet paints a future of joy and renewal: Jerusalem rebuilt, her streets once again filled with laughter and light. "Bring Jerusalem joy, exult in her, all of you who love her; celebrate her joy with her, all of you who mourned her" (Yishayahu 66:10). The Gemara (Taanit 30b) reads this verse with care and draws out a powerful principle: Only those who have genuinely mourned for Jerusalem will merit sharing in her future joy. The invitation to rejoice in redemption is conditional upon having grieved.

This teaching about who truly "mourns for Jerusalem" carries urgent contemporary weight. A Pew Research Center study released last month found that American favorability toward Israel has dropped eight percentage points in a single

year, with 60% of Americans now holding an unfavorable view. More troubling is the trend within the Jewish community: just last year, 73% of American Jewish respondents held a favorable view of Israel. That figure has fallen to 64% - a decline of nearly ten points in twelve months. For those who love Zion, these are not merely political data points. They are a challenge to the very solidarity that Yishayahu's vision demands.

What lies behind this shift? Part of the answer is a well-funded, coordinated campaign to delegitimize the State of Israel and Zionism - visible in American higher education, in the media, and in political lobbying. This must be named and addressed.

But it would be a mistake to look only outward. We in Israel must honestly ask whether the policies and public statements of top Israeli officials have not made it easier to misrepresent Israel as a state unconcerned with minorities, insensitive to other faiths (including Jewish denominations which are not Orthodox), and willing to flatten Gaza and repopulate it with Jewish settlements. The obligation to protect the State is sacred; so too is the obligation to ensure that the vision of an independent, flourishing Jewish State remains one that Jews in Israel and the Diaspora can embrace together.

"As a man is consoled by his mother,

just so shall I comfort you, and in Jerusalem, you shall be consoled” (v. 13). Yishayahu’s image of consolation is strikingly intimate – the warmth of a mother, the certainty of belonging. This comfort is not meant to be experienced alone. It is promised to a people that returns to Jerusalem together, whose grief has been communal and whose joy will be shared. Since October 7th, so many Jews worldwide have indeed mourned, prayed, donated, advocated, and made aliya. That solidarity is real, and must not be taken for granted.

Generations ago, a visitor to the Kotel etched into its ancient stones a verse from this very haftara: “You shall look on, your heart rejoicing, while your bones grow vigorous, like grass, and the hand of the Lord becomes known to His servants” (v. 14). An anonymous hand carved those words of hope into the wall – a private prayer left for all who would come after. This person understood Yishayahu’s meaning precisely: Our hope is not merely personal. The rejoicing, the vigorous renewal, the recognition of God’s hand in history – all of it belongs to all our people, as one.

As we approach Yom HaZikaron, mourning our fallen with aching hearts, may we recommit to the work of shared solidarity that Yishayahu demands. May we grieve together,

hold one another, and confront with honesty and courage whatever stands between us and the vision of Jerusalem restored. And may we all merit, as a nation, and not merely as individuals, to see that day of consolation soon. 🌍

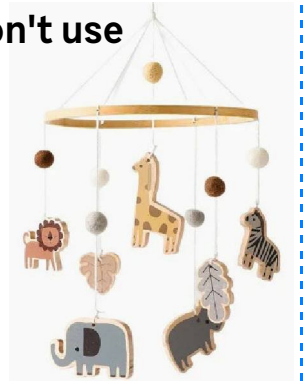
מִרְצֵדֶת אֶטְלַן
microULPAN

Here's another real Hebrew word for something that most (almost all)

Hebrew speakers don't use or even know.

This one, **MIRTZEDET**, is the Hebrew word for **MOBILE**.

(not mobile phone)



Walk through the Parsha

with **Rabbi David Walk**



S'FIRAT HA-OMER

S'FIRA & SOCIETY

This title expresses the idea that the activity called S'FRAT HA'OMER carries greater meaning than just the process of counting the days and weeks between the second day of Pesach and the holiday of Shavuot. Because when we count we are

simultaneously preparing for a new reality for the Jewish nation.

Besides the actual counting, what else are we trying to achieve? The Noam Elimelech (Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk) believes that the secret purpose is in the very word US-FARTEM (and you shall count, Vayikra 23:15). Reb Elimelech explains that this term comes from the word SAPIR (a shining stone, like sapphire). Our 'count' is casting a bright light on this time period helping us prepare for Revelation at Sinai, just a few weeks away.

According to many authorities, we use these weeks to cast a bright light on our own behavior. We want to purge ourselves of any negative traits in order to be worthy of receiving the Torah at Sinai. We recreate the effort of our ancestors, who threw off the impurities of their long stay in the corrupt society of Egypt.

K'dushat Levi presents us with a syllabus of how to prepare for the great day: The first of the seven weeks is devoted to recognizing that after 2500 years of human existence, we acknowledge its Creator and his favorite people, Israel. The second week is devoted to embracing God with reverence and awe, recognizing in Him as the Originator of all existence. The third week is devoted to ensure that God will have reason to "boast" about His people and their

accomplishments. The fourth and fifth weeks are devoted to deepening our faith in the Creator, our ability to withstand any doubt of His being the only God. The sixth week is devoted to strengthening our ties to Him through the intensity with which we serve Him. Finally, the seventh week is devoted to declaring Him as the King of Kings.

Cool! The Ohev Yisrael (Reb Avraham Yehoshua Heschel, the one who lived 1748-1825) tells us never to underestimate the power of this Mitzva, because it brings us to such a profound spiritual place. He explains that we went from illiterate slaves to sophisticated servants of God. He sees this idea represented in the move from sacrificing barley, which is animal food, at the beginning of this period, to bringing the fine wheat loaves on Shavuot.

He sees the GEMATRIYA of CHITA (wheat), which is 22, as establishing this point. This is the number of letters in our Hebrew alphabet, and represents the idea of us becoming literate on the way to becoming the 'People of the Book'.

The ultimate importance of the S'firat Ha'Omer period to our national identity is connected to a famous argument. Did God give us the Torah on the fiftieth day, immediately upon completion of the Count or one day later, the fifty-first day. The first idea is the more commonly held position,

and is, of course, that this day is the anniversary of receiving the Torah from God. This is the true beginning of our nation, and often is compared to a wedding ceremony between us and our God. This is how Rav Ya'akov Medan of Yeshivat Har Etziyon describes it:

The Exodus is compared to an engagement between God and Israel. However, the union was only sealed at the foot of Mount Sinai where we voluntarily accepted the Torah. Upon leaving Egypt, the Jews counted each day that brought them closer to Shavuot, to the intimate connection that they yearned to have. Every year, we relive this feeling of longing and anticipation. We eagerly await Shavuot when our covenant with Hashem is re-affirmed. We hope and pray that the bread of affliction - the poor man's bread of Pesach - is transformed into the full, rich loaves of the Shavuot service. Thus, S'firat Ha-Omer as a period of transformation and longing, is relevant in both the agricultural and the historical senses.

But what about the other point of view? What is the great significance of the 50th day if we really received the Ten Commandments only the next morning? Rav Shimshon Rephael Hirsch holds this position and he describes it this way: The fact that the day which is elevated to a Festival should NOT be the day of the

Revelation, but the final day of the counting which leads up to it... It is not the Revelation, but our making ourselves worthy of it, that our festival celebrates. The day on which the nation presented itself as worthy of the mission to the world, to be the bearers of the Law.

Excellent! And what character traits make us worthy to be God's representatives here on earth? Well, Rav Hirsch, I believe answers that question in his comment to verse 22 in our chapter. In that verse, we are told to leave parts of the harvest (the corners and the fallen sheaves) for the poor and the landless. Rav Hirsch explains that without those laws the harvest would only belong to the landed and the wealthy. The poor would lose their dignity and have to rely on the good will of others, which is humiliating.

This is the true meaning of the word TZ'DAKA, from the word TZEDEK, 'righteousness'. It's not charity; it's the right of the poor to this part of the harvest. Everyone in Israel attains human dignity. And he concludes: This concept of TZ'DAKA is the greatest social triumph of God's Law within the people of God.

