

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 8 Nissan 5779, Shabbat HaGadol. The special Haftorah is recited. We omit Av HaRachamim.

TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 470 Hz) (p. 689 S) (p. 424 Hi) (p. 620 AS)

METZORA מצורע Leviticus 14:1

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis, Rabbi Emeritus (RED)
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1. The purification ritual for a Biblical Leper includes "chirping birds." This can only be applicable to a Biblical Leper who became afflicted through Lashon HaRa , evil talk. It is not applicable for someone who became afflicted for the sin of murder. The obvious question is why the Torah gives a purification ritual for only a Biblical Leper who commits a particular sin, while the Talmud itemized seven different sins for which a person becomes a Biblical Leper. Our Sages said (Bava Batra 165) that "a majority commit theft, a minority commit adultery, and all commit Lashon HaRa (or at least Avak Lashon HaRa: literally the dust of Lashon HaRa, which means the Rabbinic level of Lashon HaRa.) It is not far-fetched to believe that all of us commit Lashon HaRa. The Chafetz Chaim (Yisrael Meir Kalgan, 1839-1933, Belarus) wrote the book on the subject of Lashon HaRa, and he said that there are two subjects about which limited Lashon HaRa is permissible: namely business and shidduchim. In these two areas you can talk, but you have to be super careful about what you say. (RED)

2. The birds are used in the purification ritual. They can be any variety of kosher birds; no specifications are Torah mandated. One bird is slaughtered; the other bird is dipped into the blood (and water) of the slaughtered bird and then set free. Someone digs and buries the slaughtered bird in his presence. (This part is known by tradition.) Perhaps one bird is slaughtered to teach the Biblical Leper that this should happen to him; he should die for his sin. The other bird is ultimately set free, teaching the Biblical Leper that this is what is happening to him. He will be pure and set free, to go his own way. But he should learn from his ordeal. His isolation and his non-communication with others for a week should provide for him a period of serious introspection. So much of the steps being taken to "cure" the Biblical Leper are steps he takes for himself. The Kohen gives him words of instruction and a pep talk in Torah to influence him, but the rest is up to him. (RED)

3. The Biblical Leper needed to have all his hair shaved off. The Ba'al HaTurim (on 13:33) mentions that there are three people who had their bodies shaved: the Biblical Leper, the Leviyim (as part of their consecration ceremony), and the Nazir (his head). Each required a purification ritual for sins not enumerated in the Torah. Perhaps the shaving had nothing to do with the sin, per se, but rather had to do with the purification, with starting anew. Making the person like a newborn, so to speak. Not every action was associated with sin or a sin offering. This was similar to going to the Mikvah, which was required as well. In the Mikvah, the person is stark naked. No barrier between the person and the water. When a convert finally gets to the Mikvah, when (s)he leaves the Mikvah, the person automatically enters the bond of Kneset Yisrael, the congregation of the Jewish people. The shaving of the hair heightens that feeling, and awareness of the new

beginning in their life. (RED)

4. Earlier we saw that the Torah commanded that two birds be part of the ceremony (14:5-7). One bird was slaughtered and the other was sent away free. There are two types of speech: one is words of Torah and good deeds, and the other is words of malicious speech. The bird which symbolizes the malicious speech is slaughtered and destroyed. The second bird is to be allowed to live. This indicates that one must take words of Torah and good deeds, and not reject them. Hashem commanded the inclusion of a cedar tree, hyssop, and crimson wool in the purification ritual. This teaches us that originally the person was proud like a cedar, but now he is humble and lowly like a hyssop bush. There is no bush lower than this. The crimson dye comes from a worm. The person is now humble like a worm and like the dust of the earth. A person needs to realize what his end will be. In the end he will go to a place of dust and worms. (Oznaim LaTorah)

5. The infection of houses is very strange. Even stranger is the emptying of the house before the Kohen comes to inspect. Maybe this idea can help. One of the sins from which this affliction comes is stinginess, when a person does not lend some of his possessions to other people. A person asks to borrow an axe, and the response is "I don't have one." Now he has to empty his house, and the neighbor sees that he does have an axe. He now learns that every one of his possessions is from Hashem, and the proper course of action is to lend it, if possible. Similarly, one of the other sins that causes this kind of affliction is theft. Imagine the embarrassment of the person who must empty his house, and places an object he stole on his front yard for all to see. So we see real value to emptying the house: it creates a reality that will motivate the person to repent his ways and become a better person. The reality is that Hashem is in control of all our resources and property. If he gives us property, we should rejoice in sharing it with others. (RED)

