



Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah miTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshiyot Tazria-Metzora

3 Iyar 5773/April 13, 2013

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Silence Worthy of Tzaraat

Hillel Horovitz

The *tzaraat* described in our portions of Tazria and Metzora also appears in Parshat Behaalotcha. The Torah describes Miriam and Aharon speaking about our master Moshe. G-d challenges Miriam and Aharon, "Why were you not afraid to speak regarding My servant, Moshe?" As the Torah continues, "The cloud left the tent, and Miriam displayed *tzaraat*, like snow..." (Bamidbar 12:8-10) Miriam received the punishment of *tzaraat* for sinning with her speech.

The Sages saw a similar catalyst for Moshe's experience with *tzaraat*. When G-d instructed Moshe to take the Jews out of Egypt, Moshe replied, "They will not believe me." (Shemot 4:1) One of the miraculous signs G-d gave to Moshe was the manifestation of *tzaraat* upon his hand, and the Sages explain that this sign came to teach Moshe that his words had slandered the Jewish people. [See Shabbat 97a and Shemot Rabbah 3:12.] We see that *tzaraat* punishes a person for sinning through his speech.

The Zohar (Tazria 46a-47b) tells the story of Rabbi Chiyya and Rabbi Yosi encountering a man whose face is marked with *tzaraat*. When they ask the man his name, he replies that he is Jewish. R' Chiyya and R' Yosi begin to speak of the gravity of evil speech and the severe nature of its punishment, and the man replies that his son will return shortly from the study hall. When the son arrives, he cites Tehillim 39:3 regarding his father, "I was mute with silence; I was silent even from saying anything good."

The son explained to Rabbi Chiyya and Rabbi Yosi that just as one is

punished for sinning and speaking harmfully, so one is punished when he could have said good, positive things, and he decided to be silent. One who is "silent even from saying anything good" keeps goodness from other people. The holiness of a Jew's speech is not only in knowing when not to speak, but also in knowing when to speak, and when one is obligated to speak. Rabbi Chiyya and Rabbi Yosi heard this and kissed the son on his head. They recited Mishlei 4:18, "The path of the righteous is like the light of morning, increasing its illumination until the day is established."

We often find it simple to sit on the side and refrain from speaking, lest we sin with harmful speech. We think that if we would only engage in a "fast from speaking", our mouths would be improved. Indeed, this is a good strategy, but it is not our ultimate goal. Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan named his book "Chafetz Chaim" from Tehillim 34:13-15, a passage which begins, "Who is the man who desires life, who loves days to see good? Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceptively." However, this does not complete one's obligation; King David continues, "Veer from evil and perform good, seek peace and pursue it." As we learned in the Zohar, one who fails to use his mouth for good will also be stricken with *tzaraat*.

This may also explain another talmudic passage (Sanhedrin 98a): Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi asked Elyahu haNavi where Mashiach was located. Elyahu replied that Mashiach sits at the entrance of Rome and bandages his wounds. Rashi, citing Isaiah 53,

explains that the people there are *menuga'im*. The term *menuga'im* is rooted in *nega*, the term the Torah uses for marks of *tzaraat*; this usage is not accidental, especially given that Mashiach sits outside of the city, as people with *tzaraat* do.

As Isaiah 53 explains, the state of Mashiach is caused by the sins of the nation, but based on our discussion we might add another facet. Mashiach waits to be revealed, but our sins prevent him from actualizing his potential. As we have seen, potential which is not actualized causes *tzaraat*; Mashiach's inability to act on his promise causes him, too, to suffer *tzaraat*.

This week we will celebrate Yom ha'Atzmaut. With the completion of sixty-five years since the establishment of the State, we are successfully actualizing the "Veer from evil" summons; the blood of the Jew is no longer *hefker*, and we have a country in which every Jew has a home. However, the mark of *tzaraat* remains – not as a mark of deficiency and *lashon hara*, but as a sign of a lack of "perform good", of increasing illumination. Until we can build the Beit haMikdash, Mashiach will sit and tend his *tzaraat*, for we will not have fulfilled our potential. May we merit to fulfill the words of Rav Kook (Arpilei Tohar pg. 39), "Pure tzaddikim do not complain about evil, but increase righteousness. They do not complain about heresy, but increase faith..." Let us add faith, such that we will celebrate the next Yom ha'Atzmaut in a rebuilt Jerusalem.

