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## CANDLE LIGHTING 4/20

Boston	7:11	Moscow	7:26
Chicago	7:17	New York	7:21
Cleveland	7:53	Paris	8:29
Detroit	8:00	Philadelphia	7:24
Houston	7:32	Phoenix	6:44
Jerusalem	6:52	Pittsburgh	7:44
Johannesburg	5:30	Seattle	7:46
Los Angeles	7:09	Sydney	5:11
London	7:45	Tokyo	5:59
Miami	7:27	Toronto	7:47
Montreal	7:27	Washington DC	7:30

## Weekly Parsha

# Tazria Metzarah

RABBI BERNARD FOX

“And when the days of her purification have been completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a sheep in its first year as a burnt offering, and a young dove or a turtledove as a sin offering, to the entrance of the Ohel

(continued on next page)

# MISFORTUNE

## Perception, Evaluation, & Response

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

**Aurora:** Can you please explain to me what is the right approach about “misfortune” or accidents? Do we have always to search for the motive? Is God’s Punishment and Reward system always in action? Could it be unjust to believe there is always a personal responsibility for our misfortunes? Do parent’s wrong notions invite afflictions to their child? We are sinners; we can always find a valid cause for any misfortune. Is it not very probable we will err in our conclusions? Who has the authority to make such assessments, to determine if our misfortunes are Divinely meted out, or our own doings?

Thanks for your time,

*Aurora*

(continued on page 4)



(Metzora cont. from pg. 1)

## Weekly Parsha

# JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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Moed, to the Kohen. And he shall offer it before Hashem and atone for her, and she will be purified from the source of her blood. This is the law of a woman who gives birth to a male or to a female.

And if she cannot afford a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two young doves: one as a burnt offering and one as a sin offering. And the Kohen shall atone for her, and she shall become pure." (VaYikra 12:6-8)

This week's parasha opens with an explanation of the various laws regarding childbirth. Among the laws discussed in the parasha is the requirement for the mother to bring a number of sacrifices. The Torah does not provide an explicit explanation for this requirement. This issue is discussed among the commentaries. Our discussion will not focus on this issue. Instead we will focus on an element of the parasha that is often neglected or only superficially studied – the Torah's description of these offerings.

The above passages explain that the woman is required to bring two offerings – a burnt offering and a sin offering. In this instance, the Torah provides two options for fulfilling this obligation. Ideally, the woman brings a sheep as the burnt offering – the Olah. A young dove, or a turtledove, is brought as the sin offering – the Chatat. However, if this combination is beyond the financial means of the woman, she may bring two young doves or two turtledoves. One is offered as the Olah and the other as the Chatat.

In discussing this second alternative, the Torah tells us that the two young doves or turtledoves are offered "one as an Olah and one as a Chatat." This phrasing seems to imply that the Olah is offered first and then the Chatat. However, this is not the case. The Chatat must be offered first and then the Olah offering. Why then does the Torah mention the Olah first?

In his comments on the Chumash and Talmud, Rashi generally expresses himself with brevity. His comments are often an allusion to, or summaries of, very difficult and deep concepts. His understanding of these concepts is often not apparent from his comments. This is a fundamental difficulty that the student encounters when studying Rashi. However, the simple meaning of

Rashi's words is generally very clear. In other words, the student may be left with many questions on Rashi's comments. But the student does know what Rashi is saying. However, there are some instances in which it is difficult to unravel Rashi's meaning even on a superficial level. Rashi's response to our question is one of these instances. Rashi's comment on our passage: "The Torah places [the burnt-offering] before [the sin-offering] only insofar as how they must be read. But the sacrificing of the sin-offering precedes [that of] the burnt-offering." Rashi asks why the Olah is mentioned first in the passage. The reason cannot be because it is actually offered before the Chatat. The law is that the Chatat is offered first. Rashi responds that the Olah is mentioned first only so that in reading the passage it should be read first.

Essentially, Rashi asks why the Olah is mentioned first in the passage and responds that it mentioned first so that it should be read first. This seems like the ultimate example of circular reasoning.

In fairness to Rashi, it must be acknowledged that he is merely quoting the response of the Talmud to this question on the passage. So, the difficulty is really in the meaning of the Talmud's response.[1] Rashi's comments on

the Talmud text are not very helpful. Basically, he indicates that the Talmud's explanation should be understood literally. But, he does provide a clear explanation of the precise literal meaning of the Talmud's comments.[2]

Because of these difficulties, Tosefot suggest an alternative explanation of the Talmud's comments. Before an animal or bird can be offered as a sacrifice, it must be designated for this purpose. In other words, before a sheep is offered as an Olah, it must be designated to be offered as an Olah. Tosefot's explanation of the Talmud is based on an ambiguity in the Talmud's response. The exact wording of the response is that the Olah is given precedence only le'mikra. Rashi interprets this term to mean "in reading." In other words, in reading the passage, the Olah is to be mentioned first. Tosefot suggest that the term should be translated as "in calling" or "designating". In other words, the bird that will be offered as an Olah must be designated first. Only after the Olah has been designated can the second bird be



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designated as a Chatat. However, Tosefot reject this interpretation of the Talmud's comments. It seems clear that, in fact, the law requires the birds to be designated in the order that they are to be offered. The Chatat is offered first. So, the bird that will be offered as a Chatat must be designated before the bird that will be offered as the Olah.[3] Tosefot's comments are widely quoted among the commentaries and these Sages come to the same conclusion. Although Tosefot provide a comprehensible interpretation of the Talmud's comments, the suggested interpretation must be rejected because it does not conform to the actual law.

