

SCHEDULE

שבת קדש

Mincha Erev Shabbos → **7:00PM**

Daf Yomi— By R' Teichman 7:30 AM

Shacharis— Followed by Kiddush 8:30 AM

-Sof Zman K'S- מ"א 9:01 < גר"א 9:37

Pirkei Avos 6:50 PM

Mincha - Followed by Shalosh Seudos 7:40 PM

Maariv - 8:48 PM

Weekday Minyanim & Shiurim

Sunday

Daf Yomi— By R' Teichman 7:30 AM

Shacharis 8:30 AM

Mincha / Maariv 7:50 PM

Monday - Friday

Daf Yomi— By R' Teichman 5:45 AM

Shacharis

Monday, Thursday ב"ב 6:35 AM

Tues, Wed., Fri. 6:45 AM

Mincha (Mon –Thur) 1:45 PM

Mincha/Maariv 7:50 PM

Maariv (Mon-Thur) 9:45 PM

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Yartzheits

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Rabbi Zvi Teichman

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Issue#231

RABBI'S MESSAGE

Non-Negotiable Justness

On the rare occasion of a Jewish leap year when we read the portion of *Tazria* alone, we recite as the *hafterah* a fascinating tale taken from the Book of *Melachim* regarding the mighty and arrogant general of Aram, Naaman, who was stricken with *tzaraas*, leprosy.

Evidently the various idolaters and sorcerers in Aram were incapable of curing his disease.

During one of his many raids on the Jews he apparently snatched a young girl, claiming her as a maidservant for his wife. Noticing her master's obvious distress she suggests to her mistress that Naaman should direct his prayers to the Jewish prophet who will surely heal him from his *tzaraas*.

She dutifully transmits this information to her husband who in turn reports to the king of Aram, saying, (ד' זכור) "Such and such spoke the girl from the Land of Israel".

The king of Aram sends a letter of introduction to Yehoram the king of Israel asking him to attend to his loyal general's request. Upon reading it Yehoram suspects it is merely a ploy to lure him into another confrontation as Yehoram is well aware that he is powerless to help him.

Elisha hearing about the request sends word to the king, that he should direct Naaman to him so he may teach him a lesson or two about the power of "prophets" of Israel.

Naaman arrives with a whole entourage at the entrance of Elisha's home expecting a royal reception. Elisha merely dispatches a messenger to instruct Naaman to take a dip in the Jordan river seven times and his flesh will restore to health.

Naaman is furious with this degrading treatment. He leaves fuming while murmuring his disappointment that the prophet could not simply wave away his diseased flesh with his "magic wand". He is incredulous too, with the notion that the Jordan has greater curative powers than the mighty rivers of Damascus, the Amanah and Pharpar.

His servants encourage him to give it a try nevertheless. He accedes, and miraculously, his flesh rejuvenates like that of a young lad.

He returns to Elisha declaring emphatically his newfound belief that there is no God as the One of Israel. According to tradition (ג' זכור) he became a *Ger Toshav*, a resident alien, disavowing any taint of idolatry and affirming his belief in the One Creator.

The Talmud (ד' זכור) teaches us that Naaman, conceit, is at the root of *tzaraas*.

Naaman is an abject lesson in the consequences of haughtiness. (ה' זכור)

Where did his arrogance stem from?

The verse states (ו' זכור) "And Naaman... was an eminent person... for through him God had given victory to Aram."

Rashi here refers us to the Midrash that informs us that Naaman was the archer who randomly shot an arrow that providentially entered between the plates of the armor that killed the wicked king of Israel, Achav. (ז' זכור)

It was this "claim to fame", having been the "hero" who "bravely" struck down the Jewish king, that won him the accolade as a mighty warrior.

Was Naaman so foolish as to think that his unwitting act coupled with the remarkable coincidence of it penetrating precisely between the plates should entitle him to such fame as a valiant fighter?

In Naaman's repeating to the king of Aram the information that the "girl from Israel" reported, he states (ח' זכור) "such and such spoke the girl..."