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**BEGINNING THIS WEEK:
CHABURA NIGHT AT BAYT!
8 PM WED. IN THE GRUDA BEIS MEDRASH
MEDICAL HALACHAH * RAMBAM'S THOUGHT
MUSSAR OF R' YISRAEL SALANTER
FOR MEN AND WOMEN**



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In his book, *With Perfect Faith*, Rabbi J. David Bleich writes that, "Although it is the most fundamental and universal form of religious expression, prayer is fraught with theological difficulties." He explains that it is bold and audacious for a person to ask G-d for something. How could a person "dictate to G-d how He should act!" Rabbi Bleich further argues that by assuming that our prayer will be effective, we imply that the will of G-d is subject to change. Yet G-d's will "is eternal and immutable. Thus any change in the divine will is an impossibility." Why then, do we daven?

Two sources indicate different natures of prayer. When Chizkiyahu becomes ill, Yeshayahu tells him that he will die. Upon hearing this, Chizkiyahu davens and cries out to G-d. G-d then tells Yeshayahu to tell Chizkiyahu, "I have heard your prayer, and have seen your tears, and I will heal you." As a result, Chizkiyahu would live for fifteen more years (Melachim II 20:1-6). The aspect of prayer seen here is that of asking G-d for what we are lacking; this source is thus subject to Rabbi Bleich's theological difficulty.

A passage in the Talmud (Yoma 76a) expresses a second rationale for davening. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai gives his students a parable: A king gave his son a yearly allowance at the beginning of the year. The child would only visit the king once a year, to get his allowance. Since the king wanted to see his son more than once a year, he decided to give his son a daily allowance, so that his son would visit him every day. Similarly, the *man* in the

wilderness fell daily so that the Jews would daven to G-d on a daily basis. This source suggests that part of davening is having a regular encounter with G-d; this reason for davening is not subject to Rabbi Bleich's theological difficulty.

A resolution of the theological difficulty is offered by Rabbi Yosef Albo (Sefer HaIkarim Book IV Chapter 18, translated by Isaac Husik). He writes that a person must prepare himself to receive the benefits that are bestowed by G-d. A person who does not prepare himself, "withholds the good from himself because he did not prepare himself to receive it." Rabbi Albo famously states, "As for the objection that the Divine Will can not be changed by prayer, the answer is that the Divine Will in the first place is that the decree should be realized if the person in question continues in the same state, and that the decree should be changed if the person's state changes."

In his book, *Jewish Values in a Changing World*, Rabbi Yehuda Amital writes, "Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook wrote: 'Prayer - for us and for the entire world - is an absolute necessity. It is also the most sublime of pleasures.'" Perhaps the 'absolute necessity' is in asking G-d for our sustenance (and thereby preparing to receive it), and the 'sublime pleasure' is in communicating with G-d daily.

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Parshat Tazria begins with the mitzvah of brit milah. Immediately after this, we turn to the topic of tzaraat, which is discussed throughout both Tazria and Metzora. Is there any connection between milah and tzaraat?

An interesting relationship between the two topics is established by the Talmud (Shabbat 133a). The Talmud debates the halachah in a case where tzaraat appeared on the part of the body to be removed in a brit milah: may we perform the brit milah in such a case?

The source of the problem is Devarim 24:8, "Be cautious regarding the lesion of tzaraat, to observe meticulously." Our Sages understood that the Torah prohibits us from trying to remove or to peel the signs of the tzaraat. This sets up a collision between the mitzvah of brit milah and the prohibition against removing tzaraat. What should one do?

[Usually we assume that a commandment overrides a prohibition; here, however, this rule cannot be simply applied, for the Talmud understands Devarim 24:8 as not only a prohibition but also an imperative command. See also Rambam Hilchot Tumaat Tzaraat 10:5 and Mishneh l'Melech there.]