HAFTORAH : SHABBAT HAGADOL

(p. 1005 Hz) (p. 1197 S) (p. 965 Hi) (p. 1220 AS)

MALACHI מלאכי 3:4

Rabbi Soloveitchik was once asked why the Rabbis made a haftorah for Miketz when it seems that it is always Shabbat Chanukah on that Shabbat. We hardly ever read the Haftorah for Miketz. In his response the Rav gave us an important ruling. Whenever there is a special Shabbat, like today, only one Haftorah is read: the special one. But the regular Haftorah is not overlooked. Each individual must read the regular Haftorah to himself privately. Today the public reading is the Haftorah for Shabbat HaGadol, from Malachi, but we are still required to read to ourselves the regular Haftorah about the four Jewish lepers during an invasion of our enemy in Israel. The ultimate salvation came at the hands of the four lepers. The Haftorah for Shabbat HaGadol is about the Ultimate Redemption of the Jewish people, heralded by Eliyahu the prophet. Today we find ourselves between these two acts of Redemption. The redemption brought about in the creation of the State of Israel came about by non-observant Jews, like Ben Gurion, Begin, and Netanyahu, while we await the Ultimate Redemption to be soon realized with the arrival of Eliyahu and the Mashiach. (RED)

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT METZORA 5779
by Rabbi Edward Davis, Rabbi Emeritus

I. From the Text

1. What happens to the two birds in the purification ritual for the Biblical Leper? (14:5-7)
2. What part of the Biblical Leper's body is shaved by the Kohen? (14:8)
3. How many animals does the Biblical Leper bring? (14:10)
4. How many animals does the poor Biblical Leper bring? (14:21,22)
5. What happens to the earthenware vessel when touched by a contaminated person? (15:12)

II. From Rashi

6. Why is the purification ritual for a Biblical Leper with two birds? (14:4)
7. What type of birds were used in the ritual? (14:4)
8. What Berachah was hidden in the walls of an afflicted Jewish home? (14:34)
9. Why would the Jew empty his house before the Kohen came to examine it? (14:36)
10. What kind of death was imposed upon a person who contaminated the Mishkan? (15:31)

III. From the Rabbis

11. Blood is placed on the Biblical Leper's ear, thumb, and toe. Why? (Hirsch)
12. Why was the law of the Tzora'at in the house explained later in the text and not with the description of laws of garments and human bodies? (Midrash)
13. Could a Jewish house in Jerusalem be afflicted with Tzora'at? (Rambam)

IV. Haftorah. Shabbat HaGadol. Malachi

14. Which prophet will be sent by Hashem to herald the Redemption?

V. Relationships

- a) Moshe - Pinchas (2 answers)
- b) Aharon - Chur
- c) Pinchas - Itamar
- d) Elisheva - Gershom
- e) Miriam - Levi

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT METZORA 5779

1. One bird is slaughtered. The second bird is immersed in the blood of the first bird and then sent free over an open field.
2. The entire body.
3. Three animals: two male lambs and an ewe.
4. One male lamb and two birds.
5. It cannot be kashered; it is broken.
6. Since the Biblical Leper's sin was with his slanderous talk, his purification involved chirping birds.
7. Any kosher birds.
8. During the desert travels, the Amoraim hid gold in the walls of their houses.
9. Until the Kohen comes, the contents of the house are pure. So he takes them out before the Kohen comes. If the Kohen declares the house impure, the contents will become impure as well.
10. Karet, excision from Heaven.
11. The three body parts symbolize where the Biblical Leper must improve himself: in his mind (ear), in his deeds and actions (thumb), and effort (big toe, symbolizing movement).
12. The laws of the garments and bodies became operational in the desert when Moshe taught them to Bnei Yisrael. The laws of afflicted houses did not happen until years later, after the conquest and settlement of Canaan.
13. No. There was no personal property in Jerusalem.
14. Eliyahu

Relationships

- a) Uncle or Great Uncle Moshe
- b) Uncle Aharon
- c) Uncle Itamar
- d) Aunt Elisheva
- e) Grandfather Levi