

The Dog and the Pig

By Mordecai Simhae, 10th Grade

This week's parsha talks about tzaraas, which comes from lashon hara. Lashon hara is a horrible sin, yet people are very careless with it.

The Gemara teaches, "There isn't poorer than a dog and there isn't richer than a pig" (Shabbos 155:). Rashi explains, "Nothing is richer than a pig because it can eat all types of foods. It finds food on its own, and in addition people feed it a huge amount." A dog however is poor. Rashi explains, "No one has mercy on a dog to give it a lot of food." Why does the Gemara say this? The Vilna Gaon zt'l explains that the Gemara is talking in riddles and is alluding to the best mitzvah and in contrast, the worst mitzvah. The best kept mitzvah is the prohibition of eating pork. There isn't any other sin in the Torah that is upheld as well as this one is. (Even non-religious Jews often keep back from eating pork.) The poorest and least kept mitzvah is the dog, which represents the prohibition of speaking lashon hara, as the Gemara says, "Whoever speaks lashon hara, it would be proper to throw him to the dogs." Lashon hara is a very severe sin. The Or Hachaim HaKadosh (14:9) says, "Nothing distances a person from his Creator like lashon hara." The Gemara compares it to the three cardinal sins: idolatry, adultery, and murder,

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The Sfas Emes

By Baer Boczko, 11th Grade

The Torah says "On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised" (12:3). On the eighth day of a boy's life, he has a bris milah.

There was a story about the Sefas Emes and his sons. One day the Sefas Emes asked one of his close Chassidim to take the Sefas Emes's 2 younger sons to a certain Jew in Warsaw for a brachah. The chassid left the next day in search of this Jew whom he assumed was a famous tzaddik. He arrived in Warsaw and, after some searching, discovered that this man was just a simple, common Jew. The Jew had no idea why the Gur Rebbe would want his 2 sons to receive a brachah from him. Yet, he took the 2 boys and gave them each a brachah. The chassid returned to Gur, thinking this simple Jew was one of the lamed-vav tzaddikim, thirty-six righteous Jews who live common lives.

Finally, the chassid gathered up enough courage to ask the Sefas Emes, "Why did you send your 2 sons to get a brachah from this simple Jew?" The Sefas Emes answered that although he gives the impression of being a simple Jew which, indeed, he is. However, he once demonstrated his devotion to fulfilling the mitzvos that Hashem

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Torah Teasers

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade Rebbe

Parshas Tazria Questions

1. This parsha discusses the law of circumcision. a) Who is the first person in the Torah to receive a circumcision from his parent? b) Who is the first baby to have a circumcision when he was eight days old? c) Which other baby is circumcised elsewhere in the Torah?
2. A) Where does the number 33 appear in this parsha? b) Where in the Torah and in the Prophets is the number 33 mentioned?
3. In which law is a female double that of a male?
4. Which of the ten plagues appears in this parsha?
5. Which 5 colors are mentioned in this parsha?
6. In what two contexts is fire mentioned in this parsha?
7. Which two topics in this parsha involve the number seven?
8. In this parsha, what word must a leper call out twice? What other law (in the book of Numbers) requires someone to call out a word twice?

Answers

1. a) In parshas Lech Lecha, Avraham circumcises his son, 13-year-old Yishmael ([Genesis 17:23,25](#)). b) In parshas Vayera, Yitzhak was the first baby to receive a circumcision at eight days old ([Genesis 21:4](#)). c) In parshas Shemos, Moshe's second son is circumcised by his mother, Tzipora ([Exodus 4:25](#)).
2. a) After giving birth to a boy, a mother is ritually impure for 33 days ([Leviticus 12:4](#)). b) In parshas Vayigash, when the Jewish people travel down to Egypt, Leah's descendants number 33 ([Genesis 46:15](#)). King David ruled for 33 years in Jerusalem (2-Samuel 5:5).
3. The ritual impurity of childbirth lasts seven days for a male child and 14 days for a female child ([Leviticus 12:2,5](#)). In addition, the subsequent days of purity are 33 days for a baby boy and 66 days for a baby girl ([Leviticus 12:4,5](#)).
4. 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'erah ([Exodus 9:9](#)).
5. 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).
6. (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](#)).
7. (1) A woman who gives birth to a boy is ritually impure for seven days ([Leviticus 12:2](#)). (2) Someone with leprosy, and clothing with leprosy, are quarantined in seven-day periods ([Leviticus 13:4,20,21,26,31,33,50,54](#)).
8. A leper must call out the words, "*Tamai Tamai*" (impure impure) ([Leviticus 13:45](#)). In parshas Naso, a woman accused of adultery (*sotah*) must answer the Kohen's oath with the words, "Amen Amen" ([Numbers 5:22](#)).

