

זכור את־יום השבת לקדשו.
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל־מלאכתך,
ויום השביעי שבת לה'

SHABBAT LASHEM

THE VOICE OF BNEI AKIVA UK

PARASHAT TAZRIA-METZORAH
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LIKE THE CHIRP- ING OF THE BIRDS

ZAC ABRAHAMS
SHEVET TZION

In the midst of describing over two hundred mitzvot found in Sefer Vayikra, Parashat Metzora, the second of our two parashot this week, sheds light on a very practical and eloquent message concerning Lashon Hara. Let's start with both the title of the Parsha and the name of a person afflicted with tzara'at: a metzorah.

Unique to a metzorah is the very fact that the person has their own name rather than being described as having the disease. It must be that the name describes the essence of the person. The Kli Yakir comments that the conjunction Motzei-Rah which means 'speaking evil about others' is the root of the name metzorah. With that in mind, by speaking badly about others, the metzorah is revealing to the world their wickedness as a human being.

One peculiar thing about tzara'at and Lashon Hara is that the Torah does not directly connect Lashon Hara to causing tzara'at. Rather, Chazal, our Sages, tie

them together through cases in Tanach where people like Miriam were afflicted with tzara'at. A major connection we also see between tzara'at and what causes it, is in relation to the korbanot, sacrifices, that must be brought in order to remedy it. These korbanot remind the sinner of the sin they committed.

The two doves that must be given, send a clear message to the metzorah. According to Rashi, the two **ציפורים**, or birds, offered by the metzorah, point to one cause of tzara'at: excessive talking the same way a bird chirps. In contradiction to our classic perception of Lashon Hara as a premeditated, calculated action, it is quite frequently the opposite. Lashon Hara can come about by casual, excessive talking as depicted in the image of birds naturally chirping.

In our own lives it is important not to misuse the gift of speech in our often-hedonistic ways of talking which inevitably leads to gossip, but rather we should use the gift of speech as a meaningful way of communicating and connecting to one another and to G-d.

ZAC WAS A MADRICH ON GIMMEL MACHANE 5780.

London In: 19:44 Out: 20:55
Manchester In: 19:56 Out: 21:12
Cambridge In: 19:41 Out: 20:57

Oxford In: 19:46 Out: 21:01
Bristol In: 19:50 Out: 21:05
Birmingham In: 19:50 Out: 21:06

Leeds In: 19:52 Out: 21:10
Liverpool In: 19:56 Out: 21:14
Jerusalem In: 18:33 Out: 19:48

FROM THE ARCHIVES: TAZRIA-METZORA 5777: DEALING WITH DIFFICULTY

RAV ARI FAUST | RAV SHALIACH 5774-5777

One of the burning questions we are all troubled with is why do bad things happen to good people? In truth (not to belittle that question) we could equally ask why do bad things happen at all – to good or bad people?

It is beyond the scope of the few lines of this article to explore this issue in any way that could do it justice. Suffice to say that this is one of the chief and most profound struggles of faith (see Talmud Berachot 7a), and some answers that have been offered are lacking in any depth, intellectual honesty and are at times outright distasteful – especially regarding Holocaust theodicy. It is sometimes better to live with a good question than a bad answer.

Our parasha does offer a powerful lesson in regards to relating to evil. The Torah teaches a starkly counter-intuitive law regarding childbirth: The halacha is that a woman enters into a state of ritual impurity upon giving birth; in biblical times, this period (which was limited in its time, contrary to today) would be followed by a time of being unconditionally pure. At the conclusion of this cycle, the woman would be obligated to bring two offerings (Vayikra 12:6-7):

“And when the days of her purification are fulfilled ... she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtle-dove, for a sin-offering, to the door of Ohel Mo’ed, to the priest. And he shall offer it before Hashem, and make atonement for her...”

That a woman brings an Olah (burnt) offering is understood: There could be no greater experience of elation and oneness with Hashem than literally partnering with Him in creation. But why the Korban Chatat (sin-offering)? In what way could the woman possibly have sinned when bringing new life into the world?!

