

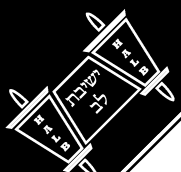
היוצאים

דברים



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The Holiness of a Baby

By Yonah Lebowitz, 12th Grade

In the beginning of Parshas Tazria, specifically in the first five Pesukim, it is explained that when a woman gives birth to a baby the woman immediately becomes impure. The obvious question is why would giving birth to a child make a woman impure? Isn't giving birth supposed to be one of the holiest things a woman can do as she is bringing a new life into this world?

The Kotzker Rebbe in his Sefer Amud Ha'emes says a beautiful idea. He explains that when something so holy departs, it creates a spiritual vacuum that is completely filled with impurity. This is why the highest level of impurity is the one that fills the room when a person dies. The reason for this is that a Neshama is the highest level of holiness and when it leaves this world it creates a void that must be filled, and because that void must be filled the room with the dead body in it becomes impure.

This is the reason a woman becomes impure upon giving birth to a child. When the child leaves the woman the child is on the highest level of holiness as it is yet to sin. The departure of the baby from the mother creates a spiritual impurity which is what makes the mother become impure. The Gemara in Taanis on daf 2a explains that there are three keys that were not given to man in this world. One of these three keys is that of childbirth, this shows how holy both the mother and the baby are at the time of the birth.

Diagnose and Cure

By Daniel E. Goldstein, 11th Grade

In Parshas Metzora, the Torah continues to describe the diagnosis and purification of tzara'as. The Torah commands the Kohen to, both, diagnose the person with tzara'as, and help him become purified of the tzara'as. Not only must he diagnose a Jew with tzara'as, 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 together. Here, 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 to them. Just like the kohen healed each Jew after diagnosing him with tzara'as, so too educators and even parents must help their students/children succeed after giving them proper instructions on how to live and act. The very act of identifying a problem is not always enough to result in a solution. Further guidance for the student may be needed from the adults.

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/Metzorah
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 other places in the book of Leviticus is there a commandment *not* to tear clothing?
5. What two people in the Torah are inflicted with leprosy?
6. In this parsha, what inorganic object is described as being alive? What else is described as being alive?
7. What country is mentioned in this parsha?

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 Shmini, after the death of Nadav of Avihu, Aharon and his remaining sons are prohibited from tearing their clothing as a sign of mourning (Leviticus 10:6). In parshas Emor, a High Priest is prohibited from tearing his clothing (Leviticus 21:10).
5. 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).
6. 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).
7. The land of Canaan appears in this parsha. Leprosy can only appear on the houses in the land of Canaan (Leviticus 14:34)



This week's haftarah contains a fantastic story which we can take several lessons from. Samaria was under siege by the Arameans and was saved from famine by a group of lepers. The king did not believe the prophet Elisha when he told them that God would send help. The lepers - thinking to desert the starving city and save themselves - made their way to the Aramean camp and discovered that the besieging army had fled. After beginning to take the spoils for themselves they realized that informing the city officials would be the right thing to do. "This is a day of good news, and we are keeping silent!?" The city officials once more responded with disbelief until it had been proven to them beyond doubt that a miracle had taken place.

There are several amazing things that took place. One of them was that Hashem chose to perform such a great miracle through such seemingly low people in the lepers. Another was that the lepers who had been cast off and seemingly had no reason to be grateful to and help out the rest of the Jews decided to help them and inform them of the great miracle.

Charles Plumb is famous for being hit in Vietnam while piloting a jet for the United States. He was ejected and he floated down in his parachute till he reached the ground and was captured and held in a Vietnamese prison for 6 years. He survived and went on to give lectures and talk about his experience.

