

## Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet

### TAZRIA 5784

Collected by Allen Klein & Chaim Shulman

#### **Home Weekly Parsha TAZRIA**

#### **Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog**

One of the primary commandments in Judaism is to marry and have children. In the Garden of Eden, we find Adam and Chava blessed by God and told to procreate and fill the world with people. For the Jewish people, having children has become a demographic necessity. Even though it is years since World II and the resultant Holocaust, the Jewish people has not as of yet made good on those immense losses in terms of population.

This is due to a lower-than-average birth rate amongst nonobservant Jews, a high rate of divorce, later-in-life marriages and an increasing population of singles. The ravages of assimilation and intermarriage also play a great part in the fact that Jews can hardly replace themselves, let alone make up for the deficit caused by the Holocaust.

The Torah places a high priority on children. It sees in children not only the physical continuity of the Jewish people but also a spiritual and heavenly connection that transcends one's life span. The rabbis commented regarding our father Jacob that as long as his descendants were alive and functioning then Jacob himself, so to speak, was also still alive. Seeing oneself 'past the grave,' is one of the hallmarks of Judaism and of the Jewish people. The concept of the immortal soul is reinforced by being able to project forward in time, living vicariously in the lives of one's descendants.

But, my friends, we all know that having and raising children is no easy task. And we also know that a parent remains a parent for one's entire life. I feel that this is one of the subtle messages conveyed at the beginning of this week's Torah reading. The Torah speaks of impurity, sacrifice, and isolation of the mother after the birth of a child. This is the Torah's indication that these are factors that are unavoidable in the raising and nurturing of a child. In all human society it is natural, indeed expected, for parents to do everything possible to give their children a good and healthy life. Those parents who do not somehow have that instinct within them are shunned in society and even liable to criminal punishment for neglect or abuse of their children. They are, even in our most open and liberal society, treated as being aberrant and cruel. The Torah, which is the book of practical human life, minces no words in describing the difficulties – impurity, sacrifice, and separation from others – that having and raising children automatically brings to parents.

It is perhaps for this very reason that the Torah gave women such a strong maternal instinct and the desire to have children. For without that instinct, based only on the practicalities of life and the difficulties of raising children, Jewish demographics would, in a practical sense, offer us

no hope whatsoever for the future. The rabbis in Avot correctly stated that "the reward is directly commensurate with the effort and sacrifice." That is certainly true as far as children and generations and the Jewish future is concerned.

Shabbat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

#### **The Law of Idolatry B'Shituf for Non-Jews**

#### **Revivim -- Rabbi Eliezer Melamed**

One who worships idolatry b'shituf (in combination) is one who believes in a Supreme God, but at the same time, also believes in various forces with independent power \* Some poskim rule stringently and consider them idolaters, while others are lenient, since the prohibition of idolatry b'shituf was stated for Israel, and not for the descendants of Noah \* In practice, most contemporary poskim ruled leniently, and therefore, adherents of Eastern religions and Christians, as long as they believe in a Supreme God, are not considered idolaters.

Q: I have heard that there are halachic authorities who hold that according to Jewish law, adherents of Eastern religions and Christians, as long as they believe in a Supreme God, are not considered in violation of the prohibition of idolatry that applies to the descendants of Noah. This is because even though their worship involves idolatry, since they believe in a Supreme God who is above all other gods, and they are upright people who observe the other six of the Seven Noahide Laws, they are considered righteous gentiles. However, on the other hand, I have heard it said that one cannot rely on this opinion, as it is the view of the minority of poskim.

A: Although our attitude towards adherents of these religions depends on several issues that I cannot address here, indeed, the main issue relates to the law of avodah zarah b'shituf (the combination of belief in G-d with other idolatrous and alien beliefs), which, according to most halachic authorities, is not considered idolatry for non-Jews. In other words, included in the Seven Noahide Laws is a prohibition against worshipping idolatry, but when the non-Jew believes in the Lord God of gods, even if he incorporates belief in idols, he is still not considered a sinner of idolatry. I will try to summarize the issue from its foundations in Jewish law.

#### **Idolatry B'shituf**

First, let us define: One who worships idolatry b'shituf is one who believes that above all is a Supreme God, the God of gods and the source of all powers, with the ability to influence them. At the same time, he believes that God created various forces that govern the world, and they have independent power to influence what happens in the world to do good or bad – they benefit those who worship them, and harm those who do not. In order to receive the benefit, one bows down to their idols and performs rituals before

them, thereby incorporating belief in the Supreme God, with belief in idols.

For Jews, idolatry b'shituf is prohibited like absolute idolatry, as it is stated: "One who sacrifices to the gods, except to the Lord alone, shall be utterly destroyed" (Exodus 22:19).

#### The View of the Stringent Poskim

According to the stringent opinions, idolatry b'shituf is prohibited for non-Jews, just as it is for Jews, for if non-Jews are permitted to worship idolatry b'shituf, the prohibition of idolatry would be nullified for them, since all idolaters believe in some way in an ancient Creator who is above all. As it is stated: "For from the rising of the sun until its setting, My name is great among the nations, and everywhere incense and pure oblation are offered to My name, for My name is great among the nations, says the Lord of Hosts" (Malachi 1:11). Our Sages explained that the intention is that in all places, even the idolaters call God the "God of gods" (Menachot 110a), and nevertheless, they are still called idolaters (Ma'il Tzedakah 22).

The stringent opinions also derived this from the words of our Sages, who prohibited conducting business with Christians on Sunday and the three preceding days, like the law of idolaters (Avodah Zarah 6a), and this, despite the fact that it is known that Christians incorporate the Name of Heaven. And although the Rishonim (Medieval Halachic authorities) permitted conducting business with Christians in practice, the stringent opinions maintain that they were lenient because the Christians of their time were not devout, and due to enmity and financial need, and not because they do not have the status of idolaters. Therefore, the stringent opinions ruled that idolatry b'shituf is prohibited for non-Jews, Christians, and all the more so, adherents of Eastern religions, are considered idolaters.

This is the opinion of Rabbi Shmuel Landa, son of the Nodah Biyehudah (Nodah Biyehudah Tinyana Y.D. 148); Rabbi Ephraim Cohen (Sha'ar Ephraim 24); Rabbi Yonah of Lednisdorf (Ma'il Tzedakah 22); Rabbi Raphael HaKohen (VaShav HaKohen 38); Rabbi Yosef Ta'omim (Pri Megadim Sh.P.T. Y.D. 65:11); Rabbi Akiva Eiger (Shu"t Chiddushei Rabbi Akiva Eiger 4, Y.D. 43); Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (Emunah Yesharah 2:7); Rabbi Yosef Babad (Minchath Chinuch 86:2); and others.

#### The Rationale of the Lenient Opinions

However, according to most halachic authorities and commentators, although it is preferable for non-Jews to believe in monotheism, only the nation of Israel is obligated to do so, but non-Jews are not prohibited from worshipping idolatry b'shituf. And one cannot argue that every idolater incorporates the Name of Heaven in his worship, because as long as he believes that the ancient Creator does not influence the world, and therefore, does not turn to Him in worship, he is considered an absolute idolater. Only when he believes that the God of gods also

influences the world, and also turns to Him in prayer, is he considered one who worships idolatry b'shituf.

#### The Sources Supporting the Lenient View

The Torah warned Israel to destroy all idolatrous images and not to derive benefit from them, but the descendants of Noah were not warned about this (Avodah Zarah 64a). It is possible to learn from this in accordance with the lenient view, that as long as they believe in a Supreme God, their statues are not considered idolatry, and consequently, there is no reason to destroy them.

Similarly, in the Temple, a sacrifice was not accepted from an Israelite who worshipped idolatry, but a sacrifice was accepted from a non-Jew who worshipped idolatry (Chullin 5a), since by coming to offer a sacrifice to God, he incorporates belief in God, and consequently, does not have the status of an idolater.

We also learned that Jews must sacrifice their lives for the belief in monotheism and not bow down to an idol, but the descendants of Noah are not obligated to do so (Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 3:5). The explanation for this is simple: as long as they also believe in the Supreme God, they are not considered idolaters, and consequently, they are not required to sacrifice their lives.

**The Reason for the Difference between Jews and Non-Jews**  
The difference arises from the fact that God revealed Himself to Israel, and commanded them specifically about the belief in His Oneness, as it is stated: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One" (Deuteronomy 6:4). Likewise, in the Ten Commandments, it is stated: "You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image... You shall not bow down to them nor worship them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God..." (Exodus 20:2-5). Ramban (Nachmanides) explained that this jealousy is specifically directed against Israel, for Israel is His treasured nation whom He separated for Himself from all the nations, as stated: "And I will separate you from the peoples to be Mine" (Leviticus 20:26), and "You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). Therefore, when Jews worship idolatry, God will be jealous against them "like a man who is jealous over his wife when she goes after others, and as one serving a master other than him."

It can be added that similarly, the Kohanim (priests) have special warnings, where when a Jew violates them, they do not bear a sin.

The Torah further states to Israel: "See, I taught you decrees and laws... Only beware for yourself and greatly guard your soul, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart, all the days of your life... the day you stood before the Lord your God at Chorev... And you shall well guard yourselves, for you did not see any image on the day that the Lord spoke to you at Chorev from the midst of the fire... lest you become corrupt and make yourselves a graven image... and lest you raise your eyes to the heavens and see the sun, the moon, and the

stars, the entire host of heaven, and be drawn to prostrate before them and worship that which the Lord your God has assigned to all the peoples under the entire heaven” (Deuteronomy 4:5-20). The early commentators explained that since God did not reveal Himself to the nations of the world as He did to Israel at the Revelation at Mount Sinai, His conduct in the world is reflected to them through various forces and manifestations, as stated: “That which the Lord your God has assigned to all the peoples under the entire heaven.” And since God bestows abundance upon every nation and land through stars, constellations and angels, they are prone to ascribe independent powers to them, and worship them (Rashbam, Nachmanides, Rashba and others).