ALIYAH SUMMARY

First Aliyah: The Jewish people are instructed regarding the ritual impurity contracted by a woman who gives birth. The timeframe of this period of impurity 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 Temple. Incidentally, the Torah mentions the obligation to circumcise 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 ritually impure. This aliyah discusses various forms of white skin discolorations. A person who has the symptoms of tzara'at must be seen by a priest. If the discoloration is deemed "suspicious," the priest will immediately declare the individual impure or quarantine him for up to two weeks.

Second Aliyah: At the conclusion of the quarantine period, the priest either declares the individual pure or impure. The Torah then discusses what is done in the event that the tzara'at spreads after the individual was declared pure, or if there is raw skin within the tzara'at, or if the tzara'at has spread over the entire body.

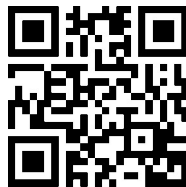
Third Aliyah: We learn the laws of tzara'at which appears following an inflammation on the skin.

Fourth Aliyah: We learn the laws of tzara'at which appears following a burn to the skin.

Fifth Aliyah: In this aliyah 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 section concludes with the laws of a person afflicted by multiple dull white areas on his skin.

Sixth Aliyah: This section discusses tzara'at which appears on a bald spot, as well as a white discoloration streaked with red, which can appear anywhere on the body. Also discussed is the procedure followed by an individual who is afflicted with 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 types of materials. The garment is shown to a priest who quarantines it for up to two weeks.

Seventh Aliyah: At the conclusion of the quarantine period, depending on the circumstances the garment is either declared pure, or completely burnt, or only the part which was discolored is torn out and burnt.



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The Laws And Customs Of Chodesh Nissan

The Rama comments on the first halacha about pesach that there is a minhag to buy wheat and give it to poor people so that they have it for pesach. The Mishna Berurah says that if a poor person can't do anything with wheat, rather he needs actual matzah then you should give him matzah. Wheat is not meant to be taken literally; it is just saying matzah or whatever he needs so that he has matzah. The Piska Teshuva says that our minhag is that we collect money for all of the Yom Tov needs, not just for matzah.

There is a three way machloket about whether Maaser Kesafim is diorissa, dirabanan, or a minhag. The Shulchan Aruch says that it is a strong minhag. The rule by maaser kesafim is that if you have an obligation to pay a certain amount of money, you can not use it for maaser kesafim. (Example: Matanot Laevyonim is a mitzvah so you can't use it as part of the maaser kesafim.)

There is a discussion amongst the poskim whether you can use maaser money to give for maot chitim. The poskim on the side of the Mishna Berurah say that you should not use maaser money since it used to be back in the day that it was not an optional tzedaka, rather it was more of a tax that you had to pay. Since nowadays it's more of a voluntary tzedaka, Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach paskined that you can use maaser money for maot chittim. Rav Shlomo also says that we should be careful when saying throughout the year that something is for pesach since it is kind of reminiscent of the karbon pesach which is not allowed. He added a cute idea that you are allowed to say that you are preparing your meat for Paisach but saying preparing your meat for pesach is a reminder of the karbon pesach which is not allowed.

There are five things that we specifically don't do during the month of nissan. The Shulchan Aruch says that we don't say tachanun, tzidkatcha, the Yehi Ratzon after laining on Mondays and Thursdays, give hespaidim (with the exception of a talmidim chachim lefanav), fast (with the exception of Bichor on erev pesach, taanis chalom, and Chatan and Kala). The reason that we don't do these things during chodesh nissan is because the Nasiem brought their karbonat for twelve days during chodesh nissan and then there was Yom Tov and Chol Hamoed so you wouldn't say tachanun for most of the month so we just extend the kedusha to the entire month.

