



S. FLORIDA ZMANIM
CANDLE LIGHTING
 7:19 PM
S"Z KRIAT SHEMA
 10:17 AM
SUNSET
 7:38PM
MOTZEI SHABBAT
 8:13 PM

"Written by a Multifaceted Student Body, Whose Ambition is to Enrich and Enhance Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion"

PARSHAT TAZRIA

פרשת תזריע

~ כ"ז אדר ב' תשע"א ~

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THE ANIMAL INSIDE OF YOU

RABBI ALLAN HOUBEN

If you peruse the *parshiot* of *Tazriah* and *Metzora* you will find a number of different types of *tumah* discussed: *tumat leida* (impurity as a result of giving birth), *tumat tzaraat* (impurity as a result of a skin disease), *tumat zav* (impurity as a result of a non-seminal mission from the male reproductive organ), *tumat ba'al ker* (impurity as a result of a seminal emission), *tumat nida* (impurity as a result of menstruation), and *tumat zava* (impurity as a result of non-menstrual bleeding).

There is one glaring omission from this discussion of *tumah*- *tumat meit* (impurity as a result of death). Why is this most extreme form of *tumah* omitted?

In order to understand this omission, it is crucial to understand what the forms of *tumah* that are mentioned have in common. One theory is that all *tumah* stems from death. One can easily explain that *tumat ba'al ker* and *tumat nida* stem from the loss of a potential life. , *tumat zav* and *zava* also originate from the reproductive organs, and *tzaraat*, which many commentators say throughout *Tanach* is like death, turns one's skin to white-appearing as if dead. It is much more difficult to explain *tumat leida*. Isn't giving birth the opposite of death?

If we examine, however, *tumat leida* not from the perspective of the child but from that of the mother, it is possible to see the connection to the theme. While the child goes on to live an independent life, the mother loses what has to this point been a part of her (*ubar yerech imo*)- perhaps an explanation for post-partum depression. This understanding of *tumah* only strengthens the question, if all *tumah* stems from death, it makes even less sense for the "granddaddy" of all *tumah* (*avi avot ha'tumah*) to be omitted.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch offers a different approach to *tumah*. While animals are completely physical creatures, every person is made up of a physical side and a spiritual side. When the physical, the *nefesh habehamit*, dominates, when we act on the level of an animal, we become *tamei*.

The Maharal similarly explained that there are three "decision makers" in a person, the *moach* (mind), the *lev* (heart), and the *kaved* (literally the liver, but used to represent the physical aspects of the body)- together the *roshei teivot* spell *melech* (king). A person stands on two legs showing a clear hierarchy of decision making (top down)- *moach*, then *lev*, then *kaved*. However, if a person acts like an animal, metaphorically standing on four legs, the *moach*, *lev*, and *kaved* are all on the same level, giving the physical aspects of a person as much importance as the spiritual.

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A LASTING GEULAH

BRACHA BRAUSER ('13)

Every aspect of life of the human world is said to have a parallel in the spiritual world. One such example is the relationship between a man and a woman that leads to the birth of children. In Shir Hashirim, this special and holy relationship is compared to the union between Hashem and the Jewish people.

This week's *parsha* opens with a woman giving birth, the process of circumcision that follows the birth of a boy, and the sacrifices a mother must bring after going through labor.

Rabbi Chaim Ibn Attar explains that, just like in Shir Hashirim, there is a deeper understanding for the event of a woman giving birth. The child being born represents redemption, a product of the holy relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people. The spirituality and feeling of completion experienced by a couple after the birth of their child mirrors the feelings upon building and completing a strong and lasting relationship with Hashem.

Throughout the history of the Jewish people, there exists a strong theme of *galut* (exile), followed by *geulah* (redemption). This was experienced by the Jews in Egypt, followed by the story of Purim in Babylon, and then during the Chanukah story when *Bnei Yisrael* were redeemed from Syrian-Greek oppression. Each time, however, after a miraculous redemption, another *galut* soon followed.

As Jewish people, our hope is to achieve a redemption that will last – an experience that can only be attained through connecting our physical world with Hashem's spiritual world; creating a foundation for a strong relationship. We must focus on guarding the commandments of the Torah so that our relationship with Hashem is real, and thus the product will be an everlasting redemption.

SELF-CLEANSING

SARAH TEPPER ('11)

Last week's *parsha*, *Parshat Shemini*, ended with the topic of *kashrut*, and this week's *parsha*, *Parshat Tazria*, opens with the laws of childbirth. When a woman gives birth to her child, she is impure for a certain amount of time.

Rashi is puzzled by the juxtaposition of *kashrut* and childbirth. Rabbi Simlai in the *midrash* of *Vayikra Rabbah* answers that just as the forming of man came after that of all the cattle, beasts, and fowl during the days of creation, so too the Torah explains certain laws of impurity after describing the cattle, beasts, and fowl which are impure. Here in our *parsha*, the Torah presents these laws in the same sequence that we find the beings of the world created in *briat ha'olam*.

Hashem is telling us that our mission is to distinguish between *tumah* and *taharah*; impurity and purity. Not only must we be able to tell the difference, but we must also know how to act and react differently towards each one of them. One is to be avoided; the other is to be drawn closer, and in this case, even eaten.