As a result, the commentaries offer a number of novel interpretations of the Talmud and Rashi's comments. One of the most interesting is provided by the Torah Temimah. Shulchan Aruch explains that each morning a person should read the sections in the Torah concerning the various offerings. According to Shulchan Aruch, the section of the Torah concerning the Olah sacrifice is read prior to the section concerning the Chatat sacrifice.[4] The commentaries are disturbed by this order. When an Olah and Chatat are offered, the Chatat is sacrificed prior to the Olah. The Talmud in Zevachim explains that the Chatat is an atonement and Olah is a devotional offering. Before offering a devotional sacrifice a person should atone for his sins. Therefore, the Chatat should precede the Olah.[5] If this is the case, why in reciting the sections of the Torah describing these sacrifices is the Olah section recited prior to the section describing the Chatat?

Torah Temimah suggests that the source for the order required by Shulchan Aruch is our pasuk. In our pasuk the Olah is mentioned prior to the Chatat. The Talmud explains that the precedence implied by the passage is in regards to "reading." Torah Temimah suggests that according to Rashi the Talmud is not referring to the reading of the passage but to the reading of the sections of the Torah describing the Olah and Chatat. The Talmud's interpretation of the passage is that when we read the section of the Torah describing the Olah and the Chatat, the section describing the Olah is read first.

Of course, this leaves a question. Why are do we offer the Chatat before the Olah but read the Olah section prior to the Chatat section? In order to answer this question Torah Temimah offers an interesting insight. We read these sections in order to replace the actual offering of the sacrifices. We do not have the Bait HaMikdash and we cannot actually offer these sacrifices. Our reading of the sections of the Torah that describes the sacrifices replaces the actual offering. However, the reading of these sections is generally an imperfect substitution for the act of offering a sacrifice. The Talmud explains that in order for a Chatat sacrifice to atone for the sin of the person who offers it, a

portion must be eaten by the Kohen. In other words, the process of offering the sacrifice includes a spiritual and a material component. The fat of the offering are completely consumed on the altar. This is the spiritual component. But a portion of the offering is eaten by the Kohen. This is the material element. We cannot simulate this material element of the sacrificial process through reading the section of the Torah concerning the Chatat. Reading the section – learning Torah – is a purely spiritual activity. Therefore, reading this section is a fundamentally dissimilar process from the actual process of offering the sacrifice.

However, the Olah sacrifice is completely consumed on the altar. The process is completely spiritual. There is no material component in the process of offering and Olah. Therefore, reading the section of the Torah describing the Olah is a more precise substitution for the experience of offering the sacrifice than reading the section describing the Chatat.

Torah Temimah concludes that this insight explains why the section concerning the Olah is read before the section concerning the Chatat. The reading of the Olah section more perfectly substitutes for the experience of offering the sacrifice. Therefore, this section is read first.[6]

There are a number of objections that can be raised in this interpretation of the Talmud's and Rashi's comments. But perhaps the most significant objection is that there is little support for this novel interpretation in the text.

Malbim offers a more conservative explanation of the Talmud's comments as understood by Rashi. He suggests that the Talmud is explaining that contextual consideration dictates that the Olah be mentioned first in the passage. He identifies a number of considerations that dictate the order of the sacrifices in the passage. One consideration is that the order reflects the relative significance of the offerings. In order to understand his comments, it is necessary to return to an issue discussed previously.

We explained above that there is a reason for the typical order in which an Olah and Chatat are offered. The Chatat is offered first in order to atone for the sins of the person before engaging in an act of pure devotion. Tosefot explain that this reasoning does not apply in our case. The Chatat sacrifice offered after childbirth is not an atonement in the typical sense. The mother does not need to atone before offering her Olah. Why does she offer her Chatat before her Olah? Tosefot explain that this order is required simply to maintain uniformity in practice.[7]

Malbim explains that when a Chatat is offered as an atonement, it takes precedence. Not only is it offered before an accompanying Olah, it is the more important of the pair. But in the instance of

a woman who has given birth, the Chatat is not offered as an atonement. Therefore, although the Chatat is offered first – in conformity with the general principle – the Olah is the more significant, or important, of the pair. The Talmud is telling us that this is the message of the passage. The Olah is mentioned first in order to communicate the relative significance of the pair. The Olah is the more essential sacrifice.[8]

Hemek Davar offers a third explanation of the Talmud's comments. He agrees with Malbim that in the case of a woman who has given birth, the Olah is the more fundamental offering of the pair. The Torah first mentions the Olah in order to communicate this message. However, he adds that this message has significance in halacha. He observes that if we study our passages carefully, we will note another oddity. In describing the preferred sacrifices after childbirth, the Torah indicates that a sheep should be brought as an Olah and a young dove or turtledove as a Chatat. The young dove is mentioned before the turtledove. In contrast, in describing the alternative sacrifices, the turtledoves are mentioned before the young doves. Hemek Davar explains that this reversal in order is significant. The turtledove is a more prized species than the young dove. Therefore, when functioning as a Chatat – a sin offering – the young dove is a more appropriate selection. The Chatat should reflect the imperfection of sin. The young dove reflects this imperfection more than the more beautiful turtledove.

