

ohr SHABBOS

PARSHAS TAZRIA

After being sent out of the camps, the Metzora was required to announce to those who approached him: "Stay away, for I am Tamei" (13, 45). The Gemara (Shabbos 67a) explains that, besides preventing people from entering his place of solitude, the Metzora's cries would engender compassion in those who heard him and they would beseech Hashem on his behalf.

There were other impurities that mandated a person to sit outside the camps. Yet, it was only a person stricken with Tzora'as who needed to call out to others in order that they daven for him. The Chofetz Chaim gives a powerful explanation for this.

The Gemara (Eruchin 15b) writes that Tzora'as afflicts a person who engages in Lashon Hara. The source for this is the Pasuk זאת תהיה תורת המצרע - "This shall be the instructions for someone afflicted by Tzora'as" (14: 2), which is understood by the Gemara to mean זאת תהיה תורתו של מצריא שם רע - "This shall be the instructions for a person who spreads evil rumours." It is written in the Medrash HaNe'elam that the Tefillos of someone who speaks Lashon Hara do not ascend before Hashem, "for these prayers are spoken with a mouth that is impure."

Rashi (Bereishis 21, 17) writes that the prayer of a sick person is more effective than the Tefillos offered by others on his behalf. He explains that this is the reason why Hashem responded to the Tefillos of Yishmael before those of his mother, as the Pasuk states, "Hashem heard the voice of the lad." (Bereishis 21; 17). Therefore a person who was outside the camps as a result of an impurity besides Tzora'as did not need others to daven that he once again be able to enter the camps. Indeed, his own Tefillos would be more effective than the entreaties of someone else. Consequently it was not necessary for him to call out that he was impure.

However, a Metzora who was plagued with Tzora'as for evil slander is not able to daven for himself. For, the Zohar writes, his Tefillos are not heard by Hashem. Therefore, he must sit outside the camps and call out to those who approach, "I am Tamei. I am not able to beseech Hashem on my own behalf since I have polluted my mouth." This is why the person who spoke Lashon Hara had no other alternative but to sit and beg for mercy from those passing by to daven to Hashem on his behalf.

The words of the Metzora echo and reverberate through time for those who are listening and understand the message... "I am Tamei..."

In most instances where the word נגע occurs, it clearly refers to a disease that comes as a result of a special divine decree. A person afflicted with a נגע is נגוע - "touched" by the finger of Hashem. (Rav Hirsch)

THE REST OF THE STORY:

By R' Yosef Dovid Rothbart

A person was afflicted by Tzora'as as a result of slanderous speech. Such a person, who goes about spreading harmful talk about others, has a tremendous dislike for his fellow man. He constantly perceives what others do as an attack on him. "My neighbour always takes my parking spot; the store-keeper cheated me." Because of these feelings, he speaks badly about others to whoever will listen to him gripe.

This feeling of animosity towards individuals increases until he has a general dislike of all mankind. He imagines that the entire world was created for his pleasure, and those other people who inhabit his world are taking what belongs to him exclusively. As a result, he begins to wish that a terrible plague should spread, taking with it the rest of humanity, leaving him alone to enjoy the world which is rightfully his.

It is fitting that such a person should receive what he wished upon others and a heavenly plague should strike him. However, Hashem has mercy on such a person, and instead of killing him, He inflicts this person with the death-like Tzora'as in order to cure him of his outlook on life. As part of the treatment, he will leave the three camps and get a sense of what the world, as he desired it, would be like. He sits alone, isolated from the rest of mankind, for a week. Surely then, he will realize the loneliness of solitude and yearn for the companionship of society.

Outside the camps, he will have time to contemplate the value of other people and feelings of fondness will begin to fill his heart. He will learn to love his fellow man, appreciate their company, and even want to invite them to his table and give them from his own bread.

Moreover, he will call out in warning as they approach, beseeching of them to notice his plight and entreat heaven for his sake. The irony of his appealing to the people whom he considered to be parasites, taking from his world without contributing, and whom he so often attacked verbally, will shake his perception of them. He will realize the value of each person and pay attention to what every individual adds to the community. Contemplating this, his heart will be stirred and he will repent wholeheartedly earning entry once again into society.

(based on Ozneyim LaTorah)

HALACHA

Hilchos Bircas Ilanos

In places where the arrival of the month of Nissan marks the end of winter and the beginning of the season in which trees blossom, a person has the opportunity to recite a bracha upon seeing fruit trees in bloom. This bracha, which praises Hashem for His ongoing renewal of the creation, is recited once a year, beginning from Rosh Chodesh Nissan. Ideally, a person who notices a tree in bloom during Nissan should recite the bracha then. If he only saw the tree after the month of Nissan, or if he noticed a tree in bloom during Nissan but forgot to recite the bracha, the Mishna Berurah (226, 4-5) writes that he may still recite it the first time he sees the tree in bloom as long as the fruit of the tree have not begun to ripen. After the fruit begin to ripen, one may no longer recite the bracha. However, if possible a person should be particular to recite the bracha the first time he sees a tree in bloom as there are Poskim (Sha'ar HaTziyon 226, 3) who maintain that it may not be recited later.