The Rama says that on erev pesach we don't say mizmor lisoda since after six hours into the day you were not allowed to eat the lachmae toda anymore and you were not allowed to bring a karbon where you would be memaait the time for eating it. Since they had so much extra lachmae toda, they would use it as a sign for everyone to show whether you had to get rid of your chametz or if you still could have chametz. We also don't say Kel Erech Apayim and Lamnatzeah on erev pesach.

The Rama writes that we don't say tzeduk Hadin during the month of nissan. This is why many people have the minhag to not go to a cemetery during the month of Nissan because it may lead one to say tzeduk hadin. In Teshuvat Minhagot it is written that on the day of Yahrzeit one should go to the cemetery even if it falls out during nissan. If you feel that you may get too carried away then maybe you shouldn't go.

There is also a din of birchot ilanot in the month of nissan.

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/759199/rabbi-aryeh-lebowitz/ten-minute-halacha-laws-and-customs-of-chodesh-nissan/>

SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With
Ari Ivry*

In Parshas Tazria, it talks about various physical blemishes and conditions which can afflict a person. It says in Maseches Negaim, which deals with these types of blemishes and conditions, that "a person sees all kinds of blemishes except for their own." The story is told of a prominent doctor who was known for his generosity but was also prone to blowing his own trumpet. One day he was traveling when he saw the local rav walking. He stopped to offer the rav a ride. As they traveled together, the doctor, as was his custom, began to speak about his achievements. "You know, Rabbi, I get a lot of patients who can't afford to pay but I never turn them away. I treat them exactly the same as my wealthier patients." "I also do that," replied the rav. The doctor figured that perhaps the rav was referring to the spiritual counsel he gave his spiritual "patients." "Also," he continued, "a lot of times patients need expensive drugs. If they can't afford it, I provide them for free." "I also do that," rejoined the rav. Maybe he means that sometimes he gives people material help also, the doctor thought. "Sometimes people need days of post-operative care. I give it to them voluntarily, even though I have so little time." "I also do that." So it went, the doctor continuing to lavish praise on himself while the rav answered each time, "I also do that." Eventually the doctor couldn't take it anymore and he asked the rav: "Rav, I don't understand. You're not a doctor, how can you do all these things?" The rav answered. "No, all I meant was I also do that - I also only talk about my own good qualities!"

The Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, taught us that another person is like a mirror—if we find ourselves noticing faults in others, it is because they exist within ourselves. This is not such a foreign concept—it is common in psychological terms to speak of one person "projecting" their own faults onto another. It is incumbent upon us to realize that when we see a fault in somebody else, it is only because we need to work on that very fault within ourselves. As the Talmud and the above story illustrate, we tend not to notice our own faults except in others! The whole world is a mirror designed to show us how we can work on ourselves and our own deficiencies. Once we realize this, and we understand that the fault we see in another person is just the way in which Hashem shows us our own shortcomings, it becomes a lot easier to be tolerant and understanding of others.

(Simhaee-Continued from page 1)

yet, people aren't careful with it. It's therefore called the \worst mitzvah. Every mitzvah has a mazal. The prohibition of eating pork has a very good mazal, while lashon hara has a poor mazal. Few people take it so seriously.

When one is careful with his words, he will be saved from tons of stress and anger, and consequently he will live a better and longer life. "Someone who guards his tongue is protecting himself from troubles" (Proverbs 21) as his caution will prevent him from many disputes and hardships. The Chofetz Chaim zt'l adds that being cautious with one's speech makes the quality of one's life much better. "Who is the person who desires life...? He should guard his tongue from speaking bad" (Tehillim 34). Reb Yanai said, "I've been saying this passuk my entire life, and I never knew its simple meaning until a certain peddler explained it to me! The peddler called it 'a medicine for life', and he didn't call it a medicine against death. Being cautious from speaking lashon hara will result in a more fulfilling and satisfying life, without stress and anxiety, and nothing will be lacking.

Rebbe Uri of Strelisk zy'a said, "When one desires to say something forbidden, and he holds back, it's as though he fasted eighty-four days. Rebbe Ahron of Belz zy'a added, "And I say, nach un nach, un nach," which means that it's like fasting for eighty-four days, and much, much more than that.