One day he was sitting in a restaurant when someone came over to him and said excitedly, "You're Plumb! You're Charles Plumb! You flew jet fighters into Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down." He went on to give many more details from the mission. Plumb was perplexed as to how this man whom he did not recognize could know so much. He asked "how in the world did you know all that?" The man answered him back: "I packed your parachute. I was in the navy too. I worked on the Kitty Hawk." Plumb

(Continued on page 6)



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Rabbi Moshe Atik's Torah Teasers
is available on **AMAZON**
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"DISTANCE YOURSELF FROM BAD NEIGHBORS"

ELI HAWK

10TH GRADE

In Parshat Metzora, the pasuk says, "Whoever enters the house while it is closed up shall be unclean until evening." This pasuk declares that a person who enters a house that was infected with tzara'as becomes tamay, impure, until nightfall. If the whole point of tzara'as is for a person to do teshuva because of saying lashon hara, and his house is infected as a warning for him to do teshuva before he contracts tzara'as, why does any person who enters his house become tamay, even if did not say lashon hara?

Perhaps we can answer this question with the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos that says "Nitai of Arbel says: 'Distance [yourself] from a bad neighbor, do not befriend an evildoer and do not despair of punishment.' " The reason a person who enters into a house infected by tzara'as is tamay for a day is because he too is getting a warning from the Torah. The Torah is warning him that if him continues to be friends with this person who says lashon hara, then he too will come to speak lashon hara.

This is a quintessential example of how we must lead our lives. We must always be aware of the threats against us, both physically and spiritually. Once we realize these threats, we must figure out a plan to combat them. The Torah gave us the guidelines to combat our evil inclination: "Tremble, and sin no more; ponder it on your bed, and sigh." The Gemara in Berachot explains that there is a four step process to defeat your Yetzer Hara: Ask your Yetzer Tov for help to defeat your Yetzer Hara; Learn Torah; Say Krias Shema al Hamita; Remind yourself of the day of death; and right before you sin, remind yourself that judgement awaits all in the next world.

With this four step process we can defeat our Yetzer Hara. But how can we actually put this plan into action if at the time of sin we are engulfed in bad thoughts? We must personify the acts of Pinchas when he killed Zimri while Midianite women entered the camp of the Jewish people. Just like Pinchas stayed strong at a time of spiritual and physical weakness among the Jewish people – he rose above his evil inclination and overcame the evil – so too we must overcome our evil inclination and distance ourselves from bad neighbors.

(Ten Minute Halacha—Continued from page 3)

meal or Sunday barbeque with other families would be מותר because the assumption is that such an event wouldn't be אסור even during the 12-month mourning period for a parent.

What about going to a ballgame?

I. According to Rav Ovadia Yosef and the ציץ אליעזר, going to a ballgame during the period of ספירת העומר wouldn't be a problem at all.

