1st Seder Weekly Divrei Torah
A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

PARSHAS TAZRIA-METZORA – WHITEOUT

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

This week's Parsha discusses the halachos of tzaraas. The Ramban explains that tzaraas is not leprosy but rather a spiritual illness with physical manifestations. One type of tzaraas is identified by a white splotch on one's skin. A person who discovers such a blemish must go to a Kohein who will determine if it is halachically tzaraas. If it is indeed tzaraas, the Kohein will declare him tamei (impure). However, if subsequently the tzaraas spreads over his entire body, the Kohein will then declare him tahor (pure). "Kulo hafach lavan tahor hu – it has turned completely white, it is pure" (Vayikra 13:13).

This Halacha is quite enigmatic and many Meforshim attempt to explain its rationale. Rav Shlomo Wolbe suggests that we refer to the Gemara in Sanhedrin (97a) to better understand this Halacha: "Rav Yitzchok said, 'Mashiach ben Dovid will not come until the entire government turns to heresy.' Said Rava, 'Where is this found in the Torah? It has turned completely white, it is tahor '" (Vayikra 13:13). Why would Mashiach come when things get even worse?

Rav Wolbe cites a Rashi regarding the meraglim – the spies who returned with a negative report about Eretz Yisrael. The meraglim said, "We arrived at the land to which you sent us, and indeed it flows with milk and honey" (Bamidbar 13:27). Rashi explains that the meraglim prefaced their disparaging remarks with this compliment because any falsehood that is not accompanied by some truth cannot endure. Rav Wolbe goes on to explain that evil, like falsehood, is devoid of any substance and value. An evil regime cannot succeed without professing some worthwhile ideals and morals. However, when a government or a society becomes so corrupt that anything goes, its basis for acceptance by discerning people loses all credibility. It will selfdestruct. When this happens all evil disappears and that is why Mashiach will certainly come if the entire government turns to heresy. This then is the symbolism and mystical reason why tzaraas which covers the entire body is tahor. Even impurity cannot exist unless it has some attachment to purity. Complete impurity, like falsehood and heresy, does not have the capacity to endure.

A similar phenomenon occurs when an individual hits rock bottom spiritually. The Medrash Rabba on Parshas Toldos (Bereishis 27:27) relates an astounding incident. When the gentile aggressors wished to ascend the Temple Mount, they feared entering the Bais Hamikdash. Therefore, they sought out a Jew who would go into the Bais Hamikdash first. They turned to Yosef Meshisa and said, "You go in first and whatever you bring out you may keep." Yosef Meshisa entered the Bais Hamikdash and brought out the Golden Menorah. The gentiles told him, "It is not appropriate for an ordinary person to use [such a magnificent object]. Go back in and whatever you bring out you may keep." Yosef refused, "It is bad enough that I have angered my Creator once. Should I anger Him yet a second time?" When Yosef Meshisa realized that even the gentiles had no respect for him, he lost any rationalization for his own behavior.

Whether we observe a society with absolutely no moral compass, or a chaotic govenment that changes its agenda every other day or a world that accuses the nation that suffered the indescribable viciousness of the attack of October 7 of committing genocide, we are tempted to say kulo hafach lavon tahor hu. Indeed, is Mashiach knocking on the door.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

Please contact R' Ungar (Ymungar@gmail.com) with questions or comments

QUESTION: May my children ride their bikes on שבת inside a gated area? What about a scooter or a tricycle for my little child?

ANSWER: The שמירת שבת כהלכתה says that a tricycle is allowed to be used by a child since it is clearly a child's bike and is used as a toy. However, a two-wheel bike that is not a toy is not allowed to be used on שבת even within an עירוב. He adds that this is true even for a two-wheel bike that is for a child. Rav Moshe Feinstein writes that a bicycle is מוקצה on שבת since it is usually used outside an עירוב, which is considered הוצאה. It is a כלי שמלאכתו לאיסור. A tricycle or other bike's that little children use which are often used even indoors and usually close to the house inside a closed area, and not mainly on the street, are considered a כלי שמלאכתו להיתר and not מוקצה. Perhaps a cut off would be, if it is only used as a toy to ride and have fun then it is not מוקצה, but once it is used as a form of transportation, which is the case when it is a bike of an older child then it is מוקצה because its function is to ride outside the עירוב. According to the שש"כ , a scooter is not allowed, and according to Rav Moshe, if it's usually used outside an עירוב , it is מוקצה. For little kids it can be okay.

עי' שמירת שבת כהלכתה (הישן) פרק ט"ז סעי' י"ז. ועי' ספר טלטולי שבת בשם ר' משה דף 24.

Weekly question [posed by Emailim Batorah]: אייר, one yud or two?