Another step in the purification process of the metzora is to take two birds, as it states, "The Cohen commands, and it shall be taken for the person who is becoming pure two live, kosher birds..." (14:4). One bird is slaughtered over an earthenware cup filled with fountain water, the other bird is dipped into the mixture of blood and water (together with a cedar branch, crimson wool, and hyssop) and sprinkled on the metzora seven times. Rashi explains, "Since tzaraas is the result of lashon hara, therefore birds are needed for his purification, because birds are always talking..." We still need to explain why two birds were necessary. If it were solely to represent the lashon hara he spoke, one bird should be enough. The Zohar (Tazria 46:) says that "just as one is punished for lashon hara, one is also punished for the times when he should have spoken kindly to his friend and didn't" One bird atones for the lashon hara, the other bird atones for the kind words that he held back. With words, one can teach Torah, give good advice, offer encouragement, say words that will increase friendship, and even say something humorous to make people happy. The Shevet Mussar calls such speech tzedakah, and adds, "It's only words, so be generous with them."

(Boczko- Continued from page 1)

granted him "tzaddik status". The Sefas Emes told over the story that when this man had a son, the man had no money to make sure his son had a bris milah. The man without hesitation sold his bed and slept on the floor in order to have enough money for the bris milah of his son. Even though he had nothing and was sleeping on the floor, the man did not care, except for the bris milah of his son. Fortunately, he earned enough money to give a bris milah to his son on the eighth day of his son's life. In shamayim, this action caused a stir, and the man was granted a unique reward- every brachah given from his mouth would be fulfilled. The Sefas Emes asked the chassid "Now do you know why I sent you with my 2 sons to this tzaddik?"

The Sefas Emes is teaching us a lesson of doing mitzvos, no matter the excuse of how hard it is, just like this common Jew who could have slept on his bed and not given his son a bris milah.



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STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: YOEL HORWITZ

I remember once hearing this story about Rav Chaim Kanievsky and I was recently reminded about it, so I thought I might tell it over:

Once, a yeshiva student, who was having trouble finding a shidduch went to visit Rav Chaim Kanievsky in his house in Bnei Brak, in order to receive a blessing for finding a match.

When he met Rav Kanievsky, he explained that when he was younger he had performed an act of kindness that caused a large and ugly scar on his cheek. He felt that this scar was harming his ability to find a bride.

Rav Chaim told the fellow that at his next date he should tell the girl exactly what had happened, what he had done and how he got the scar. Rav Kanievsky said he should not hide the story from anyone anymore. He then gave the yeshiva student a blessing that he should quickly find his soul mate.

Soon after that, the student went out on a date. He decided he would tell his date right away the story behind his scar.

The fellow related that when he was younger he had seen an Arab man chasing a Haredi family in Jerusalem, in one of the neighborhoods. The fellow said he had tried to help, but the Arab had attacked him instead. As a result, he ended up with a large scar on his face.

To his surprise, the girl he was dating told him, right when he finished his story, that she had been the daughter of that family that was being chased by the Arab. They reviewed the details of the story, and the young woman told him that she even remembered the name of the boy who had chased away the Arab.

Just a few days later, the two got engaged to each other.

After their engagement, they went to Rav Kanievsky to inform him of the engagement, and to thank him for his miraculous blessing.

When people asked Rav Kanievsky about the amazing match, he responded that the ways of Hashem are hidden.

I truly that we can see the real Gadlus of Rav Chaim from this story.

Mordechai Kahn, 12th grade

Parshas Tazria

There is a Gemara in Shabbos that says that someone who is Tamai needs to let everyone know. The question then comes to say why does he need to let everybody know? It's pretty embarrassing to be a Metzora. The gemara then says the reason he tells everyone that he is suffering is so that people will pray for him. So another question we can ask is why do we need people to pray for him? Can't he pray for himself?

The Iyun Yaakov answers that no he can't daven for himself, since the Tefilahs of a Metzora are listened to and won't be accepted. The Zohar says that the reason we need others to Daven for him is because the Tefillah of a Metzora aren't listened to. We see this by Miriam. When she was a Metzora, Moshe was the one who davened for her. Why didn't she daven for herself? The reason being her Tefilahs wouldn't be answered.