In describing the alternative sacrifices, the Torah mentions the turtledoves before the young doves. This is because the Olah is the more fundamental sacrifice of the pair. The Olah is a devotional sacrifice and is not associated with sin. Therefore, the Torah gives precedence to the more perfect turtledoves. Because the Olah is the more significant sacrifice of the pair, this species is the more appropriate selection.[9] ■

[1] Mesechet Zevachim 90a.

[2] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on the Talmud, Mesechet Zevachim 90a.

[3] Tosefot, Mesechet Zevachim 90a.

[4] Rav Yosef Karo, Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 1:5.

[5] Talmud Zevachim 7b.

[6] Rav Baruch HaLeyve Epstein, Torah Temimah on Sefer VaYikra 12:8.

[7] Tosefot, Mesechet Zevachim 7b.

[8] Rav Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel (Malbim), HaTorah VeHaMitzvah – Commentary on Sefer VaYikra, 12:8.

[9] Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (Netziv), Commentary Hamek Davar on Sefer VaYikra 12:8.

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## Letters



# Letters

from our

# READERS



**Mesora:** In his Guide for the Perplexed; Book III, chap. XI, XII, Maimonides teaches that most misfortunes are self-inflicted. You should read both chapters. For example, associating with immoral people will undoubtedly bring us harm; living on mountain sides endanger us to mudslides; and eating poorly causes sickness. God does not decree these misfortunes, not in the sense that He targeted any individual, although He did create all the laws that operate. So we are wise to study His constantly, operating laws, and forecast proper measures, and avoid harm. It is solely our fault if we are foolish.

Parenthetically, this is an important lesson for those who still carry on with idolatrous practices within the Jewish community: I refer to the belief in “segulas” or magical cures not found in the Torah. It is unfortunate that many Jewish leaders do not reprimand this behavior and educate their communities on the foolishness of such behaviors and beliefs. God created “laws” which means He wishes that we study

the nature of the world, since He upholds these laws always. He desires that we understand what can harm us, and then avoid it, since it “always” will behave this way. God thereby teaches us that we must live by the natural laws we observe. This must lead a rational person to discount any claims which nature does not display. So those who bake keys in challas, or feel that separating the dough will somehow bring fertility or any other imagined good, violates God’s lessons of natural law. In these idolatrous practices, man is assuming an outcome, which has no causal relationship to the “cause”. Such individuals contradict themselves by eating; maybe they will live without food! Or maybe they will find money for their rent without working. If we follow cause and effect and reason in other areas, we must not deviate in more important areas, like our adherence to God’s Torah, which speaks against these segulas.

God will not punish a child for the other’s sins. “Fathers are not killed for their sons, and sons are not killed for their fathers: a man in his own sin will be killed”[1]. But if the child is less than 13 years, he has not earned “merit” since free will is not yet operating. In this case, the Rabbis teach God may punish the parent by killing the child. God has rights over all life, until the person has a claim one using free will. So past 13, the individual has sins and merits and God cannot ignore his merit.

How shall we approach misfortunes? The Talmud[2] states that when problems occur, we should examine our ways, and if we are not erring, perhaps our neglect from Torah study is what causes us to deserve affliction. Now, affliction can be understood in two reasonable ways: 1) ignoring Torah, we make poor decisions and misuse the world, like overeating. So we pay the price...naturally; 2) God punishes us. Although without an outright miracle, one has no right or evidence to suggest that a given misfortune is from God, we may nonetheless examine ourselves, perhaps it is from God, and perhaps we can learn a great lesson and repent. As Rashi states there, afflictions will cause us to return to increased Torah study. Perhaps, by seeking understanding for the affliction, we will be forced to review what the Torah might say on this...which is itself an act of study! A clever response by Rashi.

But if we are not erring in any manner, and we are following God, and we are not neglecting our duty to study God, His Torah, and nature...and yet, we find ourselves suffering misfortunes, then we are wise to examine a path out of the problem, which is usually easy to detect. We most probably fell into poor

circumstances due to some form of ignorance. If for example, we examine all employees before accepting a job, we could avoid that one employee who is aggressive towards us, and ruins our day. Or, we can talk to management to correct the employee, or request a transfer. If we are ill, we can eat better, and exercise. If we are not earning enough, we can slowly take classes earning a higher degree; and we can talk to community members, family and friends about other work possibilities. And if we found ourselves in an argument with another, perhaps we were wrong to take issue with something inconsequential which aroused his anger.

But we must find confidence in the fact that God takes care of all those who follow His path. The Ashray prayer recited 3 time daily states, “The will of those who fear Him, He will perform, and their cries He will hear and save them.”[3] We must pray as an essential component to our plan. But prayer alone is insufficient, if we have the means to escape harm, but don’t act. God demands we use reason. We must also examine our ways to unveil what personality trait caused our heartache, and take measures to permanently abandon such behavior. The very knowledge that we hurt ourselves with this behavior should be sufficient to eliminate such poor actions.