Such and such?! It was a very simple idea, "Go to the prophet!"

Or is there perhaps more going on here than meets the eye?

The *Sifrei Zuta* tells us that indeed she was being *פרשת נעים*, elaborating on the details of the laws of leprosy:

Such and such is how they purify a rich man and such and such is how they purify a poor man. (ט' זכור)

Apparently there was a deeper message being conveyed, she was delivering a "*shiuur*" in the laws of *tzaraas*.

What was that lesson?

There are times in life when everything seems to be going just right, finances, relationships, health and success in all our endeavors and enterprises. Things are "going my way!"

We tend to delude ourselves to think it is some form of validation from "on high" of our worthiness.

When we feel worthy we are inclined to act with a sense of smugness and entitlement, neglecting a sensitivity in our awareness and obligations to others.

Naaman wasn't stupid, he was obviously a very capable general. He erred however in seeing

the providence of success, from whatever force it emanated from, as an affirmation of his "greatness". His "fortune" in killing Achav was evidence that "the force was with him". But now he was confused, with all his success why couldn't he shake his illness?

The "young girl from Israel" taught him an important lesson in theology.

What difference is there in the method of purifying a rich man who is afflicted with *tzaraas* as opposed to a poor man?

There are several sacrifices that accommodate the financial standing of the sacrificer. A wealthy man will bring animals, one with less means, birds, and one who is impoverished may in certain circumstances bring a meal offering alone.

This is called a *קרבת עולה ויורד*, the *Variable offering*.

The *Metzora* must bring three offerings, a *אשם*, a *guilt offering*, a *sin offering* and a *עולה*, an *elevation offering*.

Whereas with all *Variable offerings*, each category of offering (i.e. *תוספת עולה*) that must be brought is variable, the *Metzora* is an exception.

The *Guilt offering* for both a rich and poor man must be a lamb regardless of one's means, it is not variable.

The *Sin and Elevation offerings* however, can either consist both of animals or both of birds depending on one's ability.

Why the distinction? If the Torah takes into account affordability why not by the *guilt offering* that the *Metzora* must bring as well?

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch teaches that the *guilt offering* in this case represents man's failure in the realm of social justness.

The social sins of conceitedness and slander, that brought about this malady, that seeks correction through the *guilt offering*, makes no distinction between rich and poor.

The duty of brotherhood and justness can not vary based on one's social standing.

The *Sin offering* represents man's commitment to rid himself from moral self-determination.

The *Elevation offering* as well emphasizes moral free devotion to all the goodness as indicated by God.

These are tested and proved in the different external conditions of life which indeed varies based on where fate has placed each one of us.

This reality is reflected in the variability of the sacrifice.

A rich man can abuse the evidence of his success as a validation of his good standing with God, giving him license to act according to his own understanding without respect for others.

A poor man on the other hand may utilize his disadvantage as an excuse, giving him permission to deride those who haven't had to suffer as much as he.

Naaman's delusion lay in thinking that man does not contribute to the equation of success.

That arrogance is what disabled his clarity of thinking in understanding his predicament.

The young lady from Israel instructed Naaman in a most vital idea.

One's moral standing can never be measured by the external successes one may experience in life. The privileged must see their success as an obligation.

The underprivileged too, must not see their disadvantage as a rejection of worthiness.

When they do, it can taint their positive view towards others.

As regards social justness we are equally obligated.

It is not only in the arena of wealth that one is often misled.

Do we see in the relative calm and safety in our lives here in America as a validation and proof of the worthiness of "our" lifestyle and *hashkafa*?

Do we view the extremism in the wild "east" among our own brethren with disdain and rejection?

Are we conceited and firmly implanted in our own philosophies and values, unwilling to explore and understand others who may see things differently than we do?

These are the seeds of *tzaraas* that we must avoid at all cost, so that we do not remain expelled from the encampment as a *Metzora* must.

May we learn to appreciate every Jew and never allow ourselves to feel superior to any other.

The privileges that God bestows upon us should compel us to an ever greater dedication towards being sensitive and kind in our attitude towards others.

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