The Mishna Berurah (ibid, 1) writes that although, according to the Shulchan Aruch, the bracha must be recited during Nissan, this depends on each place. In an area where trees begin to blossom in Adar, as well as in a place where they begin to blossom only in the month of Iyar, the bracha should be recited at that time. This is the opinion of the Aruch HaShulchan (226, 1) as well.

The Mishna Berurah (226, 2) writes that Bircas Ilanos should only be recited on fruit-bearing trees. If, however, a person erroneously recited the bracha on a tree that does not produce fruit, the Shevet HaLevi (VI 53) writes that he need not repeat the bracha on a fruit-bearing tree.

Bircas Ilanos, as this bracha is called, may not be recited on a tree whose leaves have begun to grow. The Mishna Berurah (226, 2) writes that a person must see the actual flowering of the tree before reciting the bracha.

The Kaf Hachayim (226, 4) quotes Poskim who say that this bracha should not be recited on Shabbos or Yom Tov, as there is a concern that a person may come to break a branch off the tree. The Lev Chaim (2, 44) disagrees, pointing out that this concern is not mentioned in any of the earlier Poskim. The Minhag though is to recite the bracha only during the week, unless the last day of Nissan falls on Shabbos according to the MiBeis Levi. The Tzitz Eliezer (XII 20, 6) writes that Bircas Ilanos may be recited at night.

As always, if a person has a question regarding these Halachos he should turn to his rav for guidance

REFLECTIONS

אמר רבא, היינו דאמר אינשי: או, "Just as water reflects the face of man, so too the heart of man to another." (Mishlei 27, 19) Chazal teach us that friendship is one of the most important things for a person to possess. As the Gemara (Ta'anis 23) says, "As people say, either companionship or death". So important is friendship that ל" compare it to acquiring a rebbe, as the Mishna (Avos 1, 6) says, וקנה לך חבר, "Make for yourself a rebbe and acquire for yourself a friend." But two questions come to mind when we think about the issue of friendship: why is it so important, and how does one go about making friends? The answers to both of these questions are contained in this Pasuk from משלי.

R' Hirsch explains that the nature of man is to be insecure and self-conscious about his feelings and emotions. There are many times when we are not sure what to feel: are our sentiments too extreme, not strong enough, or even inappropriate? It is the nature of people to look to others for validation of their feelings. Even more fundamentally, we often feel incapable of fully experiencing and

expressing our emotions unless we have people to share them with and join with us in our experiences. One of the major roles that friends play is to serve as a reflection of our emotions. When others join in a person's emotional experiences they serve almost as a mirror, reflecting, validating and strengthening his own feelings, and helping him to connect with the occasion and what he is really feeling. Not only in terms of feelings, but also in terms of ideas, aspirations and values,

friends help to clarify and validate what one really thinks and believes. It is only by a person sharing thoughts with others he values, and by thinking about the reactions and comments that they reflect back to him, that he comes to understand what he truly believes. Friendship is thus an important mechanism for a person fully to develop his thoughts and feelings.

However, how does a person go about forming friendships? שלמה המלך has revealed to us in this Pasuk a fundamental psychological truth about human interactions. On a simple level, people will reflect back the attitudes that they project. If I am a happy, cheerful, positive person, then generally speaking those will be the attitudes that I will engender in others and those attitudes will be reflected back to me. If I want people to be warm and friendly to me, I must be warm and friendly to them. But on a deeper level, the Pasuk is not just talking about surface attitudes but fundamental personality traits. If I want close, sincere friends I must be a sincere and caring friend myself. There are no shortcuts in building relationships; who I am, and the sincerity and effort I put into a friendship will generally be reflected back to me in the quality of that friendship.

In summation, friendships help to clarify our emotional experiences, and define and express our thoughts, feelings and values. As a person works to build deep and meaningful relationships, he simultaneously transforms himself into the ideal friend that he is seeking for himself.

When others join in a person's emotional experiences they serve almost as a mirror...

Shabbos table discussions

- Velvel was a Ba'al Teshuvah whose wife was in the process of becoming Jewish. He was strict regarding all the Halachos. A week before Pesach he approached a rav in a quandary. His non-Jewish wife owns Chametz. Does he have to get rid of it before Pesach?
- Rashi writes that the Mahn was round like a coriander seed. If so, on Shabbos, when we use two Challos reminiscent of the double portion of Mahn that fell, why do many people use long Challos instead of round ones?

Shabbos STORY

By R' Yossi Bergman
(part 2)

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (better known by the title of his great work - the Aruch HaShulchan) was not from a family of Rabbis, nor did he receive an education as a rav. He nevertheless served as an example to others of how a rav should conduct himself. He was firm and strong in his convictions, and feared nothing and no one.

People relate that during his first days serving as a rav in Novardok, he decreed that Shabbos be welcomed well before Shkiya. The elders of the city and its scholars, however, absolutely refused to give their consent to this new custom from their new rav.