In the Guide[4], Maimonides states:

*“We, however, believe that all these human affairs are managed with justice; far be it from God to do wrong, to punish any one unless the punishment is necessary and merited. It is distinctly stated in the Law, that all is done in accordance with justice; and the words of our Sages generally express the same idea. They clearly say: “There is no death without sin, no sufferings without transgression.” (Babylonian Talmud, Sabbath, 55a.) Again, “The deserts of man are meted out to him in the same measure which he himself employs.” (Mish. Sotah, i. 7.)”*

Maimonides teaches that when God acts, it is with perfect justice. The world too is a creation of God, and therefore, it must work in a perfect fashion. This means that if we live rationally, inline with natural laws, we can avoid almost all obstacles. And if we are righteous, God will address obstacles we cannot avoid. It is therefore wise that we examine our current actions to determine if we are headed towards disaster or lesser problems...and make changes. And we must review our values and actions to make certain we are following God’s Torah. Otherwise, we do not merit His intervention. ■

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## Letters

**Morality**

**Reader:** Dear Rabbi, I hope all is well. I've been enjoying your articles and hope you continue to teach us with your newsletter. I have been studying as much as possible and I've come to a question that I keep getting in my mind while studying and talking with my Teacher and friends. I hope it's clear and that you can help me out.

In Torah there are, what seems like, two parts to which G-d "wished" for us to address and develop during our lifetime: 1) Our relationship to Him, and 2) Our relationships with each other.

My question(s) is/are the following: Was the Torah of G-d to Moses given with the goal of causing social improvement? Or, is that only the outcome that happens when we follow Torah by first developing a better relationship with Hashem, which would yield a corrected society?

I ask because when looking at other religions, that have tried to base their connection to Abraham/Moses, deviating from a truer connection with G-d; thus yielding a lack of balance on "faith" and responsibility. I'm not questioning the issue that if one follows the mitzvot, the truly seeking individual, can yield a connection or be led to Hashem. Those who do are those who have come to understand the connection to the Divine within the mitzvot (I'm including the sheva mitzvot here).

I could be wrong on this; therefore, I would like to know if I am or not, and why.

When I read of Abraham and Moses (written/oral), it seems they first and foremost developed a relationship with G-d, which begat the later relationships with those around them. Abraham was from deductive reasoning and later G-d's revelation. While Moses, was made known beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Thanks for your time and Shalom,

*Concerned Noachide*

**Mesora:** You are asking if the Torah targets morality as a goal or if it is simply an accidental result of forging a relationship with God. Maimonides addresses this in his final word of his Guide for the Perplexed. He explains that our knowledge of God and His ways (righteousness, justice, charity) must be mimicked by us. The reason is that human action is the barometer of conviction. If what we learn is not applied in our actions, we thereby display a lack of conviction, since all human conviction must lead to action. Perhaps God's wisdom determined that man be given to the world of action, so he can witness what he does, and does not do. When we see ourselves inactive in connection with charity, we

can no longer deny our miserliness. And when we hear ourselves degrading another, we cannot feel so pious, having said such disgusting words. Yes, our objective is love of God, and to constantly engage in understanding His Torah. But if our actions fall short, then how convinced are we of what we learned? What merit is there if we study, but it is all theoretical? It matters none if we say we agree with a theory, if we cannot prove it, or we do not support it with actions. Our only merit is when we each arrive at conviction, as God deemed we do by granting "each" of us the faculty or reason and proof.

So my answer is that morality is not merely a result of a relationship with God, the higher goal, but it is a goal to be worked at for itself. As thinking and emotional beings, we must address both: with thought we understand more about God; through actions, we demonstrate a conviction in those thoughts and values. And part of conviction, is to realize where our emotions fall short, preventing us from acting, and making real changes in our values until they form part of our actions. Only then can we say such a person is convinced of his thoughts. By loving our brother as God loves him, we arrive at the correct relationship man must have with others. The only correct morality is that displayed by God.

I will include Maimonides words below so you may study them:

"Having stated the sublime ideas contained in that Scriptural passage, and quoted the explanation of our Sages, we will now complete what the remainder of that passage teaches us. The prophet does not content himself with explaining that the knowledge of God is the highest kind of perfection: for if this only had been his intention, he would have said, "But in this let him who glorioth glory, that he understandeth and knoweth me", and would have stopped there; or he would have said, "that he understandeth and knoweth me that I am One", or, "that I have not any likeness", or, "that there is none like me", or a similar phrase. He says, however, that man can only glory in the knowledge of God and in the knowledge of His ways and attributes, which are His actions, as we have shown (Part 1. liv.) in expounding the passage, "Show me now thy ways" (Exod. xxxviii. 13). We are thus told in this passage that the Divine acts which ought to be known, and ought to serve as a guide for our actions, are, chesed: "loving-kindness", mishpat: "judgment," and zedakah: "righteousness." Another very important lesson is taught by the additional phrase, "in the earth." It implies a fundamental principle of the Law: it rejects the theory of those who boldly assert that God's providence does not extend below the sphere of the moon, and that the

earth with its contents is abandoned, that "the Lord hath forsaken the earth" (Ez. viii. 12). It teaches, as has been taught by the greatest of all wise men in the words, "The earth is the Lord's" (Exod. ix. 29), that His providence extends to the earth in accordance with its nature, in the same manner as it controls the heavens in accordance with their nature. This is expressed in the words, "That I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth". The prophet thus, in conclusion, says, "For in these things I delight, saith the Lord", i.e., My object [in saying this] is that you shall practice loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. In a similar manner we have shown (Part I. liv.) that the object of the enumeration of God's thirteen attributes is the lesson that we should acquire similar attributes and act accordingly. The object of the above passage is therefore to declare, that the perfection, in which man can truly glory, is attained by him when he has acquired-as far as this is possible for man-the knowledge of God, the knowledge of His Providence, and of the manner in which it influences His creatures in their production and continued existence. Having acquired this knowledge he will then be determined always to seek loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, and thus to imitate the ways of God. We have explained this many times in this treatise." ■

