

# OHRNETH

## THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

Shabbos Parshas Tazria-Metzora • For the week ending Rosh Chodesh Iyar 5756 • Apr. 20, 1996 • Vol. 3 No. 25

### WHO'S FIRST?

**“When a woman conceives...” (12:2)**

If Man is worthy - if he makes his soul the essence of his being - then he precedes all Creation. For it was the spirit of Man that hovered over the depths even before the creation of light. But if he is not worthy - if he glories in his physical dimension - then in terms of the *physical* precedence of Creation, even the mosquito preceded him...

For this reason the Torah deals with the laws of purity in Man after the laws of purity in animals: Just as the *physical* creation of Man follows that of the animals, so his laws are explained after the laws of the animals. This applies only when man behaves as nothing more than a sophisticated animal. However, if man relegates his physical side to his soul; if he fulfills the purpose of Creation by recognizing and serving his Creator, then he precedes all Creation.

• Based on the Midrash and Rashi

### TWO SIGNS

**“And on the eighth day, the flesh of the foreskin shall be circumcised.” (12:3)**

The greatness of Shabbos can be seen from the fact that a boy is not given *Bris Mila* until he is eight days old - until he has experienced Shabbos. In other words, the reason that *Bris Mila* is performed on the eighth day after birth is so that the he can

### INSIGHTS

experience Shabbos before the *Mila*. Only by passing through the holiness of Shabbos, can he reach a level where he becomes fit to enter into the holiness of the Jewish People through *Bris Mila*.

• Yalkut Yehuda

**“If Man makes his soul the essence of his being, then he precedes all Creation.”**

### MORE THAN SKIN DEEP

**“And on the eighth day, the flesh of the foreskin shall be circumcised.” (12:3)**

The custom at a *Bris* is to say to the parents “Just as he has been brought into the Covenant (*Bris*), so should he be brought to Torah, marriage and good deeds.” Just as he has been brought into the *Bris*, which is now an inseparable part of him, thus also should all the other *mitzvos* of the Torah form an inseparable part of him.

• Iturei Torah

### STICKS AND STONES

**“And he shall be brought to the Kohen.” (14:3)**

When a person speaks *Lashon Hara*, it indicates that he has no concept of the power of speech. It shows that he considers words to be insignificant in comparison to actions: As the nursery rhyme says “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me.” Nothing could be further from the truth. When a person speaks evil he awakens a prosecutor in Heaven not only against the target of his *Lashon Hara*, **but also against himself**. An angel with a ‘tape-recorder’ stands by the side of each one of us recording our every word.

In order to teach those who speak *Lashon Hara* the power of just one word, the Torah instructs that the offender be brought to the Kohen. But, even as he is on his way to the Kohen, his body covered with *Tzara’as* for all to see, until the Kohen actually pronounces the word “Impure!”, he is still considered totally pure. Similarly, he cannot regain his former status, even though his disease has healed completely, until the Kohen again pronounces him to be spiritually pure. From this the speaker of *Lashon Hara* is taught to reflect on the power of each and every word. **For with one word he can be made an outcast, and with one word he can be redeemed.**

• Based on Ohel Yaakov

#### TAZRIA

**T**he Torah commands a woman to bring a *Korban* after the birth of a child. A son is to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. The Torah introduces the phenomenon of *Tzara’as* (often mis-translated as leprosy) — a miraculous disease that attacks people, clothing and buildings to awaken a person to spiritual failures. A Kohen must be consulted to determine whether a particular mark is *Tzara’as* or not. The Kohen isolates the sufferer for a week. If the disease remains unchanged, confinement continues for a second week, after which the Kohen decides the person’s status. The Torah describes the different forms of *Tzara’as*. One whose *Tzara’as* is confirmed wears torn clothing, does not cut his hair, and must alert others that he is ritually impure. He may not have normal contact with people. The phenomenon of *Tzara’as* on clothing is described in detail.