A society is judged by how it treats its weakest and poorest members, usually the widow, orphan and stranger. This coming week is Yom HaAtzma'ut, the anniversary of the

birth of our Medina. It's a time for celebration. But shouldn't it also be a day of contemplation and self-awareness. Shouldn't we use this day to not only dance but also examine our values?

Let's have our barbecue, but let's also compare our national reality to our moral obligations. Are we living up to the TZ'DAKA of the Torah and the stated goals of our Declaration of Independence:

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture.

Do we live up to the vision? 

Rav Kook Torah



by Rabbi Chanan Morrison -
www.ravkooktorah.com

Rabbi Abba Arrives in Babylonia

Summary: Rav experienced the paradox of being the vehicle for the Torah's exile from the Land of Israel, even as that departure caused him great pain.

Babylonia did not become the center of world Jewry overnight. But a defining moment in the gradual relocation of Jewish leadership from Eretz Yisrael to Babylonia may be pinpointed to a particular event: the arrival of Rabbi Abba Aricha on the shores of Babylonia in 219CE.

Rabbi Abba was the preeminent scholar of his generation. He was known to all by the simple appellation "Rav" – the Rabbi. With Rav's arrival and the establishment of his famed yeshiva in Sura, Babylonia emerged as the true center of Torah scholarship (see Gittin 6a, Ketubot 111a).

The Talmud in Shabbat 108a offers an intriguing account of this historic event. The great Babylonia scholar, Shmuel of Nehardea, and his student Karna were sitting by the banks of the Malka River. Suddenly they saw the river waters rising and becoming muddied. Shmuel told his student

Karna: “A great man has arrived from the West [the Land of Israel]. He has a stomach ailment and the waters are rising in his honor. Go and ‘test his wine’.”

Karna then greeted Rav and presented him with three questions:

How do we know that Tefillin may only be written on parchment taken from a ritually-pure animal?

How do we know that blood is red?

How do we know which part of the body should be circumcised?

Rav successfully passed this unusual test. He then gave Karna a caustic “blessing”: “May a horn (karna) sprout from your eye.”

What is the meaning of this bizarre exchange?

Uplifting, Yet Murky

The waters in Babylonia did not rise just in Rav’s honor. This phenomenon was a sign of Babylonia’s rising fortunes and its emergence as the leading center of Torah learning.

At the same time, the waters were murky – a sign that this pivotal event was a source of profound sadness to the Jewish people. The scholar’s move to Babylonia was yet another indication of the decline of the Jewish community in the Land of Israel. Rav’s physical illness mirrored his inner pain and distress at the

necessity to further deepen the exile of the Jewish people.

What was the meaning of the peculiar test that the Babylonian scholars set for Rav?

They realized that Rav was pained by the exile of Torah from Eretz Yisrael. And yet Rav was the very vehicle by which this was taking place! Rav’s life was the fulfillment of this great, yet bitter vision, a historic event both uplifting and disturbing, containing elements of national aspiration and collective suffering. Only a great soul could unite such terrible contradictions. Therefore Shmuel commanded his disciple: Go test this scholar.

Three Questions

All three of Karna’s questions hinted at the centrality of the Land of Israel for the Jewish people. It is interesting to note that it is precisely in the Talmudic sayings of the Babylonian scholars that we find statements praising the sanctity of the Land of Israel and the importance of living there. The ideology of the Babylonian rabbis was to negate and belittle the Diaspora, despite whatever advantages, material or spiritual, it held.

The first question posed to the scholar forced to leave Eretz Yisrael was like a stab to the heart. How do we know that Tefillin may only be written on parchment from a kosher animal? Parchment from other

animals may be just as suitable for writing; but the holiness of the Tefillin cannot bind with impure material. So too, the holiness of the Torah cannot properly rest in a Jewish community residing in an impure land. Perhaps some great need forced Rav to leave Israel, but there should be no doubt as to the Holy Land's spiritual advantage over the impure land of exile.

What about Karna's second question – from where do we know that blood is red? This question was meant to evaluate Rav's love and dedication to the Land of Israel. Besides the Land's spiritual qualities and intrinsic holiness, one must also consider the nation's devotion to its homeland. These are ties of blood, built up over generations of self-sacrifice, as the nation defended the land against enemies attempting to steal it. Blood is a metaphor of our natural connection to the land – deep, national ties which cannot be broken by deliberate calculations and rationalizations.

Connected to the Physical

Karna's final question dealt with the mitzva of Brit Mila. We find that the Torah speaks of removing the ORLA of the heart (D'varim 10:16) and the ORLA of the ears (Yirmiyahu 6:10). So where should circumcision be performed?

Rav replied that the Torah refers to the fruit of a tree's first three years

as ORLA (Vayikra 19:23). Just as that ORLA refers to that which produces fruit, so, too, circumcision is performed in a place that produces fruit.

This question also concerns our ties to the Land of Israel. One might think that Brit Mila is a spiritual undertaking, such as removing the heart's ORLA to deepen one's ethical sensitivity, or removing the ear's ORLA so it can hear and absorb elevated messages.

True spiritual growth, however, requires a foundation of Brit Mila in the physical flesh, influencing future generations – “in a place producing fruit”.

So too, the special aspirations of the Jewish people are not only in the spheres of the abstract and metaphysical. They must be based on the physical realm – the Land of Israel. Our foundations of holiness must be connected to the material, just as the soul can only function in this world while bound to a physical body. Only after the Brit is established in the physical realm is it possible to overcome other types of spiritual impediments, as we remove the ORLA from our hearts and ears.

With regard to the heart and the ear, the Torah uses the word ORLA. But regarding trees, the Torah uses the same exact phrase as it uses with circumcision – ORLATO – “its ORLA”.

This, Rav explained, is the full expression of ORLA, referring to one's most basic level of obstruction to the spiritual and the holy.

Two Types of Keren

At the end of this test, Rav had a sharp retort for his interviewer. 'Your name is Karna? Then may a horn (karna) sprout from your eye.' What did Rav mean by this?

The Hebrew word KEREN has two meanings. It may refer to a ray of light; or it may refer to the horn of an animal. Thus a KEREN can enable the eye to see, or conversely, it can blind it.

Rav rejected Karna's implied criticism that, by leaving the Land of Israel, he was weakening the connection of the Jewish people to their Land. His true intention was to enlighten the Jews living in exile and elevate them with the Torah's holiness. Then they would be worthy of returning to the Land of their fathers, to build it and be built through it with dignity and holiness.

By way of analogy, Rav noted that while a KEREN should be a source of light, it can also be a sharp horn, blinding instead of enlightening. So too, our love for the Land of Israel should be a source of inspiration and holiness. However, this love can be debased into greed for material gain and physical pleasure. Exile was necessary in order to elevate the

nation's love for the land to a noble holiness. Then they will be ready for their national redemption, to leave the land of darkness to the place of light.

*Adapted from Ein Eyah
vol. IV, pp. 277-279*

Rav Kook on T'hilim

*from an unpublished work
by Rabbi Chanan Morrison*

T'hilim 20 - Grasping the Middle of the Beam

Summary: During troubled times, we should follow the path of calling out in the name of Jacob's God, focusing on Israel's special covenant with God.

May God answer you in a day of distress; may the name of Yaakov's God fortify you (T'hilim 20:2).

Why does the psalmist indicate that, in times of trouble, we should call out in "the name of Yaakov's God"?

Why not pray to Avraham's God, or Yitzchak's God?

The Sages explained that Yaakov is specifically mentioned because "The owner of a beam should grasp the beam by its thickest part" (B'rachot 64a). But this statement is puzzling.

What does advice on how to hold an unwieldy piece of wood have to do with prayer in times of trouble?

The Mountain, the Field, and the House

Rav Kook wrote that each of the Avot had his own spiritual path in serving God. Avraham strived to teach the entire world about the One God. The name “Avraham” means “the father of many nations”. His service was embodied by the image of a Mountain. “On God’s Mountain, [God] will be seen.” The Mountain indicates an open, accessible place, inviting all people to approach.

The metaphor for Yitzchak’s service of God was a Field. “Yitzchak went out to meditate in the Field.” Like the Mountain, the Field indicates an open place, without boundaries and divisions.