**Donor Needed**

54 year old Jewish woman, type B blood, in need of kidney donation. To be tested for a possible match, please contact Pat Deflorio at North Shore University Hospital Dialysis Center, 516-465-8200 and mention patient's name, Nadine Belkin. ■

**No Respect**

**Reader:** I have a question for you: if Jesus did fulfill the prophecies of the coming messiah, according to your standards, what would that make Jesus? Does it make him just a messiah, or is the messiah to come considered G-d? What will the messiah-to-come be considered: G-d or man?

On your website, I believe you are very disrespectful of the Christian view. Although you might not believe it, you do not have to portray it as a religion for mindless idiots. I am not an idiot,

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## Letters

I have done much study and research to learn more about G-d, and I am hungry for more knowledge. Please answer my question and consider doing Christianity a little more justice. The simplicity you put into your explanation of Christianity vs. the in depth explanation of Judaism is not only unfair, but it portrays your site as very uninformed. When the average reader sees that, if they are Jewish and they have half a brain, they themselves would only agree if they have never studied, or if they have a blind faith in Judaism. Don't you see that that same blind faith that you criticize us for is ironically shown in your writer's ignorance of the Christian faith. A blind faith is one that is unwilling to look outside its own beliefs, and that is exactly what you have done.

**Mesora:** Messiah is not God; that is heresy. The Bible clearly states, "God is not man that he should lie, nor the so of man, that He repents..." (Num. 23:19) You have not studied the Bible well enough. This point is not disputed by any Torah reader. God cannot be, that which He created. So I feel it is you who is ignorant here.

I will also add that a book written by man cannot possibly have the same depth as a book written by God. This is why we expound Judaism – God's book – more than we expound Christianity.

I also take issue with you claim that man should "respect a religion". We must respect "men", but a false system with no proof of Divine origin, that claims it is Divine, must not only be not respected, but seekers of truth must teach against it, clearly demonstrating its severe lies. Honesty demands that we respect truth, and unveil lies of other religions so as to prevent others from being misled. It would be an evil if I were to respect Christianity, for this would deceive others that there is something to respect in this religion. I would be doing a grave injustice. My role as a Jew demands that I assist all men and women to find the truth, which at times requires arguments against all other religions with baseless claims of Divine origin.

I will not "do Christianity Justice" as you suggest, for this religion has only brought harm and lies to mankind. It is idolatrous, the worst sin. The Bible says not to make any "graven image of any form in heaven, earth, or in the waters"[5], yet...statues of Jesus, Mary and saints populate every corner of God's Earth. Crusades murdered countless innocent lives. Christianity teaches against God's words that man dies for his own sins[6], by suggesting Jesus died for others. And you actually suggested that God can be Man...yet the Bible denounces this. Christianity denies God's words at every turn. So why do you seek to defend lies?

I have studied Christianly...it's four versions of what happened to Jesus...four "contradicting"

Gospels. What more proof is required to realize that the New Testament's stories are lies, with no connection to actual facts? I have read it's deifications of man; and I am confident others will see this is well. And I have seen an abundance of plagiarism from the Torah. Compare the Torah's words to Christianity's plagiarism:

The Torah says in Exodus, 4:19:

*"God said to Moses in Midyan, go, return to Egypt, for there have died all the men that sought your life."*

The New Testament says in Matthew 2:20:

*"Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead."*

The Torah says in Exodus 1:16:

*"And (the king of Egypt) said, 'when the Hebrew women give birth, and look upon the stone, if it is a son, kill him, and if it is a daughter, let it live.'"*

The New Testament says in Matthew 2:16:

*"Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under..."*

In both statements above Christianity attempts to equate Jesus to Moses by distorting the truth and provoking the emotion of pity. Christianity continuously portrays Jesus as the victim to foster identification and more adherents. Just like Pharaoh threatened Moses, the story constructed in the New Testament makes Jesus the victim of King Herod. Coincidentally, the events at the time of Jesus' birth were conveniently fabricated to mimic a similar threat, which had taken place during the time of Moses' birth. The reader of the New Testament feels pity and compassion for Jesus in the name of plagiarism. The goal of the New Testament is to equate the statures of Jesus and Moses, which is absolutely impossible. In so many statements contained the New Testament, if read carefully, one will find authentic, Torah accounts plagiarized with slight changes, replacing true Torah personalities with Jesus.

Plagiarism is also seen clearly in the first quote; just as Moses was threatened and then afterwards informed to return as all those seeking his life are dead, the New Testament again attempts to plagiarize a known story of Moses and transpose it onto Jesus. For the very goal of engendering pity as a tool for identification with Jesus, Christianity adopted the symbol of the Cross. The Cross' unanimous acceptance as a central icon of their religion displays how correct the developers of Christianity were that pity is a sure-fire lure to attract adherents.

