

## Tzaras- The Perfect Punishment

By Dubi Fischman, Editor in Chief, 12th Grade

**W**hat's the reason that people speak Lashon Hara? One explanation brought down is that when a person says something negative about someone else, he believes that by bringing down his fellow, he will bring himself up and boost his own morale. Another reason brought down is that the person doesn't believe that what he's doing will cause his friend any pain. It is possible that if he knew that what he was doing would belittle his friend and cause him pain, he wouldn't have uttered the damaging words.

According to this second explanation, the punishment for Lashon Hara perfectly fits the crime, Mida K'neged Mida, for the wrong that he did. The person who spoke the lashon hara is punished with tzaras and becomes a metzora; as a metzora he is forced to leave the camps of Israel, immediately becoming an outcast. Even as he is walking out of the camp he signifies his new status, calling out "unclean, unclean!", letting people know not to come near or associate with him. The metzora is himself looked down upon and he is perceived negatively by others. Once he has had the experience of being an outcast, he would surely think twice before speaking negatively about others in the future, which is a testament to the fact that he has truly learnt the lesson of tzaras.

Vayikra Rabbah brings down a story about Rabbi Yanai (a similar story is also brought down in the Gemara Avoda Zarah). There was once a peddler passing through the town of Rabbi Yanai, calling out "who wants to buy the elixir of life?" Rabbi Yannai was intrigued about this elixir and asked the peddler what is in the secret potion. The peddler, however, refused to give away the secret. Final-

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## Diagnose and Cure

By Daniel E. Goldstein, 12th Grade

**I**n Parshas Metzora, the Torah describes the process of the diagnosis and purification of tzaraas. The Torah commands the Kohen to, both, diagnose the person with tzaraas, and help him become purified of the tzaraas. Not only must he diagnose a Jew with tzaraas, but he must also make sure that the disease goes away and the man is purified.

Rav Moshe Feinstein notes that it is very rare for the Torah to list both the problem and the way to fix that problem. However, in this case the Torah commands the kohen to find the problem and then fix it as well. Perhaps this is to teach us the valuable lesson that teachers must not only tell their students what to do, but they must also help the students succeed in the tasks and challenges provided for them. Just like the kohen healed each Jew after diagnosing him with tzaraas, so too educators and parents must help their students/children succeed after giving them proper instructions on how to live and act. In addition to "diagnosing" the problem, teachers and parents must also help their students/children become "purified" from the problem just like the Kohen did.

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**Torah Teasers**

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade Rebbe

**Parshas Tazria-Metzora****Questions**

1. Which of the ten plagues appears in this parsha?
2. Which 5 colors are mentioned in this parsha?
3. In what two contexts is fire mentioned in this parsha?
4. What two people in the Torah are inflicted with leprosy?
5. In this parsha, what inorganic object is described as being alive? What else is described as being alive?

**Answers**

1. The Torah discusses the laws of someone whose skin has leprosy on boils (Leviticus 13:18). Boils is one of the ten plagues in parshas Va'era (Exodus 9:9).
2. The following colors appear, all relating to the laws of leprosy: white (Leviticus 13:3), red (13:24), yellowish gold (13:36), black (Leviticus 13:37), and greenish yellow (13:49).
3. (a) The Torah discusses someone who has leprosy on a burn that has healed. The word for burn is *michvas aish* - "a fire burn" (Leviticus 13:24). (b) Clothing that has incurable leprosy must be burned by fire (Leviticus 13:52,57).
4. In parshas Shemos, at the Burning Bush, Moshe's hand is temporarily inflicted with leprosy (Exodus 4:6). In parshas Beha'alo'secha, Miriam is inflicted with leprosy for speaking improperly (*lashon hara*) against her brother Moshe (Numbers 12:10).
5. a) The water used for the purification of the leper must be *mayim chaim* - "living waters" from a natural spring (Leviticus 14:5). b) as an offering, the leper must take what is described as "living birds" (14:4).



