

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 5 Nissan 5784, corresponding to April 13, 2024. We omit Av HaRachamim and Tzidkatcha Tzedek. Ashkenazim may say Kidush Levanah tonight, moon-willing.

TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 460 Hz) (p. 674 S) (p. 416 Hi) (p. 608 AS)

Tazria תזריע

Leviticus 12:1

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis, Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale]

1. The most God-like act of all human beings is the act of creating a baby. It brings true joy to the entire family. Our Sages tell us that there are three components in the creation of life: the father, mother, and Hashem. So why then does the mother become Tamei (impure) when she gives birth? Rabbi Norman Lamm z"l wrote that all creative acts also create a negative component. When Hashem created the world, a byproduct of this act was the creation of evil. The creation of America came at a price of much bloodshed. And the birth of the State of Israel spilled much Jewish blood in its creation. (I believe that each of the Israeli wars are actually battles of a much longer War of Independence, including the current Gaza War.) Rabbi Lamm includes in his discussion the creation of a business, which will produce the cost of ethical integrity, or psychological tranquility.

2. My own feeling as to why a birthing mother becomes impure is that in the process of delivering a baby the mother's sanctity will lessen. While pregnant, the mother develops "double Kedushah," her and the baby in one person. Giving birth decreases the level of her Kedushah, and the lessening of Kedushah creates impurity. Not only does the death of a life create impurity, but so does the lessening of Kedushah. The double length of her impurity when she gives birth to a girl is due to the circumcision of the baby boy. The Brit Milah propels the mother to a pure state so that she could enjoy the Simchah of the Brit. [The reunion of the parents in intimacy is the result of the cessation of the blood flow that resulted from the birthing process.] (RED)

3. When a person displays a skin blotch that might be Biblically leprous, he must show it to a Kohen for a decision. Even if a non-Kohen had developed an expertise in determining whether a skin blotch is leprous, his decision in the matter is irrelevant to the case. Only a Kohen has the ability to pronounce a person Tamei (impure). I believe this is an essential part of the process. Not only does the Kohen have the ability to state aloud whether the person is impure, he is also trained to counsel the person as to what caused this malady to develop. The

Kohen orders the person to be isolated and even expelled from the Jewish community so that the person can work on himself, to make corrections to his conduct in social settings within the community. The Kohanim are regarded as the teachers of Torah among the nation and in charge of the religious development of the people.

4. With the Torah's usage of the word Adam instead of Ish in the first verse in discussing Biblical Leprosy our Sages deduce that a one day old baby can develop Biblical Leprosy. Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch raises the obvious question: If Biblical Leprosy is a divine punishment for the sin of Lashon HaRa (slandering talk), certainly, the baby has not sinned to warrant such a punishment. Rav Hirsch states that just as Biblical Leprosy can develop on a person's house, or clothing, or his person to propel him to a spiritual development and to correct his conduct in society, so too can Hashem smite his baby in order to motivate him to improve his behavior. Using his baby's condition might increase the chance of spiritual improvement for the parent!

5. Our Sages instruct us that Biblical Leprosy can only afflict a Jewish person. This is also derived by the Torah's usage of the word Adam. Yet in the Haftarah, Scripture relates the story of Naaman, the Aramean general, clearly a non-Jew, who is plagued with leprosy. Using the statement of our Sages, we must conclude that Naaman was not plagued with BIBLICAL Leprosy. Adding to prove our statement, the prophet Elisha did not send Naaman to a Kohen to determine his status. Elisha treated his condition himself because Naaman was not Jewish. The choice of this Haftarah portion was not due to it being a case of Biblical Leprosy. It was chosen due to the similarity to the Torah description, and due to the miracle of divine intervention. It might not match exactly, but it is the closest image possible. (RED).

