



**ALEPH
INSTITUTE**
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

TORAH WEEKLY

T"01

23 -29 April, 2017
27 Nissan - 3 Iyyar, 5777
Leviticus 12:1 - 15:33
Omer: 12 - 18
Haftarah: Kings II 7:3-20

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ALEPH INSTITUTE

Hyman & Martha Rogal
Center
5804 Beacon Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15217
412-421-0111
Fax: 412-521-5948
www.alephne.org
info@alephne.org

Speak Nicely, but Clearly

That the Torah speaks in refined language is a principle of Biblical studies. The classic example is back in the Book of Genesis. There, when G-d tells Noah to take all the animals into the Ark, He speaks of the "clean" animals (hatehorah) and the "animals which are not clean" (asher einenah tehorah). Although the Torah is generally sparing with words--every seemingly superfluous letter is expounded upon and interpreted by the Sages--here it uses an additional eight (Hebrew) letters to avoid using the word teme'ah (literally, "defiled" or "impure").

By doing this the Torah teaches us that we should never allow a shameful expression to pass our lips. When the Torah deliberately uses eight extra letters that could have been avoided simply by saying the word teme'ah, it is powerful message to us to watch our language.

And yet, a cursory look at this week's readings which deal with the laws of the ritual impurity caused by tzaraat ("leprosy") reveals the word tamei occurring numerous times. Why is it that in the story of Noah the Torah goes out of its way not to use a negative word and here it uses it repeatedly, seemingly at whim?

The answer given by the

Sages is that in Genesis the Torah is recounting a historical narrative, and can thus allow itself to be more subtle and not pronounce a negative word. However, when it comes to halachah, to determining Jewish law, one cannot afford subtleties or flowery language; one must be crystal clear in laying down the law. The Law is sacrosanct and in matters of Law there may be no ambiguities. Our Parshah deals with dos and don'ts that must be expressed in no uncertain terms. When a rabbi is called upon to answer a halachic question, he should not beat around the bush. His response must be clear and unequivocal. And if it is treif, then he must pronounce it treif!

Now, generally speaking, rabbis should be gentle, nice and soft-spoken. They should suggest, not demand. The old "fire and brimstone" types don't work that well today. But sometimes rabbis can be too gentle, too subtle and too undemanding. And not only in halachic matters but even in counseling.

Psychologists and social workers will, on principle, never be directive with their clients. It is part of their professional code not to impose their opinions or personal values on those seeking their guidance. They will try to help their clients "see the wood from the trees" so they can make their own informed decisions.

Parshat Tazria-Metzora

Rabbis, on the other hand, should have no qualms about giving direction. After all, it's their job!

A fellow once came to see me about his therapist. "She doesn't tell me what to do," he complained. I explained that therapists don't work that way. "You want someone to tell you what to do? Go to a rabbi."

If a couple goes for marriage counseling, a counselor is likely to guide them based on their hopes and aspirations. Do they really want to work it out, or are they going through the motions on their way to the divorce lawyer? And if it is the latter, the counselor may very well help them on their way. A rabbi will not hesitate to explain that marriage is sacred and should be worked on and that divorce is an absolutely last resort when all else has failed. The counselor might ask, "Would you guys like to stay married?" while the rabbi might say, "You must stay married." Then, he may refer them to a professional counselor who is committed to saving marriages.

Remember the kleptomaniac who bumped into an old friend? The friend remembered how guilty he had felt because of his compulsive shoplifting and asked him whether he still had the problem. "No," said the fellow. "I went to a psychiatrist and he helped me solve my problem."

“That’s great, so you don’t shoplift anymore?” asked the friend. “Sure I shoplift. I just don’t feel guilty anymore.”

Please G-d, rabbis will be soft, supportive, friendly, loving and gentle. Please G-d, they will give clear direction when they have to.

By Rabbi Yossi Goldman

The Treasure Behind the Wall

The two portions of Tazria and Metzora are perhaps the most difficult and technical in the book of Leviticus.

The first portion, Tazria, describes the laws of impurity caused by tzaraat, a form of leprosy that afflicts human flesh and garments. Tzaraat is a malady that came upon a person as a consequence of slandering or gossiping about another person, as well as other sins.

The next portion, Metzora, describes the process of purification from this leprosy. Only after discussing the purification of the body and garments does the Torah introduce a third type of leprosy, one that afflicts the walls of a home. This is immediately followed by the laws of purification for the home.

Why, when talking about the leprosy that afflicts the person and the garments, are the affliction and its purification taught in two separate portions? This is not the case when discussing the topic of leprosy of the home—the purification process is taught immediately after, and in the same portion as, the affliction.

Anyone looking at life objectively can appreciate that a setback can be an opportunity for growth. Challenge has the potential to bring out the best in the human soul.

But that is theoretical.

When we experience an actual struggle in life, our perspective may be very different. We do not feel anything positive or constructive in our moment of despair and pain. Pain hurts. It does not build.

Eventually, when we find the courage and strength to pick ourselves up and overcome the challenge, we feel as though we have reached a new state of being. Only after we are removed from the painful situation are we capable of looking back and realizing that the person we have become is very much a result of the previous challenge that we tried so hard to escape.

This is the reason that the affliction of tzaraat and its purification are written in two separate portions. From the human perspective, the purification is a new beginning; it is an escape from the impurity, not its culmination.

Things are very different from G-d’s perspective. The purpose of the challenge is to lead a person to greater heights. But we humans are not always capable of seeing it that way.

In describing the tzaraat that afflicted the home, the Torah says: “When you come to the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as a possession, and I place an affliction of tzaraat upon a house in the land of your possession.” The Midrash teaches that from the words of the verse we learn that G-d Himself placed the affliction of tzaraat on the house, so it was in fact a blessing. For when the Israelites removed the afflicted stones from their homes, they discovered treasures that the native Canaanites had hidden within the walls.

The tzaraat of the home was taught to us from G-d’s perspective. Every affliction is just a facade, begging to be pulled away so we can discover a great treasure. By telling us the laws of the home’s purification immediately after the affliction, the Torah asks us to keep G-d’s perspective in mind. This will give us the strength to transform challenge to treasure (Based on Lekutei Sichos 27,2)

By Rabbi Menachem Feldman

In Jewish History

Sunday, 27 Nissan, 5777 - April 23, 2017

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (1943)

In the summer of 1942, about 300,000 Jews were deported from Warsaw to Treblinka. When reports of the mass murder in the killing center leaked back to the Warsaw ghetto, an organized resistance began forming, which managed to smuggle a modest cache of arms into the ghetto. On the 14th of Nissan of 1943, the remaining 35,000 Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto (from an original 450,000) staged an organized uprising, and drove back the Nazis with a rain of bullets when they came to begin the final removal of all Jews. The Jewish resistance lasted 27 days. A heroic stand was made in an underground bunker under 18 Mila Street, where hundreds of fighters, including the 24-year-old leader of the uprising, Mordechai Anilevitch, met their death. Although the Ghetto was burned to the ground by Iyar 3, a few stray survivors hid in the rubble and fired at the Nazis for two months longer.

In tribute to the uprising, the Israeli government designated the 27th of Nissan as its official “Holocaust and Bravery Day,” and in many Jewish communities the day is observed as an annual Holocaust remembrance day. But because of the halachic prohibition to conduct eulogies and other mournful events in the festive month of Nissan, the chief rabbinate of Israel, and many Jewish communities, observe instead the 10th of Tevet as a day to mourn and remember the six million, which include many whose yahrtzeit (date of passing) remains unknown.