Yaakov, on the other hand, heralded the beginning of a new stage in the world’s spiritual development. With Yaakov began the establishment of the Jewish people, a nation with a Divine covenant and a holy mission. All of his children formed the twelve tribes of Israel.

This was the start of a new process, the world’s elevation through the influence of a holy nation. Yaakov’s service is compared to a House: “the House of Yaakov’s God” (Yishayahu 2:3). Houses are defined by walls,

separating those inside and those outside the structure.

Two Paths

Now we may understand what it means to call out in “the name of Yaakov’s God.”

We may draw close to God in two ways. The first path is to approach God through the universal ideals that connect every human soul to its Maker. We may refer to this path as calling in the “name of the God of Avraham and Yitzchak”. This is a universal path by which all peoples relate to God. It is the Mountain and the Field, the spiritual paths of Avraham and Yitzchak, accessible to all.

The second path is to call “in the name of Yaakov’s God.” This means to base our relationship to God on His special covenant with the Jewish people.

So which path should we take?

The psalmist teaches that during troubled times, we should follow the second path and focus on Israel’s special connection to God. At times of peril and need, it is best to deepen our closeness to God with those aspects that are close to the heart. This approach will inspire an outpouring of the soul and an awareness that we are praying to One Who comes to the aid of those who call out to Him.

By concentrating on this special connection to God – a connection fortified by mitzvot binding us to God’s service – our heart is filled with powerful feelings of love and awe. We are filled with great love for the God of Israel, Who drew us near to serve Him and gave us His Torah.

The universal connection of every human soul to God is a real connection, but it is of a more abstract nature. Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi termed this intellectual service as worshipping “the God of Aristotle”. It lacks the warmth needed to kindle the emotions and gain closeness to God – a sense of connection that is essential in times of trouble. Unlike the more dispassionate intellect, awakening our feelings of love and awe will have a greater impact on our actions, as our emotions are closer to our physical side.

Gripping the Middle of the Beam

Now we may understand the Talmudic metaphor of grasping a wooden beam at its thickest point. A piece of timber has various parts: small branches and twigs at one end, heavy roots at the other. It is easiest to carry a beam by holding it, not at the top, but near the bottom, at its thickest spot.

So, too, one may relate to God with an abstract, universal approach, as the Creator, as the God of Avraham and Yitzchak. But the psalmist

counseled that we grasp, not the upper branches, but the massive trunk. We should hold on to that which is closest to us, that which most directly appeals to our heart and soul. This is “the name of Yaakov’s God” - our connection to God as belonging to the Jewish people, as recipients of His Torah.

This advice is especially relevant during times of trouble, whether personal or communal. At such times, we should gather under the flag of the Jewish people, renew our dedication to Torah, and awaken the holy emotions and thoughts that are unique to Israel. With this effort, the national soul of Israel gains strength and power, thus advancing the universal goal of uplifting the entire world.

When the Jewish people will attain a proper material and spiritual state, the time will arrive for Avraham’s blessing. “All of the families on earth will be blessed through you” (B'reishit 12:3). But in times of trouble, we should focus on our spiritual heritage. We should firmly grasp the thickest part of the tree, our ties to the God of Yaakov. Then we will have a better grip on the branches above – our universal aspirations – as well as the roots below – mitzvot grounded in the physical realm.

*Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. II
on B'rachot 64a, sec. 9:356*

The Daily Portion - Sivan Rahav Meir

Five ideas for Shabbat

Translated by Janine Muller Sherr

1) This Shabbat, in all shuls throughout the world, we will be reading two parashiot in Sefer Vayikra that have intriguing names –TAZRI'A and M"TZORA. Parashat Tazria opens with the wonder of childbirth. What does a woman do after she gives birth? When and why does she go to the Beit HaMikdash and offer a sacrifice? This is followed by the mitzvah of circumcising a baby boy when he is eight days old.

2) Then the parashiot turn to the topic of tzaraat. It sounds like magic: Someone speaks lashon hara (evil speech) and as a result develops tzaraat on his or her skin. Tzaraat is not a medical condition but a manifestation of an ethical flaw. Therefore, the person with tzaraat doesn't go to a doctor; instead, he goes to a kohen, the community educator, who evaluates his situation and offers guidance. The M'tzora must go through a period of social isolation and character refinement, and can only return to the Beit HaMikdash and to human society after undergoing a purification process.

3) In today's world, we no longer have tzaraat but the laws against speaking lashon hara still apply – now and forever. Every word that comes out of our mouths is significant. Our commentators speak extensively about forbidden and defective speech, as well as the power of positive and uplifting speech. In Mishlei we read the verse: "The power of life and death is in the tongue." In an age of cyberbullying, classroom ostracization, and "keyboard warriors", we are more cognizant than ever of the truth of this statement. We must choose carefully what we say and when and how we say it.

4) S'firat HaOmer (the Counting of the Omer) is now in full swing, as we continue to count the days until Shavuot. This Shabbat will be the 16th day of the Omer. On the Shabbatot in which we count the Omer it is customary to study Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers).

5) And finally: The month of Nissan will have drawn to a close, and Friday and Shabbat are Rosh Chodesh Iyar.

Chodesh Tov and Shabbat Shalom!

Send your friends this link so that they can receive Sivan Rahav-Meir's content too: tiny.cc/DailyPortion



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

TAZRI'A-MITZORA

Circumcision: Improving God's Work

Among the detailed laws in the sidra comes a reminder of the duty of circumcision (Vayikra 12:3), which had been previously promulgated early in B'reishit (Parshat Lech L'cha).

The Midrash Tanchuma (Tazri'a 5) reports that the Roman, Turnus Rufus, asked Rabbi Akiva a good question concerning this mitzva. "If", said the Roman, "your God desires circumcision, why does a child not leave its mother's womb already circumcised?"

Rabbi Akiva was not without an answer. He went back to the story of Creation, in which the sixth and seventh days (B'reishit 1:26-2:3) record the creation of man in the Divine image and the establishment of Shabbat as the day of rest.

Both events, the climax of the work of creation, are later described as B'RIT OLAM - "an everlasting covenant".

This phrase is applied to Shabbat, in Sh'mot 31:16, which tells us LA'ASOT

ET HASHABBAT - "to make Shabbat". It is applied to man, in the law of circumcision in B'reishit 17:7, where Avraham is told, "This is My covenant which you shall observe, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised."

Rabbi Akiva told Turnus Rufus, "The reason why men are not born already circumcised is that the Almighty desired the individual co-operation of every Jew in the perfection of His creation by performing the mitzva of B'RIT MILA.

Similarly, when God says, "The Children of Israel shall keep Shabbat, to observe (literally, 'to make') Shabbat throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant", He means us to make a personal effort to fulfil His purposes by turning Saturday into Shabbat.

It is our effort that completes God's creation of the seventh day and indeed of the week itself.

Through the two mitzvot of circumcision and Shabbat, we affirm our belief in God, we recognise our human role in the world, and we assume our full human dignity as "partners with God in the work of creation".

Offerings after Childbirth

Many questions need to be asked about this week's sidra.

The first is why a woman who has given birth is ritually impure and needs to bring an offering.

Is not procreation the very first of the commandments? Are not children "a heritage from the Lord" (Psalm 127:3)? Is not a mother fulfilling a God-given purpose?

Abravanel suggests the offering is not because of any sin but in thanksgiving to God who brought her safely through the pain and danger of childbirth.

Not only for herself should she be grateful, but on behalf of the child; Rabbi Abba bar Kahana remarks in the Midrash, "The embryo dwells in its mother's womb and the Holy One, blessed be He, watches over it that it does not fall and die. Does this not warrant praise?"

Another Midrash speaks of the wonder of childbirth and the beneficence of the Almighty.

Rabbi Levi says, "The way of the world is, that if someone secretly leaves a purse of silver with another person, and the latter gives back a pound of gold in public, should he not be grateful? Thus it is with the Holy

One, blessed be He. Human beings secretly deposit with Him a drop of fluid, and the Holy One, blessed be He, gives back magnificent, complete human beings in public. Does this not warrant praise?"

The mother's ritual impurity is seven days for a boy and 14 for a girl. Some commentators believe it takes longer to recover from the birth of a girl; a medical view on this assertion would be interesting.

