

A Taste of Torah

Spot Check

By Rabbi Mordechai E. Fleisher

Tzora'as, a malady that is commonly translated as "leprosy," takes the lion's share of this week's parsha. However, it is important to note that while tzora'as may be similar to the disease that we refer to as "leprosy," tzora'as was, in fact, a unique ailment that was more spiritual than physical in nature, a result of a person's transgressing certain sins or failure to rectify certain character defects. The reason why people are not struck with tzora'as in today's day and age is because we, unfortunately, are not even on a sufficiently elevated level to deserve such Divine rebuke.

There are specific criteria that must be met before a spot on the skin is declared to be tzora'as. However, even if all the qualifications are met, there is still a strange and puzzling exception to rendering an individual impure due to tzora'as. The Torah tells us that if the tzora'as covers the person's entire body, he is declared pure.

Counterintuitive as this may seem, the Chofetz Chaim gives an explanation of this law which bears an important lesson for us all. The purpose of tzora'as, says the Chofetz Chaim, is to jar the person out of his complacency and make him realize that has work to do in rectifying himself. When the afflicted individual cured his spiritual shortcomings, he would be cured of the tzora'as. As long as it remained, it served

as a wake-up call. The state of impurity that is imposed on the person with the tzora'as, and all the attendant laws and restrictions that come with it, serve to drive the point home as strongly as possible. Without this state of impurity, and the restrictions and inconveniences it brings, one could possibly brush off the important message being conveyed by the tzora'as.

A person whose entire body is covered with tzora'as, continues the Chofetz Chaim, cannot possibly ignore the malady afflicting him. He cannot avert his eyes and explain away something that is covering his every inch. A person in this state does not need a special state of impurity; the affliction itself is sufficient.

We live in a time where strange and catastrophic events have, unfortunately become all-too-common. From freak storms to earthquakes to civil unrest, we wonder what it all means. While we certainly have no business deciding why Hashem brings a particular punishment to the world, we nonetheless have an obligation to take world events to heart and to realize that they are also meant to make us realize that we are far from perfect. If we can take advantage of G-d's wake-up call, rather than hitting the snooze button yet again, then we can look forward to a better tomorrow, when Hashem will remove tears and sorrow from the world.

Ask the Rabbi

Speech Therapy

JK wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I was wondering about the laws of

continued on back

Stories For The Soul

The 3-String Violin

It was November 1995 and Itzhak Perlman, the violinist, came on stage to give a concert in New York City. Stricken with polio as a child, he has braces on both legs and walks with the aid of two crutches. To see him walk across the stage one step at a time, painfully and slowly, is a sight.

That evening, just as he finished the first few bars, one of the violin strings broke. The crowd knew he'd have to make the painful trek off stage to find another string, or another violin.

But he didn't. He signaled the conductor to begin again. And he played with such passion and power and purity as they had never heard before. Everyone knows it is impossible to play a symphonic work with just three strings. But that night Itzhak Perlman refused to know that. You could see him modulating, changing, recomposing the piece in his head.

When he finished, there was an awesome silence. And then people rose and cheered. He smiled and said, not boastfully, but in a pensive tone, "Sometimes, it is the artist's task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left."

After giving birth, a woman brings a purification offering to the Temple. The offering consists of a sheep and a dove. The Torah says that if she cannot afford a sheep then she brings two doves. We see a simple idea that a person should never give up, but should make do with what he has.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek, by Rabbi Baruch Lederman.

continued on back

Kollel Happenings

WHY TWO TORAHS AT AISH, APRIL 3

Rabbi Yaakov Marcus, acclaimed lecturer, will be presenting "Why Two Torahs: Written vs. Oral Law." The class, explaining the connection between the Oral and Written Torah, will be held on Sunday, April 3 at 7:45 p.m., at Aish Denver. Cost \$10. For information, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org



'YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE!' AT APRIL 6 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Dr. Stuart Senkfor, Partner, Denver Nephrologists, and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab, Dean, Denver Community Kollel for "Your Money or Your Life!: Healthcare Funding Triage" at the next Torah for Tycoons, Wed., April 6. The program will be held at noon at the East Side Kosher Deli. CLE credits pending. Cost: \$20. To RSVP, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org



'SEDER PLATE MEANING' APRIL 12 AT SUNFLOWER MARKET

Join the Kollel on Tues., April 12, for a special Passover class, "Secrets of the Seder Plate", at 7 p.m. at Sunflower Market, 4700 W. 38th Ave. Rabbi Levi Lebovits will discuss the different aspects of the traditional Seder plate and their meaning for today. The program is free of charge. Reservations preferred. For information or to RSVP, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org

Interpersonal Issues No Witness

A person who is guilty of theft is Halachically invalidated as a witness, and any testimony he provides on a contract is invalid as well.

Therefore, such a person should not be a witness to a k'subah (marriage contract), kiddushin (act of marriage), or a bill of divorce, because his testimony

may be invalidated. However, there are those who say that he is only invalidated if witnesses testify to his guilt in a beis din (Jewish court of law).

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi

continued from front

Lashon Hora (negative speech) and Clinical Therapy. Are there parameters governing what may and may not be said during therapy? For instance, what if I am having trouble with my dad or my sister, and there are issues about them that I need to talk about. From a clinical point of view, the more honest I am the more likely it is for therapy to be helpful. Also, from the clinician's point of view, are there parameters governing their validation of feelings and issues?

Dear JK,

Your question is a good one and often asked. You wrote about 'Clinical Therapy,' but your question applies equally whether you speak to a 'professional' therapist or an 'amateur' - e.g., your best friend, your spouse, your barber...

Speaking 'bad' about others is forbidden. In general, however, you're allowed to say negative things about a person for a beneficial purpose. For example, to help your relationship with that person.

However, certain conditions must be met. Among these conditions:

You must know what you say is true. "My sister makes fun of me." If you heard the information from someone else, you must mention that it's not first-hand. "My cousin says she makes fun of him too." If what you are saying is just your opinion, it should be stated

that way.

Don't exaggerate. "She never misses a chance to be mean." If appropriate, say some positive things so the listener won't form a totally negative picture of the person.

Say only as much as necessary. The fact that she makes fun of your cousin is probably irrelevant, and should not be said.

Most of all, your intention when you relate the negative information must be to improve the situation, and not to speak out of animosity.

When speaking about parents, extra care must be taken, since it's a Torah commandment to honor them. Nevertheless, if all the conditions are met, it's allowed.

The listener has to walk a tight-rope: He has to take the information seriously, but he must not accept it as the absolute truth. If possible, he should help the speaker see the person in a more positive light.

Our Sages say that prior to the coming of the Mashiach, family discord will be rampant; this description fits our generation all too well. Through careful speech, judging people favorably, love and understanding, may we merit the fulfillment of the verse "And he will return the hearts of the fathers to the sons, and the hearts of the sons to their fathers."

Reprinted with permission of Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem, www.ohr.edu