6. Having Aharon, the Kohen Gadol, as the decision maker as to a person's purity makes perfect sense because historically Aharon was known as a peacemaker between a Jew and his neighbor, and between a man and his wife. Midrashically Aharon would even lie in order to create peace among rival neighbors. Lying was normally not permitted, but for the sake of creating peace, it was allowed (within reason). Seeing that Aharon would be involved in the process would be instructive to the possible Biblical Leper to learn from Aharon's presence, and seek to improve himself right away. Speaking slander against a fellow Jew is a terrible sin; and yet many people overlook the sin by stating that they are telling the truth, not lying. The truth can also be Lashon HaRa! Now we have set an interesting dilemma when telling the truth can be Lashon HaRa and telling a lie can be permitted if done to create peace! We

better think and think hard before opening our mouths.
(RED)

7. The Torah dictates that the Biblical Leper is isolated outside the Camp of Israel in an introspective method of self-correction. He even must be separated from other impure people who are also "exiled." The Torah Temimah takes exception with this decision. He (Rabbi Baruch Epstein, d. 1941, East Europe) wrote that it was acceptable that a Biblical Leper can be isolated outside the Camp with other impure people. It wasn't necessary that he be totally by himself. The Hebrew term BADDAD means alone, even in a group. Bilaam referred to the nation of Israel as a nation living BADDAD, alone. There it is a group that is set aside from being with others. So too here, the Biblical Leper can be with other impure people. Let them all ponder over their condition.

8. MIDRASH. Rabbi Elazar ben Parta said: Come and see how dangerously damaging Lashon HaRa can be. The ten spies that Moshe dispatched to Canaan spoke Lashon HaRa against a land, against trees and stones, resulting in their death and the ultimate demise of an entire generation of Jewish people. Therefore we can surmise that speaking negatively about another person is much worse (and can result in a worse punishment.)

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT TAZRIA

I. From the Text

1. After how many days from giving birth to a boy may a woman bring a sacrifice to Hashem? (12:2-4)
2. Who determines the status of a Biblical Leper? (13:2)
3. What color declares a person impure if it appears on the scalp or beard? (13:30)
4. What colors will make a garment impure? (13:49)
5. What does a Kohen do with a discolored impure garment? (13:50)

II. From Rashi

6. Which sacrifice does the birthing mother bring first, the Chattat (Sin) offering or the Olah (whole burnt) offering? (12:8)
7. How large must the afflicted area be in order to be considered Biblical Leprosy? (13:24)
8. What color hair is definitely pure? (13:31)
9. Why is the Biblical Leper required to be isolated, outside the Camp of Israel? (13:46)
10. The Biblical Leper had to proclaim publicly that he was Tamei, impure. Rashi wrote that this way people will distance themselves from him. The Talmud (Moed Katan 5a) gave two answers to this. One is what Rashi states here. What is the other reason in the Talmud?

III. From the Rabbis

11. Why is the law of the impurity of a birthing woman the first law for impurity of humans? (Ibn Ezra)
12. What new laws are introduced here by stating that the Brit Milah occurs on the 8th day? (Sifra, Shabbat 132a)
13. What does the word Niddah mean?

IV. Midrash

14. Is it in accordance with the dignity of Aharon to examine for Leprosy?

V. Haftorah

15. Whom did Elisha cure of Biblical Leprosy in the Haftorah?

VI. Relationships

16.
 - a) Elisheva - Pinchas
 - b) Miriam - Eliezer
 - c) Itamar - Levi
 - d) Nadav - Avihu
 - e) Shem - Ashur

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT TAZRIA

1. After $7 + 33 = 40$ days.
2. A Kohen
3. Golden
4. Green and red.
5. He isolates it (locks it away) for one week.
6. The Chattat offering is brought first.
7. The size of a gris (about the size of a dime.)
8. Black
9. Because his affliction was a punishment for slander, causing separation of people from others in society. Therefore he deserved to be isolated, cut off from society.
10. So that people will pray for him.
11. Because it is the beginning of life.
12. The Brit must be during the day, and not at night. And the Brit must occur on the 8th day, even if it is on Shabbat.
13. Separated. She remains separated from marital relations and may not touch anything that is ritually pure.
14. Yes, because he will be compensated.
15. Na'aman, the general of Aram.
16.
 - a) Grandmother Elisheva
 - b) Aunt Miriam
 - c) Great Grandfather Levi (through the grandmother)
 - d) Brothers
 - e) Father Shem