In the Sefar Medrash Yonason he wants to know why the Metzora need to let everybody know that he is suffering? Why can't he daven for himself? In parsha Vayerah, Rashi is bothered. Why does it say that Yishmael davened? Didn't Hagar also Daven? If so, why did Hashem only listen to Yishmael? Rashi answers that the tefillah of a Choleh is much more effective than someone else davening for them. If that's the case let the Metzora daven for himself. Why tell everyone to daven for him? Because the Tefilah of a Metzora will not be listened to. According to this, there's a special reason a Metzora needs to let everybody know they are suffering. But for others who are just a regular Choleh they can Daven for themselves and not tell anybody.

The Megudim Chadushim asks a question based on a Gemara in Chulin and Sotah that states, anytime that something happens you should let people know. From here we see that it has nothing to do with someone's status as a Metzora and how his Tefilahs aren't listened to. There is also a Gemara in Shabbos that says that if a tree is not holding onto its fruits, you should put a red string around it so that people will see and Daven for it. So we see that it's not because the Tefilahs aren't accepted since it's just a plain old tree and that you should let everyone know so they can Daven for it. This looks like the opinion of Rabeinu Prachia, that you tell people about your pain. He brings up the concept that someone who is in jail, can't get themselves out of jail. This means to say that when you are in a bind you can't get out by yourself. Often people will think that since I'm helping others with their problems, I don't need help with mine. However, a person will have a hard time getting out of their own issues. Even if they are very smart it would be hard to see and realize the problems one might be facing. It is worthwhile to listen to others and hear what they have to say. The Gemara in Nedah says if you have a problem tell your friend so he can Daven for you. It seems to be against the Achronim who say that the reason why a Metzora says that he should tell everyone because his Tefilahs aren't answered. But it's not limited to that, rather whenever someone has an issue they should tell others so that they can Daven for them. The Megudim Chadushim suggests that the Torah explicitly and specifically points out this advice for a Metzora, so there must be a more important reason a Metzora should tell people. Yes, it is good to tell others whenever you have a problem but more specifically by a Metzora. The Chofetz Chaim explains that the Metzora contaminated his power of Tefilah by not speaking appropriately.

JOBE SILVER

TZORA'AS

12TH GRADE

"And the kohen shall look upon the plague in the skin of the flesh...it is the plague of leprosy, and the kohen shall look on him, and pronounce him unclean." (13:3)

The Rambam points out that the various laws of tzoraas apply only to Bnei Yisroel and that nigei battim (tzoraas on houses) only applies in Eretz Yisroel. These rules demonstrate that tzoraas is not a physical illness or disease; rather, it is a physical manifestation of a spiritual "disease." It is for this reason that the Torah tells us that the kohen, as opposed to a doctor, comes to examine the tzoraas and determine whether the afflicted person is pure or impure.

Upon looking at the pasuk, many ask the following question: Why does the Torah mention that the kohen has to examine the tzoraas twice; what do we learn from the repetition of the word kohen?

One possible way to answer this question is based on the following halacha. When the kohen goes to look at the tzoraas, he must first look at the person and see what he is dealing with. For example, if the person is a chassan during his Sheva Brachos, the kohen cannot determine the person impure, in order to not ruin the Simcha of the chassan and the kallah. This shows that the Torah is more concerned with the happiness and well-being of the afflicted person than the actual tzoraas itself. This again demonstrates very clearly that the affliction of tzoraas is not physical but spiritual.

The Yeshuos Malko provides another answer. He says that when the kohen goes to look at the potentially afflicted person, he should not only look at the person's shortcomings and the places where he has been affected. He must also look at the person as a whole, with all of his good traits and qualities taken into account. Therefore, although the kohen must first examine the tzoraas (as that is his responsibility), as long as afterward he looks at the man as a whole person with all of his strengths taken into account, only then can he make a full assessment of the person and the tzoraas.

People make mistakes. When we look at them, we must strive to see all of the positive traits and not only focus on the harm and damage this person's actions may have caused.

Upon focusing on the good, suddenly the bad points are no longer as significant.

(Adapted from Derachim Beparsha)

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ephraim.herrmann@drshalb.org or zachary.rosenberg@drshalb.org