R' Samson Raphael Hirsch thinks the second seven days in the case of a girl takes the place of the MILA of a boy, who is circumcised after the first week of life. -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

TAZRI'A-M'TZORA

On the eighth day, the child's foreskin shall be circumcised (12:3)


The Maharal writes that the mitzva of Brit Mila has special characteristics of its own. It centres around number eight, which is an addition to the seven days of the Creation. He develops the idea that the Creation itself revolves around the number seven, including the seven days of the week and the seven years of the

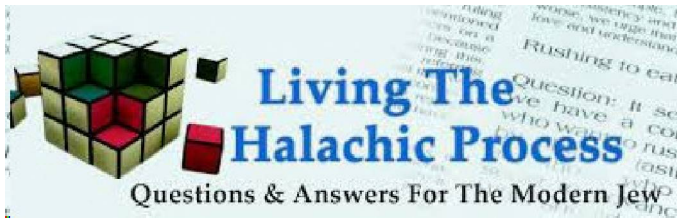
agricultural cycle. By commanding the circumcision of male children on Day 8 of their lives, G-d expects Am Yisrael's spiritual ascent in life to transcend the natural order of things. There are times he should go against the flow. This is a message transmitted and reminded privately between G-d and each male Jewish person.

Am Yisrael had to go against the tide of what they had been conditioned to in Egypt in accepting the Torah. This was transcending the Creation, the natural order of things, by accepting and implementing drastic change. Keeping circumcision was necessary to frame this attitude of mind before receiving the Torah. And keeping circumcision is a key reminder to the Jew to this present day of the need to transcend the natural order of things in situations that confront him, even at the cost of financial loss and personal ridicule. This is particularly exemplified by Shabbat, Kashrut, and Taharat HaMishpacha, where, outside Israel, our Torah-ordained practices set us apart from the practices of the general population.

This idea can be extended in that Brit Mila is not only there to keep us separate from practices of the general population, but from immoral social norms of the general population. For we learn of Brit Mila in Sefer B'reishit where G-d established that practice in the form of a covenant

with Avraham Avinu and his descendants. As my late teacher R' Jonathan Sacks ztl points out, Sefer B'reishit brings six instances where those at the top of the social pyramid abused their power in sexual ethics. Sara was abducted twice, once by Pharaoh and once by Avimelech. The men of S'dom attempted the homosexual version with Lot's two guests. Two generations on, Shechem forced himself on Dina, and later, Potifar's wife strove by foul means to seduce Yosef. Indeed, various legal codes of that time support such practices, allowing the rich and privileged to pay compensation to the family, exemplified by the way Pharaoh 'treated Avraham well for her sake' through which 'he acquired... donkeys... servants... and camels' (B'reishit 12:16).

As Rabbi Sacks explains, our norms are not like that. Among the cornerstones of our sacred traditions are the sanctity of marriage, the exclusivity of the relationship between husband and wife, and equality before the law. Not one law for the rich and another for the less privileged peoples and classes. Being rich does not allow us to indulge passions at will. All have to exercise self-control. Brit Mila is both inward sign and a unifying of Klal Yisrael in accepting that might does not conquer what right, whether in this or any area. All of us are equal before Torah law. 



Reprinted from *Living the Halachic Process* by Rabbi Daniel Mann - Eretz Hemdah, with their permission [www.erezhemdah.org]

Shehecheyanu, New Clothes, and Renovations During S'firat HaOmer

Question: May one buy and wear new clothes, do work on his house, and recite Shehecheyanu during the sefirat ha'omer period?

Answer: The gemara¹ discusses the halachot of aveilut (mourning) for a deceased relative and for the national mourning over the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash during the period before Tish'a b'Av. However, the minhagim of national mourning during S'firat HaOmer over the death of Rabbi Akiva's students are not found in the gemara. There are both overlap and differences between the rules for these different periods of mourning.

Regarding the aveilut of the Omer period, the Shulchan Aruch² mentions prohibitions on marriages and hair cutting (as well as on work after sunset, but this is not widely accepted). The Mishna Berura³ further mentions the minhag of not dancing, which many have extended to include refraining from all forms of instrumental music.⁴ These standard sources make no mention, in the context of S'fira, of the practices about which you inquire.

Let us look briefly at minhagim regarding Shehecheyanu, new clothes, and work on the house as they appear in the context of the period before Tish'a b'Av. One should curtail certain activities before Tish'a b'Av, including building projects,⁵ but according to the Shulchan Aruch,⁶ this applies only during the Nine Days and not throughout the entire Three Weeks.⁷ There is also a recommendation, which not all accept,⁸ not to recite Shehecheyanu during the Three Weeks.⁹ The logic is that the b'racha of Shehecheyanu expresses our gratefulness for having made it to “this time”, which may not be appro-

¹. See *Ta'anit* 29b.

². *Orach Chayim* 493.

³. 493:3.

⁴. See *Igrot Moshe*, *Orach Chayim* I:166.

⁵. *Yevamot* 43a.

⁶. *Orach Chayim* 551:2.

⁷. See response D-18.

⁸. See opinions in *Mishna Berura* 551:98.

⁹. *Shulchan Aruch* op. cit. 17.

priate at such a particularly sad time of the year.

While the standard sources do not mention these issues during the S'fira period, there are some sources that do, especially in regard to reciting Shehecheyanu.¹⁰ There is basis to extend these prohibitions to the s'firat ha'omer period on two grounds. First, there is logic in doing so, as this is a nationwide sad period (as opposed to aveilut over a relative, the sad nature of which is only personal¹¹). Second, it is relatively easier to transfer minhagim when there is a model for such halachot, by doing, so to speak, a “copy and paste” from one time period to another (i.e., from the Three Weeks to S'fira).

However, paradoxically, the logic and the model are also reasons to ignore the minority strict opinions and the practice of some to refrain from some or all of the matters you mentioned. The reason is that people may have gotten confused as to which practices apply when. They remembered that there is a concept of not saying Shehecheyanu and not doing renovations during national mourning periods, and they may have heard of

someone knowledgeable who says to act this way during S'fira. They then may have started adopting the practice, but not based on a decision with knowledge of the sources and a desire to accept the stringency. Rather, they thought these are the standard minhagim. This is called a MINHAG TA'UT. In such a case, even one who has already followed the stringent practice may suspend it without hatarat nedarim.¹²

Rav Ovadia Yosef has an interesting approach to these questions. First, he explains¹³ that one cannot call S'fira, which is actually the bridge between the joyous holidays of Pesach and Shavuot, a tragic period of time, as we term the period leading up to Tish'a b'Av. Therefore, he is against refraining from recitation of Shehecheyanu on fruit at that time. He is not, however, against the stringency to avoid wearing new clothing that warrants Shehecheyanu, out of extra mourning. Regarding moving into a new home or doing work on an existing one, he unequivocally permits the matter.¹⁴ The Tzitz Eliezer¹⁵ is perhaps more resolute in rejecting stringency in these matters.

¹⁰. See several opinions cited in *Bein Pesach L'Shavuot* 16:(2).

¹¹. See *Mishna Berura* 551:98.

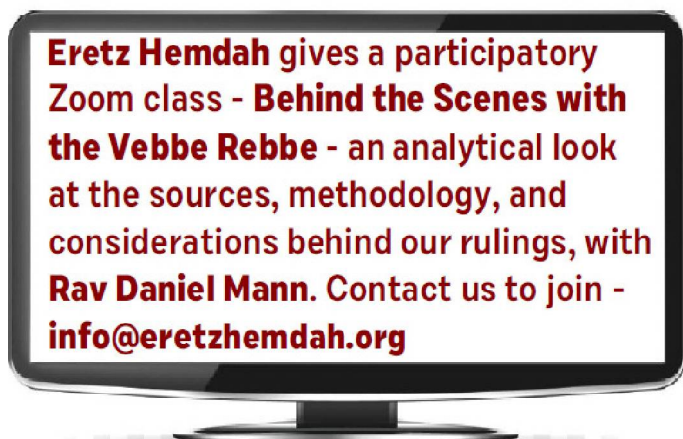
¹². *Shulchan Aruch* and Rama, *Yoreh Deah* 214:1.