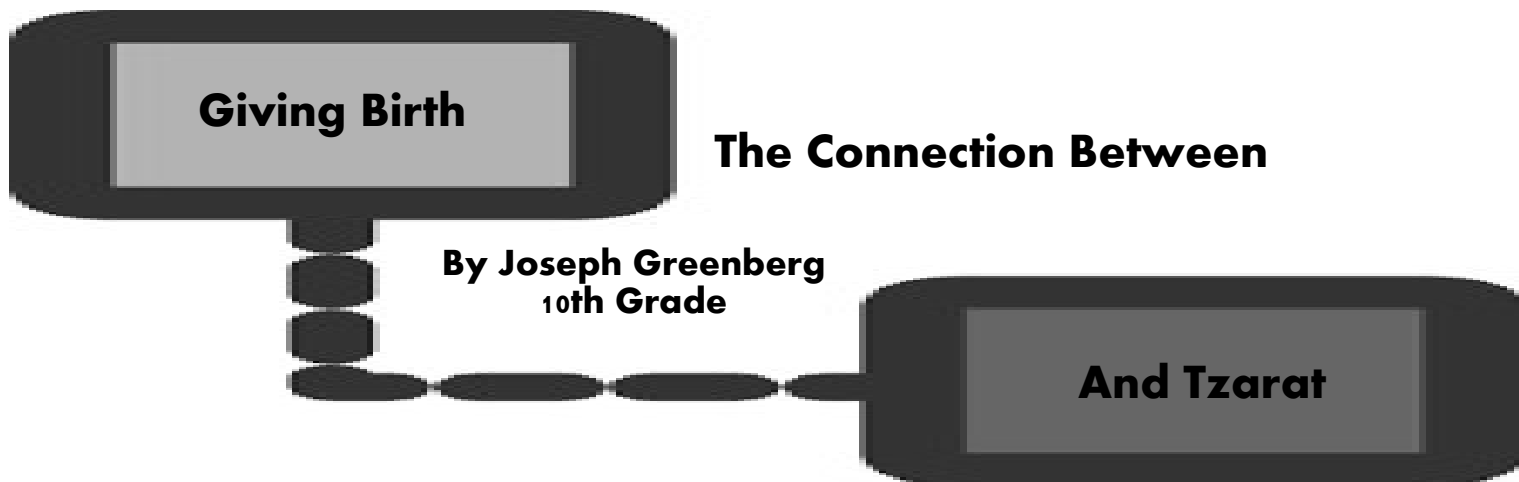
II. According to Rav Moshe, it would depend on what he would say for one who is within the 12-month mourning period for a parent, who wants to go to a ballgame because it certainly can't be called a "דבר מצוה."

III. Rav Shachter: Rav Soloveitchik used to say that attending a ballgame during the period of ספירת העומר is אסור because it is an enjoyable experience, not to mention the fact that there are also a lot of people involved in the enjoyment.

A. Rav Aharon Soloveitchik: When going to a ballgame, the larger the crowd the more the experience is enhanced so one can't claim that he is going independent of everyone else.

What about going to a movie?

(Continued on page 5)



One of the main topics of the Parshiyot, Tazria and Metzora, is the examination of, and the basic procedures to isolate and cure tzaraas. But before this, the Torah discusses how when a woman gives birth to a boy or girl, she is tamai for a certain number of days. A very simple question can be asked: What is the connection between the juxtaposition of the tuma of tzaraas and the tuma of giving birth. Furthermore, another question that can be asked is why does a woman who gives birth get tamai at all? Tuma is usually associated with death and impurity, but birth is about new life, and the purity of a newborn baby. It seems counterintuitive that by participating in the creation of an entirely pure being, that a woman should become tamai.

The answers to these two questions may be connected. Chazal explains that the reason people get tzaraas is because of lashon hara, and people speak lashon hara because they are arrogant and haughty. So maybe that is why the Torah put the two forms of tuma together. When a woman gives birth, a living human being has left her body. Although at the time of birth, this baby has no accomplishments and is nothing special, this baby also has amazing potential. When the mother gives birth, she gives away this potential that was once part of her. In this way, she degrades herself from being pregnant to someone who has just given birth.

Thus, the tuma that she receives is due to the reality that all life is valuable and has worth; even those who haven't done any actions. Similarly, this is the lesson that a metzora has to internalize, that he has no right to think that he has more worth than the person he spoke about. Because even the baby, who has done nothing yet, can cause its mother to be impure through leaving. This is why the Torah puts them together.

(Ten Minute Halacha—Continued from page 4)

I. According to Rav Ovadia Yosef and the ציץ אליעזר going to a movie wouldn't be a problem at all (מדין ספירת העומר).

II. According to Rav Moshe it would depend on what he would say for one who is within the 12-month mourning period for a parent who wants to go to a movie because it certainly can't be called a "דבר מצוה."

III. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik: Going to a movie during the period of ספירת העומר is אסור because it is entertainment.

IV. Rav Aharon Soloveitchik: Going to a movie during the period of ספירת העומר is מותר because the large crowd does not enhance the experience. Therefore, it is dissimilar from a party in that respect.