The Gemara (Niddah 31b) addresses this anomaly, suggesting a powerful lesson:

“Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai was asked by his disciples: ‘Why did the Torah ordain that a woman after childbirth should bring a sacrifice?’ He replied: ‘When she kneels in giving birth she swears impetuously that she will no longer be with her husband. The Torah, therefore, ordained that she should bring a sacrifice.’”

Life can be seen as a process of childbirth. Just as the woman on the birthstool brings-about new life, we are all in an eternal-evolutionary process of encountering

ultimate goodness. But this process is at times accompanied by terrible birth pangs. There are times in life of extreme distress and difficulty, when we don’t see the Ultimate Goodness shining through. During these times of torment and anguish we can be caused to lose the plot and become disenfranchised from this great process. Even worse, the pain can be so great that we wish to not be part of the process at all.

The Hebrew word chet – sin – literally means to miss, in the sense of missing a target. A sin is an act that expresses a temporary lapse in focus on the ultimate end-goal. The Korban Chatat is brought to achieve atonement for those moments when we lose our sight of the target, when we become disenfranchised from the process of increment. Thus, the woman must bring a sin-offering for any possible moments of chet she experienced during the agonizing pain of her contractions, which removed her from the process.

HARDSHIPS PRESENT US WITH THE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY TO REMAIN STEADFAST TO THE PROCESS, AND ENCOUNTER THE ULTIMATE GOODNESS EVEN IN THE BAD.

We all experience these birth pangs in our own lives. They need not be as physically or emotionally exhausting as the contractions of childbirth, but every person

experiences moments of hardships: economic hardships, arguments with friends or siblings, challenges at school, spousal strife, or other personal tragedy. The challenge is to remain committed to the process and focused on the Ultimate Goodness in these moments. The challenge is to say that if Hashem wills it, I do too – no matter how bad it is.

There is perhaps no time more apt for contemplating this message. In the days between Yom Hashoah, Yom Ha’Zikaron and Yom Ha’atzmaut.

We do not know why bad things happen, and we certainly would prefer that – in the ideal world – they wouldn’t occur at all. But when hardships do befall us, there is a manifestation that it is Hashem’s will that they do occur and this presents us with the challenge and opportunity to remain steadfast to the process, and encounter the Ultimate Goodness even in the bad.

May it be Hashem’s will that we know no more hardships, and that we experience the Ultimate Goodness manifest in our lives.

MENTAL HEALTH: ANYONE AND EVERYONE

DINA PARKUS | SHEVET OROT



In Parashat Tazria, we are taught about the laws of tzara'at and the metzora. In perek 13, passuk 3, it is written that "וראה הכהן", "the Kohen shall look...", and then in Pasuk 5, "וראהו הכהן", "the Kohen shall see him". These passukim

teach us about how tzara'at is identified by a kohen. However, what is interesting is the change of וראה to וראהו, i.e., that the kohen does not just see the tzara'at on the skin, but also sees the whole person.

There are a few explanations for this seemingly superfluous repetition. Rabbi Yehoshua of Kutno answers that these words teach us that while the kohen would be looking at the metzora to examine their tzara'at, the kohen should also be taking into account the entire person, their strengths and weaknesses, and their personal circumstances. This could almost seem to add a sense of reassurance to the metzora – whilst not relieving them of the responsibility for their actions, it assures them that for all their faults, they have strengths too, and that they always have the potential to improve upon their weaknesses.

Another reason for taking a metzora's personal circumstances into account when examining and identifying potential tzara'at is that there are certain situations in which a person, their clothing and their home are exempt from being inspected. As mentioned by Mishna Nega'im 3:2, a bridegroom is exempt on his wedding day and for the entirety of his sheva brachot period. Similarly, a person is exempt during chagim. This all seems to suggest that there is concern for preserving their enjoyment of a special occasion.

