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Parashat Metzora

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REBUILD TO RECONNECT

By Rabbi Ezra Wiener

The portion of Sefer VaYikra describing the Tzara'at affliction is a most troubling section of the Torah. Virtually all Parshanim, as well as the Talmudic literature, point to the spiritual nature of this disease and its concomitant transgressions, most notably Lashon HaRa. Nonetheless, the Parashah remains hard to understand; this difficulty has the potential to paralyze, undermine, or debilitate its educational effect. Tzara'at is not merely a theoretical phenomenon. We encounter this affliction in Sefer Melachim Bet (Chapter 5). The Navi relates the story of Na'aman, a general of Aram who had been afflicted with Tzara'at for an unidentified reason, although some commentators attribute it to his taking captive a young Jewish girl. The girl urged Na'aman to seek the advice of Elisha the prophet, and after some degree of coaxing in response to Na'aman's skepticism, his servants persuaded Na'aman to immerse in the Jordan River at Elisha's direction. Na'aman emerged from the river to find that his skin had returned to the soft texture of a young boy.

It is in this context that the Parshanim note an interesting word which is used to describe the transition from affliction to healing and from ritual impurity to purity. The Jewish maidservant states, "*VaTomer El Gevirta, Achalei Adoni Lifnei HaNavi Asher BeShomeron, Az Ye'esof Oto MiTzarato,*" "And she said to her mistress, 'Let my master beseech the prophet of Israel in Shomeron, and then he will gather him in from his Tzara'at'" (Melachim Bet 5:3). The root A.S.F., meaning "to gather," is used again in Pasuk Vav: "*Va'Asafto MiTzarato,*" in Pasuk Zayin: "*Le'Esof Ish MiTzara'ato,*" and in Pasuk Yud Aleph: "*Ve'Asaf HaMetzora.*" Most of the commentators assume that this term is a description of the return of the Metzora from his banishment to the city (or camp, as the case may be). He will be gathered unto his people (not to be confused with the selfsame root used to describe death, where one is also gathered unto his people). As Radak states: "*VeNikreit Refu'at HaTzara'at Asifa Mipnei SheHaMetzora Yeisheiv Badad UVeHeirafot Yei'aseif Bein Bnei Adam,*" "The curing of Tzara'at is called Asifa, because the Metzora sits alone, and when he is healed he is gathered between people" (Melachim Bet 5:3 Radak s.v. *Ye'esof Oto MiTzarato*). This is certainly a tenable explanation, as we find the same term used in

the context of Miriam's Tzara'at affliction, as recorded in Sefer Bamidbar. It is there that G-d issues the command: "*Tisageir Shivat Yamim MiChutz LaMachaneh Ve'Achar Tei'asef,*" "She shall be quarantined for seven days outside of the camp, and afterwards she shall be gathered in" (BeMidbar 12:14). Indeed, the Torah states that the nation did not travel, "*Ad Hei'aseif Miriam,*" "Until Miriam was gathered in" (ibid. 15).

However, Ralbag, in his commentary to Sefer Melachim, offers a most fascinating and innovative interpretation of the usage of the root A.S.F. in the context of the curing of the Tzara'at. He writes, "*VeNikra HaRefu'a MeiHaTzara'at Asifa Ki HaTzara'at Ta'aseh MeHa'Echad Rabim Ki MiPnei Tigboret HaChom Ha'Aposhi YeChaleish Me'od HaChom HaTivi HaKosheir Eivarei HaBa'alei Chayim UMeisim Otam Echad,*" "And the process of healing from Tzara'at is called 'Asifa', because the Tzara'at makes one into many, as the strengthening of the heat of the disease causes the weakening of the natural heat which binds the limbs of living things and makes them one" (Melachim Bet 5:6 Ralbag s.v. *Ve'Asafto MiTzarato*). Tzara'at transforms the body's one unit into many parts. The breakdown of the skin essentially separates the integumentary system (and perhaps internal systems as well) into separate unconnected parts-- dead tissue serves as this disuniting barrier. This is why he claims that the Metzora will occasionally lose a limb. It is for this reason the messenger that Elisha sent to Na'aman says to him, "*VeYashov Besarcha Lecha UTithar,*" "And your flesh will return to you and you will become pure," as the Ralbag explains, "*Ki HaMetzora Ein Besaro Lo Ki Ein Bo HaDavar SheKosheir Besaro Vo,*" "As the Metzora's flesh is not his, as he lacks the thing which ties his flesh to him" (ibid.). The cure of the Metzora, therefore, invariably involves the merging of the skin and perhaps some of the internal systems of the body into one unit. If Tzara'at makes "*MeiHa'Echad Rabim,*" "From one, many," then the Tikkun is to make "*MeiHaRabim Echad,*" "From many, one."