A most obvious plagiarism describes the sale of Jesus by one of the 12 disciples for 30 pieces of silver. It is almost identical to the sale of Joseph by one of his 12 brothers for 20 pieces of silver in the Torah. Compare:

Genesis 37:25:

*"And there passed by Midianite men, traders, and they drew him and lifted him (Joseph) out of the pit and they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for 20 pieces of silver and they brought Joseph to Egypt."*

Matthew 26:14-15:

*"14. Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15. and said, 'What will you give me if I deliver him to you?' And they paid him thirty pieces of silver."*

Christianity uses another statement from the Torah and distorts it in order to evoke empathy and identification with Jesus who is again being portrayed as the "victim." Yet, the goal of Christianity is to raise Jesus to a leadership role. The downtrodden Jesus becomes a great leader as Joseph, whom his brothers sold would eventually become a great leader. Christianity found many ways to distort the Divine Word of God in order to gain mass acceptance and many followers.

Do not feel you must follow Christianity simply because you were raised in it. Just as you use your mind to make other decisions in your life, use you mind to determine whether Christianity possesses any proof, as does Judaism, or any other rational science. God gave you a mind to use, not to ignore. You must also not confuse our disgust with a religion, with its followers. No animosity must exist for a human, unless of course such a human lives against God. But those raised in false religions require guidance, and this is the obligation of the Jew. We do not proselytize, but rather, make answers available for those seeking them. We do not demand conversion by the sword, rather, assist the genuine convert.

God said, "From a false matter, distance yourself..."[7] How then can we speak as if we respect Christianity, when it violates God's words? We cannot respect fallacy, for this would be denying God. ■

[1] Deut. 24:16

[2] Berachos 5a

[3] Psalms 145:19

[4] Book III, chap. XVII

[5] Exod. 20:4

[6] Deut. 24:16

[7] Exod. 23:7

## APPEAL

# the gift of life



Dear Klal,

How many times do you receive a letter telling a tale of a tragedy, of an affected family and wish there was something you could do? I am not talking about prayer, although I will ask you to pray. I am not talking about giving tzedakah, although it would help tremendously. I am talking about an opportunity to save someone's life, and it is up to you.

My father saved my life many years ago, and now I would like to return a favor.

I was born over twenty-five years ago in Russia. I was born two months premature. The standard procedure for babies like me was to either let them slowly starve at the hospital, or to send them home, letting their parents watch them die. Incubators, nasogastric feeding and other interventions were unheard of. A few babies made it, of course, but the prognosis was not good. So I was sent home, where my parents were trying their best to keep me alive. They used space heaters to raise room temperature to that of a human body. They tried feeding me through a pipette, since I was too young to nurse and swallow properly. However, despite all their efforts, I was losing weight and so, when I was only 18 days old, I had to go back to the hospital. After a few grueling days, the doctors proclaimed that I needed a blood transfusion. My father was the right blood type, so he unflinchingly gave me his blood. That is how he saved my life.

Fast forward to today. About ten years ago, during a gall bladder surgery, the doctors discovered that my father had significant damage to his liver and spleen. They ran some tests and found out that he had Hepatitis C, which was destroying his body. There is no treatment for Hepatitis C

(interferon aside, but he was not a candidate). Unfortunately what this virus does is slowly destroy the person's liver, leaving one to suffer, develop cirrhosis (scarring of liver tissue) and eventually need a liver transplant. Right now my father is on the waiting list for a liver. About half of the people on the waiting list die each year, which means that my father has only a 50% chance of surviving this year, just waiting. There is nothing equivalent to dialysis for this condition, so there is nothing to do, but wait.

Usually, when a family member needs a new liver, the relatives are the first ones to be tested. However, in our case, my mother is not a match, since she has different blood type. As for me, I cannot save my father's life because I also have Hepatitis C. I got it at that fateful blood transfusion. My father saved my life, but now I cannot save his!

This is where I will ask you to do something:

Please daven for Mihel (Michael) ben Malka by inserting his name in Refaeinu in Shemone Esre. The refuah is in Hashem's hands, but we must do our part.

Consider becoming a living liver donor. The initial requirements are being 18-60 years of age, being generally healthy and having A or O blood type. Unlike kidneys and other organs, liver regenerates, which means that 6 weeks after the surgery the donor's liver will grow back to its original size.

Contact me for more information regarding liver donation. I have been forwarded all the necessary forms, which I will gladly pass on to you. My e-mail is noscreennames@yahoo.com

Pass this information to as many people and mailing lists as possible.

All Yisroel are responsible for one another. One who saves a life is as one who saved an entire world. Do not stand idly by, as your fellow Jew suffers and dies. This is a direct way to help somebody, and the reward is tremendous.

Do not let a mitzvah pass before you, please help me save my father's life. My children are still very little, and I would like them to get to know their grandfather. Do not deprive them of that connection.

A few practical details:

My parents live in Toronto and my father is on the waiting list in Toronto General hospital. From my research, that is one of the best centers in the world to do a liver transplant. The transplant, hospital stay and all additional testing are covered by OHIP (Canadian health insurance). The testing to see if one is a match could be done in as little as a week. The hospital states that six weeks post-surgery the donor can resume his/her regular activities.

