



Parshas Tazria

April 1, 2022

A Taste of Torah

Did You Get the Message

by Rabbi Aharon Wilen

King Achav (Ahab) was desperate to own Navos's vineyard, but Navos refused to part with it. And so when Achav's wife Izevel suggested framing Navos for the crime of cursing G-d's Name and King Achav, and then having him stoned as punishment for his "crime," Achav agreed. When Navos was dead, King Achav set out on his way to take possession of the vineyard, as the possessions of one who is killed for insurrection against the king are seized by the king. Hashem sent Eliyahu Hanavi (Elijah the Prophet) to meet him there. Eliyahu cursed Achav in the name of Hashem: "I will cut off from Yisrael every male belonging to Achav. All of Achav's line who die in the town shall be devoured by dogs, and all who die in the open country shall be devoured by the birds of the sky. In the place the dogs licked the blood of Navos, the dogs will lick your blood as well." (Kings I 21: 19-24)

When Achav heard the words of Eliyahu, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and fasted. Upon seeing Achav's repentance, Hashem said to Eliyahu, "Have you seen how Achav has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the disaster in his lifetime; I will bring the disaster upon his house in his son's time." (ibid.:29)

Achav teaches us the power of submission to Hashem. His submission, albeit a superficial *teshuva* (repentance) done only out of fear, delayed the death decree pronounced by Hashem himself. (The Malbim states that true *teshuva* would have

removed the sentence entirely.)

A *metzora* (individual diagnosed with *tzara'as*) must quarantine alone outside of the camp. A *metzora* is *tamei* (spiritually impure), and his state of *tuma* is unique in that he would be sent out of the encampment of the Jewish People during their sojourn in the desert. Once the Jewish People arrived in the Land of Israel, this being sent out meant a *metzora* could not enter even the outermost sanctified areas around the *Mishkan* and, later, the *Bais Hamikdash*. Furthermore, the *metzora* must declare his state of impurity to those approaching him, and people would thus avoid being in his presence.

The Talmud (Erachin 16b) teaches that one of the reasons *tzara'as* was visited upon a person was for the sin of *lashon hara*, slander. The disease of *tzara'as* is a fitting punishment for *lashon hara*, says the Talmud. The gossip must be quarantined, since his gossip and slander causes separation between people - between husband and wife and between friends - and so the gossip is separated from society due to his *tzara'as* affliction.

The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan; 1838-1933) takes this idea a step further and explains that this state of quarantine is not merely a fitting consequence for *lashon hara*. It is meant to encourage the gossip to contemplate his sin of *lashon hara*. Being left alone with only his Heaven-sent malady for company should bring him to submission and remorse. As we learn from Achav, even if the *teshuva* is only superficial,

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Stories for the Soul

Two-Tongued

Rabbi Shmuel HaNaggid (993-1056) was the Vizier of the Caliph in Spain during the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry. Rabbi Shmuel and the caliph were once walking through the market when a man in the street began to hurl insults at Rabbi Shmuel. The enraged caliph demanded that Rabbi Shmuel have the man's tongue cut out.

Instead of carrying out the order, Rabbi Shmuel, unbeknownst to the caliph, began sending gifts on a regular basis to the offender. Some time later, Rabbi Shmuel and the caliph were again walking, and they encountered the man, who began praising Rabbi Shmuel.

The caliph turned to Rabbi Shmuel and said, "I ordered you to have this man's tongue cut out!"

"I did exactly as Your Majesty commanded," replied Rabbi Shmuel. "By lavishing him with gifts, I removed his vile tongue and replaced it with a noble one!"

Lashon hara (slander) is the most famous cause of *tzara'as*, a spiritual skin malady discussed in this week's parsha. Proper attitude toward others is vital to ensure that our tongues remain noble and not descend to vileness.

Kollel Happenings

SPRING-SUMMER AVOS UBANIM CONTINUES THIS SHABBOS

The Kollel's spring-summer Avos Ubanim program continues this Shabbos afternoon at the Kollel Torah Centers in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and prizes. Program ends 15 minutes before mincha in Southeast Denver, at mincha in West Denver. For sponsorships and more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Tuesday nights on Zoom at 8:15 for men and women; email info@denverkollel.org for Zoom link info.

TALMUDO BIYADO GEMARA CLUB FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS

Learn, review, and acquire a masechta! Boys in grades 6-8 are invited to join Rabbi Chaim Gross at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center/Ohel Yissochor weeknights Mon.-Thu. from 8-8:30 pm for a Gemara shiur followed by review. Contact Rabbi Nesanel Kipper at rnk@denverkollel.org for further details.

Halacha Riddles

Last week we asked: When is there a mitzvah to invite the waiter to eat something?

Answer: If two men are eating a bread meal together and there is a third person in the area, it is a mitzvah for them to offer him some food to eat so that he can combine with them to form a *mezuman*. This is true even if the third man is the waiter. (Note: The term "mitzvah" does not refer to one of

the 613 mitzvos, but rather to a worthy thing to do.) (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 193:1 with Mishna Berura 7)

This week's question: Two adult Jewish males attending a meal with many people washed for bread at the start of the meal. One of them is permitted to *bentch* without a *mezuman* and leave, while the other may not. What is the difference between them?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XLV

Despite all of Rabbi Shapiro's work fundraising, Rabbi Shapiro was still strapped for funds. The upper floors of the building were still uncompleted, but Rabbi Shapiro decided the time had come to open Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. On June 24th, 1930, the yeshiva formally opened its doors. More than 100,000 Jews from across Poland attended the grand opening. There was much pomp and circumstance at the event. *Rabbanim* and Jewish leaders from across Poland

were present, as were members of the Polish government. From the balcony of the yeshiva building hung the official flag of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, designed by Rabbi Shapiro. The yeshiva had an official anthem, which was sung by a boys' choir.

Rabbi Shapiro rose to speak. He greeted the assembled *rabbanim* in Hebrew, then greeted the government officials in Polish. Finally, he spoke to the assembled crowd in Yiddish.

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meant to save himself from a fearsome punishment, it is still effective.

Strangely, when the *tzara'as* spreads and covers the entire body, the Torah does not apply the rules of a *metzora*. The Chofetz Chaim explains that when the *tzara'as* affects part of the body, the afflicted person might downplay it and brush it off as a regular skin rash. He may even try to cover it up, ignore it, and carry on with business as usual. In that case, the Torah requires him to quarantine alone with nothing to keep him from worrying about his disease in order to elicit the desired *teshuva* process.

When the *tzara'as* spreads and covers the entire body, however, there is no

way to ignore it, no excuse, nowhere to hide. The clear Heavenly decree itself should be enough to shake the person to his core and bring him to submission. Just like Achay, the simple fact that he is shaken by his malady and realizes that it is Heaven-sent should suffice to bring about repentance and a cure. Therefore, concludes the Chofetz Chaim, the regular laws of *tzara'as* do not apply to such a case.

The spiritual malady of *tzara'as* does not occur today, in our spiritually darkened world. However, the lesson of paying attention to the messages we receive from Hashem is certainly one we can incorporate into our lives.

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