¹³. *Yechaveh Da'at* 1:24.

¹⁴. *Ibid.* III:30.

¹⁵. XVIII:41.

Thus, one need not be stringent with regard to the practices you mention. If one has acted stringently in the past, he may continue if he likes, but he should consider whether his (family's) practice is more based on confusion than on a conscious decision to accept minority stringencies.



The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

TAZRI'A-M'TZORA 5785

The Biblical phenomenon of the M'tzora has intrigued our Sages, each offering their own unique interpretation. As Ramban expounds, that flesh should erupt with discoloring blemishes and deformities, and clothing should be stained with similar disfiguring patches, clearly points to a metaphysical manifestation. And when unexplained blotches are noticed on the walls of a house, the need for some explanation becomes begging. If these surface appearances defy any rational scientific

origin, the Torah's fascination and preoccupation with this subject obviously is coming to teach. Ramban's explanation argues that since the entire halachic topic of Tzaraat is operative only in the Land of Israel, it is the intense concentration of K'dusha of the Land that cannot tolerate any sin. Hence, when a Jew transgresses any of the many sins which precipitates the Tzaraat, the Shechina lifts away with the result that the person's body, clothing and/or home expels the toxicity of the sin outward where it manifests itself as Tzaraat.

As Ramban would have it, the breakout of Tzaraat is actually a blessing for the Jew. While many have a peculiar tendency to avoid confronting their mistakes and making amends, when the evidence of sin is physically visible as Tzaraat, the misdeed cannot be ignored and must be addressed. Thus, the Torah tells us (D'varim 24:9) to "Remember what HaShem, your Gd, did to Miriam..." Precisely because Miriam was such a great and righteous woman, her hallowed being could not bear even the slightest sin. The result: She was afflicted with Tzaraat. In a word, as Rabb Y.Y. Jacobson put it: "She was too good to be not good."

Addressing this last point, the S'fat Emet (R. Yehuda Leib Alter, 1847-1905) develops a very different and

deeply meaningful exposition of the Tzaraat reality. In a number of places in his magisterial Biblical commentary, he presents a Tzaraat theology, as it were, which speaks to the human condition in a way that each of us can relate to.

He begins by observing that although the word, M'TZORA (which refers to the person afflicted with Tzaraat), is generally understood by Chazal as a merger of three words, MOTZI SHEIM RA, one who spreads damaging lies about another, Rav Alter contends that, more accurately, the word is a composite of just two words, MOTZI RA, the ejection of what is RA (evil) from a person. What does this mean?

The word, RA, which is commonly understood to mean something evil and wicked, also has the denotative meaning of brokenness, fragmentation, instability. As in the broken T'RU'A sound of the shofar, or as in KOTEL RA'U'A, a rickety wall (Bava Kama 21b). Every human life contains a bit of this RA. It finds expression in the anxieties and tensions we experience, the ugly and horrid thoughts and cravings that invade our mind, the failures and hardships we must endure. All this and more fall under the rubric of RA as all that is un-whole, fractured. RA, in essence, speaks to the vulnerability of man, his inherent mortal weakness and hence his proneness to blunder from time to time.

The S'fat Emet then states that so long as this RA is submerged within the larger context of the good, it remarkably serves the good and is thus transformed. Much like the foul smelling CHELB'NA spice which when mixed with the K'TORET (incense) creates a sanctified fragrance, so too when the RA in a person's life is immersed in - and bounded by - the much more abundant TOV, the RA is sublimated and contributes to a greater good. Thus, the great Rebbe of Gur explains the Chazal (B'reishit Rabba 9:7) which surprisingly interprets the Biblical phrase at the end of the Creation chapter, V'HINEI TOV M'OD, (B'reishit 1:31) to refer to the YETZER HARA! What makes RA truly TOV M'OD, very good, is because those very instabilities of the human condition, those very worrisome, disheartening aspects of daily living, can actually be an impetus and driving force, themselves transmuting and making the already good, TOV M'OD, increasingly better!

But, on the other hand, says the S'fat Emet, if a person is MOTZI RA, which means that he chooses to extricate the RA from the bosom of TOV - from the normative constraints of what is good - then it is that unchecked, unrestrained RA that will become a monster and fiend; what we usually understand RA to be - evil and demonic.

With this explanation, we arrive at a more expansive definition of MOTZI SHEIM RA. Not only is it forbidden to tell lies and slander another, but what is even more injurious are the terrible lies we tell ourselves about ourselves! - the smears that we are losers, just a "piece of garbage". This violation - this beating up upon ourselves - is no less serious and perhaps even more grave than the first!

Indeed, the words that I whisper to myself about myself have the uncanny and powerful ability to define who I am. And should I extract the RA from the context of my immense goodness, I can easily descend, Gd forbid, into the muck of a much greater RA.

To Illustrate: Say a person has suffered a devastating illness, LO ALEINU. He is now debilitated and can no longer function as he once did. RA has invaded his life and upended all of his fondest hopes and dreams. He must now choose. After the initial trauma and blow, he can either detach his RA from the authentic totality of who he is and allow himself to sink into melancholy and depression; psychologically self-medicate and perpetually feel sorry for himself. As the S'fat Emet would have it, he could become a M'TZORA. Or, he can decide - and it would by no means be easy - to assess his physical condition, gather up the RA - the

shattered shards of his life - and recreate himself. By placing the RA within his greater religious world-view, a hashkafa which avows and ensures that HaShem still has a job for him, his very misfortune now spurs him on to become what he never thought possible. And, at the end of the day, as so many who've gone through such painful journeys have attested - the Helen Kellers of the world - he discovers that his new-found life is more ennobled and greater than he ever could have imagined. Thus, the RA has indeed become TOV M'OD

To return briefly to our Parsha, another word for Tzaraat is NEGA. My good friend, Rabbi Stewart Weiss references a famous adage about two words in Hebrew that share the same 3 letters; AYIN, GIMEL, NUN. If you place the AYIN at the end of the word, it spells, NEGA, plague. But if you put the AYIN at the front of the word, it spells, ONEG, pleasure. It all depends where you direct your AYIN - your eye! In terms of the wisdom of the second Gerer Rebbe, it all depends where you place your RA - inside the infinite TOV and purity of your Neshama, or isolate and banish it where it becomes a hell! The choice is ours!

The S'fat Emet concludes by reminding us that when after 120, our souls testify on High as to the worthiness of our lives while in the lower world,

the fundamental question will be whether or not we sanctified HaShem by how well we elevated the RA and proved, if only to ourselves, how truly great and exalted we were able to become.

The choice is ours! 🙌

Insights into Halacha

- Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Ohr Somayach (yspitz@ohr.edu)

S'fira Switching

The Gemara Y'vamot (62b) famously and tragically details the deaths of 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva during the time period between Pesach and Shavuot, all for not according each other proper honor. Although there are many different rationales given by the commentaries to explain this catastrophe, the Tashbetz (Shu"t vol. 1: 178) elucidates that the reason they were punished so severely for a seemingly minor infraction is that their not treating each other properly ended up engendering a tremendous Chilul Hashem. In fact, according to several authorities, the reason why Lag BaOmer is a day of celebration is that it is the day when Rabbi Akiva started teaching his five new students (including Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai), allowing the Torah's mesorah to

perpetuate;

However, the Yalkut Me'am Loez and Sdei Chemed maintain that Rabbi Akiva actually bestowed Semicha on his five new talmidim on this day.

a feat that was previously in jeopardy after the deaths of his talmidim.

This calamity is actually the basis of the annual S'fira restrictions, which include not getting married or taking a haircut.

There are also other reasons cited for these prohibitions. See Chok Yaakov that according to Rav Yochanon ben Nuri, Resha'im are judged in Gehinnom between Pesach and Shavuot... The Arizal, who mandates keeping the entire S'fira up until Erev Shavuot (including Lag B'Omer) is quoted as holding so for a different reason, a Kabbalistic prohibition, exclusive only to hair and not necessarily related to aveilut associated with S'fira HaOmer.

Yet, that does not properly explain the different and varied minhagim that Klal Yisrael keeps regarding the actual time frames of these restrictions.