This seems strange – why are these exemptions offered for someone who has clearly done something wrong? Some might take the view that a metzora needs to change their behaviours, healing themselves of their tzara'at, before partaking in anything enjoyable. However, this is a clear example of where the Torah, not to mention Judaism as a whole, has the highest regard for a person's mental health and wellbeing – instead of forc-

ing the metzora to adapt their celebrations due to their own transgression, the opposite occurs: the tzara'at must "adapt" to the needs of the person, in order that this joyous period in their life not be detracted from.

In recent months, people all around the world have felt the strain of the current crisis on their mental health, and the Jewish community is no different. While the COVID-19 pandemic has really brought to light how important looking after our own mental health is, this is not a new idea. Already in 1992, the International Network of Orthodox Mental Health Professionals, also known as NEFESH, was founded in order to promote discussion on and address mental health problems that are faced day-in, day-out by the community.

Additionally, in recent years, many members of the Jewish community have voiced their encouragement for

more promotion of mental health awareness, and also acceptance. For example, there is now much support for the inclusion of those unwell with a mental illness to be included in the Mi SheBerach prayer for refuah. If movements such as this continue, the future seems bright for those who have until now felt that they were suffering with

something that no one else would even acknowledge, let alone accept.

As mentioned, the global crisis has brought forward how important it is to look after ourselves and maintain our wellbeing. This has really been an opportunity for us as a community to learn, and adapt, and face up to challenges and obstacles no one could have ever expected. Perhaps this now means we are more prepared to deal with any further trials our collective mental health may face in future.

From the treatment of the metzora, we learn a valuable lesson: as Jews and as human beings overall, it is not up to us to decide who deserves to have enjoyment and wellbeing, and who does not. Merely, it is our responsibility to ensure that anyone and everyone knows that there is always a way forward, regardless of your past, despite your actions and behaviours. Perhaps this message simply teaches us that this core ability to improve is what makes us all human, and what allows us all to find the fulfilment we need.

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DINA WAS A MADRICHA ON MA'APILIM 5781.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

- Applications are open for **Summer Machane 5781!** With the Government's roadmap in place we are looking forward to a fantastic Summer Machane, with some epic residential Machanot and day camps for children in Years 3-10. Spaces are filling up fast, so if you haven't yet signed up make sure you do so as soon as possible and join us for a summer experience not to be missed! Join us from **2nd-15th August** and enjoy a fantastic Bnei Akiva experience full of fun, friends and Ruach! Sign up today at bauk.org/camps or email camps@bauk.org for more information.

- Calling **Shevet Hineini** (Year 13!) Join us on **The Bet Midrash L'Manhigut Programme!** A unique leadership (Manhigut) experience to develop your learning through Shiurim and Chavrutot and leading others through Tochniot and Chaburot! **Apply now - www.bauk.org/bmp-tafkid/** For more information about the programme or other options this summer please email - Chinuch@bauk.org or Camps@bauk.org

- **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** Coronavirus has hit Bnei Akiva hard, costing us over £150,000. Our Mazkirut, Bogrim and Madrichim have

been working tirelessly to put on a range of fantastic programming for our youth, from Machane Aviv last Spring, to a celebration of Israel like no other on Yom Ha'atzmaut, a packed summer of programming for over 400 children, and Winter Machane. Please support our **Yad Achim Campaign**. Visit bauk.org/yad-achim for more information and to donate.

- Join **Rav Joel's Torat Rav Kook Chabura! Monday's at 8:30pm** in the BA Zoom Room for all Bogrim!

- Keep an eye out for **exciting Bnei Akiva events** for all ages! **Stay Safe > Stay Inspired > Stay BA**

- Be sure to like our **Facebook page (Bnei Akiva UK)** and follow our **Instagram (bneiakivauk)** to get regular updates with what is going on in the Tnuva.

- Visit bauk.org/feedback for contact details for all Mazkirut members and to leave any general feedback!

SHABBAT SHALOM!!!



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