

Candle Lighting

7:24

S”Z Kriat Shema

10:10

Sunset

7:43

Motzei
Shabbat

8:19



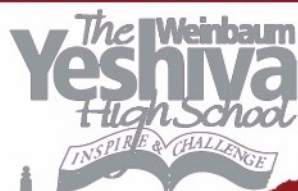
Parshat HaShavuah

תזריע-מצורע

TAZRIA-METZORA
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חלקינו מה טוב

Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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EVERY LETTER COUNTS MRS. ORA LEE KANNER

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Nechama Leibowitz discusses a strange phenomenon found in our פרשת מצורע. The Torah describes the individual who, having seen a stain on the walls of his house, appears before the kohen and declares "כנגע נראה לי בבית"- "I have seen what is like a stain of *tzaraat* on my house."

In explicating this verse and attempting to understand why the Torah mandates that the individual proclaim this stain a *k'nega* (like a stain) rather than simply a *nega*, (a stain), Rashi explains that "אפילו הוא" "even if the individual was a scholar, he has no authority to render the stain an official "*nega*" of *tzaraat*." The most he can claim is that it is a "*k'nega*" (like a *tzaraat* stain), as the power to render a stain that of a *nega tzaraat* is solely that of the kohen.

The super-commentator on Rashi, Rav Eliyahu Mizrachi, tries to understand why the Torah is so concerned with what the individual calls the stain on his house. *Nega*, *k'nega*, who cares?. After all, he argues, the individual Jew's description of the stain doesn't create or change the status of the stain! It is merely his description, not an official conclusion or pronouncement!

He answers his own dilemma by explaining that the Torah is teaching us the importance of modeling ethical and appropriate moral behavior, thought, and speech. One should never assume **as fact** something that he perceives as profane or derogatory about an individual or situation, even if it is clear to him that he must be right. One must **humble** himself, question his own perceptions, and be דן לכה זכות, unless the negative that he perceives has been proven to be fact.

Continued page 4





SWITCH UP

GABRIELLA SOBOL (‘13)

If someone gets *tzaraat* on his or her clothing, a kohen gives instructions on the steps to take to have the blemish removed. Yet if these directions are followed, and the *tzaraat* has not changed its appearance, than the garment must be burned. Rabbi Frand questions why the strange term of “*lo hafach hanega et eino*” is used to describe the *tzaraat* as not having changed its appearance.

He explains that *tzaraat* is a spiritual, not medical, disease. The Gemara gives seven potential reasons why a person may contract *tzaraat*, including, of course, lashon hara. Yet what many people do not know is that another cause of *tzaraat* is *tzarut ayin*, or “narrowness of the eye”. This refers to a person who looks at everything negatively and constricts his worldview to the extent that he literally overlooks the positive in everything.

If *tzarut ayin* is the reason that a person got *tzaraat*, then the person must change himself to have an “*ayin tov*,” a “good eye”; he must change his perspective on the world and become a generous, optimistic person. If he does this successfully, the *tzaraat* will vanish. If not, it will remain on the garment.

The Chiddushei HaRim therefore explains that if “*lo hafach hanega et eino*,” then the owner of the clothing has not transformed himself and his “eye” remains the same—so the garment must be incinerated.

We know that the Hebrew word for an affliction is *nega*, while the word for pleasure is *oneg*. Both words have the same three letters: nun, gimmel, and ayin. The only difference in the spelling of the two is the placement of the ayin. If the ayin is moved in the word, the affliction changes into pleasure. Yet this person, who does not bother to change his “ayin” (eye), has therefore not successfully transformed his *nega* into *oneg*.

OH BABY!

ISAAC KURTZ (‘14)

Tazria and Metzora are both chock full of interesting laws and restrictions concerning purity and the human body. Many of these laws seem to be beyond the scope of human understanding and can lead to many puzzling questions.

Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks takes a unique approach in discussing the impurity of a woman who has just given birth. The Torah states that after the birth of a boy a woman is impure for 7 days and pure for 33 days, and after the birth of a girl a woman is impure for 14 days and pure for 66 days. Rabbi Sacks explains that in Judaism, G-d is life. Judaism is a profound rejection of cults, ancient and modern, that glorify death. It follows that *kedusha*— a point in time or space where we stand in the unmediated presence of G-d — involves a supreme consciousness of life.