1st aliyah- The Jewish people are instructed regarding the tumah contracted by a woman who gives birth. The timeframe of this period of tumah differs depending whether the child is a boy or girl. At the conclusion of this period, the woman immerses in a mikvah and is required to bring certain offerings in the mishkan. Incidentally, the Torah mentions the obligation to give a bris to a male child on the eighth day of his life. The Torah then begins discussing the laws of tzara'at, a skin discoloration- often inaccurately translated as "leprosy"- which renders a person tamei. This aliyah discusses various forms of white skin discolorations. A person who has the symptoms of tzara'at must be seen by a kohen. If the discoloration is deemed "suspicious," the kohen will immediately declare the individual tamei or quarantine him for up to two weeks. At the conclusion of the quarantine period, the kohen either declares the individual tahor or tamei. The Torah then discusses what is done in the event that the tzara'at spreads after the individual was declared tahor, or if there is raw skin within the tzara'at, or if the tzara'at has spread over the entire body. We learn the laws of tzara'at which appears following an inflammation on the skin.

2nd aliyah- We learn the laws of tzara'at which appears following a burn to the skin. We discover that tzara'at can also affect the areas on the body covered by hair. The symptoms and laws of such a tzara'at are quite different than standard tzara'at. This aliyah concludes with the laws of a person afflicted by multiple white areas on his skin.

3rd aliyah- This aliyah discusses tzara'at which appears on a bald spot, as well a white discoloration streaked with red, which can appear anywhere on the body. Also discussed is the procedure followed by an individual who gets tzara'at, the main requirement being that he must remain outside the city until his condition clears up. The Torah then discusses "clothing tzara'at," a green or red discoloration which can affect certain

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# 10-Minute Halacha Shiur

Given by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz  
on yutorah.org

Transcribed by  
Chezky Rothman

## Music During Sefira

### Is there an Issur of listening to music during the year?

1. The Shulchan Aruch never writes that one cannot listen to music during Sefira and the 3 Weeks, because the Shulchan Aruch (Siman 560 Seif 3) holds that music, and singing while drinking wine is forbidden nowadays.
  - a. Mishna Sotah 48a (brings proof from Pasuk): Once the Sanhedrin ceased to function, there was no longer any music.
  - b. Gittin 7: There are other sources that we no longer have music.
    - So obviously the Shulchan Aruch won't say it Asur during sefira, because he holds it is always assur.
2. Rama Siman 560: The Issur of listening to music is only if you listen to it all the time. Like kings who listen to music when they wake up, while walking around, and go to sleep.
  - Nowadays, we are like these kings, people listen to music all day. So seemingly, even the Rama would agree that you cannot listen to music nowadays.

### Why are most poskim lenient nowadays?

1. Chelkas Yaakov Chelek 1 Siman 62, Shevet Halevi: We live in a very depressing world and need whatever we can to cheer us up.
  - On an individual level it is hard to say that you will be depressed, but on a communal level we can say that we need music.
2. Shevet Halevi: If the music is meant to be "Shireh Regesh" (spiritually uplifting), to come closer with Hashem it can be listened to.

### 3 Weeks vs. Sefira

Just because someone forbids music during the 3 weeks, does not mean they would forbid it during Sefira.

There is a clear difference between the 2:

- a. The 3 weeks: A clear cut time of mourning, it is a sad time.
- b. Sefira: It is ambiguous. The Ramban calls it a Chol Hamoed between Pesach and Shevuos. It is, on some level, an uplifting time.
  - This is seen in the Tur:

i. During Sefira: Shouldn't increase happiness. (be neutral)

ii. During 3 Weeks: Decrease your happiness. (Go out of your way to be sad)

- Therefore there is more room to be strict by the 3 Weeks. For example, during the 3 Weeks one may not say Shehechianu, because cannot praise Hashem for bringing us into this time, it is a sad time. But during Sefira, which isn't inherently sad, one may say the Bracha.

### Recorded Music

1. Rav Moshe in Igros Moshe Chelek 1 Siman 166, Tzitz Eliezer Chelek 15 Siman 33: Recordings always have the same status as the original sound.
  - Ex: A cappella remains voices, and instrumental music remains instrumental.
- ⇒ Therefore, one should not listen to recorded instrumental music. And A cappella would be acceptable.
2. Rav Binyamin Zilber in Uz N'dberu Chelek 8 Siman 58: A musical instrument is defined as something that plays a sound that is pleasant. So that can be a Piano, Guitar or an iPod. An iPod playing a recorded voice is no different than a live guitar. But live, voice-only, pleasant music would be permissible.
3. Chelkas Yaakov: A live radio broadcast would be fine, because there is no possible way that could have been included in the prohibition. But any other music device would be prohibited.