#### The Halachic Authorities

This is also the view of Rabbi Moshe Isserles (Rema in Darchei Moshe and Shulchan Aruch OC 156:2), Rabbi Shabbetai Cohen (Shach YD 151:7), Rabbi Moshe Rivkash (Be'er HaGolah CM 425:1), Rabbi Yair Bachrach (Chavot Yair 185), Rabbi Alexander Ziskind (Tivuat Shur 4:1). These poskim expounded on this at great length: Rabbi Binyamin Zev Boskowitz (Seder Mishnah on Rambam Yesodei HaTorah 1:7:1-3, Avodah Zarah 3:3), Rabbi Yosef Shaul Nathanson (Sho'el U'Meishiv 2:1:51, 3:1:55 and many other places in his responsa and Torah commentaries), Rabbi Elazar Fleckles (Teshuva Me'Ahava 1:69), Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Lifshitz (Chamedet Shlomo OC 36:14), Rabbi Yaakov Ornstein (Yeshu'ot Yaakov OC 156:1), Rabbi Avraham HaKohen of Salonika (Shiyurei Tohorah 100:6), Rabbi Chaim Palagi (Chayim Melech, Melachim 9:2), Rabbi Yaakov Ettlinger (Binyan Tzion 1:63), Rabbi Yekusiel Yehudah Teitelbaum (Avnei Tzedek YD 105), Rabbi Rachemin Franco (Shaarei Rachamim 5), Rabbi David Tzvi Hoffman (Melamed Leho'il YD 55), Rabbi Mordechai Horowitz (Mateh Levi 2:YD:28), Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac HaLevi Herzog (Techukas LeYisrael 1:2:6), Rabbi Yosef Eliyahu Henkin (Kisvei HaGri'a Henkin 2:226), Rabbi Avraham Aharon Preis (Mishnah Avraham 2:1:1-2), Rabbi Shalom Messas (Shemesh U'Magen 3:OC:30-31), and many other poskim.

Many wrote about this principle in a spiritual context, including: Rabbi Moshe Zacuto quoted in Mikdash Melech (Ha'azinu pg. 106) of Rabbi Shalom Buzaglo; Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz the Ba'al HaFla'ah (Penei Yefes, Bereishis 11:1, 31:53 and elsewhere); Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (Kedushas Levi, Devarim Va'eschanan 5:7); Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Chayos (Toras HaNevi'im 11); Malbim (Melachim II 17:34 and elsewhere). Likewise, Maran Rabbi Kook wrote: “Shituf is for them (the nations), for now, the ultimate ascent” (Orot, Yisrael VeTchiyato 5); “And the descendants of Noah are not warned against shituf, which is beyond their conceptual and spiritual capacity” (Shemonah Kevatzim 8:44); Rav Hirsch Kalischer (Mai Marom 10:35, 12:32:2). This was also the view of the Rebbe of Chabad: Rabbi Menachem Mendel

the Tzemach Tzedek (Derech Mitzvotcha, Mitzvat Achdut 5) who wrote that this was the view of the Rambam (Hil. Avodah Zarah 1:1-2); and the last Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (Likutei Sichot 25:16 note 44).

#### In summary

For Jews, idolatry b'shituf is prohibited like absolute idolatry, and all the laws of distancing from idolatry also apply to idolatry b'shituf. However, for the nations of the world, according to the majority of poskim, there is no prohibition to worship idolatry b'shituf, and this is the main reason for the leniencies regarding Christianity.

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

#### Othello, WikiLeaks, and Mildewed Walls

##### TAZRIA Rabbi Jonathan Sachs

It was the Septuagint, the early Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, that translated tsara'at, the condition whose identification and cleansing occupies much of Tazria and Metzora as “leprosy”, giving rise to a long tradition identifying it with leprosy.

That tradition is now widely acknowledged to be incorrect. First, the condition described in the Torah simply does not fit the symptoms of leprosy. Second, the Torah applies it not only to various skin conditions but also to mildew on clothes and the walls of houses, which certainly rules out any known disease. The Rambam puts it best:

“Tsara'at is a comprehensive term covering a number of dissimilar conditions. Thus whiteness in a person's skin is called tsara'at. The falling off of some of his hair on the head or the chin is called tsara'at. A change of colour in garments or in houses is called tsara'at.”

##### Hilchot Tumat Tsara'at 16:10

Seeking to identify the nature of the phenomenon, the Sages sought for clues elsewhere in the Torah and found them readily available. Miriam was smitten by tsara'at for speaking badly about her brother Moses (Num. 12:10). The Torah later gives special emphasis to this event, seeing in it a warning for all generations:

“Be careful with regard to the plague of tsara'at . . . Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam along the way after you came out of Egypt.”

Deut. 24:8-9

It was, in other words, no normal phenomenon but a specific Divine

punishment for lashon hara, evil speech. The Rabbis drew attention to the verbal similarity between metzora, a person afflicted by the condition, and motzi shem ra, someone guilty of slander.

Rambam, on the basis of rabbinic traditions, gives a brilliant account of why tsara'at afflicted both inanimate objects like walls and clothes, and human beings:

It [tsara'at] was a sign and wonder among the Israelites to warn them against slanderous speaking. For if a man uttered slander, the walls of his house would suffer a change. If he repented, the house would again become

clean. But if he continued in his wickedness until the house was torn down, leather objects in his house on which he sat or lay would suffer a change. If he repented they would again become clean. But if he continued in his wickedness until they were burned, the garments which he wore would suffer a change. If he repented they would again become clean. But if he continued in his wickedness until they were burned, his skin would suffer a change and he would become infected by tsara'at and be set apart and alone until he no more engaged in the conversation of the wicked which is scoffing and slander.

Hilchot Tumat Tsara'at 16:10

The most compelling illustration of what the tradition is speaking about when it talks of the gravity of motsi shem ra, slander, and lashon hara, evil speech, is Shakespeare's tragedy Othello. Iago, a high-ranking soldier, is bitterly resentful of Othello, a Moorish general in the army of Venice. Othello has promoted a younger man, Cassio, over the more experienced Iago, who is determined to take revenge. He does so in a prolonged and vicious campaign, which involves among other things tricking Othello into the suspicion that his wife, Desdemona, is having an adulterous affair with Cassio. Othello asks Iago to kill Cassio, and he himself kills Desdemona, smothering her in her bed. Emilia, Iago's wife and Desdemona's attendant, discovers her mistress dead and as Othello explains why he has killed her, realises the nature of her husband's plot and exposes it. Othello, in guilt and grief, commits suicide, while Iago is arrested and taken to be tortured and possibly executed.

It is a play entirely about the evil of slander and suspicion, and portrays literally what the Sages said figuratively:

"Evil speech kills three people: the one who says it, the one who listens to it, and the one about whom it is said."

Arachin 15b

Shakespeare's tragedy makes it painfully clear how much evil speech lives in the dark corners of suspicion. Had the others known what Iago was saying to stir up fear and distrust, the facts might have become known and the tragedy averted. As it was, he was able to mislead the various characters, playing on their emotional weaknesses, distrust and envy, getting each to believe the worst about one another. It ends in serial bloodshed and disaster.

Hence the poetic justice Jewish tradition attributes to one of the least poetic of biblical passages, the laws relating to skin diseases and mildew. The slanderer spreads his lies in private, but his evil is exposed in public. First the walls of his house proclaim his sin, then the leather objects on which he sits, then his clothes, and eventually his skin itself. He is condemned to the humiliation of isolation:

'Unclean! Unclean!' he must call out . . . Since he is unclean, he must remain alone, and his place shall be outside the camp.

Lev. 13:45-46

Said the Rabbis: Because his words separated husband from wife and brother from brother, his punishment is that he is separated from human contact and made an outcast from society (Arachin 16b).

At its highest, WikiLeaks aims at being today's functional equivalent of the law of the metzora: an attempt to make public the discreditable things people do and say in private. The Sages said about evil speech that it was as bad as idolatry, incest, and murder combined, and it was Shakespeare's genius to show us one dramatic way in which it can contaminate human relationships, turning people against one another with tragic consequences.

Never say or do in private what you would be ashamed to read about on the front page of tomorrow's newspapers. That is the basic theme of the law of tsara'at, updated to today.

---

### Parshat Tazria: God, What Have You Done for Me Lately?

**Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founder and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone**

"If a woman has conceived seed and born a male child: then she shall be unclean for seven days; as in the days of her menstrual sickness shall she be unclean." (Leviticus 12:2)

One of the greatest miracles of life is that of childbirth – and this Torah portion opens with the short state of impurity (bound up with the women's and child's close brush with death) and the much longer state of purity (because of the marvelous phenomenon of the continuity of life) which the mother must experience. And the Bible also commands the mother to bring two sacrifices (obviously during Temple times): a whole burnt offering, symbolizing the fact that all of life ultimately belongs to God, and a sin offering, usually explained as being necessary in case the woman took an oath never to become pregnant again while experiencing the pain of childbirth. What is strange about all this is that the mother is not commanded to give a thanksgiving offering, the most likely sacrifice one would expect to find in such a situation!