#### METZORA

**T**he Torah describes the procedure for a *Metzora* (a person afflicted with *Tzara’as*) upon conclusion of his isolation. This process extends for a week, and involves *korbanos* and immersions in the *mikveh*. Then, a Kohen must pronounce the *Metzora* pure. A *Metzora* of limited financial means may substitute lesser offerings for the more expensive animals. Before a Kohen diagnoses that a house has *Tzara’as*, household possessions are removed to prevent them from also being declared ritually impure. The *Tzara’as* is removed by smashing and rebuilding that section of the house; if it reappears, the entire building must be razed. The Torah details those bodily secretions that render a person spiritually impure, thereby preventing his contact with holy items, and how one regains a state of ritual purity.

### OVERVIEW



צור משלו אכלנו...

TZUR MISHLO ACHALNU

"The Rock, from Whose food we have eaten"

"Yibaneh hamikdash, ir Tziyon t'malay, v'sham nashir shir chadash"

"May the Sanctuary be rebuilt, the City of Zion replenished and there shall we sing a new song."

The Midrash calls attention to a connection between the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the songs of praise sung by Israel to its G-d. In *Tehillim* 147, which we say each morning, we quote King David's words that "it is good to sing to our L-rd ... Hashem builds Jerusalem and gathers in the dispersed of Israel."

Jerusalem, concludes the *Midrash*, will only be rebuilt with the praise and *zemiros* we sing to Hashem. There is also contained in this phrase the idea that when the final redemption takes place none of the old songs will be adequate for expressing our joy and a "new song" will have to be composed. Our singing of *zemiros* today is only a rehearsal for the "new song" which will herald the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdash*, soon in our days.



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The following Ask the Rabbi is a reprint.

PERSISTENT PENTATEUCH  
PINKIE POINTING PEOPLE.

Mr. Irv Oxlander from America-On-Line wrote:

What is the source for and the meaning of the custom to point the pinkie at the Torah during hagbah?

Dear Mr. Oxlander,

Your question is interesting because it relates to a widespread custom whose source is rather obscure.

Nachmanides remarks that the verse "accursed is the one who will not uphold the words of this Torah..." is the source for the obligation to show the written text of the Torah to the whole congregation.

The Shulchan Aruch states:

It is a mitzva for all men and women to see the written text of the Torah, to bow, and to say, "This is the Torah that Moshe placed before the Children of Israel. Halachic authorities explain that this verse is to be said only upon seeing the actual text of the Sefer Torah.

It is told about the *Arizal* that when the Torah was held up for all the congregation to see, it was his custom to look closely at the text so that he could read the letters. The *Arizal* was quoted to say "that by gazing at the Torah closely so as to be able to clearly read its letters, a person is infused by a great [spiritual] light."

While the Shulchan Aruch obligates reciting the verse: *This is the Torah...*, it is also a *minhag* to append part of a second verse "according to the word of Hashem through Moshe." In his comprehensive anthology *Me'am Lo'ez*, Rav Yaakov Kuli expounds on this custom saying: "the combination of these two verses, though from different sections of the Torah, alludes to the dual nature of Torah — a Written and an Oral Law both stemming from a single Source."

Also, The *Me'am Lo'ez* is the only source that mentions the custom of pointing the pinkie finger towards the text, adding that it is customary to kiss the pinkie after pointing. However, this is not a universal custom, and is not mentioned in other halachic sources.

In reply to our inquiry as to the source of this custom, Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, *shlita*, gave the following explanation: The Torah

lists the ten generations from Noah until Abraham, including *Yoktan*, who established the largest number of families. Rashi notes that *Yoktan* merited establishing so many families due to his great humility as his name indicates (from the root *katan*-little). Rabbi Scheinberg went on to explain that when pointing at the Torah we take this lesson to heart and we point with our smallest finger — the pinkie — to indicate that we should reach out to try to gain understanding of the Torah with the utmost humility and thus merit to succeed in this aspiration.

