



Parshat HaShavuah

**TAZRIA-
METZORA**

תזריע-מצורע

APR 28, 2012

ו' אייר תשע"ב

A PUBLICATION OF



Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

Candle Lighting
7:32
S"Z Kriat Shema
10:01



Sunset
7:51
Motzei
Shabbat
8:28

Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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I DO MY BEST, AND HASHEM DOES THE REST

RABBI NOAH ZISQUIT

The American Airlines Arena where the Miami Heat play can hold up to 19,600 people. The Bank Atlantic Center where the Florida Panthers play holds 20,120 people.

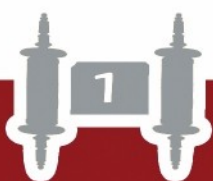
Between Pesach and Shavuot, we recall the tragedy of the death of every single one of Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 students. As a result, these days have been established as days of mourning for this great calamity. After years of toil and effort, Rabbi Akiva lost each and every one of his precious students who had received from him the entire Oral Torah and their deaths left the world desolate (Yevamos 62B).

Someone else in Rabbi Akiva's position may have interpreted this tragedy as a clear sign that they are not an effective teacher. Perhaps one would think that he was even in the wrong field and should not continue as an educator. Rabbi Akiva, however, was not deterred.

There is a pasuk in the Torah which states, "In the morning sow your seed and in the evening, don't withdraw your hand" (Kohelet 11:6). Rabbi Akiva interpreted this verse to mean that if one developed students in his youth (morning), than he should continue developing students in his old age (evening). Rabbi Akiva put this verse into practice and continued teaching. After starting again from scratch, he was able to reestablish the Torah in Israel through five brilliant new students who proved equal to all 24,000. It is from these five holy students that the Torah was passed down, eventually reaching our generation

Rabbi Yaakov Meir Shechter of Jerusalem explains that Rabbi Akiva was able to persevere because he was focused on his duties and responsibilities and did not allow himself to become preoccupied with his successes and failures.

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YOU'RE NOT SO INNOCENT AFTER ALL CORI DENNIS ('13)

In this week's parsha we read of the various types of physical blemishes and conditions that can appear on one's body. The Gemara explains that when observing the blemishes, "a person sees all kinds of blemishes except for their own." How can it be that a person is able to see all blemishes, except on their own body?

A doctor known for his generosity, but also notorious for speaking of his accomplishments and good deeds, was once driving the rabbi of his community home. The doctor spoke at length of what he does for his patients who could not afford the medical bills, the medicine, and the post-operative care which he provides for free. After the doctor explained each one of his actions of which he was proud, the rabbi would respond, "I do that too."

Finally, confused, the doctor asked the rabbi how he could be doing these things if he was not a doctor. The rabbi responded, "It's not that I do what you do, but I do what you're doing. I also speak highly of my good qualities."

The Baal Shem Tov explains that every person on this world is to serve as a mirror into which we must look. When we find faults in others, just as the rabbi finds in the doctor for speaking so highly of himself, it is because we too have those faults. We project our own flaws and insecurities onto those around us, and are bothered most by the actions of others that we too perform. When we find ourselves judging others, we must take a step back and realize that we are not innocent ourselves. It is important that when we find things in others that bother us, we look deep into ourselves and figure out a way to rid ourselves of these traits as well.

CONNECT THE DOTS EZRA KURTZ ('12)

Traditionally, the haftorah each week is connected to the parsha in a way that emphasizes the values or situations that are found in that parsha. Often times, an examination of the haftorah will allow the reader to draw conclusions and lessons about the parsha that perhaps otherwise might have been overlooked. However, a cursory glance at this week's haftorah is quite baffling as this general rule does not appear to hold true. In a long winding tale involving a famine, the Aramean army, two courageous horsemen, and a heretic, the only connection to the parsha appears to be a hasty mention that the story's minor characters are in fact four *metzora'im*, lepers. Surely the sages must have had more than this juvenile wordplay in mind when they appointed this story from *Sefer Melachim Bet* as the haftorah!

The Talmud, in Arachin 16a, recounts the reasons as to why one could have been afflicted with the supernatural malady of *tzara'at*. Of course, it is well known that lashon harah, or gossip, tops the list. But it is also of note that the Talmud mentions many other sins, such as miserly behavior, theft, and excessive haughtiness, for which the transgressor is also punished with *tzara'at*.

Continued page 3





Kurtz continued

While the common denominator between these four *aveirot* is obviously that they are sins a man commits against a fellow man, there is a deeper connection between them.