There is yet a second question – specific to the thanksgiving offering. The general law regarding a thanksgiving offering is that it must be completely consumed on the day on which it is brought – one day and one night. The priests eat of it their allotted portion, those who bring it eat of it, and others in Jerusalem may be invited to eat of it – as long as it is consumed by the end of the first night. Since many wealthy people would bring especially generous thanksgiving offerings in accordance with their station in life, and since the meat had to be consumed in one day, Josephus records that there was always plenty of "barbecued" meat offered to residents of and pilgrims to Jerusalem in open "Kiddushes" free to everyone. This certainly added an extra incentive to travel to Jerusalem for the pilgrim festivals – good food, free of

charge, was always in abundance! But the thanksgiving offering is merely one type of sacrifice subsumed under the more general category of peace offerings (shlamim) – and all of the other peace offerings, like those brought in payment of an oath, may be consumed for two days! Why only give the thanksgiving offering one day to be eaten?

I would like to suggest an answer to both questions, but we must first review the fascinating biblical account of Elijah the Prophet on Mount Carmel. You will remember that Elijah, sorely vexed by the multitude of Israelites following the pagan god Baal, arranged for a daring contest in front of six hundred thousand Israelites, involving four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal versus the lone Elijah – on top of Mount Carmel. The prophets of each arranged their respective altars, the Baalists prayed, danced, sang and slashed their skin to their idol – but received neither answer nor response. Elijah turned heavenward:

“Answer me O God, answer me..., and a fire from the Lord descended and consumed the whole burnt offering...The entire nation saw, fell on their faces and said, ‘The Lord He is God, the Lord He is God’... and they slaughtered the false prophets of Baal”. (I Kings 18:37–40)

The story, however, is not yet over. Ironically and tragically accurate is the response of Jezebel, wicked and idolatrous Queen of Israel, to Elijah: “At this time tomorrow I shall make your life like each of those [slaughtered prophets]” (ibid. 19:2). Why the next day, and not that very day? After all, the powerful and diabolical Queen Jezebel could just as easily have ordered an immediate execution for Elijah! But she understood that had she done so on the day of the miraculous occurrence, when Elijah was a national hero, she may well have faced a popular uprising. Tomorrow, however, one day later – by then, the miracle would have been forgotten, business would return to usual, and the wicked queen could do whatever she wanted to Elijah with impunity. Her words ring so true that Elijah flees to the desert and begs the Almighty to take his soul!

The Bible, as well as our own contemporary experiences, abound with supportive incidents to buttress Jezebel’s insight. Only three days after the miracle of the splitting of the Reed Sea, the freed slaves again complain about the bitter waters at Mara. Only forty days after the phenomenal revelation at Sinai, the Israelites worship the golden calf – and the day after the miraculous Six Day War and the liberation of Jerusalem, the Jews in the Diaspora as well as in Israel largely returned “to business as usual.” Indeed, Moshe Dayan, when he first visited the Western Wall, kissed its stones with such visible emotion that a reporter asked if he had become a “born-again Jew.” Dayan honestly responded, “I was not religious yesterday and I will not be religious tomorrow. But at this moment, no one in Israel is more religious than I.”

This is how Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, famed nineteenth century dean of the Volozhin Yeshiva, answered

our questions. It is sadly not within the nature of most people to sustain our feelings of thanksgiving; we are generally only concerned with what God has done for us lately, now, today. We all too easily forget God’s many bounties of yesterday – and certainly of last year and of five years ago. The offering for thanksgiving must therefore be consumed on the very day it was brought; by the next day, the feelings of gratitude will have dissipated. And since the woman may not offer a Temple sacrifice after childbirth until the periods of her impurity and purity have passed – forty days for a male child and eighty days for a female child – she cannot be expected to bring a thanksgiving offering such a long time after the birth. By then she may be so concerned with staying up at night and the vexations of a colicky offspring that the initial joy of birth may well have been forgotten.

Shabbat Shalom

---

**Rabbi YY Jacobson** from: Rabbi YY Jacobson  
[rabbiy@theyeshiva.net](mailto:rabbiy@theyeshiva.net) Apr 11, 2024, 5:14 PM  
subject: **How to Bring Out the Best in Your Loved Ones - Essay by abbi YY Jacobson**

How to Bring Out the Best in Your Loved Ones  
If You Don’t Love Me, Don’t Expel Me  
Where Is G-d?

A couple had two little mischievous boys, ages 8 and 10. They were always getting into trouble, and their parents knew that if any mischief occurred in their town, their sons would get the blame.

The boys' mother heard that a rabbi in town had been successful in disciplining children, so she asked if he would speak with her boys. The rabbi agreed and asked to see them individually.

So, the mother sent her 8-year-old first, in the morning, with the older boy to see the rabbi in the afternoon.

The rabbi, a huge man with a booming voice, sat the younger boy down and asked him sternly, "Where is G-d?" The boy's mouth dropped open, but he made no response, sitting there with his mouth hanging open.

The rabbi repeated the question. "Where is G-d?"

Again, the boy made no attempt to answer.

So, the rabbi raised his voice some more and shook his finger in the boy's face and bellowed, "Where is G-d!?"

The boy screamed and bolted from the room. He ran directly home and dove into his closet, slamming the door behind him.

When his older brother found him in the closet, he asked, "What happened?"

The younger brother, gasping for breath, replied: "We are in real big trouble this time! G-d is missing, and they think we did it!"

The Ignorant Kohen

The Torah portion of Tazria, in the book of Leviticus, discusses the laws of tzaraat, an unusual illness, identified by a white patch appearing on the skin of a person, that was

symptomatic of a profound emotional and spiritual blemish within this individual. This, plus several secondary symptoms, determined the person as being temporarily "impure," and required him or her to separate from the community and undergo an intense program of introspection and healing [1].

The Torah states[2] that only a Kohen (a priest), a descendent of Aaron, the High Priest of the tribe of Levi, was authorized to diagnose a tzaraat-leprosy and pronounce the malady as such. Even in a case where all the symptoms of the illness are clearly present and a multitude of scholars recognize it as tzaraat, the person cannot be diagnosed as possessing this malady unless a Kohen states so explicitly. The ramifications of this biblical law are far-reaching. For example, even if the only Kohen present is a child so that he is unable to examine the person in question, a trustworthy scholar needs to report his findings to the Kohen, and it is only the Kohen who may pronounce the white-patched person as impure. Even if the only Kohen around is an imbecile (shoteh), lacking the knowledge and understanding required to give a diagnosis, it is only he who is entitled to make the verbal pronouncement under the instruction and guidance of an adult-scholar.<sup>3</sup>

Why was the Kohen so indispensable to this process? Shouldn't the scholar, who is intricately familiar with the symptoms of this malady, be trusted more than a child-Kohen who can do nothing more than utter a diagnosis determined by someone else? What is needed here is an expert in these illnesses and symptoms, not a priest! (3\*)

#### Conduits of Blessing

More than three millennia ago the Kohanim were charged with the mission of blessing the Jewish people[4]. To this day in the Holy Land, there is an interval during every morning service, at which the Kohanim spread out their hands and extend Divine blessings on their Jewish brethren. Among Diaspora Jewry, this tradition is practiced only on holidays.

The Kabbalah explains[5] that the reason the Kohanim were designated to be the conduits for Divine blessings is because their souls evolve from the celestial chamber of love, granting them a unique ability to cultivate compassion and kindness toward others and hence making them uniquely suitable conduits for G-d's love and grace.

This is reason for the Jewish law which states[6] that a Kohen who is disliked by the congregation or dislikes the congregation is forbidden to bless the people, because the negative energy that surround this man may severely obstruct the flow of the blessings. Indeed, the blessing recited by the Kohanim prior to the priestly blessings states: "He (G-d) commanded us to bless his people Israel with love." The Zohar, the basic text of the Kabbalah, explains[7] that this is also the reason for the tradition that an unmarried Kohen could not serve as an agent of the Jewish people performing the services in the Holy Temple (Beit Hamikdash) in Jerusalem.

In order for the Kohen to be worthy of this extraordinary position, he needed to fully develop his innate capacity for love and selflessness, and it is only through marriage, in which one learns to share one's life with another human being, that a person is challenged to bring out his full potential for caring and affection. When you are unmarried, you may be extremely kind and sensitive, but at the end of the day you have the luxury of retreating to your own hub and doing things your own way.

Ultimately, you need not answer but to yourself, which is why so many people today opt for the single life. It is only in the institution of marriage that you are consistently called upon to take another person and their needs and feelings seriously. For a marriage to work and blossom, you can't be selfish. That is why it was only the Married Kohen who was charged with the responsibility of serving G-d in the Jerusalem Holy Temple.

#### Prerequisite for Criticism

Now we will understand why the Torah allows no one but the Kohen to diagnose another human being as suffering from an illness that renders him or her severely impure and requires them to separate from the community. The Torah is imparting to us a critical lesson: Before you diagnose another person as being spiritually ill and deserving temporary isolation, you must make sure that your heart is filled with love toward this person. For it is only then that we are certain that your diagnosis is not coming from your own bias or lack of refinement, but it is objectively true and thus productive and beneficial; and it is only then that you will no doubt search for every possible way to rehabilitate this wounded soul.

As parents, educators, spouses, employers, and colleagues, we often need to rebuke, denounce, criticize, and sometimes penalize. Yet all too often these are done more as an outlet for our own anger and frustration rather than as a tool to help these people become the best they can be. We may call it discipline and justice, but if it is not based on kindness and the desire to help the other person, they may end up being more destructive than constructive.

Principals and teachers at times feel the need to expel a student from the institution, just as—during biblical times—the leper was dismissed from the community. Comes the Torah and declares: If you are not a Kohen, you are forbidden from issuing forth such a verdict! If you do not genuinely care for this youngster, you have no right to expel them! If you will not lose sleep over the fact that you had no choice but to dismiss a student, then it might be you who should be dismissed from your position.