The Talmud points out that the solution to the problem is hinted to us in the way the Torah formulates the mitzvah of brit milah in our parshah, "The flesh of his *arlah* shall be circumcised." The word 'flesh' seems to be redundant, teaching us that brit milah should take place regardless of the condition of the flesh.

It seems to me that this connection between brit milah and tzaraat, established by our Sages, expresses their understanding of the juxtaposition of brit milah and tzaraat. These mitzvot symbolize contradicting values.

Homiletically, one could suggest that both tzaraat and the *arlah* represent evil, but we deal with them in a very different ways. Brit milah is the removal of evil, its elimination and destruction. Tzaraat, on the other hand, is the attempt to conquer evil, facing it and healing it. The lesson is clear: different types of iniquity requires different types of reaction, but the goal is one, to repair the world under the kingdom of G-d.

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613 Mitzvot: #251-252

Male Haircuts

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Mitzvah 251 prohibits cutting *pe'at harosh*, meaning the sideburns above the center of the ear. Mitzvah 252 prohibits using a razor on *pe'at hazakan*, which we understand to refer to five different sections along the jaw. The Torah's language regarding these laws limits them to males.

Offering an explanation of Mitzvah 251, Rambam (Moreh haNevuchim 3:37) writes that Egyptian priests used to cut their hair evenly all around the skull, and we are not supposed to imitate them; a similar account of Arab ritual haircuts is found in the Roman historian Herodotus.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (Commentary to Vayikra 19:27) takes a different approach, suggesting that the back of the brain is associated with animal activity, and the hair upon the temples divides between the civilized portion of the brain and that which is more animal in nature.

Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (Emek haNetziv to Vayikra 19:27) suggests that both mitzvah 251 and 252 stem from a historic practice of shaving the hair of a slave as a sign of his servitude. Because the Torah deprecates the idea of selling ourselves into slavery, we are not to shave in this manner.

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Torah in Translation
A Kohen Joining Hatzalah
Rabbi Shemuel Wosner
Shevet haLevi 3:164
Translated by R' Mordechai Torczyner

Regarding the Hatzalah organization, which gives oxygen to patients, and sometimes deals with patients whose lives are in danger: Given the concern that a patient might die in their care, may a kohen volunteer to participate in such an organization? What is the law if the organization can only find kohanim?...

Rabbi Moshe Sofer (Chatam Sofer Yoreh Deah 338) rules that it is highly obvious that as long as there is even the slightest possibility that he might be able to save a life, a kohen physician should enter and treat as needed, just as other biblical prohibitions are overridden to save a life. However, where there are other non-kohen physicians, the view of our master the Chatam Sofer is to be strict. The essence is that saving lives overrides prohibitions, but does not eliminate them.

On the other hand, to Rabbi Avraham Tzvi Hirsch Eisenstadt (Nachlat Tzvi) the opposite is obvious, that a kohen physician may heal even where there are other physicians. His position is based on Yoreh Deah 221:4, where we say that one who has vowed not to benefit someone else may still heal him, for he is doing a mitzvah. This may be done even where there is another physician, for the patient may not be healed by just any physician....

In my opinion, the Chatam Sofer is quite correct. Our case is not comparable to Yoreh Deah 221... Therefore, in our case:

1. As far as joining that Hatzalah group and the concern that one might eventually violate the prohibition against becoming impure – There is no prohibition. As the Chatam Sofer wrote, a kohen may study medicine even if he might eventually enter a position in which saving a life would override the sanctity of his kehunah.
2. Where there are others who can rescue, we should be strict like the view of the Chatam Sofer. This is true especially regarding giving oxygen, where it seems likely that the concept of "a patient may not be healed by just any physician" does not apply. This is a mechanical act, not a skill.
3. The above assumes that the others are as

Born to Yosef Zvi and Rachel Wosner in Vienna in September 1913, Rabbi Shemuel Wosner excelled as a student in Rabbi Meir Shapiro's Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin until he married and moved to Jerusalem ahead of World War II. In Jerusalem he studied under Rabbi Yosef Zvi Dushinsky and apprenticed to Rav Shimshon Aharon Polansky before becoming Rabbi of Givat Shaul. He also joined Jerusalem's "Edah haChareidis", and he remains affiliated to this day.

