

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."