It is easy to define somebody as "impure" if you do not understand their pain, but it is unethical. Before you punish, you must first learn how to be a Kohen, how to really care about others. When criticism, punishment and even dismissal are motivated by concern for the person rather than your own rage or incompetence, it will have a totally different effect on the person you are punishing.

Your criticism will build, rather than destroy, this person's character. What is equally important, you will not cease to labor that the situation be reversed and the individual returns to his or her potential glory.

So next time before you criticize your spouse, stop and ask yourself if you are doing it as a "Kohen," out of concern and care for them, or because of your stress or anger. If that is the case, you ought to remain silent until you can transcend your self-absorption and enter into the world of another human being.[8]

[1] See Midrashim and commentaries to the Torah portions of Tazria-Metzorah. Talmud Erchin 15b. Rambam Laws of Tumas Tzaraas at the end. [2] Leviticus 13:2 and Toras Kohanim and Rashi on verse. Mishnah Negaim chapter 3. Maimonides laws of Tumas Tzaraas 9:2. [3] Toras Kohanim, Mishnah and Maimonides cited in previous footnote. 3\*) See the answer presented in Meshech Chachmah (By Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen, the author of Or Samach and the Rabbi of the Ashkenazim in Dvinsk, Poland) Parshas Tazria [4] Numbers 6: 22-27. [5] Zohar vol. 1 p. 256b; Vol. 3 pp. 145-147. This idea is based on Moses' expression in Deuteronomy 33:8. Cf. Sefer Halikkutim-Tzemach Tzedek under the entry of Kohanim. [6] Shlchan Aruch HaRav Orach Chaim 128:19, based on Zohar ibid. [7] Zohar vol. 3 p. 145b. [8] This essay is based on an address by the Lubavitcher Rebbe from December 1984. Likkutei Sichos vol. 27 pp. 88-91. Cf. references noted there.

---

from:TorahWeb <[torahweb@torahweb.org](mailto:torahweb@torahweb.org)> date:Apr 11, 2024, subject: Rabbi Yakov Haber: On Earthquakes, Eclipses, and Tzara'as

### Rabbi Yakov Haber

#### On Earthquakes, Eclipses, and Tzara'as

Much "buzz" has abounded recently concerning two natural phenomena occurring within the last few days, a non-lethal earthquake hitting the tri-state area and a solar eclipse, total in many areas of the United States, but seen, to some extent, practically across all of that country. Much has been written and said about various Torah perspectives on these two events, for, as believing Jews, we do not attribute anything to mere happenstance. Here, I humbly submit some viewpoints culled from Torah sources with a modest attempt to connect these two natural events to broader current events and to the weekly Torah reading.

A famous passage in Maseches Brachos (59a) states:

AND OVER ZEVA'OT [a blessing is recited]. What are ZEVA'OT? R. Kattina said: A rumbling of the earth. R. Kattina was once going along the road, and when he came to the door of the house of a certain necromancer, there was a rumbling of the earth. He said: Does the necromancer know what this rumbling is? He called after him, Kattina, Kattina, why should I not know? When the Holy One, blessed be He, calls to mind His children, who are plunged in suffering among the nations of the world,

He lets fall two tears into the ocean, and the sound is heard from one end of the world to the other, and that is the rumbling. Said R. Kattina: The necromancer is a liar and his words are false. If it was as he says, there should be one rumbling after another! He did not really mean this, however. There really was one rumbling after another, and the reason why he did not admit it was so that people should not go astray after him. R. Kattina, for his own part, said: [G-d] clasps His hands, as it says: "I will also smite my hands together, and I will satisfy my fury." R. Nathan said: [G-d] emits a sigh, as it is said: "I will satisfy my fury upon them and I will be eased." And the Rabbis said: He treads upon the firmament, as it says: "He giveth a noise as they that tread grapes against all the inhabitants of the earth." R. Aha b. Jacob says: He presses his feet together beneath the throne of glory, as it says: "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool."<sup>[1]</sup>

Although earthquakes are unpredictable events,<sup>[2]</sup> in the above passage, Chazal present various approaches as to the cause of their happening. At first glance, all of these statements - attributing earthquakes to various Divine actions - seem directly at odds with the contemporary scientific theory of tectonic plates which attributes earthquakes to the shifting of tectonic plates beneath the earth's surface. These plates, resting on liquid magma, are the foundation of all of the land above.<sup>[3]</sup> A fundamental statement of Maharal (Be'er Hagola 6:1) illuminates our understanding of this and similar statements of Chazal. Our Sages in their aggadic statements are rarely concerned about the siba or direct, natural cause of natural or historical phenomena. They do not deny that this is present, but since natural phenomena are created and controlled by Hashem, they are more focused on the "sibas hasiba - the cause of the cause." In other words, they seek the fundamental, spiritual, heavenly reason why either erratic natural phenomena (e.g. earthquakes and rainbows) happen at a specific time or why cyclical ones (e.g. eclipses and comets) were programmed into the fabric of the natural order of creation by their Creator.<sup>[4]</sup>

In light of this, our Torah luminaries have presented various central lessons inherent in the above-mentioned teaching of Chazal. Here, we present one of them. Maharal (Be'er Hagola 4:7) explains that Klal Yisrael being in exile represents a fundamental change of the proper state of the world.<sup>[5]</sup> Such a change causes, by means of Divine providence, another massive change in the world order, an earthquake. In the language of Maharal, "shinui goreres shinui." Perhaps we can elaborate based on another teaching of Maharal (Nesiv Ha'avodah 5) that the word for place, "makom," is related to the word "mekayeim" or causing existence. Without a place to rest on, nothing could exist; the bricks of a building are not its true source of existence, but rather the piece of land it rests on is. Hashem is called "Hamakom" since He is the true Source of

existence for everything. Hence, when the world order is massively conceptually "shaken to its core" by the exile of the Jewish people, its very source of existence, the makom, is quite literally shaken by its core. According to Maharal, the various anthropomorphic expressions used by the various Amoraim[6] refer to different parts of the body representing various aspects of G-d's closeness to mankind - eyes, hands, heart (the source of sighs), the lower leg (the source of kicks) and the foot, each one focusing on a different level of Divine providence evidenced by the earthquake.[7]

Commenting on eclipses, Chazal (Sukka 29a) state (among other comments there) that when a "solar defect" occurs, this is a bad omen for the nations of the world. By contrast, when a "lunar defect" happens, this is an inauspicious sign for the Jewish people. Here too, Maharal (Be'er Hagolah 6:2), in answering the problem that these "defects" are predictable natural events, explains, as mentioned briefly above, that the world was created in an imperfect manner in light of the imperfections that different segments of mankind would later manifest. Perhaps we can also explain that just as there are times in the day which are more conducive to prayers being answered and seasons in the year where certain spiritual resources are more readily accessible, eclipse phenomena may represent such times.[8] In addition, many have noted that a solar eclipse caused by the moon, smaller than the sun by orders of magnitude, indicates the important teaching of "רבים בידם מעתים", that when one is allied with the Creator of the World and the Master of its History, the ability to overcome mighty nations can be granted even to the few and the weak.[9] Rav Aryeh Lebowitz quotes the Rishpei Eish that indeed a solar eclipse represents the victory of Klal Yisrael, represented by the moon, over the persecuting nations of the world, represented by the sun. The subsequent light of the sun represents the light of redemption over the entire world to follow that.

The bulk of our parasha deals with the physical phenomenon of tzara'as. As is quite evident, this is not to be equated with the medical condition known as leprosy. Neither its initial appearance nor the halachos mandating its declaration as tamei or tahor corresponds to medical science. Nonetheless, tzara'as is a physical phenomenon on the body, clothing or home. This serves as an example of the Maharal's principle of sibas hasiba on an individual basis. True, there is a physical phenomenon governed perhaps by the rules of nature, but it clearly represents a Divinely machinated physical manifestation of some spiritual malaise as highlighted by Chazal in Midrashim listing the various sins which can cause tzara'as. Not just concerning tzara'as but concerning all travails in life, Chazal (Berachos 5a) adjure us: **חרואה שיטורין באין עליון, יפשפש במעשיך** - one who sees that suffering befalls him, should examine his deeds and return to G-d. In other words, one should constantly strive to see "the cause of the

cause" and not suffice with a surface level focus on just the physical reason for the stress.

Klav Yisrael the world over, and, more manifestly, the yishuv in the Holy Land remain threatened by formidable enemy nations. The IDF remains locked in a multi-front war against Arab terrorists in Gaza, Yehuda and Shomron, Lebanon and Syria in a precarious struggle for survival. Iran, the modern-day kingdom of Persia, has threatened and, in light of recent events, presently threatens severe reprisal attacks against Israel and its interests abroad. Any other nation would go insane from fear under the current situation. But, the Jewish people, strengthened by the words of the haggada: "In every generation they rise up to destroy us, and the Holy One blessed be He saves us from their hand!" have confidence that they will survive against all odds.[10] The natural phenomena just occurring should both inspire us to be worthy of Hashem's protection by strengthening our avodas Hashem and by improving our interpersonal relationships and serve as an impetus to constantly realize that the Sibas Hasibos and Ilas Ha'ilos Above is the One truly running the show. May the aforementioned words of the Rishpei Aish be fulfilled in our days with a speedy victory over our enemies and may the illumination of the final redemption speedily shine in this month of the ge'ulah! **אור חדש על ציון הארץ ונזכה כלנו מהרה לארו!**

[1] Translation courtesy of the online version of the Soncino Talmud. [2] A quote from the United States Geological Survey: "Can you predict earthquakes? No. Neither the USGS nor any other scientists have ever predicted a major earthquake. We do not know how, and we do not expect to know how any time in the foreseeable future. USGS scientists can only calculate the probability that a significant earthquake will occur...in a specific area within a certain number of years." Available at <https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/can-you-predict-earthquakes>.