Currently my father is on disability, and my mother works part-time, so she could take care of my father, so their financial situation is extremely tight.

All that I ask of you is to find it in your heart to consider saving another person's life. May you never find yourself in the situation where somebody is dying before you and all you can do is helplessly watch.

Sincerely,

*Ilana Gimpelevich*

therein along with a branch of hyssop and myrtle, and the live, bloodied bird is now set free over an open field.

On the surface, this seems barbaric, or at the least, unintelligible. However, as we know God is the Designer of the Torah, and “all its ways are pleasant”, there must be a rational explanation for these required practices, and for the objects used in attempting to correct the person who spoke viciously.

In order to understand how “mida k'neged mida” (measure for measure) works in this case, we must first understand the crime. Speaking derogatorily against another has at its source, the desire for self-affirmation of one's greatness. An insecure person will usually be found degrading others. In his mind, he now feels higher in comparison to the ridiculed party. However, a secure individual does not seek social approval, as this doesn't affect his self-estimation. He is more concerned with God's approval. Being secure, another person's level has no effect on his status. What then is the remedy for this egomaniacal type of personality? It is to diminish his imagined grandeur with a dose of real alienation. Part of the need to elevate oneself is the desire to be loved by others. When this cannot be, as a leper is banished outside the camp of the Israelites, he is faced with the fact that he is not the great image he conjured. He must now face the truth about his insignificance.

However, God the merciful seeks to avoid the worst by hinting to the person that he has done wrong. God does not send leprosy to the body first. He initially uses other vehicles with which the person identifies, viz., his home, and his clothing. God commences with the home, as this is furthest removed from the person, but related enough to him so as to awaken him: there is something distasteful in him that he should delve into. If the person is obstinate, God sends the leprosy to a closer object, his garments. This is more closely tied to one's identity, and is more effective. But if not heeded to, God finally delivers leprosy to his body, which is undeniably ‘him’. We see from here God's mercy, and intelligence in using objects, with which we identify.

Parenthetically, these three objects, namely the house, clothes and body, correlate exactly to Mezuzah, Tzitzis, and Tefillin. These are also tied to the idea of identification, but from a different angle: since God desires that one place their trust in Him, and not in their own strength, God created these three commands to redirect where one places their trust. Mezuzah reminds one not to invest too much reliance in his home, as God

should be recognized as the true, only Protector. The home is correctly viewed as a haven from the elements. But God desires that we act in line with reality, which means, above natural law: we must trust in His ‘shelter’, over structural shelters. So we place a reminder on the doorway, which is the best place for us to be reminded of God, as a doorway receives all of the traffic of a home. We are urged not to place too much importance on our dress, and therefore are commanded to wear Tzitzis, fringes. Clothing again is an area where people express their identity. But when we gaze at the Tzitzis, we are reminded about investing too much importance in our dress. Lastly, but most closely tied to our self-images, are our bodies. One is most affected when something happens to his body, even if no pain is suffered. We are also more tied to our appearances than to our clothes and homes. We define the body incorrectly as the “real me”. This is due to our false definition of what “man” is. Society tells us that man equals his body. The Torah tells us that man equals intellect, perfected values, and ideals. Hence, we are commanded to wear Tefillin: a bodily reminder that we should not invest too much worth here either.

These three, the home, clothes, and body are the three main areas where one identifies, and thus, the three areas where God saw it fit to place reminders that God alone should be the one upon whom we depend. And as these three are where we identify, God uses them again when attempting to focus us on our errors: He attacks with leprosy those objects that we deem are “ours”, or “ourselves”.

Returning to the Parsha, what is the idea behind the two birds? I believe that besides correcting the person's flaw of overestimation, he must also realize the irrevocable harm inflicted on another human being. Rashi states that birds in specific are brought, as they chirp, to make clear that the crime had to do with his “chirping” like a bird. The live bird (resembling the sinner) is dipped in the blood of the other, dead bird (resembling the one humiliated by the speech) and let free over a field. This is to demonstrate that just as this bloodied bird is irretrievable, so is his evil “bloody speech” irretrievable. As you cannot catch the same bird twice, so also he cannot retract his words which were let loose on the world. The damage is done, the “bird is loose”. This will hopefully give recognition to the person who spoke destructively and make clear his crime.

The birds acting as atonement teaches that knowing one's sin is the first step towards forgiveness. ■



## Evil Speech & Leprosy

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The Torah teaches of the punishment of leprosy, or Tzaraas, which visits a person on account of his or her speaking “Lashon Hara”, derogatory remarks concerning another. Leprosy visits the person in stages. At first, leprosy attaches itself to the person's home. If the person heeds the warning and repents, it is gone. If not, it excels towards the person's garments. Again, if one repents, it is gone. If God's warning is still ignored, it finally attaches to the person's body.

What is the purpose of this progression, and why these three, specific objects? Additionally, the Torah states that for one to be atoned, one must bring two birds: one is slaughtered, and its blood is caught in a bowl. The live bird is dipped



the Weekly Parsha:

# Metzora

taken from  
*Windows to the Soul*

**RABBI DR. MICHAEL BERNSTEIN**

It must have been quite unpleasant to be a metzora, afflicted with tzoraas.[1] The unsightly lesions and the Torah-mandated quarantine made it difficult to endure. One might expect a metzora to initiate the purification process as quickly as possible so that he could return to normal.