And there are different minhagim. In fact, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l lists six different customs, and that is not including the Arizal's minhag. Yet, practically, the Pri Megadim and Mishna B'rura break it down to three main disparate customs. The others are variations on those main opinions.

Minhag # 1 - S'fardic S'fira

The Shulchan Aruch writes that one should not get married between Pesach and Shavuot until Lag BaOmer; likewise regarding haircuts, as at that time the Talmidim of Rabbi Akiva stopped dying. Therefore, these restrictions are permitted starting from the next day - 34 of the Omer.

Minhag # 2 - LaG not LaD

However, the Rema argues, stating that the Ashkenazic minhag is to allow these activities from Lag BaOmer itself, and not necessitate waiting until the next day. The reason for the allowance a day earlier than the Shulchan Aruch mandates is either due to the dictum of MIKTZAT HAYOM K'KULO, that part of a day is considered like a full day, or that he held that the Talmidim stopped dying by/on Lag BaOmer and not Lad BaOmer. Additionally, the Rema is following early Ashkenazic authorities such as the Maharil, Mahari Weil, and the Sefer HaMinhagim of Rav Yitzchak Isaac Tyrnau (Tirna), all of whom allowed haircuts and celebrations on Lag BaOmer itself.

Although the Rema (and most other authorities explicitly only allows weddings and haircuts etc. on the day of Lag BaOmer due to the Talmudic

dictum of MIKTZAT HAYOM K'KULO, and is therefore only permitted from Sunrise, nevertheless, there are several authorities who are lenient in permitting haircuts even from the preceding evening, at the start of Lag BaOmer...

Minhag # 3 - Second Sefira

The Rama then mentions another popular minhag, to only start the S'fira restrictions from Rosh Chodesh Iyar, and not from right after Pesach. This S'fira lasts until shortly before Shavuot, excluding Lag BaOmer itself. This has come to be known colloquially as 'Second S'fira'.

There are many variations of this opinion, when this period actually starts and ends. These will be explained further on.

But why such disparate S'firas? If we are all keeping the same prohibitions for the same reason, how can there be so many different minhagim in its practical application?

Halftime Respite

It turns out that there are two main different rationales expressed by the Rishonim as to when the S'fira restrictions should actually apply. The first, mentioned as a 'Midrash' by R' Yehoshua ibn Shu'aib and an 'old Sefardi Sefer' by the Baal HaMa'or and Tashbetz,

According to many Rishonim only on LaD BaOmer would haircuts and weddings be permitted.

is that Rabbi Akiva's Talmidim stopped dying by PARUS HAATZET, the halfway point before Shavuot. Since the Gemara states that we should start to learn the halachos of a Yom Tov 30 days prior to its commencement, which would mean that 15 days before a holiday would be its 'midpoint', this would squarely place the PARUS on LaD BaOmer (49-15= 34). According to this, they stopped dying on LaD BaOmer and therefore all S'fira restrictions cease on this day as well. As mentioned previously, the Shulchan Aruch states that he follows this opinion, and therefore he rules that from LaD BaOmer, haircuts and weddings are permitted. As mentioned previously, this is the common Sefardi minhag.

33 Days

However, there is another opinion, attributed to the Baalei Tosafot. They maintain that in actuality the talmidim died throughout the entire time period from Pesach to Shavuot. Yet, they did not die on days when Tachanun was not said, including all days of Pesach, the Shabbatot in between, and Rosh Chodesh. This adds up to 16 days. Meaning, of the entire 49 day period, they died on 33

of those days. Therefore, as a siman to show that they died for 33 of these days (in addition to several other reasons...)* LaG BaOmer, the 33rd day of the S'fira, was chosen as a day of easing restrictions.

** These reasons include being the day when the MAHN (manna) started to fall, feeding Bnei Yisrael in the Midbar; the day when Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son, Rabbi Elazar came out of the cave they hid in for 13 years; it possibly is Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's Yahrzeit (unlikely); the day when Rabi Akiva gave S'micha to his five new students (including Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai) after the 24,000 died, allowing the Torah's mesorah to perpetuate; and the day when Rabi Shimon bar Yochai's hidden Torah, the Zohar, became revealed to the world.*

Kavanat HaRama?

The question is, which of these minhagim is the Rema following? It is fairly certain that the second Minhag Ashkenaz he delineates, starting from Rosh Chodesh Iyar until shortly before Shavuot (and variations thereof; this will be addressed later on), is following Tosafot's shita of 33 days. Since nowadays we don't say Tachanun the whole month of Nisan, the 33 days start in Iyar and last until the beginning of Sivan. But which opinion is the first custom he cites (from Pesach until LaG BaOmer) following?

The Bach maintains that this minhag as well, follows the shita of Tosafot. In other words, both minhagim cited by the Rema, 'First S'fira' and 'Second S'fira' are due to keeping 33 days, with the variant minhagim dependent on which 33 days are customarily kept. On the other hand the Vilna Gaon argues that the Rema's 'First S'fira' minhag is due to following the shita of the Shulchan Aruch, which is that the Talmidim only died up to LaG BaOmer itself.

However, it is important to note that this discussion of figuring out the Rema's true intent is not just theoretical. It actually has practical ramifications. And yes, there is a substantial difference between these understandings that just might affect us, and that is the question of the permissibility of switching S'firas.

S'fira Switching

The Chatam Sofer, regarding scheduling weddings during S'fira, maintained that there is "no contradiction between years" as pertaining to S'fira observance.

He also maintains that there is no TARTA D'SATREI (contradiction) between haircuts and weddings. Meaning, one may keep one Sefirah regarding haircuts and another regarding weddings.

This means that even in one town

(which needs to follow one minhag), if one year someone got married on Rosh Chodesh Iyar, this does not prevent another from getting married during the SH'LOSHET Y'MEI HAG-BALA (the three days before Shavuot) the next year. His psak is widely followed. Additionally, we find that according to many authorities, if there is no set minhag in a certain place (and nowadays, most Jewish communities with no one central authority are considered as such), one may simply choose which minhag to follow. Following this implies that one has the halachic right to choose which S'fira to keep in any given year, based on whatever specific circumstances affect him that year.

Rav Moshe's Ruling

However, this is not so clear-cut, nor unanimous. In fact, and although widely and seemingly erroneously quoted as holding that one may indeed switch between 'First' and 'Second S'firas' in different years, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l actually qualified such action. He clarifies that for Ashkenazim to be allowed to do so would depend on the difference of opinions between the Bach and Vilna Gaon as to the interpretation of the Rema's 'First S'fira'. He explains that according to the Bach, that both minhagim are based on keeping 33 days, it technically should not matter which 33 days are kept. Accordingly,

one may switch 'S'firas' in different years.

Yet, according to the GR"A, the 'First S'fira' is solely due to the Talmidim dying only during the first 33 days of the Omer. If so, questions Rav Moshe, how can one switch 'S'firas', if each is mutually exclusive, based on different accountings? If one holds that the Talmidim only died up until LaG BaOmer, how can he, in the very next year, follow a different minhag, which is based on a shita that they did not actually die at that time, or vice versa? Therefore, he maintains that according to the GR"A one may not switch 'S'firas' from year to year.

Additionally, Rav Moshe holds that the 'Second S'fira' is the true Ashkenazic minhag and that the 'First S'fira' is essentially a Sefardic minhag. He therefore concludes that an Ashkenazi may not switch from the 'Second S'fira' to the 'First', as L'CHATCHILA we should not be lenient against the shita of the GR"A, except under extremely extenuating circumstances', but rather only between two different versions of 'Ashkenazic S'fira', in different years, both of which end in different days in Sivan (see Postscript).

Wedding Woes?

However, and although several others contemporary authorities allow only coming for the Chupa and wishing a

brief Mazal Tov, nevertheless, Rav Moshe does fully permit one to attend a wedding of someone who is keeping a different S'fira, including even staying for the music and dancing. Most poskim, including Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l, Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer zt"l, Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l, Rav Moshe Sternbuch shlit"a, and Rav Nissim Karelitz zt"l, agree with Rav Moshe and allow one who is still keeping his S'fira to fully participate in a wedding of one who is keeping/kept a different S'fira.