[3] A fascinating passage in Chazal perhaps references this by comparing the earth to a ship floating on the ocean (Midrash Tehillim 93) as explained by Rav Dovid Brown, *Mysteries of Creation*. [4] A similar approach explains the difference between human history and Divinely recorded history as written in Tanach. The former concerns itself only with natural, historical cause and effect; the latter presents the inner Divine dimension. See the Daas Mikr introduction to the book of Shmuel. [5] See also Netzach Yisrael 1. [6] And the necromancer who, in the Gemara's conclusion, actually spoke truth. R. Katina dismissed his words in order to avoid people following his other falsehoods and forbidden behaviors. [7] The existence of earthquakes before the Jewish people were exiled represented the imperfect state of the world which would allow for such an exile. These words of Maharal perhaps imply that in the perfect Messianic era, earthquakes will cease to exist. He writes this explicitly concerning eclipses (see below) ceasing in the Messianic era (Be'er Hagolah

6:2). [8] I was delighted that Rav Aryeh Lebowitz expressed a similar thought in his recently published remarks on the eclipse. [9] A fascinating insight by Professor Nathan Aviezer in his book, "In the Beginning: Biblical Creation and Science" suggests that, on a pshat level, the seeming contradiction between the passages describing the creation of the sun and the moon as, on the one hand, "שנֵי מְאוּרֹת הַגָּדוֹלִים" but, on the other hand, also as "הַמְּאוֹר הַקָּטוֹן הַגָּדוֹל" can be resolved by noting that although in actual size, the sun dwarfs the moon being approximately 400 times larger than it, but in relative size - due to the sun's extreme distance from the earth and the moon's relative nearness being 400 times closer - they are practically equal. This is of course what allows for a total solar eclipse of the gigantic sun by the small moon. [10] Even CNN, notoriously anti-Israel in its news coverage, put out a series of videos entitled Against All Odds documenting the miraculous survival of the yishuv in Eretz Yisrael.

© 2024 by TorahWeb Foundation. All Rights Reserved

---

The beginning of Parshas Tazria includes references to parent-child relationships...

### **Medical Procedures on a Parent**

#### **By Rabbi Yirmiyahu Kaganoff**

Question #1: My Daughter, the Surgeon

"I specifically want my daughter to perform my upcoming operation. Is this permitted?"

Question #2: My Son, the Medic

"May my son, a trained medic, give me my daily shot?"

#### **Foreword**

One of the many mitzvos mentioned in parshas Mishpatim is capital punishment for someone, male or female, who strikes his or her parent. As we all know, the aseres hadibros include a mitzvah of kibud av ve'eim, honoring parents, and the Torah also has another mitzvah of yiras av ve'eim, treating parents with awe (Vayikra 19:3). Obviously, the opposite extreme is someone who curses or strikes his parent. Yet, there are situations in which the parent wants the child to "wound" him because of the resultant benefit. For example, if the parent needs open heart surgery, and the child is the most qualified thoracic surgeon available, he would probably want him or her to perform the operation. (We are assuming, of course, that the "child surgeon" in this instance feels that he can make objective medical decisions.) Another situation is that the parent requires an injection and it is more convenient or less expensive to have the child, who is a nurse, physician or medic, administer the injection. Yet a third, common situation is when the child is a dentist and will provide free dental care to the parent, but this involves either a painkilling shot or causing the gums to bleed.

#### **Introduction**

Although the Torah states that someone who strikes his parent shall be put to death, we know that capital punishment is meted out only when:

- (a) a beis din of 23, specially-ordained dayanim rule this way,
- (b) the crime is witnessed by two halachically valid witnesses,
- (c) the defendant receives a clear warning prior to performing his criminal act,
- (d) he acknowledges to have understood the warning, including the ramifications of its punishment, and
- (e) he commits the crime immediately (Rambam, Hilchos Mamrim 5:5).

The potential capital punishment meted out by the Torah for striking a parent establishes this as a major sin, a significant factor relating to our opening questions (see Sanhedrin 84b).

Our first discussion will be about the passages in the Mishnah and in the Gemara, located in Sanhedrin 84-85, that discuss the halachic details of this prohibition. The Mishnah (Sanhedrin 85b) states that someone who strikes his father or mother is deemed punishable by the death penalty only when he draws blood. The poskim provide three instances to explain what this means:

(1) We see blood from the injury (Bava Kama 86a). Bear in mind that bleeding can be tiny, painless and insignificant; yet, that would be included in the Torah's prohibition. Examples of causing bleeding would include injecting something directly into a vein or pressing against sensitive gums.

(2) An injury in which it is noticeable that there is bleeding under the skin, called colloquially a "black and blue mark."

(3) An ear injury that causes deafness, which is an indication that the blow caused internal bleeding (Bava Kama 86a, 98a).

The Gemara (84b) states that the punishment for striking a parent does not exist if the wound was for a medical purpose, such as using a needle to remove a thorn, lancing a boil, or bloodletting.

Having ruled that it is permitted to cause therapeutic bleeding on a parent, the Gemara tells us that Rav did not allow his son to remove a thorn from him, nor did Mar berei de Ravina allow his son to drain a boil. The Gemara questions: why should a son performing this procedure on his father be any different from anyone else performing this procedure on his fellowman? There is a lo sa'aseh min haTorah to injure another Jew, but this action is permitted when it is beneficial. Upon this basis, we have blood tests, perform surgery and donate blood. What difference does it make whether the practitioner performs this service for his parent or for anyone else?

The Gemara answers that the concern is that if the person performing the procedure cuts more than is necessary, this is a negligent (shogeig) violation of the prohibition. We are more concerned about a child performing this act on his

parent, since this involves a more serious violation than injuring a fellow Jew. Thus, we view with greater concern something for which the Torah prescribes a high level of punishment – and there is a difference in practical halacha that results from the greater degree of culpability.

#### Prohibited or suggested?

The rishonim note that Rav and Mar brei deRavina seem to disagree with the previous passage of the Gemara, which permits a child to perform a medical treatment on a parent, even when it causes bleeding. Are these amora'im, Rav and Mar berei deRavina, disputing the previous conclusion of the Gemara, or, perhaps, is there another way to explain the differences between the rulings? In fact, there are numerous approaches to answer this question, two of which figure prominently among the (see Beis Yosef and Bach, Yoreh Deah 241):

(A) Rav and Mar berei deRavina conclude that, although a child may carry out these medical acts when no alternative exists, he may not do so when someone else is available to perform them (Rambam, Hilchos Mamrim 5:7). However, when no one who can perform the treatment is available, the child may do so, and we are not concerned about a potential mishap. This approach is followed as definitive halacha by the Rema and others (Bach, Gra).

(B) Others conclude that, indeed, Rav and Mar brei deRavina disagree with the position of the Gemara, cited earlier, and rule that a child may not perform therapeutic activity that will cause bleeding on a parent. Since this is the last opinion mentioned in the passage of Gemara, it is accepted by these rishonim (Beis Yosef, in his understanding of the position of the Rif and Rosh). The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 241:3) rules that this is the halachic conclusion.

So, at this point, we see that the Shulchan Aruch, usually followed by Sefardim, rules that a therapeutic treatment that causes bleeding cannot be performed by a child, even when no one else is available. The Rema and other early Ashkenazic authorities permit a child to perform these treatments when no one else is available.

When is it considered that someone else is available? What is the halacha if the procedure can be performed by someone else, but the parent prefers that the child does it. For example, the child is a well-known heart surgeon, but the surgery is considered routine and any competent thoracic surgeon should be able to perform it successfully. Similarly, if the child will charge his parent less than someone else will, is this permitted? Notwithstanding that cost is not usually a factor when we deal with violating Torah prohibitions, here, it may be a factor, because the parent, who wants the child to perform the activity, is not violating any prohibition of the Torah. Thus, if the parent wants the child to perform the procedure because it will now be gratis, many authorities consider this as if there is no one available other than the child (Aruch Hashulchan,

Yoreh Deah 241:6; Gesher Hachayim 2:1; Minchas Shelomoh 1:32)

#### My daughter, the surgeon

At this point, we can answer the first of our opening questions: "I specifically want my daughter to perform my upcoming operation. Is this permitted?"

The answer is that if your daughter is Ashkenazi, it is permitted, but if she is a Sefardiyyah, it probably is not.

#### Mechilah

Does it make any halachic difference if the parent is mocheil the child in advance for any unintended injury? The Minchas Chinuch contends that had Rav and Mar berei deRavina stated that they were completely mocheil their sons, even if the result was an unintended injury, there would be no problem for the sons to perform the procedure. In the opinion of the Minchas Chinuch, the case of the Gemara is when Rav and Mar berei deRavina never declared that they were completely mocheil their sons, regardless of the result. Rav Shelomoh Zalman Auerbach rules that this approach of the Minchas Chinuch should be given credence, at least as a tziruf, which means that we may use this as a heter, combined with other reasons to be lenient.

The Minchas Chinuch proposes a further novel suggestion germane to this prohibition. He contends that if a father asks a son to injure him, there is no prohibition on the son to do so. He understands this to be included in the rule that a parent is permitted to be mocheil on his honor. However, as is noted in Minchas Shelomoh (page 184 note 2), this last opinion of the Minchas Chinuch runs contrary to a ruling of the She'ilatos of Rav Achai Gaon (She'ilta #60) wherein it states that, whereas a parent may be mocheil on kavod, as is done whenever a mother prepares meals for adult children, this does not permit striking, cursing or treating a parent with disdain, which is prohibited even if the parents grant permission.

#### Injection

At this point, let us discuss the second of our opening questions: "May my son, a trained medic, give me my daily shot?"

