



OD YOSEF HAI NEWSLETTER

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Thoughts on TAZRIA / METZORA Year 25

by Dayan Abraham David

The parasha teaches us insights on how we should look upon the birth of children. A woman after recovering from childbirth is obliged to bring a sin offering and a burnt offering to the Temple. The world looks upon childbirth as a natural event, appreciating the baby but giving no thought to the actual event of the birth. Perhaps we do give thought to the pain involved but not to the miracle and wonders of it. Childbirth involves the greatest physical changes in the person of the woman and even with all the advances in medicine, is still a time of danger to both mother and child, as our Rabbis call it 'Sha'at Sackanah' and for this she brings a burnt offering. She is required to bring a sin offering to atone for any angry thoughts or oaths she might have made during the pain of childbirth. She is taught to

appreciate all she has gone through and still come out well and not just to think about what sort of treatment she received in the hospital etc. To think about the wonders of how G-d has developed from the tiniest beginning a wonderful being, giving it all it needed for its journey into our world, without our having to do very much.

This is followed by the command of the Brit Milah on the eighth day which the father is obliged to perform on his son, to bring perfection to G-d's creation, as we see in the argument between Tunrufus, a Roman dignitary, and Rabbi Akiva. Tunrufus asked Rabbi Akiva, since the deeds of G-d are surely better than those of man, why do you need to perform a Brit Milah, surely G-d's creation is perfect and does not need any improvement. Rabbi Akiva countered, which is better wheat or bread, grapes or wine – surely bread and wine, and yet it was G-d who created the wheat and grapes and man improved on it.

Tunrufus then countered, if circumcision is better why did G-d not create people circumcised? To this Rabbi Akiva answered, it was to give us the opportunity to improve ourselves through the mitzvot, to perfect ourselves as if we were partners in the creation. Only man has the ability to improve and change himself through his deeds. The Torah places the laws of childbirth next to the mitzvah of Milah for in one man only makes a tiny beginning and G-d completes it all and in the other G-d makes the creation and man completes perfection through mitzvot.

GEMS

In the Parasha Tazria, the Torah speaks extensively about the spiritual malady called *'tsarat'* which came upon a person for the sin of *'lashon hara'* bad mouthing people. This is indicated with the first words of the following Parasha Metzora. *'Motzei Shem Ra'*. One who gives bad names to people. The Talmud and Midrashim warn us of the devastating consequences of *'lashon hara'* which kills three. It kills the one spoken about, the one who listens and the one

who speaks it. As we see in the story of Doeg, who told Shaul about the help Nob the city of Cohanim gave David, the whole city, was wiped out by Shaul Hamelek. Shaul was killed because of this sin and Doeg lost his life in this world and the world to come. The *Metzora,*' slanderer, received a severe punishment; he was humiliated and shamed in public and had to leave his home, friends and community to dwell on his own outside the city walls until he repents; then the *'tsarat'* mysteriously goes away without any physical medicine.

What we need to understand is why the cause of his malady is given in Parasha Metzora indicated by the title given to him *'Hametzorah'* *'Ha Motzei Shem Ra'* the bad mouthed which speaks about his cleansing process after the malady has left him and not in Tazria which speaks about the illness and his punishment

Let us first understand the significance of the process of purification; he brings two kosher birds, a stick of cedar wood, a tongue of crimson dyed wool derived from red

worm and some moss. One of the birds is slaughtered (*shechted*) and its blood poured into an earthen vessel containing a small amount of spring water. The live bird and the bundle of the cedar wood and moss tied together by the crimson wool are dipped into the earthen vessel containing the blood and spring water and then sprinkled on the *metzora* seven times. The live bird is then set free to fly away. His whole body is clean shaven and he is immersed in a mikvah for purity. This process is a lesson for the future, even though he has repented and the *'tsarat'* has been removed from him, but there is a fear that his repentance is temporary, broken by the shame and humiliation, being ostracised from the community he is broken and repents. He could however revert to his bad ways. The Torah now gives him a lesson for the future after his *'tsarat'* has been taken off and he is feeling better. Now he must be warned for the future so he should not revert to being a *metzora*.