Continued page 3





Kurtz continued

A further look into the laws of purity and impurity shows the tremendous emphasis that the Torah places on life. While the Ancient Egyptians built pyramids for the dead and cults around the world glorify death, we find stories and sources from Moshe to David that demonstrate that Judaism glorifies life. There is an emphasis placed on the fact that during our lives we have the ability to complete goals and reach certain heights, while in death David famously asks: “Can the dust acknowledge you?” Therefore, the women is given these days to highlight the importance of life and its role in our religion. Therefore, the women is given these days to highlight the importance of life and its role in our religion.

While some may attribute childbirth to merely another step in the life cycle, Judaism attributes childbirth to a wonderful miracle. As seen through Sarah and Rachel who were barren and miraculously gave birth, so too is every birth a miracle of great significance.

Finally, a basic Jewish principle is “one who is engaged in a mitzvah is exempt from other mitzvot,” which perhaps provides a profound insight into the purity or impurity of a new mother. For forty days after the birth of a boy and doubly so in the case of a girl (the mother-daughter bond is ontologically stronger than that between mother and son), the Torah provides women with a certain maternity leave. They are engaged in the most holy practice of bringing life into this world and nurturing that life. Therefore, they do not need to go to the Beit Hamikdash, as they have already brought life and holiness into their own homes.

MORE THAN A MOSQUITO

DANIELLE SOBOL ('13)

In this week’s parsha, the Torah discusses the states of ritual disqualification, during which we are prohibited from partaking in certain mitzvot and services, specifically the period after which a woman gives birth.

A midrash discussing these verses questions the meaning of the creation of humankind; after all, is it not a positive and celebratory event when a new child is born? Why would the woman who gave birth be in a state of *tumah*? The midrash states: “‘You have formed the front and back of me...’ (Psalms 139:5). Reish Lakish said: ‘The front,’ this is (refers to) the first day (of creation), and ‘the back’ this is the last day (of creation). If one merits he is told ‘you have preceded the entire creation.’ If not, he is told (even) a mosquito preceded you in creation.”

This is a very puzzling midrash! After all, was man not created on the sixth day of creation? What would be the meaning of suggesting otherwise?

The Beit Yitzchak, quoted by the Yalkut Lekach Tov, explains this midrash with the following story: Once a group of great philosophers gathered together with the goal of uncovering and understanding the purpose behind the creation of everything on earth; after much contemplation, they came to the conclusion that everything on earth has a purpose—be it for food, medicinal purposes, for serving man, etc.—nothing was created in vain! To celebrate this discovery, they hosted a feast, during which one of the philosophers interrupted the party to remind the others that they had left out one piece of the puzzle—they had not found a purpose for mankind! At first they were stumped and could not come up with a purpose for man, and instead could only find ways that man detracts from the world to serve his own needs. Eventually, they decided it must be that man serves a higher purpose than the rest of creation, dictated by the fact that he has a soul within him.

Continued page 4



Danielle Sobol continued

So too, the Torah teaches us that everything was put in this world in order to help in our fulfillment of the will of Hashem. When people use Hashem's creations for good, by harvesting their wheat in the proper time, giving one-tenth to tzedaka, and making a bracha on the final product, it is said that they preceded creation, meaning that everything Hashem created subsequently was intended for the purpose of helping them do their job on this earth. But when people do not use the world for its intended purpose, and revel in the physical simply for the sake of their own pleasure, it is said that everything was created before them, since they are acting like thieves, stealing from Hashem's world and giving nothing in return.

Man was put on this Earth for a reason; it is up to us to make sure that we follow in Hashem's ways and do the right thing to ensure that we are fulfilling the purpose for which we were created.

Mrs. Kanner continued

Until the stain has been officially rendered a *nega* by the kohen, one should assume the best and be hopeful even in his choice of words that the stain only **looks** like a *nega*. Until his presumptions have been proven, the Torah wants us to be hopeful, positive, and humbly concede that we're uncertain. As the Gemara Brachot teaches, "למוד לשונך לומר איני יודע" - "accustom yourself to say: I'm not sure."

The Maharal, in his commentary Gur Aryeh, explains this strange Biblical insistence on *k'nega* rather than *nega* as a desire to ensure that every word spoken by an individual and every description depicted by him is accurate and truthful. If the individual called the stain a *nega*, but the Kohen later decided the stain was, in fact, טהור and not a *nega*, the individual would have retroactively been guilty of uttering a false statement in describing the stain on his house.

How careful we must be, concludes the Maharal, to avoid lies and falsehoods in all circumstances, even when seemingly insignificant or unwitting.

Humility, honesty, and positivity: fundamental ethical values, and all learned from one extra letter "כ" Our Torah is truly a treasure trove of riches encoded in every letter.

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Shabbat Shalom.

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