Most people would not be that concerned whom they entrust with giving them a shot, provided the individual is a medical professional with proper training. According to what we have explained until this point, it would seem that, according to all poskim, this should not be performed by a child for a parent.

However, there are some differences between this case and the situations discussed by the Gemara. Inoculations and most other shots are injected into a muscle, and should not cause any bleeding. Does this permit this action, even when another professional is available, or is it no different from therapeutic bloodletting or boil lancing that is permitted, even according to the Rema, only when no one else is available? Furthermore, if a medical professional will

charge to give the shot, but the child will do it gratis, does this permit the child to perform it?

These two questions were discussed by Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky, a highly respected posek of old yishuv Yerushalayim, in his magnum opus, *Gesher Hachayim* (Volume II, Chapter 1). There, he mentions that he was asked a shaylah by an emergency medical technician whose mother required regular injections whether he could do them for her, something which would save both of them an appreciable amount of money. Since the Rema paskins that a physician should not perform bloodletting on his parent whenever there is another physician available who can, does that preclude a son from injecting his mother?

The *Gesher Hachayim* presents three reasons why he believes that it might be permitted:

(1) All the situations we have so far described involve causing bleeding for a therapeutic reason. The concern is the child might cause more bleeding than necessary. However, intramuscular shots do not usually cause any bleeding at all. Although they could cause bleeding, since, in most instances no bleeding occurs, we do not need to be concerned.

(2) To understand his second approach, I note the following: In the case of surgery, a surgeon decides where and how to make the incision. If the child surgeon uses a technique that causes more bleeding than is necessary, this might be considered a negligent violation of the Torah law. Similarly, in the instances of bloodletting, the practitioner decides how much blood he needs to remove and, in the case of boil lancing, how he will lance the boil. There is ample room for a judgment error that will cause a greater amount of bleeding than the situation requires. On the other hand, the medic in our case of an injection is not deciding how much bleeding or cutting is necessary. Therefore, there are grounds to allow the son to provide this injection for his mother.

(3) The son's willingness to work without charge is considered as if no one else is available. The logic is that Mom is not required to hire someone to give her the injection, when her son is willing to do so for free. After all, it is not her prohibition. Once she decides that she does not want to hire someone, no one is providing her with the necessary service, and the son is not required to hire someone to take his place.

Rav Tukachinsky then reports that after he thought of these three reasons to permit the son to inject his mom, he sent the shaylah to many rabbonim of Yerushalayim to see if they agreed with his conclusion. The three rabbonim who, indeed, answered him and agreed with him all dated their responsa, from which we see that this shaylah came up in the spring of 1944. The three rabbonim were:

(1) Rav Yitzchak Halevi Herzog, a close, personal friend of Rav Tukachinsky, who was the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisroel at the time.

(2) Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, who was the rav of Yerushalayim.

(3) Rav Shalom Zalman Auerbach, at the time a very young, up-and-coming superstar in psak halacha. In addition to his reply published in *Gesher Hachayim*, a longer form of his reply is supplied in *Minchas Shalom* (#32).

#### Applying leaches

Rav Tukachinsky then discusses a similar, related question whether a child may apply leaches to a parent's wound. Is this considered that the child is injuring the parent in a way that causes bleeding? Rav Tukachinsky was not convinced that this is permitted, but

Rav Shalom Zalman Auerbach permitted it for two reasons: When applying leaches, the leaches do not begin to draw blood immediately, and therefore this is not equivalent to striking and drawing blood from a parent. Instead, it is an indirect action that would be exonerated from capital punishment. Once this action is no longer included under the Torah's punishment, the prohibition to perform it on one's parent is the same as on anyone else, and is permitted when done for therapeutic reasons.

Secondly, since the parent has the ability to pull off the leaches before they begin to suck blood, the child has not inflicted any injury (*Minchas Shalom* #32:4).

#### Conclusion

In conclusion to this article on the concepts of kibud horim, I would like to share a comment that I once responded to in an advice column: "My mother-in-law and I have an excellent, warm relationship. However, one area of conflict causes her anxiety and me irritation. The issue is attending the weddings of extended family members, which is very large (sic.) and there are many weddings. She claims that not attending the weddings of these family members, whom I hardly know, rebels against the family norm. I attend about two or three of these weddings every year, when it works out for my schedule, and I forgo the others so that I have more time for professional work, housework, family time and much-needed sleep. On the rare occasions that I attend, I don't know most of the people there, and I don't feel my presence appreciated enough for me to have killed a night. My mother-in-law agreed that I present this issue to the rav. Please advise."

I answered her: You seem to be asking whether you are obligated to acquiesce to your mother-in-law's request. In response, I'd like to start by briefly reviewing the halachos of kibud av va'em. You do have an obligation of kibud av va'em towards your husband's parents, although not on the same level as your obligation towards your own parents or your husband. However, the mitzvah includes only two components – kibud and morah. Kibud encompasses ensuring that your in-laws have their physical needs met. This involves providing them with food if needed, bringing them a drink if requested, taking care of their medical needs if relevant, and so on. Morah requires you to show

them respect by not contradicting them, not sitting in their set places etc.

In the situation you describe, I do not see how either kibud or morah come into play. One can claim that, since your mother-in-law is insisting so strongly on this, there is an element of morah. However, that is only a result of her insisting so strongly that your refusal is rude.

If you are like most frum women today, between caring for a large household, supplementing the family income, and taking care of all your other responsibilities, you are juggling the equivalent of at least two full-time jobs. It seems unfair for your mother-in-law to pile even more on your already overburdened shoulders. Women today are already far too stressed and need to spend more, not less, time with their nuclear families. Encroaching on that time for the sake of fairly distant relatives is not a wise move.

---

### Drasha

#### By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Tazria

Holistic Healing

Tzora'as, the main discussion of the portions of Tazria and Metzorah is an affliction that discolors human skin, clothing, hair, beards and even homes. The laws of tzora'as are detailed, complex and intricate. There are Talmudic tractates that deal with the proper procedure for purification and a litany of laws that must be followed flawlessly. The ramifications of tzora'as have more than physiological implications, they have a great theological impact as well.

The discoloration of skin does not necessarily reflect a chemical impropriety or a nutritional deficiency. It is a heavenly sign of a spiritual flaw, primarily related to a deficient speech pattern. It is a disease that afflicts a gossip. The one in question must go to the kohen (priest) who instructs him in the proper procedure to rid himself of both the blemish and the improper behavior that caused its appearance. The Torah tells us that the fate of the stricken man is totally dependent upon the will of the kohen. The kohen is shown the negah (blemish) and has the power to declare it tamei (impure) or tahor (pure). In fact, even if all signs point to the declaration of impurity, if the kohen, for any reason deems the person tahor or refuses to declare him tamei, the man remains tahor. He is not tamei until openly and clearly labeled as such by the kohen.

Yet the verse seems a bit redundant. "And the kohen shall look at the negah affliction on the skin and behold it has changed to white and appears deeper than the skin of the flesh – it is a tzora'as and the kohen shall look at him and declare him tamei" (Leviticus 13:3). Why must the kohen look twice? The Torah should tell us that the kohen shall look at the negah, and if the affliction is white and appears deeper than the flesh of the skin, then the kohen shall declare him impure. What purpose is served by looking again?

Rabbi Abraham Twerski tells the story of a young man who came to the chief Rabbi of Vilna, *Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky* with a request. As this young man's father was applying for a Rabbinical position in a town that the sage was familiar with, he asked the rabbi for a letter of approbation on his father's behalf.

Rabbi Grodzinsky felt that the candidate was not worthy of the position, but instead of flatly refusing, he just said that he would rather not mix into the Rabbinical affairs of another city and was sure that the council of that city would make a fair and wise decision.

Rabbi Grodzinsky did not realize the tirade that would be forthcoming. The young man began to spew insults and aspersions at him. The sage, however, accepted them in silence. After a few minutes of hearing the abusive language, Rabbi Grodzinsky excused himself and left the room.

Students who witnessed the barrage were shocked at the young man's brazen audacity. They were even more surprised that the Rav did not silence the young man at the start of the barrage.

Rabbi Grodzinsky turned to them. "You cannot view that onslaught on its own. You must look at the bigger picture. This young man was defending the honor of his father, and in that vein I had to overlook his lapse."

The kohen who is instructed to deal with the stricken individual should not only look at the negah. He must look again. He must look at the man. Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of D'vinsk explains that even if the negah has all the attributes that should lead to a declaration of tumah, there are other factors that must be weighed. If the man is a groom, about to wed, impurity must not be declared. It will ruin the upcoming festivities. If there are other mitigating circumstances, then a declaration of contagion must be postponed.

Perhaps the Torah is telling us more. It is easy to look at a flaw and declare it as such. But one must look at the whole person. He must ask himself "how is my declaration going to affect the future of this person." He must consider the circumstances that caused the negah. He must look again – once at the negah – and once at the man.

There are those who interpret the adage in Pirkei Avos (Ethics of the Fathers), "judge all (of the) people in a good way," as do not look at a partial person: rather, judge all of the person — even a flaw may have a motivation or rationale behind it. The kohen may look at the negah, but before he pronounces tamei he must look again. He must look beyond the blemish. He must look at the man.

Good Shabbos!

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

---

### Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Rochel bas Yosef.

A Day of Rectification

If a woman conceives, and bears a male child; then she shall be impure for seven days; as in the days of her menstruation, shall she be impure. On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised (12:2-3).

Rashi (ad loc) introduces this week's parsha with a curious statement: "R' Simlai stated, 'just as the creation of man came after all the different animals so too is his law explained after that of the animals.'" Presumably, Rashi is referring to the Torah's detailed description of which animals are to be used for sacrifices under what circumstances, and which animals may or may not be consumed.