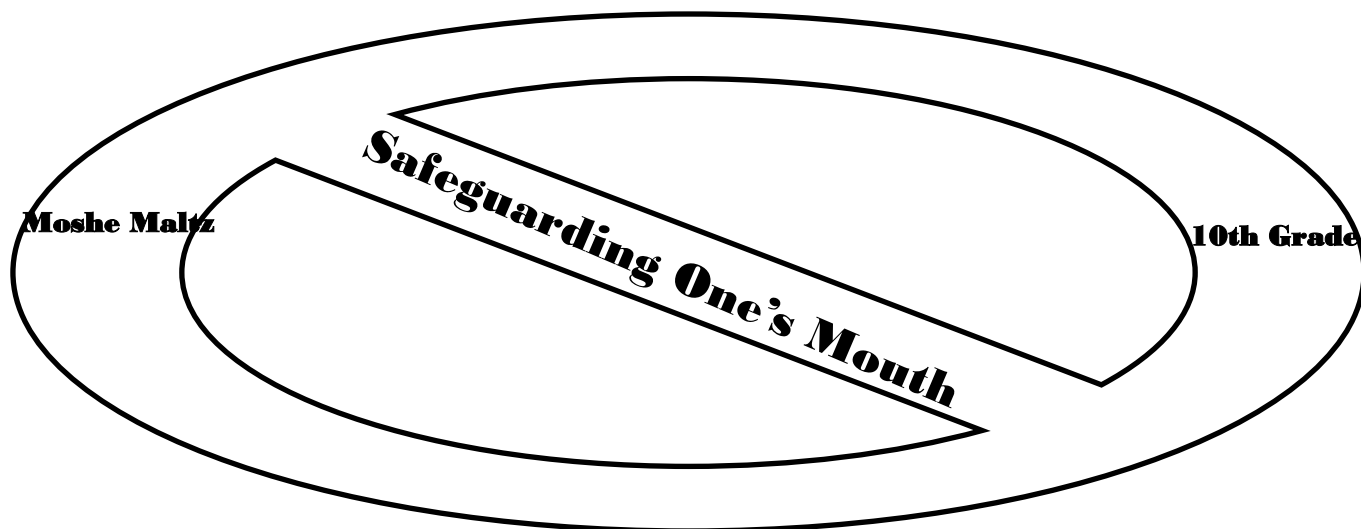
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“This shall be the law of the metzora... He shall be brought to the Kohen.” (Vayikra 14:2)

This week’s parsha is all about the metzora, one who has spoken lashon hara and now has tzara’as upon himself. The Chofetz Chaim quotes Reish Lakish, who understands the word metzora as an acronym: Motzi Sheim Ra – One who gives his friend a bad name. As a result of giving his friend a bad name, tzara’as strikes a person as he is guilty of lashon hara. This man has become a metzora.

The metzora’s purification process depends on the Kohanim, as it says “For the lips of the Kohen shall safeguard knowledge, and from his mouth they shall seek Torah” (Malachi 2:7). This teaches us that a metzora’s cure does not depend on a doctor. It depends on nothing other than the statement of a Kohen, as the Mishnah in Nega’im (3:1) says: The Kohen says: Tahor – ‘pure’. Since the cause of tzara’as is lashon hara, sinning using the power of speech, the Torah says that the cure, too, must come from the power of speech. From here we learn that “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Mishlei 18:21).

The Chofetz Chaim gave the following mashal about the relationship between the mitzvah of guarding one’s tongue and all the other mitzvos. A man walks into a large factory where he sees 248 machines, all working at once, sewing and weaving fine linen and wool products. There is one additional machine there, which is worth as much as all the other machines combined. Obviously, the workers are told to tend to it more than the other machines, closely watching what comes in and out. This machine is considered a “life and death” machine, as if it stops working, all the other machines are not worth anything.