### Can one listen to music during Sefira?

1. Magen Avraham: One may not dance during Sefira.
  - a. Aruch Hashulchan Siman 493 Seif 2, Rav Moshe, Rav Ovadia: If you cannot dance during Sefira, Kal V'chomer you cannot listen to music during Sefira.
2. Rav Binyamin Zilber: Even recorded voices are Assur.
  - a. Rav Moshe: Recorded voices are permitted
3. Rav Scheinberg, Rav Schlesinger: Non-dancing music, like Classical music, is permissible.
  - If the root of the Issur is to avoid dancing, then non-dancing music should be permissible.

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# LASHON HARA: IS IT THAT BAD?

Noah Kranz

10th Grade

In Parshat Tazria, the Torah speaks about tzaraat and how one gets it. The rabbis later explain to us that lashon harah and motzei shemra, two sins that result in getting tzaraat, are just as bad as murder, idol worship, and adultery. This begs the question: how can mere words be on the same level as these three terrible actions? The Chofetz Chaim gives a mashul to answer. Imagine you just used a funnel to pour brake fluid into your car. Now imagine using the same funnel to pour wine for yourself. You would never drink that wine. In the same way that you wouldn't drink wine that came from a dirty funnel, your mouth is a funnel as well used for avodat Hashem and Torah learning, and just like you shouldn't use a wine funnel previously used for something unclean, you shouldn't use your mouth for avodat Hashem if it was previously unclean. Furthermore, Hashem punishes us midah k'neged midah, therefore if we speak badly of one another the Satan can accuse of sins before Hashem. On the other hand one who refrains from speaking poorly of others will not be accused of his sins by the Satan. If the Satan cannot accuse us of our our sins we can't face destruction. So we see that what we use our mouth for has consequences, and that our mouths should only be used to "filter" good speech and things relating to avodat Hashem.

*(Dubi Fischman- Continued from page 1)*

ly, after asking three times, the peddler responded by opening up a Sefer Tehilim and reading the pasuk "Mi Haish HaChafetz Chaim... Netzor L'shoncha MeRa". Who is the one who desires a long life... Guard your tongue from evil. Rebbi Yanai then turned to his students and told them that only now does he understand that the meaning of the pasuk- that one who guards his tongue from evil will actually be the one to live a long life.

It is a straightforward connection between avoiding Lashon Hara and living a long life. If one avoids speaking Lashon Hara he will lead a happier and longer life by not having any animosity and arguments. This will lead to a calmer, more peaceful existence. It's an obvious and important lesson, the true elixir of life.

Adapted from Lilmod Ulelamed

*(SOG- Continued from page 8)*

permitted. But the court answered, "This matter belongs to a higher jurisdiction"—because in heaven there are higher and higher courts, one above the other—an appellate court, a supreme court, and so on. Rabbi Yechiel Michel then left to make an appeal to a higher court, and completely forgot about his son Yosef.

Yosef stood near the door, worried and troubled. Not long after this, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye also made a soul-ascent and came to that heavenly palace where the court was sitting. He entered, and also shouted and pleaded while weeping, complaining about those who wanted to burn his book. Then he noticed his friend's son standing by

*(Continued on page 6)*

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# The Power of Speech: Both the Affliction and the Cure

Yosef Schafler 9th Grade

.....  
 : In this week's double Parsha, Tazria-Metzorah, we speak of the affliction of "tzaaras" and its laws. We :  
 : learn that tzaraas sprouts from things such as speaking lashon hara. We also learn that tzaraas can affect both the :  
 : skin as well as other things like clothing and property. :  
 : The Chofetz Chaim asks a very basic question on this concept of tzaaras. He asks: why is this affliction, which :  
 : affects the skin and is caused by speech, seemingly cured by the Kohen's power of speech? How does that make :  
 : sense?" The Chofetz Chaim answers that the cure is specifically through the words of the Kohen to teach the af- :  
 : flicted person that the power of speech is not something to be taken lightly, as this person did by speaking lashon :  
 : hara, as it is what essentially connects our soul with our body. :  
 : .....

*(Aliyot Summary- Continued from page 2)*

types of materials. The garment is shown to a kohen who quarantines it for up to two weeks.