It is a little difficult to understand how the verses above are a definitive description of the laws of man. What is unique about the concepts that are introduced here that Chazal refer to them as the law of man? Perhaps even more perplexing is the law itself. Childbirth is, perhaps, the single most important event in a person's lifetime. Why should this event create impurity and a separation between husband and wife?

Ohr Hachaim (ad loc) is bothered by the Torah's repetition that circumcision takes place on the eighth day. The mitzvah of circumcision was originally given to Avraham Avinu and is described in Parshas Lech Lecha. Why, asks the Ohr Hachaim, is there a need for it to be repeated here? Targum Yonason Ben Uziel (ad loc), in translating the verse "on the eighth day the flesh of his skin shall be circumcised," makes a stunning addition to the possuk that actually changes the whole meaning of the verse. The Targum adds the words "she should become permitted." Therefore the possuk reads, "On the eighth day she should become permitted and the child will have the flesh of his foreskin circumcised."

In other words, the eighth day isn't referring to the age of the newborn, and it isn't a repetition of the laws given in Lech Lecha. The "eighth day" is referring to his mother, it is her eighth day. This addition to the possuk is referring to the teaching of Chazal as to why circumcision is on the eighth day: On the eighth day a woman can become purified and be with her husband once again. Since everyone is rejoicing in the childbirth we want the parents to be joyous as well and therefore they need to be permitted to each other.

This begins to explain the reason as to why these laws are referred to the laws of man: On the sixth day of creation man and woman were created. But on that very same day man and woman both sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge. This sin had terrible consequences including the definitive separation between man and wife. The menstrual cycle, the pain of childbirth, and the competition for control of the relationship are all a direct result of the original sin.

This parsha begins to introduce the rectification of the original sin. The impurity that was brought into the world via the sin, which is tangibly expressed in the menstrual

cycle, process of childbirth, and male foreskin (Adam was created circumcised) are all discussed here. Thus, the Torah is defining the "law of man" as the efforts we make to address and rectify the original sin. This is the path for man to achieve his ultimate reason for being created but it must begin with a reunification with his soulmate and ultimately a relationship with his creator.

#### Seeing is Not Believing

All the days that the affliction is upon him he shall remain impure. He is impure and he shall stay in isolation; his dwelling shall be outside of the camp (13:46).

In this week's parsha, the Torah introduces the laws of tzora'as – commonly mistranslated as leprosy due to the fact that tzora'as shares a similar symptom where white splotches appear on the skin of the afflicted.

In fact, tzora'as isn't merely a disease caused by a bacterial infection (which is what leprosy is); it is a very specific punishment sent from heaven for the sin of lashon hora (see Rashi in his comments on this possuk). The Torah first introduced this concept in Parshas Shemos when Moshe's hand turned white "like snow" from tzora'as (Shemos 3:6) and Rashi (ad loc) explains that it was because he spoke lashon hora on the Jewish people. Similarly, Miriam is afflicted with tzora'as when she spoke negatively about Moshe at the end of Parshas Beha'aloscha (Bamidbar 12:10).

Lashon hora is considered one of the worst sins a person can commit, as heinous as murder, adultery, and idol worship (Talmud Arachin 15b). Yet the punishment, tzora'as, seems to be a minor one. After all, the size of the tzora'as discoloration can be relatively small, around the size of a nickel. While the consequence of having tzora'as is related to the sin of lashon hora (see Rashi 13:46), it is difficult to understand how a relatively small mark on one's body is a fitting punishment. We know that Hashem punishes in a very strict system of quid pro quo, nothing more and nothing less than a transgression deserves. How is this small discoloration a proper punishment for the terrible sin of lashon hora?

One of the most famous photos of the 20th century was taken by famous war photographer Eddie Adams. The photo, named "Saigon Execution," depicted a general in the S. Vietnamese army (America's ally) killing, in appalling cold blooded fashion, a Vietcong prisoner. Beyond the Pulitzer Prize that Eddie Adams won, this photo deeply contributed to the American public's conflict as to whether or not to support the Vietnam war.

The New York Times (when they still had a conscience) was extremely hesitant to publish his photo for it depicted the brutality of America's ally, and only consented to run it side by side with a photo of a child slain by the Vietcong. Nonetheless, Eddie Adams' photo was the one burned into the American psyche.

Yet, Adams himself lamented, "Two people died in that photograph: the recipient of the bullet and General Nguyen

Ngoc Loan. The general killed the Vietcong; I killed the general with my camera. Still photographs are the most powerful weapons in the world. People believe them; but photographs do lie, even without manipulation. They are only half-truths."

The actual circumstances from the incident (obviously not captured on film) were that the prisoner had just ambushed this general's regiment and murdered three of his soldiers. It was a hot and miserable day and tempers were running very high. The general, who actually had a reputation for compassion, made the decision to execute the prisoner for he feared he would lose control of his regiment who were furious that this Vietcong had just murdered three of their fellow soldiers. Because of the terrible backlash from that photo, the general was stripped of his command and discharged from the army. Eddie Adams felt so guilty that he supported him and his family until the end of his life.

Loshon hora, while technically true, is actually the most horrible kind of lie. Loshon hora is exactly like a photograph – a fleeting glimpse of a terrible act that a person committed. But what are the circumstances? Who is that person in reality? Is it fair to paint that person's entire being by that fleeting act; is that who they really are? No one is proud of every moment of his life (there is a well-known saying that no one growing up in the digital era will ever be elected to public office because there are photographs of just about everyone in compromising circumstances).

This is why the punishment for lashon hora is tzora'as. A little discoloration, even the size of a nickel, comes to define the whole person as a metzora. This is the perfect quid pro quo; for it is exactly what the person speaking lashon hora did – took a relatively small (when compared with a person's entire life) and embarrassing vignette and portrayed that to be the entirety of an individual's identity. So too tzora'as, a small discoloration, comes to define the entirety of the sinner.

---

from: **Alan Fisher** [afisherads@yahoo.com](mailto:afisherads@yahoo.com) Apr 11, 2024  
Subject: Potomac Torah Study Center: Devrei Torah for Shabbat Tazria 5784

Hamas has just announced that it cannot find even 40 of the remaining approximately 130 hostages (alive and presumed dead), including Hersh ben Perel Chana, cousin of very close friends of ours. We continue our prayers for all our people stuck in Gaza. May our people in Israel wipe out the evil of Hamas, protect us from violence by anti-Semites around the world, and restore peace for our people quickly and successfully – with the help of Hashem.

Tazria and Metzora come right after the death of Aharon's two sons, Nadav and Avihu. Contact with a dead body creates tumah, spiritual impurity, and disqualifies a person from coming close to Hashem's presence or participating in rituals for a period of time. The process of recovering from tumah and becoming tahor (spiritually pure) again is

the subject of Metzora. Rabbi David Fohrman and his fellow scholars at alephbeta.org explain that all forms of tumah arise from behavior or situations that involve contact with death or a near death experience.

Rabbi Marc Angel observes that despite the dangerous and deadly attacks by Hamas and increases in anti-Semitism throughout the world, the latest World Happiness survey, very recently released, ranks Israel as the fifth happiest country in the world – far better than the United States (number 23). Rabbi Mordechai Rhine observes Moshe's remark that tzaraat (the physical manifestation of tazria) is a loving message from Hashem and exists so B'Nai Yisrael will eat, drink, and be happy.

Tzaraat, a white area on a person's skin, garment, or walls of his home, is a communication from God that something is off. Rabbi Rhine quotes psalm 73, which states that Hashem does only good for the Jewish people, for those who are of pure heart. A person with tzaraat must consult with a Kohen, who will identify whether the white spot is tzaraat. After a positive identification, a metzora (one with tzaraat), must leave the camp, call out that he is tamai (impure), and perform teshuvah for a week. The kohen then re-examines the spot and determines when the metzora may go through the purification process and re-enter the community.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, z"l, focuses on coping with lashon hara, evil speech, the classic evil that chazal recognize as the leading cause of tzaraat. Rabbi Sacks discusses the 2019 film, *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*, which focuses on the life of Fred Rogers, the long time television personality on public broadcasting. A magazine decided to do a series on heros and assigned Rogers to be the subject of one episode – but assigned a journalist known for his angry, negative writings. The journalist tries to engage Rogers in negative speech. Rogers, however, turns every negative comment into positive messages to build up the journalist's self image. While the writer attempts to obtain his typical negative interview, Rogers uses his speech only to help him heal from a negative self image from his past. Rabbi Sacks observes that speech has the power to heal or to harm. While the journalist's history is using writing to harm, Rogers uses speech to heal. Rogers perfectly embodies the message of Tazria and Metzora. The cure for tzaraat is to get rid of negativism. Rogers listens carefully, talks gently, and affirms the positive in others. Chazal say that lashon hara is worse than the three cardinal sins of Judaism (idolatry, adultery, and bloodshed). Fred Rogers understands that lashon tov is the cure for lashon hara and the foundation of a moral, happy society.

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander observes that the discussion of Tazria starts with the laws of tumah and tahara following childbirth (a situation that historically involved a close encounter with death for both the mother and baby). In the six plus months since Hamas entered

Israel to murder and kidnap as many of our people as possible, approximately 90,000 babies have been born in Israel. Rabbi Brander informs us that Tazria expresses our hope that the embryos in the bodies of our mothers, and the newly born babies, will help transform our world for a better tomorrow. We who are adults must focus on building a better society and world in which our children and grandchildren can blossom. With the new generations, hopefully our people and the world can find ways to heal.

---

From: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org>

Thu, Apr 11, 7:53 PM to ravfrand Parshas Tazria

Give the Critic a Taste of His Own Medicine

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 235, Cesarean Section Births. Good Shabbos!