In light of this, we now see that the connection between the *parshiyot* is not the relationship between *kashrut* and childbirth, but between one kind of *tumah* and another. The first kind of *tumah* is one that seems to take a physical form. Certain animals are *tamei*, as the Torah states many times, "*Tamei Hu Lachem*" in regards to the camel, for example.

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It seems that this form of *tumah* is generated by the animal's physical make-up, and the animal is therefore *tamei* from a physical standpoint. That is to say, Hashem has branded this particular animal as *tamei*. The animal cannot go to the *mikvah* and emerge as spiritually cleansed.

This is not the case, however, regarding the *tumah* of a person, namely a mother. Her *tumah* is much more abstract and spiritual than that of a non-kosher animal. One might have thought that creation is something that happened at one point in time, and is forever buried in history, but Rabbi Simlai comes to teach us the contrary.

Included in the idea of creation is a constant connection between us and Hashem. The Torah is our life, blood, and source for constant connection to Hashem. Rabbi Simlai reminds us of this by stating that just as the formal creation process happened in a certain order, so too the laws of the Torah are fashioned in such an order. Through the performance of what the Torah asks of us, we constantly re-establish our connection to Hashem, just as He does with us.

A PERFECT SCORE

RALPH BETESH ('13)

In this week's *parsha*, God commands the Jews many laws regarding *tzaraat*, leprosy. *Tzaraat* is a spiritual skin disease that is most commonly known as the punishment for speaking *lashon harah*. *Tzaraat* appears as a white spot on a person's house, clothes, or body; but this week's *parsha*, addresses the disease on the body.

Hashem says if a man has a little bit of *tzaraat* on the them, they shall be deemed impure by the Kohen. Hashem appoints a Kohen to judge the blemish because it is a spiritual job, and then goes on to say that a person who is covered in completely white; "וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה כִסְתָהּ הַצָּרְעַת אֶת כָּל בְּשָׂרוֹ וְטָהַר". A man who is completely covered in *tzaraat* is to be deemed pure by the Kohen. But, the two ideas are contradictory; a man who only has a mild case of *tzaraat* is considered impure, but one who is fully afflicted with the disease is completely pure?

There is truly no contradiction because the Torah is using reverse psychology. Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains the logic behind the Torah's decree. Really, the person with less *tzaraat* has done a lesser sin than the person with full-fledged *tzaraat*, but the person covered completely in white would be aware of his sin and be unable to defend it because of the proof on his skin. Since the man with the spot of *tzaraat* has not done a sin so noticeable and severe as the "pure man", he may try to find loopholes and overlook his mistake as a minor sin, possibly coming to the conclusion that he does not need to better himself.

Hashem, in his ultimate wisdom, takes human nature into account because as humans, we tend to be blinded when analyzing our own mistakes, and try to justify them, even if we are wrong. To prevent this from happening, the Torah emphasizes that any little white spot on ones body is deemed impure, so the person realizes their mistake and does *teshuvah*. However, the man who is completely covered in *tzaraat*, his whitened skin stands as a proof to his sin. Therefore, in order not to completely embarrass the man covered in *tzaraat*, the Torah deems him pure.

An example of this would be if you failed a test. You can fail with a 64% and other times you may fail with a 20% or lower. When receiving the 64, you could say that "I did not put enough effort so I failed" or "that's not so bad since I got about half the questions correct." Hashem tries to prevent this attitude by motivating us to try harder. But, if you were to get a 0 on a test, you have no excuses and you would definitely realize that you did poorly and need to improve, even without any hints. The overall lesson here is that when you fail something, whether it be a test in school or a test that Hashem presents you with, you cannot make excuses for yourself and wait for others to rebuke you, rather you should try again by putting more effort into correcting what was not done 100 percent.

Armed with Rav Hirsch's understanding of *tumah* and bolstered by the Maharal's explanation, perhaps we can understand why *tumat meat* was left out of this discussion of *tumah*. Unlike animals, who are only *tamei* in death, people can become *tamei* even in life. The Torah is only discussing those aspects of *tumah* which are uniquely human, that distinguish people from animals.

Human beings are unique because they have been endowed by their creator with the gift of spirituality. As long as we act in a dignified manner, thinking before we act- allowing our *moach* to be the executive, we walk on two legs holding our heads high. But when we are like animals, when the physical dominates the spiritual and we give as much *kavod* to the *kaved* as we do to the *moach* and *lev*, we encounter *tumah*.

Parshat Tazria

AFFLICTION
GARMENTS
IMPURITY
LEPROSY
MIKVAH
PURITY
QUARANTINE
WHITESPOTS

Y M M P R K U L S Q V T J F L
S T I P Z A F X T U R J E L V
T A I K Y P G D N A Z Y X I I
N N C R V O L C E R T Q P G Q
G Z V R U A I J M A F Q U O U
T U F R A P H T R N Z W R H V
L W T D N F M W A T H P I P S
W B B Z M K I I G I Q L T K Q
G E B N F N Y C T N M C Y L J
K Z R E W S M E E E X L M N F
M S Z T O J S T G S C A Z E Q
U S Z R K P D Y S C N O U J R
T U P N O I T C I L F F A F Z
N E O T X G U N X S J I D B J
L Q S P Z Y C T Z A R A T Z Y

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