When one speaks lashon harah, it is out of an incredible sense of selfishness and egoism that the aforementioned individual is exuding. This gossip has no problem harming the reputation of others merely for the benefit of a few laughs, or perhaps for the ephemeral sense of pride that comes with the degradation of others.

Similarly, the other sins mentioned in the Talmud are transgressions that underscore a person's selfishness. Overt arrogance is a character trait in which one clearly believes one's needs are paramount to those of individuals around him, while by extension the sins of theft and miserly behavior are actions that come as a result of this misguided philosophy. Accordingly, we see that *tzara'at* is resultant from sins where one acts out of selfishness.

Therefore, the importance of this week's haftorah is to serve as an example of the antithesis of the selfish behavior for which one can become afflicted with *tzara'at*. The four lepers mentioned in the haftorah are exiled beyond the city owing to their malady, a malady which comes to them owing to their selfishness. When they encounter the massive quantities of food necessary to save the starving city from whence they were exiled, it would seem as though these lepers would merely keep the food for themselves or perhaps sell it. Yet in an act of altruism, they alert the Jewish king to the incredible bounty they find, thus providing food for the entire city and saving its inhabitants from starvation.

This act of selflessness is the exact opposite of the reason they were originally afflicted with *tzara'at*, and provides us with a powerful example of how the power of teshuvah can overcome the pitfalls of selfishness.

HELP DON'T HARM

AVI ALPERT ('15)

In this week's parsha, the Torah states that one who has *tzara'at* should be brought to Aharon the Kohen Gadol. Why is this person brought to Aharon? Why not to Moshe or another leading figure?

Often times when people speak lashon hara, they justify their actions by saying that the gossip is true or that the person who is subject to the lashon hara has committed so many sins that he deserves to be spoken against. They may claim that it is not really lashon hara, but rather that it is a mitzvah to rebuke this Jew by speaking badly about him in public. This causes dispute and hatred between Jews, and that is why a transgressor of lashon hara should be brought to Aharon.

Arguable one of Aharon's most notable characteristics is his determination to making peace between Jews. He tries his best to eliminate any quarrels between people. Aharon teaches people to do everything they can to help others feel love for one another instead of causing harm to each other.

In our society, we especially need to refrain from speaking lashon hara because this a vital way to ensure the unity of the Jewish people for many more generations to come.



TAKING IT TO THE CLEANERS ETHAN HARRIS ('14)

This week we read of the ailment that occurs when people speak negatively about others, also known as lashon hara. One interesting rule, however, is that even if it is blatantly obvious that one has *tzara'at*, the laws pertaining to the *tzara'at* do not apply until the kohen has declared the person impure. Why would one need an 'official' to see and declare the disease before it becomes legitimate, if it is obvious what it is? Moreover, the Torah says that *tzara'at* that is partially healed is considered as if it is clean. Why would a partial healing be adequate if there is still discoloration?

If we think about it, we can discover a great lesson from the Torah: the concept of having someone to go to for guidance. As Rabbi Twerski explains, showing your flaws to a kohen should help you want to change them because of the embarrassment of having to admit your problems to them. If a suit of yours got dirty, you would take it to a professional to be cleaned, and may even point out the stains. In this case, the professional is the kohen.

By the same token, we should treat our souls the same when cleansing ourselves of bad habits (both Halachic and personal), and a rabbi happens to be the expert in the Biblical field. The truth is that a partial healing is enough to purify the stain for it shows that there was effort to change. The lesson of the kohen and the *tzara'at* is just as our sages advise us in *Pirkei Avot*: find yourself a rav. We should not be ashamed of our weaknesses, unless we're not doing much about them!

Rabbi Zisquit continued

Rabbi Akiva understood that success is in Hashem's hands and the ultimate result of one's actions are up to Him while our job as people is to put forth as much effort as we can into achieving our goals.

The Vilna Gaon said that all of our actions in this world, whether physical or spiritual, are comparable to planting a seed. All we can do is plow and sow, whereas the rain and dew, blight and rot, are entirely up to Hashem.

As a result of Rabbi Akiva's efforts and attitude, the Oral Torah was able to be preserved. This summer a *Siyum Hashas* (celebration of the completion of the entire Talmud) will take place on August 1, 2012 at Met-Life Stadium in New York, home of the New York Jets and Giants, which has the capacity to seat 82,566 people.

This was all made possible because Rabbi Akiva never gave up!

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