PUBLIC TAKEDOWN

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha talks about lashon hara and the terrible consequences of speaking lashon hara. This leads us to the following true story:

A city in Eretz Yisrael was having an election for mayor. Chaim, a religious fellow, decided to take it upon himself to oppose one of the candidates. For whatever reason, Chaim felt that this candidate was unfit for the job and had a bad character. He made posters and flyers explaining why this person shouldn't be elected and put them in every single shul in town. He posted them in the shuls erev Shabbos, assuming everyone would see them over Shabbos.

When Chaim got home that Friday night, he was approached by a close friend. The friend explained to him that what he had done was public lashon hara — he was embarrassing the candidate and setting himself up for severe divine punishment, as we see in this week's Parsha.

Chaim thought about it and felt very bad. He decided to remove all the signs. He planned to spend the rest of Shabbos going to every single shul to take down the posters. But he wondered: would taking down the signs that were attached be a problem on Shabbos? Normally, it's not allowed to take down posters because of the prohibition of kore'a (tearing). But in this case, would there be a heter in order to avoid continuing the violation of lashon hara?

Chaim brought the question to Rav Zilberstein. What do you think? Would he be allowed to take down all the posters on Shabbos? See Shabbos Besimcha Page 166).

Regarding last week's question about the man who blew the shofar, Rabbi Zilberstein does not give a conclusive answer and presents opinions that consider it a problem, as well as opinions that do not. Rav Akiva Meister answered that we pasken this would not be considered a mitzvah haba'ah b'aveirah, and the person who blew the shofar, along with everyone else, would fulfill their mitzvah of shofar.

I THOUGHT I WOULD KEEP IT TO MYSELF

There are many middos that a person should acquire, but ayin tovah is the entranceway to all the others. Having an ayin tovah for a friend—being happy for him when things go well for him, taking care regarding what you say about another person, not speaking lashon hara or rechilus about him... Watch your mouth and have a good heart."

These words were said by the Pnei Menachem to a young bachur who sought his guidance. His words echoed the Chiddushei Harim, who taught that through the middah of ayin tovah, a person could access all middos. Indeed, throughout his life, and especially in the years of his leadership, the middah of ayin tovah, or in the Rebbe's words, "farginin yennem"—being happy for others—was a central component of his teachings. He felt that both on a macro level, the generation needed to improve in this area, and on a micro level, each individual needed to accept upon himself the desire to acquire this middah.

It wasn't only his own chassidim whom the Pnei Menachem encouraged in this matter. His eye doctor, Dr. Mordechai Silenfreund, related a fascinating story: "As a result of being involved in the Rebbe's care, I became one of his great admirers. Once, before I left Israel to attend a major medical conference on eye disease, I went to take leave of the Rebbe and receive his blessing. He told me, 'When you are together with other doctors, it is important to tell them that part of cultivating ayin tovah, "good eyesight," in patients is by having "a good eye." If any doctor has discovered some type of new, innovative method of treating a patient that can improve the patient's condition, he should not keep it to himself in order to get credit as the only doctor who can provide this unique treatment. Rather, he should have an ayin tovah! Share that knowledge with other doctors so that they too can help their patients have an improved quality of life.'"

During Dr. Silenfreund's presentation at the conference, he conveyed the message that the Rebbe had shared with him. A bit later, a renowned specialist approached him and said, "I want to tell you something. I recently figured out something that is a medical breakthrough in my field. Initially, I thought I would keep it to myself so that I would be the exclusive provider of this treatment. But now that I heard the message from the Rabbi that you gave over to the doctors, I have decided to share it with the other doctors at the conference so that their patients can also benefit."

The Rebbe would add, "A person who has been blessed with a particular talent, whatever that talent may be, should do his utmost to share it with others. Not only is it good for them, but it is good for him as well. We know that a well that is not used will ultimately dry up. Only when one continuously draws water from it does it produce its maximum. So too, a person who shares his talents with others is himself enriched as a result. I know numerous people, who, when they were young, were brilliant bnei Torah with a great future ahead of them. But now, when I look at them, they are broken men. Why? Because they did not share their abilities with others. From sharing, from ayin tovah, one only gains."

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Answer to this week's question:

The רמ"א (E.H. 126:7) writes, "Since there is a מחלוקת how to spell אייר (1 or 2 yuds), we try to refrain from writing gittin the entire month ."

ר'עקיבא איגר quotes the ילקוט that says "אייר is the ראשי תיבות of אברהם, יצחק , יעקב and רחל and that is the סוד המרכבה."

From the ילקוט, we see that the spelling of אייר is with 2 yuds. Perhaps we can explain how the סוד המרכבה fits in. The אלשיך in Parshas ויחי writes "The מרכבה requires to have all three אבות, including both יצחק and יעקב. Hence, this explains why the ראשי תיבות of אייר with two yuds, one for יצחק and one for יעקב, is the סוד המרכבה.

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Good Shabbos!