4th aliyah- At the conclusion of the quarantine period, depending on the circumstances the garment is either declared tahor, or completely burnt, or only the part which was discolored is torn out and burnt. The Torah then describes the purification procedure for a person who gets tzara'at. After the kohen determines that the tzara'at has been healed, a ceremony involving two birds, a cedar plank, a scarlet thread and water from a live stream, is used for the initial stage of the purification. The individual also shaves his entire body. After a seven day wait, the person shaves again, and brings three animals and an oil offering to the mishkan. The kohen processes the karbanos in the manner prescribed in this aliyah. With this the purification process is completed.

5th aliyah- If the individual suffering from tzara'at cannot afford the above karbanos, two birds can be substituted for two of the animals. This aliyah describes the slightly different purification process reserved for the poor person.

6th aliyah- Homes, too, can be afflicted with tzara'at. If stones on a home become discolored- acquiring a strong red or green pigment- a kohen is summoned. If indeed the discoloration seems to be tzara'at, the kohen quarantines the home for up to three weeks. Depending on the spread of the discoloration, the home is either declared to be tahor, or the specific stones are removed from the house, or, in the most extreme situations, the house is demolished. The Torah then describes the purification process for such a home- which is very similar to the initial stage of the purification of the human afflicted with tzara'at (described in the First Aliyah). After concluding the subject of tzara'at, the Torah discusses the ritual impurity of a man who issues a sickly and unnatural seminal discharge, as well as the method by which this person attains purity when the condition passes.

7th aliyah- The last aliyah discusses the tumah contracted by a man who issues a "normal" seminal discharge, the ritual tumah of a menstruating woman, and of a man who cohabits with her. All such people must immerse in a mikvah in order to be purified. Under certain circumstances a menstruating woman was required to bring to the mishkan two bird karbanos in order to attain purity.

(10 Minute Halacha- Continued from page 3)

4. Rav Willig: Since we are lenient all year round about listening to music, so there should be no issue of listening to music during Sefira. However, dancing is still Assur, you are clearly expressing joy.
5. Rav Lebowitz: At least during the 3 Weeks don't listen to music. We should feel some sort of loss.

(SOG- Continued from page 4)

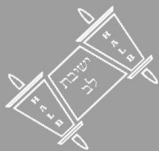
the door, and said, "Yosef, why are you here?" "Rabbi, I don't know," said the boy. "But please speak to the court on my behalf." "I'll certainly say something on your behalf," said Rabbi Yaakov Yosef. The court then told him too that the issue of the book was a matter for a higher court. Rabbi Yaakov Yosef immediately left to appeal to the higher court, and totally forgot about Yosef. Yosef, meanwhile, continued to stand there worried and troubled, because he had no one to help him or to be his advocate.

Suddenly, there was such a great commotion that all the worlds trembled, and a proclamation echoed throughout the heavens: "Make way, make way; the holy Baal Shem Tov is entering the palace!" (The Baal Shem Tov, as we said, had already passed away and was in the other world.) As soon as the Baal Shem Tov came in, he saw his disciple's son standing alone by the door, and said, "Yosef, why are you here?" "Holy Rabbi, I don't know," said Yosef. "Could you please speak to the court on my behalf?" "I certainly will," said the Baal Shem Tov, and he immediately went and spoke to the court about the boy, asking them to dismiss his case and let him go in peace. He then returned to Yosef and said, "You can leave now and go home."

By this time, Yosef was curious about what would happen in heaven, and wanted to stay a little longer to see what the Baal Shem Tov would do there. But two burly angels immediately came, took him under the arms and escorted him out. They then took him down, down, down, to the lower world, "until," he said, "I saw a repulsive corpse lying on the floor," for his family, thinking he was dead, had taken him off the bed and put him on the floor with his feet pointed toward the door, according to custom. And the angels said, "Enter that corpse!"—they wanted him to return to his body. But he was disgusted by the body and the suffering in this world, and absolutely refused. He cried and pleaded with them, but they forced him to enter against his will. "Then," he said, "I began to perspire, opened my eyes, and am telling you this story."