These 248 machines are parallel to the 248 positive mitzvos in the Torah. The most important “machine” is one’s power of speech, which Hashem implanted into us. Both life and death are in the power of our tongues. One who wants life must keep his tongue from speaking bad. Power of speech is the most valuable gift that Hashem has given us, so we must all work on guarding this amazing gift at all times.

(Haftorah Corner—Continued from page 2)

was in shock. He thanked the man, who had held his life in his hands literally, profusely for what he had done.

He thought about this man a lot afterwards. He was unable to even imagine him in a navy uniform let alone actually remember him from his time in service. He thought of all the times he must have walked past this man probably without even acknowledging his presence, after all Plumb was a fighter pilot while this man was only a sailor. It is a lesson he went on to give at many of his lectures. He always asks the audience the question “who is packing your parachute?”

Throughout our lives, we have so many opportunities to say hello and speak to all different kinds of people. Sometimes we quickly brush it off as weird or annoying to say, “thank you” for something. We think of ourselves as too great to speak to and thank someone we perceive as beneath us. We must remember to always speak to others with the utmost respect. We must remember to acknowledge and thank all the people around us. Because we never know who we are going to need to rely on later to “save us from famine.” You never know who will be “packing your parachute.”

(Stories of Greatness—Continued from page 8)

So I decided to fast the first three days of each week, only drinking water at night, until I understood what this man did that was so pleasing to G-d. I had just finished the first three days and was leaving the shul when, by divine providence, there was Herschel walking down the street. He had a big smile on his face as I approached him. I told him I was very weak from having fasted, and asked if he could give me something to eat.

“Of course! Of course!” he said joyously. “Please, just follow me to my home! I’m so happy to help.” We walked for about an hour till we came to an old run-down hut near the woods. Nothing seemed unusual, until he opened the door and we entered. Suddenly four or five goats jumped from all corners of the hut at him. They lovingly licked his hands and literally pranced with joy about him. I had never quite seen the likes of it. Herschel quieted the goats and told me to sit down, took out a large metal pail, milked one of them, and poured me a cup to drink.

“Nothing’s more healthy than goat’s milk! Here, have another,” he said with satisfaction as he handed me a second cup. When I tried to pay him, he refused. “G-d forbid! Money? No! No money, no money! It’s my pleasure! I’m the one that benefits! What, I should take money too?” he said with a smile on his face. Then he looked at me seriously and said, “I want to tell you a true story. You have no idea how happy I am that you came here. Please listen.” He sat down opposite me, waited a few moments while collecting his thoughts, and began:

“My wife, of blessed memory, was a truly righteous woman, always helping people. Anytime anyone lacked anything, she was there, doing everything she could to help. She collected money for charity, cared for people when they were sick; everything she did was for others. Shortly after she passed away, after the seven days of mourning, she appeared to me in a dream. “She told me that after she died, instead of going through the painful and frightening purification processes of ‘the slingshot’ and ‘the thrashing of the grave,’ she was received warmly by the souls of all those people she had helped, and led directly to one of the highest heavens.

“She told me that nothing is valued in heaven more than brotherly love, and beseeched me to also begin a life of charity and good deeds. That is why I bought these goats. I give free milk to whoever needs it, and it has done wonders for people, simply wonders, and I am so happy I can help. Since then, my wife never appeared to me again. It’s been ten years since then, but today, just before I woke up, she came. She told me that this morning I would meet a holy man and he would change my life, and I’m sure she was talking about you. Please stay with me for a few days and teach me Torah.”

I stayed with Herschel for several days, and watched the way he lovingly cared for his goats and how he dispensed their milk to dozens of people that needed it, everything done with a simple, contagious joy and with no egotism whatsoever. But, on the other hand, he was a complete ignoramus and could barely read. I discussed it with the tzaddikim, and we decided to take him under our wing and teach him Torah. For three years we taught him the most basic books, and then one day his mind simply opened. He suddenly understood and remembered everything we taught him, even the most difficult concepts in Talmud and in Kabbalah, but he never lost his simplicity.