The Middah KeNeged Middah becomes abundantly evident according to Ralbag's innovation. We typically point to the Metzora's banishment from the camp as the manifestation of measure for measure. As Rashi (Vayikra 13:46 s.v. *Badad Yeisheiv*) quotes from the Midrash, "*Ma Nishtanah Mische'ar Teme'im Leisheiv Badad Ho'il Vehu Hivdil BeLashon HaRa Bein Ish Le'Ishto Uvein Ish LeRei'eihu Af Hu Yibadeil,*" "Why is the Metzora treated differently than all other individuals who have contracted ritual impurity? Since he, through his slander, caused a separation between husband and wife or between a person and his or her neighbor, he too shall be separated." This is a most befitting punishment. However, the penalty of banishment doesn't address the more immediate and perhaps more physically debilitating

This week's Kol Torah issue is in memory of Yosef Yessachar ben Eliezer Zvi. May the learning be a blessing for his memory.

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affliction of the skin. Where is the measure for measure in skin discoloration and skin death?

The skin binds the body into one unit. It makes a person whole. It makes him feel that all of his limbs form one unit of purpose. It protects the body and allows for homeostasis, or temperature regulation. The breakdown of the skin makes a person more vulnerable to the environment, unable to regulate his own self-esteem and self-worth, and exposes him to pathogens. A breakdown of the skin makes a person more vulnerable to the environment, unable to regulate his own self-esteem and self-worth, and exposes him to pathogens. A breakdown of the skin is a breakdown of the self. *"VeYashov Besarcha Lecha,"* "And your flesh will return to you" (Melachim Bet 5:10): your self will return to you when you have internalized that you have taken the self from your fellow human being with your disparaging, vicious remarks. This is truly a suitable punishment, measure for measure. The proper treatment of another human being is making them feel whole and complete, where all the limbs are focused together on a mission, thus making them into a Basar Echad.

If this is true of our daily interpersonal relationships with our colleagues, how much more so with our spouses! *"VeHayu LeVasar Echad,"* "And they shall be one flesh" (BeReishit 2:24), the Torah tells us. Our geniality, our benevolence, our loving disposition when interacting with our friends should reach another dimension of Basar Echad with our speech and overall conduct with our spouses. *VeHayu LeVasar Echad* demands that more than any other responsibility and obligation, it is a spouse's duty to ensure that each remains Basar Echad: one stable, durable, balanced human being, capable of navigating the caustic world of the spoken word.

METZORA WIDENS SCOPE OF TORAH

By Yonasan Rutta ('20)

In this week's Parashah, the Torah states, *"Zot Tehiyeh Torat HaMetzora BeYom Taharato; VeHuva El HaKohen,"* "This is the Torah of the Metzora on the day of his purification; you shall bring him to the Kohein." The Midrash comments (VaYikra Rabbah 15:8) that Moshe Rabbeinu was heartbroken that only Aharon HaKohein had the honor of checking the Nega'im, indicating that only Aharon and his children were allowed to do this Bedikah. Moreover, the Kohen was now granted full responsibility over all of the Avodah in the Mishkan.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (Sefer Kol Ram, Parashat Metzora Siman Bet) asks why the Kohen must give the Metzora directions for each and every step of the purification process. This Mitzvah seems a bit dragged out because of the Kohen's involvement. The Mitzvah to wear Tefilin for example, is one in which it is implied that one must acquire Tefilin to fulfill the Mitzvah. However, in the context of a Metzora the Kohen could have simply told the Metzora what to do in one directive, and it would be implied that he would have to fulfill it to become pure. Yet,

the Kohen commands the Metzora to fulfill many similar processes in order to become pure. Rav Moshe answers that the Torah is coming to teach us a very important lesson. People often assume that many things outside of the immediate realm of Talmud Torah, such as politics and education, are outside the realm of a Rabbi's role. They think of a Rav as someone whose opinion is only important in the immediate realm of Talmud Torah. While this is true, the mistake that people make is that they assume that there is a world outside of the Torah. In reality, the world **is** Torah, and Torah **is** the world. The Torah is related to every part of a person's life. This idea is expressed when we refer to Torah study as *"Chayeinu Ve'Orech Yameinu,"* "Our lives and length of our days."

When a person wishes to give Tzedakah, he/she must realize that there are Halachot concerning prioritization, and even prohibitions concerning the misappropriation of funds. When a person wishes to seek education for his children, he/she must take into account the Halachot that govern the substance that the children may learn and the livelihoods that they may pursue (Kiddushin 82a). Therefore, it is the job of the parent or donor to be cognizant of their possible ignorance and ask their Rav before embarking on any endeavor.