But what if he took a cavalier attitude and was in no hurry to go to the Kohein to become purified? We find a clue in the language of the Torah (14:2), "This shall be the law of the metzora on the day of his purification<sup>3</sup>he shall be brought to the Kohein." Instead of using the active "he shall go to the Kohein," the Torah uses the passive "he shall be brought to the Kohein." This implies that he may be brought to the Kohein by force.

Since the Torah finds it necessary to specify that we may force a metzora to comply with the laws that pertain to him, it would appear that this is not the case with regard to other commandments. In fact, however, the possibility of enforced compliance exists with regard to just about all the commandments. In what way does the case of a metzora stand out?

The commandments of the Torah fall into two categories<sup>3</sup>positive commandments (mitzvos aseh) and prohibitions (mitzvos lo saaseh). According to the Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 4), we may use non-lethal force to prevent the transgression of a prohibition, and lethal force only in extreme cases, such as to prevent a murder. Lethal force may also be used to coerce a neglectful person to fulfill a positive commandment; as the Talmud states (Kesubos 86a), "He is beaten to within an inch of his life."

The laws of metzora fall into the category of positive commandments. What additional guidelines regarding the use of force apply to them, as suggested by the verse?

There is a disagreement on this issue in the Shulchan Aruch. In general, according to Ketzos Hachoshen, only rabbinical judges and not laypeople may use potentially lethal force to gain compliance

with positive commandments. But with regard to tzoraas, any individual may exert life-threatening force to bring the metzora to the Kohein.

Nesivos Hamishpat disagrees; he maintains that the use of lethal force is never restricted to rabbinical judges. Laypeople have the right to force compliance of any positive commandments on their recalcitrant brothers. With tzoraas, however, they have not only a right but also an obligation.

According to both views, the Torah broadens the scope of the license to use lethal force to effect compliance with the laws of tzoraas. Why?

Let us first consider the difference between positive commandments and prohibitions. Penalties for the violation of prohibitions are generally more severe; they often entail capital punishment, corporeal punishment or untimely death. The penalties for violation of positive commandments are almost never so severe. Yet paradoxically, the Torah permits lethal force to assure compliance with a positive commandment but not with a prohibition. How do we explain this?

The answer lies in a basic distinction between positive commandments and prohibitions. A person who contemplates the transgression of a prohibition has not yet done anything wrong; although he is considering rebellion, he has not actually taken the step. Therefore, we may not apply lethal force to restrain him, even though the potential sin is grave.

On the other hand, when a person rejects a positive commandment that comes his way, he is instantly in violation. He rebels against God every moment he refuses to act. This person has violated his very *raison d'être*, and there is no limit to the force we may exert to curtail his rebellion.

Now let us consider why the Torah indicates an added requirement and urgency to curtail the rebellion of a metzora who fails to comply with the laws of tzoraas.

Our Sages deduce the cause of tzoraas from the two instances of its occurrence in the Torah. In the first

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(Exodus 4:6-8), Moses doubts that the people will believe he is God's messenger, and God afflicts his arm with tzoraas as a sign of his mission. Later on (Numbers 12:10), Moses' sister Miriam criticizes him for separating from his wife after reaching his level of prophecy; Miriam is stricken with tzoraas. Moses and Miriam spoke improperly, and the Sages deduce that tzoraas is caused primarily by the sin of lashon hara.

Let us reflect. Most sins have no immediate physical manifestations. Why then did God create tzoraas as a sign of the sin of lashon hara?

The Talmud considers misfortune a warning signal of wrongdoing and a call for self-examination, but there is no absolute surety. Misfortune is not always a sign of overt providence; it may come independent of sin and in any case, it appears to occur through natural means. Tzoraas, however, is an exception; it is always an external supernatural manifestation of an internal failing. If there is tzoraas, there is sin. Tzoraas is the only Halachic institution that serves as type of interface between the legal system and an expression of God's supernatural providential hand; God intervenes in the laws of nature to create the malady.

In this light, we can understand why failure to comply with the laws of tzoraas is a far greater rebellion than failure to comply with other positive commandments. Once God shows the afflicted providentially and publicly that he has sinned, he must go to the Kohein to expiate his sin. His rejection of this obligation is a flagrant affront to God, and it incumbent on all of Israel to set him right.

Although tzoraas is the result of sin, the only two people mentioned in the Torah who actually contracted this malady are Moses and Miriam, two of the most perfectly righteous people that ever appeared on the face of the earth. There is no happenstance in the Torah; the choice of these two as the paradigm of tzoraas sufferers is surely instructive.

By any objective measure, these two stellar personalities were righteous beyond our conception. Nonetheless, relative to their own potential, there must have been some minuscule failing that manifested itself through the tzoraas. The Torah's message is that it is not for us to pass judgment when we encounter someone afflicted with tzoraas, or any suffering for that matter, since it reflects a failing relative to his potential. In the case of Moses or Miriam, it may be a failing we cannot even begin to fathom. ■

[1] Tzoraas is often mistranslated as leprosy. It is really a non-clinical affliction that discolors the body, clothing or residence and results in ritual impurity (tumah).



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