After five more years, he became a great hidden tzaddik and mystic in his own right, and moved to the city of Ostropol. There, for the next ten years, he helped, and even saved, hundreds of Jews with his prayers and blessings. But the story has a strange ending. As fate would have it, Herschel passed away on a cold, rainy day. The burial society of Ostropol did provide ten Jews to escort him to his final resting place, but otherwise treated him like a simple pauper. A pauper whose funeral did not deserve to be attended if it was an unpleasant day. This was not received well in heaven. After all, Herschel was a holy man, and had helped myriads of people, and deserved much more honorable treatment. Yet, the inhabitants of Ostropol had terribly mistreated him when it came time to bury him.

A decree was passed in heaven that the city of Ostropol should suffer terrible misfortunes because of their mistreatment of Herschel. I and many others tried to avert the decree, but to no avail. It seems that disgracing a tzaddik, although they do not care about their own honor, is no small matter. Until, suddenly, the soul of Herschel’s wife appeared before the heavenly court.

All the accusing angels fell silent and she spoke. How could it be that the entire city of Ostropol would be punished because of her husband? Her husband had devoted his life to helping people. The greatest possible disgrace that could be done to him would be to cause anyone, no less an entire city, to suffer on his account. How bitterly ironic her husband would feel to see so much suffering to the people he cared about in defense of his honor. She demanded that the punishment be annulled. “After short deliberation,” the Baal Shem Tov concluded his tale, “her demands were met.”

STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: NETANEL YOMTOV

When the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Shalom Dov Ber Schneerson (1860–1920) was a young child, his father (the fourth rebbe: Rebbe Shmuel) woke him one morning and asked him if he had dreamed anything. The boy thought for a minute, then began trembling with fear and answered that he dreamed that several awesomely holy men had visited him, and that one of them told him a Torah idea and a story. He described them, and his father identified the one who had spoken as Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (the founder of Chassidism, 1698–1760).

The boy recounted the Torah idea that the Baal Shem Tov said: It is written in Ethics of the Fathers (4:1): "Who is strong? He who conquers his selfish inclinations." It does not say "who breaks his selfish inclinations," but rather "who conquers . . ." Showing that true might lies in conquering and transforming one's selfish drives in order to use them to serve G-d as well.

The story that he told was as follows: When I was a young man of twenty, soon after being accepted as a member of the society the hidden tzaddikim, several of us came to the city of Brody. [Note: The "hidden tzaddikim" were a group of unusually gifted and devoted Jews who, disguised as simple people, dedicated their lives to improving the plight of their Jewish brethren both spiritually and materially.]

It was there in Brody that I saw a

most amazing thing. I was standing in the marketplace, speaking to a large group of locals, when I noticed from the corner of my eye, an older man walking in the distance, bent under the burden of a large sack he was carrying on his shoulder. His face was covered with sweat, and there was nothing unusual about him, except for the fact that over his head floated a brilliant pillar of spiritual fire! Obviously, none of the other townspeople saw it. A few of them even yelled jeeringly, "Keep going, Herschel Goat," and, "Carry, Herschel, carry!" And he called back with a smile, "Thank you! G-d bless you!"

I could not believe my eyes. I called two of the elder tzaddikim who were with me, Rabbi Yechezkel and Rabbi Ephraim. They, too, saw the pillar but also couldn't explain it. To all appearances, this Herschel was just a simple old Jew trying to make a living. What connected him to such a great revelation? For several days I observed him and tried to understand the reason for this holy fire, but I still had no idea. People told me that he was a widower, his wife having died some ten years ago. He earned his meek living by carrying things on his back and doing odd jobs, and as far as everyone knew, he used all his money to feed a few goats he had because he loved goat milk. That is how he earned the name "Herschel Goat."

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