The pasuk says, "And if the Kohen examines the tzoraas and sees that it has spread, he need not (further) examine the yellow hair, the person is tameh (impure)" (Vayikra 13:36).

The Baal HaTurim points out that there are only two times in the entire Torah where we find this expression "lo yevaker" (he need not examine). The first time is in our parsha. The second time is in Parshas Bechukosai, regarding the laws of temurah (switched sacrifices) "lo yevaker (he shall not distinguish) between good and bad" (Vayikra 27:33).

The Baal HaTurim explains that there is a connection between these two pesukim: Since the person was guilty of distinguishing between good and bad (by speaking lashon horah), therefore the Kohen has no need to examine his tzoraas symptoms further and can declare him tameh (impure) immediately. The Baal HaTurim concludes "...for there are seven reasons that cause negaim (ritual skin-blemishes) to come".

This is a classic comment of the Baal HaTurim because it is a riddle. Anyone is welcome to speculate over the meaning of this Baal HaTurim during his or her Shabbos seudah. My feeling is that the meaning of the Baal HaTurim is the following:

What is the aveira of lashon horah all about? When we distill lashon horah to its basic form, what does it consist of? Basically, lashon horah is about criticizing. It is the uncanny ability to look at a person or situation and find what is wrong — to latch on to the shortcomings and the downside. There is good and bad in all of us. We are not all good and we are not all bad. It is possible to look at a person and say "He's stingy, he's this, he's that, etc." But that same person also has positive traits. The chronic lashon horah speaker never sees these positive traits. He chooses to look at the bad and to criticize. He chooses to examine every person under a microscope, and always come to the conclusion that there are faults and shortcomings.

This is the meaning of the Baal HaTurim. When a person transgresses "You shall not examine between good and bad" (he always examines, always looks for fault and always criticizes), he will be punished midah k'neged mida (measure for measure). He will come to the Kohen and the Torah will instruct the Kohen "Do not examine any further." Rule that he is tameh on the spot. Let receive some of his own medicine. Teach the importance of "You shall not scrutinize (further)..." to he who always scrutinizes.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington Edited by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, Maryland

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#235). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: Cesarean Section Births. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Tazria are provided below: A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Rav Frand © 2023 by Torah.org.

---

-----  
from **Ira Zlotowitz** [Iraz@klalgovoah.org](mailto:Iraz@klalgovoah.org) in memory of  
Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz ZTL date: Apr 11, 2024, 7:01 PM  
subject: Tidbits for Parshas Tazria • April 12th • 4 Nissan  
5784

Reminders

The first opportunity for Kiddush Levana was Thursday night, April 11th. The final opportunity is Monday night, April 22nd.

Chodesh Nissan began this past Monday night, April 8th. For the duration of the month, Tachanun, as well as the Yehi Ratzons recited after Kerias Hatorah, are omitted from the weekday davening. On Shabbos, Av Harachamim (before Mussaf) and Tzidkoscha (after Minchah) are omitted as well. The Kel Malei recited by one who has a yahrzeit is also not said. Fasting and hespeidim are generally prohibited as well.

The berachah of Bircas Ilanos (a blessing on a newly blossomed fruit tree) should ideally be said during the month of Nissan. Many have the minhag not to eat matzah from Rosh Chodesh Nissan (some do not eat matzah beginning from Shushan Purim).

One must donate money for Maos Chittin, money which will be used to provide the needy with food during Pesach. The donation may be given from maaser funds.

As the precarious situation in Eretz Yisrael continues, each person should increase reciting tehillim and performing other mitzvos as a zechus for the many Acheinu Beis Yisrael 'in travail and captivity' as well as for the soldiers in battle.

Daf Yomi - Friday: Bavli: Bava Metzia 44 • Yerushalmi: Terumos 101 • Mishnah Yomis: Nazir 2:7-8. • Oraysa: Next week is Yoma 84a-86a.

Make sure to call your parents, in-laws, grandparents and Rebbi to wish them a good Shabbos. If you didn't speak to your kids today, make sure to connect with them as well! Shabbos Hagadol is next Shabbos, Parashas Metzora, April 20th.

Leil Bedikas Chametz is on Sunday evening, April 21st. Pesach begins on Monday evening, April 22nd.

For the Shabbos Table

"**וְאַתָּה נֹגֵעַ אֶת־עֵינֶךָ**" "the affliction has not changed appearance" (Vayikra 13:55) The simple meaning of this pasuk is that the appearance of the tzara'as on the garment has not changed. The Chidushei HaRim offers another, homiletic interpretation.

The Gemara says that aside from lashon hara, another sin that causes tzara'as is tzarus ha'ayin - a narrowness in spirit resulting in a negative outlook and stinginess mainly towards others. As this sin causes tzara'as, in order to heal one must remedy his "eye" and repair his attitude in this regard. The pasuk can be read, "if the nega does not lead to him remedying his eye", then the tzara'as will inflict him further.

The Chidushei HaRim adds that the word **נוֹגֵעַ** - pleasure, and the word **עֵינֶךָ** (tzara'as) are very similar with interchangeable letters. The difference just being where the "ayin" is placed. When the ayin - the eye - is proper then it is blissful. When the "ayin" falls and fails, it may become a **עֵינֶךָ**.

Please reach out to us with any thoughts or comments at: [klalgovoah.org](http://klalgovoah.org)

---

From: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu> Thu, Apr 11, 11:15 AM - Ohr Somayach -Explore JudaismStudy In IsraelAudio Insights into Halacha

## 5784 - The Year of the Rare Haftarah - 2

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

As discussed in the OhrNet to Parashas Vayigash, our current year, 5784, is quite a rare one indeed. Over the course of this special year, not just one, but three out of the six rarest haftaros are leined. The next time this will occur is in another seventeen years, in 5801/2040. But first, a bit of background is in order.

According to the Abudraham and Tosafos Yom Tov, the haftaros were established when the wicked Antiochus IV (infamous from the Chanukah miracle) outlawed public reading of the Torah. The Chachamim of the time therefore established the custom of reading a topic from the Nevi'im similar to what was supposed to be read from the Torah. Even after the decree was nullified, and even prior to the Gemara's printing, this became minhag Yisrael.

Most haftaros share some similarity with at least one concept presented in the Torah reading. The Gemara Megillah (29b-31a) discusses the proper haftarah readings

for the various holidays throughout the year, which are rather related to the holiday and generally trump a weekly haftarah. But it is not just Yomim Tovim that may "knock off" a regular haftarah, but special Shabbosos, and usually, even if Rosh Chodesh falls out on Sunday. Hence, practically speaking, there are several haftaros that almost never get a chance to be leined publicly.

But, as mentioned previously, this year, three out of the six rarest haftaros are leined. They are the haftaros of Parashas Mikeitz (at the end of sefer Bereishis), Parashas Tazria, and Parashas Kedoshim (both in sefer Vayikra).

As discussed in Part 1 of this series, this year, the haftarah of Parashas Mikeitz was actually leined. In fact the next time "Vayikatz Shlomo" (Melachim I Ch. 3:15), discussing the wisdom of Shlomo HaMelech – ordering to cut the disputed baby in half in order to determine his real mother, is the second rarest haftarah Ashkenazim read, averaging being read only once in ten years. The next time this haftarah is slated to be read is in another 17 years in 5801/2040.

This week, Parashas Tazria, the second rare haftarah "V'ish ba," (Melachim II Ch. 4:42) will be read. Although statistically speaking, it is on average read every 6 years (16.32% of the time), nevertheless, it practically has not been leined in 21 years – since 5763/2003! There are several reasons for this. The common minhag is that when the Parshiyos of Tazria and Metzora are read together - which they are in a standard year; they are only leined separately in a leap year - only the haftarah of the latter Parashah is read.

Although there is some debate about this among the Rishonim, this position is codified as the proper ruling by both the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 284:7) and Rema (Orach Chaim 428:8), and as far as this author knows, this was accepted by all of Klal Yisrael. The main reason this is so is to enable reading a haftarah similar to what was just concluded in the Torah leining, which translates to the second parashah that was just finished, and not the first parashah. So we see that generally speaking, whenever there is a double parashah, the haftarah of the second parashah is read, as that is the Torah reading that we just concluded. However, this means it is only possible for Tazria's haftarah to be read in a leap year, which occurs only 7 out of 19 years.

Moreover, Tazria can also be Parashas HaChodesh, which as a special haftarah reading, would also trump its leining. That, plus the preponderance of Shabbos Rosh Chodesh or Rosh Chodesh falling on Sunday, both of which would preclude it from being leined, make this year's Tazria's stand-alone haftarah quite a rare read, indeed.

However, the calendarical-minded among us who appreciate rarities and statistics need not fret, as we will thankfully not have to wait another 21 years to hear Tazria's haftarah. In fact, in the upcoming leap years,

Tazria's haftarah will be read somewhat often – in 5787, 5790, 5793, and then, after an 8 year break, again in 5801. The remaining rare haftarah, and the reasons detailing why it will be specifically read this year, will be IY”H be discussed closer to the time it will be read.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch famously wrote that “the Jew’s catechism is his calendar.” It is this author’s wish that by showcasing the uniqueness of our calendar year and

its rare haftaros, this article will help raise appreciation of them and our calendarical customs.

This author wishes to thank R’ Yosef Yehuda Weber, author of ‘Understanding the Jewish Calendar,’ for originally ‘tipping me off’ as to the rare haftaros being leined this year, as well as for being a fount of calendarical knowledge.

---

לע”ג

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה  
בילא בת (אריה) ליבע ע"ה  
אנא מלכה בת ישראל