With the support of the Chazon Ish, Rabbi Wosner moved to Bnei Brak at the end of the 1940's, and he established a yeshiva named "Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin". He also became the Rabbi of the Zichron Meir community, and he still holds that position today. Rabbi Wosner and Rabbi Nisim Karelitz are considered the leading halachic authorities in Bnei Brak.

Rabbi Wosner is considered one of the leading halachic authorities of Israel's *haredi* community, and his books of responsa, *Shevet haLevi*, include rulings related to every major technological advance of our day, including the standing of DNA forensics in halachah, the use of motion sensors on Shabbat, the permissibility of copying digital intellectual property, and the kashrut of fish infested with the anisakis parasite. Rabbi Wosner tends toward conservative positions, but his views are cited with respect across the spectrum, including by organizations like the Orthodox Union's Kashrut division and by the halachic authorities affiliated with Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Israel.

Dozens of Rabbi Wosner's students, as well as his many children and grandchildren, now lead communities across Israel.

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expert as the kohen. If there is any possibility that the kohen might be a little more expert, and he is more practiced than others in saving patients, then it is as obvious as could be that he could enter and treat a dangerously ill patient, and this would be a mitzvah.

This Week in Israeli History
5 Iyar 1948
Fall of Gush Etzion
Adam Frieberg

5 Iyar is Monday

On November 29, 1947 the United Nations agreed to implementation of a partition plan to divide Palestine into two; one part would be Jewish, the other Arab. Most of the Jewish leadership accepted the plan, over strong objections from the Irgun and Lechi groups. The Arab population rejected the plan, and on the following day a civil war broke out in Palestine. The war would last until May 14th, 1948, at which point it transitioned to a full scale war.

Gush Etzion was in the area that the Partition Plan had earmarked to become Arab land, and the fighting was intense in that area at the start of the unrest. Travel to Jerusalem became increasingly difficult, but the Haganah decided not to abandon the area, due to its strategic location. Gush Etzion was under siege; getting supplies in and out became extremely hard, resulting in the loss of many Jewish lives. With British assistance, the women and children were evacuated in January 1948.

As conditions had severely deteriorated, on May 12th the request was made to evacuate Kfar Etzion. The Haganah Central Command denied the request. Later that day, Arabs captured a crucial Haganah fortress on the perimeter of Kfar Etzion and killed 24 of its 32 defenders. The attack continued the next day, when Arab Legion infantry attacked from all four directions; Arab forces massacred everyone, soldiers and civilians alike. On the following day, as the declaration of independence was read in Tel Aviv, the three other kibbutzim that made up the Gush surrendered. 320 Jews became prisoners of war and were held in Jordan for a year, before being released.

Ben Gurion, in 1948, eulogized the defenders of Gush Etzion, saying, "If I can think of no battle in the annals of the Israel Defense Forces which was more magnificent, more tragic or more heroic than the struggle for Gush Etzion ... If there exists a Jewish Jerusalem, our foremost thanks go to the defenders of Gush Etzion."

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Who is the prophet of our haftorah?

The book of Melachim ("Kings") records the history of Jewish life in Israel from the end of King David's reign until the Babylonian destruction of the first Beit haMikdash. The Talmud (Bava Batra 15a) says that it was recorded by Yirmiyah, who lived through the last decades recorded in the book. In our editions of Tanach, Melachim is split into two parts; the first part begins with the end of King David's reign and continues until shortly after the death of King Achav of Yisrael, and the second part continues from there.

The dominant prophet of the first half of Melachim II is Elisha. Elisha began his prophetic career as a student of Eliyahu, but grew to the point that he doubled Eliyahu's achievements. His record includes splitting the Jordan river (Melachim II 2), healing Aramean general Naaman from his tzaraat (Melachim II 5), blinding the Syrian army (Melachim II 6) and, in our haftorah, predicting the plenty which would come when the Aramean camp would fall to the Jews.