Rabbi Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov, the boy's father, forgot about his own son in his zeal to defend the book that contained the Baal Shem Tov's teachings. Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye, the author of the book, forgot about his friend's son in defending his book that contained the Baal Shem Tov's teachings. But the holy Baal Shem Tov, whose teachings were in the book, did not forget a Jewish child. A child was more important to him than a book.

Some of the holiest people do not write books. The Baal Shem Tov focused on living the teachings, not recording them. The Baal Shem Tov's legacy was not of books, but of people. What he left behind were disciples and followers in whose hearts burned love of G-d, love of Israel and love of the Torah, with an eternal fire. He never wrote a book, but he never forgot a child.



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Giving Birth

## The Connection Between

By Joseph Greenberg  
11th Grade

And Tzarat

One of the main topics of the parshiyot, Tazria and Metzora, is the examination and the basic procedures of tzaraas. But before this, the Torah tells us that when a woman gives birth to a boy or girl, she is tamei for a certain number of days. A very simple question can be asked: what is the purpose of the juxtaposition between the tuma of tzaraas and the tuma of giving birth? Furthermore, why does a woman who gives birth become tamei? This seems odd, tuma is usually associated with death and impurity. Giving birth is the exact opposite! Birth is about purity, we are bringing a new person into this world! Why should the new mother be tamei?

The answers to these questions may be connected. Chazal explains that the reason people get tzaraas is because of lashon hara. The reason that people speak lashon hara is because they are arrogant and haughty. So maybe this is why the Torah put the two forms of tuma together. When a woman gives birth, a living being is leaving her body. Although at the time of birth this baby has no accomplishments and has not done much to be commended for, this baby has potential. When the mother gives birth, she gives away this potential that was once part of her. The tuma that she receives is due to the reality that all life is valuable and has worth--even a life that has not done anything yet. This must be the lesson of the p'sukim. A metzora has to internalize, that he has no right to think that he has more worth than the person he spoke about. Thus, the Torah groups these two concepts together.

Adapted from Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg on YUTorah.org



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## STORIES OF GREATNESS

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### The Baal Shem Tov in Heaven

Rabbi Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov was one of the greatest disciples of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chassidism. Many years after the Baal Shem Tov's passing, Rabbi Yechiel Michel's young son Yosef became critically ill, and his condition steadily deteriorated until he was on the verge of death. Just then, news reached Rabbi Michel that opponents of the Baal Shem Tov were planning to burn the chassidic book Toldot Yaakov Yosef ("The Generations of Yaakov Yosef") in a certain city. This book, written by another great disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye, was the first book, and at that time the only one, that contained the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov.

Rabbi Yechiel Michel realized that this was an attempt to suppress the new chassidic movement, and that the situation was urgent. He decided to travel to that city and try to prevent this terrible desecration. He instructed his family that if (G-d forbid) his son died when he was gone, they should delay the burial until he returned home. Shortly after he left, Yosef entered a deep coma. He seemed to have stopped breathing, and they thought he was dead, but they delayed his burial as they were told. After three days, however, Yosef began to perspire. He opened his eyes and told this story:

"When I went into the coma, I felt my soul leave my body. Immediately, an angel came

to take me to a certain heavenly palace. Since the angel was not permitted to enter that palace, I entered alone and stood by the door. Inside, the heavenly court was in session, and I saw two angels arrive with a book that contained a record of all my sins. It was so large and heavy that it was difficult for them to carry. As I looked on, another angel came with a thin book of my good deeds, but they were not equal to the sins, which outweighed them. Then a third book was brought in, of my sufferings, and they caused many of my sins to be erased. Nevertheless, because of the sins that remained, the court decided to condemn me to die from my illness, and they were about to pronounce the sentence and write the decree.

"At that moment, my father—who had made a soul-ascent to protest before the heavenly court—came to that palace, entering with a commotion and loudly complaining about those who wanted to burn the book with the Baal Shem Tov's teachings. He vigorously protested, saying, 'It will be a terrible chillul ha-Shem (desecration of the divine name) if it's burned. It can't be allowed!'"

Just then, Rabbi Yechiel Michel noticed his son standing near the door, and said, "Yosef, why are you here?" "Father, I don't know," he said. "But please speak to the court on my behalf." "I certainly will," his father answered. Then Rabbi Yechiel Michel continued to protest about the book burning as before, and pleaded passionately that it not be

(Continued on page 4)

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