The birds who chatter and chirp remind him to be wary

of the idle chatter he indulged in which lead to *hashon hara*. One of the birds is slaughtered and one lives; for life and death can depend on the tongue, *'Chayim ve Mavet biyad Ha lashon'*. The cedar wood which comes from a tall tree depicts pride which is a cause of bad mouthing others, by bringing down others he feels greater; lack of respect for others is caused by pride. The moss and the crimson wool *'Tolat Shani'* depict humility and a lowly spirit. Pride must be replaced by humility. They are bound together to tell us there is also a place for pride when it comes to the service of G-d, but they go together, the more a person has humility the greater he sees G-d so when distracters discourage the keeping of mitzvot and the learning of Torah, then *'Veyigbah libo Be Darchei Hashem'*; He stands up against them like a lion he must not behave meekly but even so he must not lose his inner humility but work it together with his pride for serving G-d,

The live bird and the bundle of cedar wood and moss are dipped in the blood in an

earthenware vessel, for we are fragile and earthly material as such a vessel our only hope is the spring water depicting the Torah '*Mayim Chayim*' at the bottom of the vessel to save us from '*lashon hara*' which like a bird or an arrow once let out cannot be called back and can continue its damage beyond our imagination.

The Metzora is shaven clean like a new born child and immersed in a mitvah as a convert is a new beginning to start afresh after these lessons.

STORIES OF TZADDIKIM

The story is told about the Hafetz Haim that he was once travelling on a train journey. There were, together with him, some rough men who were speaking bad about one of their companions. As soon as the Hafetz Haim heard that they were going to speak Lashon Hara, he decided to go over to them and strike up a conversation to change the subject of discussion. The Hafetz Haim left the train very happy, as he pointed out to one of his students that he successfully engaged them in a very long discussion about horses (or perhaps cars in our

times) and each one had a different opinion as to which horse was the best for riding on and lashon hara had been avoided. If we are caught up in a similar situation we should try to change the subject of conversation to something which interests people like food or sport, just not people.

Shabbat Shalom

HALACHOT

1. Crackers and matzot, which were not baked for Pesach, during the year, are mezonot for Sephardim according to the Shulchan Aruch since they are brittle and need to be chewed a lot, it would take a long time to eat a small quantity unlike eating bread. .
2. Matzot during Pesach have the din of bread even though they are brittle, we eat them like bread since they keep fresh and we are koveah seuda because they are our main sustenance during this time.
3. Matzot made for Pesach according to many Poskim are considered bread even after Pesach and the beracha for them would be HaMotze and Birchat HaMazon to be recited after. There are others who say that matzot are mezonot.

According to the Ben Ish Hai we should only eat them when we wash for bread or eat 165 grams or 225 grams to be stricter of matzot, which is Kebiyot Seuda and becomes HaMotze with Birchat HaMazon afterwards. If one cannot do any of these options and he must eat then it is better to make Mezonot and Meyin Shalosh and not HaMotze and Birchat HaMazon on a small quantity.

4. If one wets the matzot to make it soft and pliable then he should make HaMotze and Birchat HaMazon afterwards.
5. Some Poskim say that after the 14th of Iyar, Pesach Sheni, the matzot from Pesach are considered mezonot. However, the Ben Ish Hai holds that all year round they should only be eaten in a seuda. We can rely on the first opinion which is accepted by Rabbi Mordecai Eliyahu.

Rosh Chodesh Iyar falls both on Friday 24th and Shabbat 25th April

Do not forget to count sefirat ha'omer after nightfall every day

We have started last week to say Pirkei Avot every Shabbat. We are now in the second perek.

SHABBAT TIMES

Shabbat commences	7:58 pm
Shabbat terminates	9:12 pm
Shabbat :Latest Shema	
Magen Avraham	8:21 am
Shabbat :Latest Shema Gra	9:22 am

PLEASE FOLLOW ALL THE GUIDELINES AND WARNINGS CONCERNING COVID-19

PANDEMIC

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LE'NAFSHOTEHEM**

**VEAHAVTA L'REACHA
KAMOCHA**