Rabbi Chaim Falagie expounds on a second variation of the custom in which the index finger is used for pointing towards the Torah rather than the pinkie. He bases this custom on six consecutive statements in

*Tehillim* the first of which is,

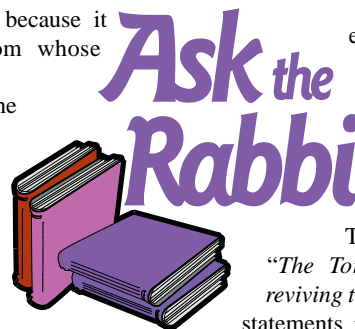
"The Torah of Hashem is perfect reviving the soul..." Each one of these statements is composed of five words

corresponding to the number of fingers of one hand. The second word of each statement is *Hashem* corresponding to the second, namely the index finger. In pointing towards the Torah with the index finger we are indicating that every word of the Torah is a Name of Hashem. For that same reason, Rabbi Falagie points out, during the wedding ceremony the ring is placed on the index finger to signify that Hashem is the unifying force binding husband and wife.

The significance and the symbolism that our Sages attach to every finger and to each part of our body is most instructive. Rabbeinu Bechaye discusses the utility of each organ and in particular the fingers, each of which serves to facilitate one of the five senses. The pinkie finger is associated with the sense of hearing and we may conjecture that this is related to the custom of pointing towards the Torah with the pinkie.

Sources:

- *Nachmanides on the Torah - Devarim 27:26*
- *Tractate Sofrim (14:14)*.
- *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim (134:2); Ba'er He'tev (6)*
- *Devarim (4:44)*
- *Sha'ar Hakavanos (Sefer Torah — Drush 1)*
- *Bamidbar (9:23)*.
- *Me'am Lo'ez — Devarim (27:26)*
- *Bereishis (10:26-29)*
- *Lev Chaim (Responsa) — Orach Chaim 167:6*
- *Tehillim (19:8-10)*.
- *Rabbeinu Bechaye — Vayikra (8:23)*



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## SAVING THE SKIN

The *kohanim* who perform the service of offering a *korban olah* are entitled to the skin of that animal whose entire body is burned on the altar. (*Vayikra* 7:8)

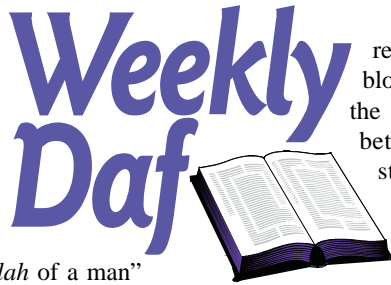
The *mishnah* on 103a declares that if the flesh of that *korban* became disqualified for offering on the altar the skin does not go to the *kohanim* but is burned along with the flesh at a site off the altar. The source for this rule is the phrase “the *olah* of a man” which appears in the above cited passage, a phrase which indicates that the skin goes to the *kohanim* only when the *olah* was indeed offered on behalf of a man and not when it was disqualified from the altar.

Two modifications of this rule emerge from cases arising in this *mishnah* and the next one:

What if the *olah* was slaughtered not for the sake of offering it as an *olah* but for the sake of *shlamim*? At the very outset of *Mesechta Zevachim* we learned that such a *korban* is considered kosher for offering on the altar but is not considered a fulfillment of the vow made by its owner, who is required to bring another animal for a *korban*. If we interpret “the *olah* of a man” in the strictest literal way, the skin of such an animal will not

go to the *kohanim* because the *korban* did not serve as the *olah* of the man who brought it. But the *mishnah* rules that the skin will go to the *kohanim*, because the requirement of “*olah* of a man” is only that the flesh be offered on the altar, completing the process for which a man had designated it.

What if the skin was removed from the *olah* before its blood was applied to the altar and the flesh became disqualified in between? In normal circumstances this will not occur because it is improper to delay the application of the blood until after flaying. This



Insights, explanations and comments for the seven pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle.

*mishnah* therefore categorically states that if the flesh became disqualified the skin will not go to the *kohanim* since the disqualification affected the flesh and skin as one unit. The next *mishnah*, however, suggests a situation where the skin was removed from the flesh before the blood was applied to the altar and was therefore not affected by the disqualification of the flesh. In such a case the blood is applied to the altar and grants sacred status to the skin which is awarded to the *kohanim*.

• Zevachim 103

## RESPECT FOR ROYALTY

How should one relate to royalty?