The first Friday after he made this decree, the rav came to the Beis Medrash to daven and found it completely empty. Not flustered, he assembled a Minyan of adolescents, welcomed Shabbos, finished the Tefilla, and then went home. On his way home, he saw the town's residents still making preparations for Shabbos. He shouted to them, "Good Shabbos!" and they responded with obvious annoyance. As he was sitting down to recite Kiddush, the community members began to gather in the Beis Medrash to daven Mincha followed by Kabbalas Shabbos.

On the following Friday, the rav once again arrived at the Beis Medrash and found it empty. He then prayed with the boys, but this time, he remained in the building after he completed davening Ma'ariv. When the people of the community began to file in, they found their new rav standing in front of the Aron not allowing anyone to pass. "In this building," the rav spoke forcefully, "I am the head of the house, and communal prayer has already ended. Whoever is late must pray by himself." In the end, the rav was victorious and everyone accepted this new decree. He said, "In welcoming Shabbos early, I am sure that the last water-drawer will have time to bring his horse and wagon into the shed before sunset."

Yet even though he was firm in his decisions and conduct as a rav, he could bend like a reed when it came to making Halachic decisions, and he put all his expertise into being lenient rather than strict.

One story has it that a woman came to him on Pesach just before the Seder, asking a question concerning a mixture of food. It was a serious question and, at first glance, it appeared that he would have to prohibit not only the food, but all the utensils in question. He looked at the woman, however, and saw that she was poor. Rabbi Yechiel Michel went into his library and began to search all his different Seforim, from the responsa of ancient and recent

Poskim to see if he could find a lenient opinion. Meanwhile his family was waiting for him. Several hours passed and the rav had still not emerged from his room. His grandson entered, and said to him, "Until when, Grandfather? If there's no way to permit them, then you have to declare them Treif."

"What did you say, my son?" the rav replied. "How can I allow myself to sit at the table, to participate in the Seder, and to rejoice while this poor woman will be plunged into misery and not have a desire for the holiday?" He continued to leaf through his books, until after a long time he emerged with a smile on his face and told the woman that everything was kosher. He then returned to the table with his family and rejoiced in the holiday.

He wrote a few works throughout his life including a commentary on Sefer Hayashar by Rabbeinu Tam, as well as the Aruch HaShulchan on the four parts of the Shulchan Aruch, and mitzvos which related to Eretz Yisrael (the Aruch HaShulchan HeAsid). Already during his lifetime, Rabbi Yechiel Michel merited that his Aruch HaShulchan should be considered as a Halachic authority by Rabbis and Poskim.

Towards the end of his life, Rabbi Yechiel Michel was wont to say: "The old have less fear of G-d than the young, for they no longer have the strength to fight the evil inclination. Through weakness, a man leaves that which concerns him unchanged." He passed away, advanced in years, aged 80, on Adar 22, 5668 (1908).

RIDDLE

By R' Naftali Spiegel

The Medrash tells us that the human soul was created before the animal one. At which point in creation was it created?

Please send your answers to editor@ohrshabbos.com. Please include your name.

All those who submit a correct answer will be entered into a raffle to a free meal at Pizza Café. Sponsored by: **Pizza Café (416) 633-5678**

Answer to last week's riddle: Moshe took with him the bones of Basya, the daughter of Paraoh, when he left Egypt.

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The innkeeper of a small town was delighted when R' Simcha Zissel, accompanied by another scholar, came to her inn. She served them a lovely meal and waited on them most graciously. In her excitement over receiving such holy guests, she told them, while serving, about her cows and geese, her chickens and potatoes. The other scholar kept his head in a sefer the whole time and paid no attention to the woman's idle chatter. But R'Simcha Zissel listened attentively, responding and asking questions as if he were interested in every detail. Before leaving, the guests wanted to pay for the meal but the innkeeper refused to accept money. "Should I lose the merit of this mitzvah," she explained, for a little bit of money?"

After they were well on their way, R' Simcha Zissel turned to his companion and asked, "Aren't you concerned that you transgressed the prohibition against stealing? You ate and drank but did not pay!"

"What do you mean?" responded his companion. "We offered to pay her for the meal."

"True," said R' Simcha Zissel. "But you saw how much satisfaction the woman derived from speaking to us, yet you refrained from paying attention to her conversation. Thus you benefited from her meal without giving anything in exchange."

A visitor forgot his cane in Bais HaTalmud (R' Simcha Zissel's Yeshiva). When he returned for a visit another 13 years later, he found it hanging in the same spot where he had left it. On a similar note, someone once left a coin on the window sill in Bais HaTalmud, and it remained there for many years. No one touched it.

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riddle

By R' Naftali Spiegel

Who was the first person stricken with Tzora'as?

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editor@ohrshabbos.com.

Please include your name and age.

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Answer to last week's riddle: Although human milk and bee honey are produced by things that are not Kosher, they may be eaten.

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