Although several of these Gedolim write that this applies "if one got married when it was mutar for him to do so", implying that if one did not keep a proper S'fira, it may not be permitted for others to stay and rejoice at the chatuna, nevertheless, it is important to note that Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (and others who agreed with his reasoning) explicitly permitted attending even in such an occurrence. Rav Moshe explains that the halacha states (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 493: 1) that if one got married during S'firat HaOmer (at a time when it was technically forbidden for him to do so) we do not punish him (meaning it is still valid). Rav Moshe writes "that there is no greater punishment for a Chatan and Kalla than having guests refuse to show up and rejoice at their

wedding”, and therefore it is still permitted to attend. In a later teshuva Rav Moshe even allows a guest who would feel uncomfortable attending such a wedding ungroomed, to take a haircut, even though S'fira restrictions are still personally in affect for him. On the other hand, it is known that his son, Rav Dovid Feinstein zt"l, generally rules somewhat more stringently nowadays.

In conclusion, now that we have a clearer understanding of the various S'fira minhagim and their sources, we can appreciate the array of customs followed by our neighbors and friends. And if you do get a wedding invitation inviting you to share in a simcha at some point between Pesach and Shavuot, you will now know how to respond – by asking your local competent halachic authority a proper sh'eila.

Postscript: As mentioned previously, there are many variations as to the exact starting and ending dates for the S'fira, and especially the ‘Second S'fira’. For example, there is the Rema’s basic ‘Second S'fira’, which starts after Rosh Chodesh Iyar, breaks for LaG BaOmer, and continues until Erev Shavuot, as well as its alternative, the Magen Avraham, Chayei Adam, Aruch HaShulchan, and Mishna Berura’s minhag, which starts from and

includes Rosh Chodesh Iyar until the SH'LOSHET Y'MEI HAGBALA, with a break on LaG BaOmer. Another common minhag is the Derech HaChayim’s minhag which starts from Isru Chag Pesach, skips Rosh Chodesh Iyar and LaG BaOmer, and ends by Rosh Chodesh Sivan. Another interesting custom is the Elyah Rabba’s minhag, keeping the entire S'fira excluding LaG BaOmer, and concluding on Erev Shavuot. Another variation is the Taz’s custom, to keep the ‘First S'fira’ for haircuts, but to continue with the prohibition on weddings after LaG BaOmer until shortly before Shavuot; due to the horrific tragedies perpetuated by the Crusaders to many Ashkenazic communities during the second half of S'fira (G'zeirat Tatn”u). And of course, there is the well-known minhag of the Arizal, which is to keep the entire S'fira for haircuts, including LaG BaOmer, until Erev Shavuot. One should check with his knowledgeable Rabbinic authority as to which exact minhag he should personally follow.

The author wishes to thank Rabbi Naftali Zvi Frankel for providing several important sources and for being the impetus for this author’s interest and research on this topic.

See website for all the footnotes and sources.

For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomot & sources, please

email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz serves as the Sho'el U'Meishiv and Rosh Chavura of the Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel at Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim. He also currently writes a contemporary halacha column for the Ohr Somayach website titled "Insights Into Halacha".

ohr.edu/this_week/insights_into_halacha/

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz's English halacha sefer, "Food: A Halachic Analysis" (Mosaica/Feldheim) containing over 500 pages featuring over 30 comprehensive chapters discussing the myriad halachic issues pertaining to food, is now available online and in bookstores everywhere."



TAZRI'A

GM In searching for Gimatriya Matches, I occasionally come across two p'sukim that reflect totally opposite themes or ideas. Take Vayikra 13:47 -

וְהַבְּגָד כִּי-יְהִיָּהּ בּוֹ נִגַּע צָרַעַת
בְּבִגְד צֹמֶר אֹו בְּבִגְד פְּשִׁתִּים:

[And as for] the garment that has the lesion of tzora'at upon it, on a woolen garment, or on a linen garment.

The Gimatriya of this pasuk is 2160. Five other p'sukim in Tanach had the same gimatriya, but nothing interesting to comment on. But using the NISTAR gimatriya of this pasuk - 5298 - resulted in four other p'sukim, one of which deals with a garment of wool - not one afflicted with a NEGA, but rather an exemplary garment on the opposite end of the spectrum of garments - the Kohen Gadol's M'IL. Sh'mot 28:33 in Parshat T'tzaveh -

וְעָשִׂיתָ עַל-שׁוּלְיוֹ רִמּוֹנֵי תְּכֵלֶת וְאַרְבָּנָן
וְתוֹלְעֵת שָׁנִי עַל-שׁוּלְיוֹ סָבִיב וּפְעֻמּוֹנֵי
וְהָב בְּתוֹכָם סָבִיב:

And on its bottom hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and crimson wool, on its bottom hem all around, and golden bells in their midst all around.

It struck me as startling that the pasuk about afflicted and defiled garments should have a hidden match with one of the Kohen Gadol's garments.

M'TZORA

GM Tazri'a and M'tzora deal with TUM'A and TAHARA, the laws of Ritual Impurity and Ritual Purity. Beginning with a woman giving birth and then the presentation of the afflictions of TZARA'AT and NEGA'IM, - of body, clothing, and homes, ZAV & ZAVA - these two sedras are focused on TUM'A and TAHARA.

A summary and 'mission statement' of the topic can be found at the end of Parshat M'tzora, Vayikra 15:31 (gimatriya 5059) -

וְהִדַּרְתֶּם אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִטְּמֵאוֹתָם
וְלֹא יָמוּתוּ בְּטִמְאוֹתָם בְּטִמְאָם
אֶת־מִשְׁכְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹכָם:

And you shall separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, so that they will not die on account of their uncleanness, if they defile My Sanctuary which is in their midst.

Our separation from TUM'A, our quest for TAHARA and K'DUSHA, is like a prerequisite for our realization of the goals of our Nationhood, as a People, and of each of us, as individual Jews.

That goal was conveyed to Moshe Rabbeinu at the burning bush, who then told the People of God's plans for us - To take us out of Egypt, to make a covenant with us at Sinai, and to bring us to Eretz Yisrael. Two p'sukim that have the same gimatriya as our pasuk, relate to these sacred goals. The first is in Parshat B'chukotai, Vayikra 26:45 -

וּזְכַרְתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית רְאשֵׁימֵ אֲשֶׁר
הוֹצֵאתִי־אֹתָם מִמִּצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵי
הַגּוֹיִם לְהָיוֹת לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים אֲנִי יְהוָה:

I will remember for them the covenant [made with] the ancestors, whom I took out from the land of Egypt before the eyes of the nations, to be a God to them. I am the Lord.

And the other pasuk is in Parshat D'varim, 1:21 -

רְאָה נָתַן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְפָנֶיךָ

אֶת־הָאָרֶץ עֲלֶיהָ רָשׁ כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה
אֵלָי אֲבֹתֶיךָ לְךָ אֱלֹהֵיךָ וְאַל־תִּתּוֹת:

Behold, HaShem, your God, has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as HaShem, God of your fathers has spoken to you; you shall neither fear nor be dismayed.

YOM HAATZMA'UT

GM Let's take the traditional greeting for Yom Haatzma'ut. One says to his fellow: MOADIM L'SIMCHA. The response is LIG-ULA SH'LEIMA

מועדים לשמחה - לגאולה שלימה

Good Yom Tov - To the Final Redemption

The gimatriya of these greetings is 1013.

Two identical p'sukim in T'hilim matched that gimatriya - 60:14 and 108:14

בְּאֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה־יוֹיָל וְהוּא יָבוֹס צְרִינוּ:

Through God we shall gather might, and He will trample our adversaries.

May we suggest - without detracting at all from TZAHAL - that this twice-repeated pasuk speaks to the victories Israel has had, BARUCH HASHEM, and will continue to have until the GEULA SH'LEIMA when we will not be subjected to wars.

USFUNEI T'MUNEI CHOL is the title of my book of Gimatriya Matches - IY"H and BE"H. The title translates to Hidden in the Sand. That's how I feel about my Gimatriya searches. Like walking along the beach with a metal detector. Beep-beep-beep. Lean down and find something. Usually, nothing of note. But sometimes you find something special.