With great respect, say our Sages, and cite two examples from Scripture.

Rabbi Yannai’s model is Moshe Rabbeinu, who said to Pharaoh that following the plague of the first born “all these, your servants, shall come down to me and shall bow to me saying: Be gone, you and your people.” (*Shemos* 11:8) Although the intention of his warning was that the Egyptian ruler himself would thus be humbled, as did eventually happen, (*Shemos* 12:31), Moshe did not explicitly say so out of respect for the king.

Rabbi Yochanan points to the prophet Eliyahu of whom it is written that “the hand of Hashem was on Eliyahu and he girded his loins and ran before Achav” (*Kings* II 18:46). Rashi explains that the king was alone so the prophet ran ahead of him as an escort and Radak comments that the very act of running was an expression of respect.

Why did even such wicked vilers as Pharaoh and Achav deserve to be honored? Maharsha quotes the statement of our Sages in *Mesechta Brachos* (58a) that earthly government is a reflection of Heavenly rule. One who shows a lack of respect for a king below is therefore guilty of a lack of respect for the King above.

• Zevachim 102a

### TAZRIA

1. A woman after giving birth is *tamei* (has a ritual impurity). What is the status of a woman who has a miscarriage?
2. After a woman gives birth, she is required to offer two types of *Korbanos*. Which are they?
3. Who determines whether a person is a *metzora tamei* (person with ritually impure *Tzara’as*) or is *tahor*?
4. If the *Kohen* sees that the *Tzara’as* has spread after one week, how does he rule?
5. What disqualifies a *Kohen* from being able to give a ruling in a case of *Tzara’as*?
6. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow (e.g., the head or beard), what color hair is indicative of *tumah*?
7. What signs of mourning must a *metzora* display?
8. Why must a *metzora* call out, “*Tamei! Tamei!*”?
9. Why is a *metzora* commanded to dwell in isolation?
10. What must be done to a garment that has *Tzara’as*?

### METZORA

1. When may a *metzora* not be pronounced *tahor*?
2. In the *Midbar*, where did a *metzora* dwell while he was *tamei*?
3. Why does the *metzora* require birds in the purification process?
4. In the purification process of a *metzora*, what does the cedar wood symbolize?
5. In the *Beis Hamikdash*, when the *metzora* was presented “before Hashem” (14:11), where did he stand?
6. How was having *Tzara’as* in one’s house sometimes advantageous?
7. What happens to the vessels that are in a house which was found to have *Tzara’as*?
8. When a person enters a house that has *Tzara’as*, when do his clothes become *tamei*?
9. A *zav* sat or slept on the following: a) a bed; b) a plank; c) a chair; d) a rock. If a *tahor* person touches these things what is his status?
10. What does the Torah mean when it refers to a *zav* who “has not washed his hands” (15:11)?



### I Didn't Know That!

The *Tzara’as* mentioned in the Torah is a spiritual condition that comes to help a person atone for his sins. Leprosy, a medical condition, comes as a result of inappropriate life styles.

• Sforno

### Bonus Question ?

During the purification process, the *metzora* must shave off the hair on his head, eyebrows and beard. Why?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

**TAZRIA**

- 12:2 - She is also *tamei*.
- 12:6 - An *Olah* and a *Chatass*.
- 13:2 - A *Kohen*.
- 13:5 - The person is *tamei*.
- 13:12 - Poor vision
- 13:29 - Golden.
- 13:45 - He must tear his garments, let his hair grow wild, and cover his lips with his garment.
- 13:45 - So people will know to keep away from him.
- 13:46 - Since *Tzara'as* is a punishment for *Lashon Harah* (evil speech), which creates a rift between people, the Torah punishes *mida k'neged mida* (measure for measure) by placing a division between him and others.
- 13:52 - It must be burned.

**METZORA**

- 14:2 - At night.
- 14:3 - Outside the three camps.
- 14:4 - *Tzara'as* comes as a punishment for *Lashon Harah*. Therefore,



- the Torah requires the *metzora* to offer birds, who chatter constantly, to atone for his sin of chattering.
- 14:4 - The cedar is a lofty tree. It alludes to the fact that *Tzara'as* comes as a punishment for haughtiness.
  - 14:11 - At the gate of Nicanor.