What is the message of our haftorah?

Our haftorah describes the miraculous and narrow escape of Shomron from the siege of the Aramean army, led by Ben Haddad. The siege had caused severe famine, which is described in the

preceding chapter; this is expressed especially in the story of two women who conspired to kill and eat their own children. The city seemed doomed.

Our haftorah tells us that in the middle of the night G-d caused the Aramean camp to hear the sounds of chariots and horses. They came to believe that the king of Israel had hired the Hittites and Egyptians to attack them; they ran away, leaving all of their belongings behind.

The people who discovered this were four *metzoraim*, who were sitting outside of the city walls. In their hunger and despair, they decided to turn themselves in to the Arameans, in the hope that they would give them some food; to their surprise, they discovered that no soldier remained in the besieging camp.

The *metzoraim* began eating and taking loot for themselves, but after some time they understood that they must report to the Jews in Shomron. The Jewish king hesitates, but after some of his men ensure that there is no ambush, the Jews enter to take of the food that had been left in the camp.

One victim of this rush for food is an officer who had stood by the gate; he was trampled and killed by the masses.

This death, as the haftorah concludes, was a punishment for his lack of belief in G-d's ability to salvage Am Yisrael. He was punished by seeing the plenty but being prevented from enjoying it.

What is the connection to our parshah?

The immediate connection is clear – our haftorah tells us a story about *metzoraim*, while the subject of our two parshiot is tzaraat.

However, as in many other cases, we should consider a deeper connection, which will shed light on our parshah and haftorah. It seems that the connection is in our attitude toward the *metzoraim*, these people who had been sent outside of the city, and who rescued the Jews of Shomron. Can the declaration of salvation come through the mouths of such people?

Our haftorah teaches us that tzaraat is not only a punishment, a state to be endured, but it should be seen as a state with potential for improvement. Sometimes, indeed, tzaraat is the key to geulah.

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Highlights for April 13 – April 19 / 3 Iyar - 9 Iyar

Shabbat, April 12-13

7:45 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Reasons for mitzvot and the parshah, Or Chaim

10:20 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Parshah, Clanton Park
After Hashkamah Hillel Horovitz, Touched by G-d, Bnai Torah

6:20 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daf Yomi, BAYT
After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Avodah Zarah: Uncovered Wine Part II, BAYT

Sunday, April 14

8:45 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Medical Halachah (with CME credit): Medical Care on Yom Tov, BAYT

9:15 AM Hillel Horovitz, Parshah, Zichron Yisroel, Hebrew (Shacharit 8:30 AM)

40 min. pre-minchah R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachah in Israel, **Hebrew**, Clanton Park, *men*

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachah in Israel, **Hebrew**, 4 Tillingham Keep, *mixed*

Monday, April 15

7 PM Program of Yom haZikaron and Yom ha'Atzmaut, Shaarei Shomayim

Tuesday, April 16

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daniel: The Writing on the Wall

8 PM Yair Manas, Chaburah: Sanhedrin, 33 Meadowbrook **not this week**

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Rambam's Laws of Kings, Shomrai Shabbos, *men*

Wednesday, April 17

10 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Supernatural and Superstition II, Week 2 of 8: The Dybbuk, BEBY

8 PM Chabura Night at BAYT

- **R' Ezra Goldschmiedt: Path of the Just**
 - **Hillel Horovitz: The Rambam's Thought**
 - **R' Mordechai Torczyner: Medical Halachah**
- 9 PM Chabura Night at Shaarei Shomayim**

Thursday, April 18

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Sotah, Clanton Park

10:00 AM Sunday April 21st

New Series at BAYT

Sunday Morning Learning for Women

Rebbetzin Lori Grysman—Roots of the Amidah

Hillel Horovitz—Hallel on Yom Herzl?

8:00 PM Sunday April 21st

Program for Rav Soloveitchik's 20th yahrtzeit

at Shaarei Shomayim

Featuring Rabbi Azarya Berzon