RED ALERT!

TAZRI'A-M'TZORA - ROSH CHODESH

*by Rabbi Eddie Davis (RED)
of the Young Israel of Hollywood -
Ft. Lauderdale (Florida)*

DIVREI TORAH

- The sidra begins with the law of the woman who has given birth. She is required to bring two sacrifices, an Olah (whole burnt offering) and a Chatat (sin offering). The Olah is explained by the Abravanel that it is a form of gratitude to Hashem for granting her a child and for sparing her life through the ordeal of childbirth. This reasoning is supported by a number of Midrashim that obligates the woman to acknowledge Hashem's beneficence during her involvement in the motherhood process. It makes more sense superficially to think that the Toda (thanksgiving offering) seems more appropriate for her than the Olah (whole burnt offering). Many commentators offer suggestions as to why she has the Olah and not the Toda. May I suggest that since the birthing process was one event for which she should be grateful and thankful of God's blessings, but the recovery is a much longer process. Maybe further down the road, if she is so inclined, she would actually bring a thanksgiving offering. But at this stage of the game the process is far from concluded and the Olah would

be more appropriate for surviving the great threat to her life which is incorporated within the birthing process.

- The Torah now goes on to a longer explanation of the law of the Biblical M'tzora. These afflictions have to be analyzed by a Kohen and determination of the M'tzora's status. The order of laws in the Torah is commented upon by several rabbis and well back even into the Midrashic and Talmudic periods. The laws of kosher foods which was dealt with last week forms a proper contrast to this law of Tzaraat, which our Sages firmly combine with the sin of Lashon HaRa (scandalous talk). Rabbi Yisrael Selanter (19th century Lithuania, founder of the Mussar movement) discusses the contrast in his own unique way. People are more scrupulous not to eat forbidden foods than they are to "devour" another human being by destroying the person's reputation through slander. The juxtaposition of these chapters teaches us that "consuming" your fellow man by means of gossip and slander is no less sinful than is eating pork. The ethical teachings of Torah are the hallmark of the Mussar movement and add a nice dimension to Torah commentary.

- The Kohen must look at the NEGA (affliction) in order to determine the person's status. There is repetition of

the expression, “the Kohen shall look”. It is possible for the skin to be examined by a learned non-Kohen and the declaration of Tzara’at to be made by even an unlearned Kohen who does not know the relevant laws. If so, we might think that the Kohen of this sort need not look at the affliction at all. The scholar would look at it and determine its halachic status, and the Kohen would simply pronounce the declaration TAMEI (defiled) or TAHOR (pure). Therefore, the Torah repeats several times, “the Kohen shall look”. Even if the Kohen does not know the status of the affliction except by consulting a learned non-Kohen, the Kohen must see the affliction. Perhaps this is simply the decree of the Torah. Or perhaps it is because even the unlearned Kohen cannot pronounce the declaration unless he at least knows the different types of Tzara’at and their names. The Kohen may act on the advice of a non-Kohen scholar but the Kohen himself must assume the role of the healer of the soul of the potential M'tzora. (Oznayim LaTorah)

- After discussing all of the conditions that could make a person a M'tzora, the Torah prescribes for him several obligations: his clothes must be ripped; his head must be wild, meaning that his hair grows long; he covers his lip (understood by many as not speaking); he must call out Tamei,

impure; he lives outside the encampment. The first two elements are reminiscent of death as a mourner rips his clothes and does not cut his hair. Indeed the Talmud (Mo'ed Katan 15) compares and contrasts the halachot of a mourner and that of M'tzora and lists a M'tzora as one of whose who is considered as if he is dead (Avoda Zara 5a). So he is in effect mourning for himself. Support is brought for the prayer that Moshe said for Miriam when the latter was afflicted by Tzara’at: “that she not be like a dead person.” (Eretz Hemda)

- Mourning the dead and mourning one’s affliction with Tzara’at are quite different. A dead person has died permanently (at least until Techiyat HaMeitim, the Revival of the Death, which is a new existence). In stark contrast, a M'tzora is expected to heal. This difference may be able to be explained by a halachic distinction between the types of M'tzora'im: a Musgar (quarantined until further determination), and a Muchlat (one with a definite status of M'tzora). The difference between the two is that only a Muchlat wears the ripped clothes and lets his hair grow (Megila 8b). We can suggest that a Muchlat is considered to be a permanent M'tzora in a way that makes him as one who died. The person who was separated from society has ceased to exist as we once knew him. Any recovery contains elements of

rebirth. (Eretz Hemda)

- The Torah states an unusual circumstance of the Tzaraat invading the walls of a house. Rashi explains that the verb V'NATATI implies a gift, meaning that the people of Canaan hid treasures in the walls of the house, and when the Jews removed the Tzara'at in the house they found the hidden riches. Why would there possibly be a reward for somebody who has committed the sin of Lashon HaRa? Perhaps we should interpret Rashi's comments allegorically. Maybe this potential M'tzora has realized the sin of his actions and in the process of healing himself he breaks down the walls of his home but the joy he experiences is a cleansing of his soul in the process. When the impurity is removed, the surrounding environment becomes enhanced and it is no longer burdened by the contamination. The gift is the removal of the sin and the uplifting of the entire neighborhood and its inhabitants to reach a greater level of what it means to live in a Torah society. The gift involved is the law of Tzara'at. Imagine if God were to send us signs enabling us to individually realize our mistake and improve upon it. This is a divine directive tailored to the individual sinner. That Hashem really is looking at you is a true bracha and an understanding that divine providence is tailor-made for each one of us.

Questions by RED

From the text

1. For how many days is a birthing mother impure, after giving birth to a boy, before she may bring a sacrifice in the Holy Temple? (12:2,4)
2. What two sacrifices does a birthing mother eventually bring? (12:6)
3. Who is the professional who is designated to decide whether a person has developed Tzaraat? (13:3)
4. What is the status of a person whose whole body turned white? (13:13)
5. What is the damaging color to declare a person impure with a contamination on his scalp or beard? (13:30)

From Rashi

6. A person is quarantined by the Kohen, and after a week is declared pure. Why must he and his clothes be immersed in a Mikva? (13:6)
7. What color hair (on his scalp or beard) will render him pure?(13:37)
8. Why is the purification ritual for a M'tzora with birds? (14:3)
9. Who shaves the M'tzora and what part of his body is he shaved? (14:9)
10. What is the hidden gift of having a house contaminated with Tzaraat HaBayit? (14:34)

From the Rabbis

11. What two laws do we learn from the verse concerning a Brit Mila “On the the 8th day...”? (Sifra and Shabbat 132a)

12. Why is the mother declared pure after only seven days when she gives birth to a boy, in contrast to fourteen days after a girl? (Rabbi David Tzvi Hoffman)

13. What city was exempted from the law of a contaminated house? (Ramban)

Haftara of Shabbat Rosh Chodesh from the book of Yishayahu

14. What war will precede the coming of Mashiach?

Relationships

- a) Aharon-Itamar
- b) Miriam-Elazar
- c) Moshe-Pinchas
- d) Uziel-Aharon
- e) Amram-Nadav

ANSWERS

- 1. Forty days.
- 2. An Olah (whole burnt sacrifice) and a Chatat (sin offering).
- 3. A Kohen
- 4. He is (ironically) declared pure.
- 5. Yellow

6. Being quarantined by the Kohen rendered him impure enough to require a Mikva immersion.

7. Any color other than yellow.

8. Since his malady was caused by speaking Slander, birds are used for his purification. They make a lot of noise.

9. The Kohen shaves the M'tzora's entire body.

10. When he breaks the walls of the house, he will discover the gold that the Amorites hid there (when Bnei Yisrael were coming.)

11. 1) The Brit must be during the day, and 2) the baby is circumcised even on Shabbat (if it is his 8th day).

12. The Torah declares her pure so that she may participate in her son's circumcision.

13. Yerushalayim

14. The War of Gog and Magog.

Relationships

- a) Father & Son
- b) Aunt & Nephew
- c) Great Uncle & Great Nephew
- d) Uncle & Nephew
- e) Grandfather & Grandson