- 14:34 - The Amorites concealed treasures in the walls of their houses. After the conquest of the Land, *Tzara'as* would afflict these houses. The Jewish owner would tear down the walls and find the treasures.
- 14:36 - They become *tamei*.
- 14:46 - When he remains in the house long enough to eat a small meal.
- 15:4-5 - Only a type of object that one usually lies or sits upon becomes a transmitter of *tumah* when a *zav* sits or lies on it. A *tahor* person who subsequently touches the object becomes *tamei* and the clothes he is wearing are also *tmei'im*. Therefore: a) *tamei*; b) *tahor*; c) *tamei*; d) *tahor*.
- 15:11 - One who has not immersed in a *mikveh*.

Recommended Reading List

TAZRIA	<i>Sforno</i>	<i>Sefer HaChinuch</i>
<b>Ramban</b>	12:8 Self Involvement	174 Purification and Rebirth
12:2 Procreation	13:47 Garments	175 Cleansing Waters
12:7 The "Sin" of Childbirth		
13:47 The Greatness of <i>Tzara'as</i>	<b>METZORA</b>	<i>Sforno</i>
<i>Sefer HaChinuch</i>	<b>Ramban</b>	14:12 The <i>Asham</i> of the <i>Metzora</i>
167 Respect for <i>Kedusha</i>	14:2 Compulsive Cleanliness	14:36 The Reason for Waiting
168 A Gift of Thanks	15:11 The <i>Zav</i>	15:2 The <i>Zav</i>

Bonus Answer!

The punishment for haughtiness, *Tzarus Ayin* (selfishness: literally - "narrow vision") and *Lashon Harah* is *Tzara'as*. The *metzora* must atone for holding his head high, for looking upon his possessions with selfishness and for not guarding his speech. Thus, he must shave his head, his eyebrows and his beard.

• *Kli Yakar*

HAFTORAH: Rosh Chodesh-Yishayahu 66:1-24

When Rosh Chodesh occurs on Shabbos, the regular Haftorah is replaced by a special Haftorah - the last chapter of the Book of Yishayahu (Isaiah). This chapter was chosen because of its penultimate verse which links Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh: "And it shall be that, from New Moon to New Moon, and from Shabbos to Shabbos, all flesh shall come and prostrate themselves before Me, said Hashem." (66:23) This verse is also repeated after concluding the reading of the Haftorah.

Every New Moon is a summons to Israel to renew and rejuvenate itself. Every Shabbos is a call to show practical proof of our homage to Hashem by ceasing from *melacha* (prohibited work). But there will come a time when not only Israel will be called to offer their willing service to

Hashem...

"And I will establish a distinctive sign amongst them and send refugees from them to the nations to ...*Yavan*, to the most distant lands that have not heard My Fame, nor have seen My Glory, and they will inform the nations of My Glory." (66:19)

*Yavan/Greece* is the nation charged with the task of elevating the lowly and un-refined nations through culture. But culture is not an end in itself. It is only a preliminary stage. After *Yavan/Greece*, it is *Shem/the Jews* who will show mankind the path to elevate itself to an awareness of what is good and true; to pay homage to what is *morally* beautiful; to lead the nations to the height of Man's calling.

The 'uniformity' in thought that rules the actions and intellect of Greece is ultimately a ful-

fillment of Hashem's plan. For through this love of uniformity, the nations will be united and they will finally come to perceive the 'One-ness' of the Creator.

This unified mankind will become the encircling vessel that will contain the pure *mincha* offering that is the Jewish People. Then the nations will recognize Israel's role as the priests of mankind, just as the *Levi'im* are the priests of Israel.

The realization of this goal is something absolutely certain. Then every 'New Moon' and every 'Shabbos' will not only bring to Israel a call for renewal of *kedusha*, of acknowledging Hashem in free-willed devotion, but all mankind will also hear and heed this call.

• *Adapted from Rabbi S. R. Hirsch*

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