The reason the Torah is teaching us this lesson in the context of a Metzora is because a person is not simply stricken with an illness as a punishment for his misdeeds. Rambam writes in Hilchot Tumat Tzara'at (16:10), that Tzara'at is a miraculous affliction that affects a person purely for the sake of convincing him to do Teshuvah for his/her Aveirah. Just like in the context of a Metzora, a seemingly mundane phenomenon such as illness is in reality within the scope of Torah, so too any seemingly mundane activity is within the world and bounds of Torah. Just as a Metzora must consult the Kohein who represents the paradigm of Torah observance, so too, we today must consult our present day paradigms of Torah observance - Rebbeim - in order to guide us in our everyday endeavors.

SHABBAT HAGADOL: WHAT'S IN THE NAME? GREATNESS AND REDEMPTION

By Ezra Sepowitz ('20)

The Shabbat before every Pesach is known as "Shabbat HaGadol," or "The Great Sabbath." The term originates from the time of the Rishonim. While it is not exactly clear as to why Shabbat HaGadol was given this name, some claim that it relates to the custom of the Rabbi to give a long or great speech to his congregants on the Shabbat preceding Pesach. Others (cited at Shabbat 87b) claim that the name is a reference to the great miracle that Hashem performed on the 10th of Nissan prior to the Bnei Yisrael's exodus from Egypt. On the 10th of Nissan, all of the Bnei Yisrael gathered the sheep which were to be slaughtered four days later as Korbanot. Throughout three Parashiyot, the Torah provides a perspective on the Egyptian's relationship with sheep. In Parashat VaYigash, the Torah describes how shepherds were *"To'eivat Mitzrayim,"* "An

abhorrence to the Egyptians" (BeReishit 46:34); in Parashat Va'Eira, Moshe describes sheep as "To'eivat Mitzrayim" (Shemot 8:22); and in Parashat Mikeitz the Torah relates how the Egyptians could not eat together with the Jews, as it was a "To'eivah" for the Egyptians (Bereishit 43:32). Rashi famously takes the approach that the abhorrence, To'eivah, to which the Torah refers is a direct outgrowth of the Egyptians' deification of the sheep (Bereishit 46:34 s.v. *Ki To'eivat Hu*). The Bnei Yisrael's slaughter and consumption of the Egyptian deity would be regarded to as an abomination by the Egyptians. When we began preparing for the slaughter of the sheep, there was an Egyptian backlash. The Egyptian people became infuriated when they saw us tying down the sheep. Yet, a miracle occurred, and they did not attack them. Therefore, the "Gadol" in Shabbat HaGadol refers to this great miracle.

A major question is raised as to why we celebrate this miracle on the Shabbat preceding Pesach as opposed to the 10th of Nissan. A common answer that is given is that Miriam died on the 10th of Nissan. Therefore, instead of celebrating on the day of the month in which the miracle took place, we celebrate on the day of the week in which the miracle took place -- Shabbat.

Others see the reason to the name Shabbat HaGadol as a reference to a Pasuk at the end of its associated Haftarah. At the end of the Haftarah (Sefer Malachi 3), the coming of Mashiach is referred to as "Gadol": *'Hinei Anochi Sholei'ach Lachem Et Eiliya HaNavi Lifnei Bo Yom Hashem HaGadol VeHanorah*", "Behold, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the **great**, and terrible day of the Lord" (3:23).

In this Perek, Malachi addresses the Jewish people who had previously committed a variety of egregious acts, including: sorcery, adultery, lying, cheating one's laborers, abandoning the tithe and contributions to the Levi'im, and treating widows, orphans, and strangers poorly. Malachi views the people as standing before God, and he wonders how they will ever face Him again. Hashem reminds them that if they turn back towards Him, He will turn back towards them, giving them bountiful rewards (3:7).

Furthermore, Malachi notices that the people have become skeptical of the concept of Sechar Ve'Onesh (reward and punishment). However, Malachi adamantly points out that a day will come when God will mete out appropriate punishments and rewards for everyone. That day is described with language of heat and fire, as Malachi portrays those who are evil being consumed: *"Ki Hinei HaYom Ba Bo'er KaTanur, VeHayu Chol Zeidim VeChol Oseih Rishah Kash,*" "For behold, that day is at hand, burning like an oven; all the arrogant and evildoers shall be straw" (3:19). Meanwhile, those people who have feared Hashem will be rewarded with all that they need, "Ke'Eglei Marbeik," "like stall-fed calves" (3:20).

The Haftarah closes with a reference to Eliyahu HaNavi, who, I"YH, will come to herald the redemption quickly in our days. Mal'achi portrays the redemption as imminent, thus giving the people a strong incentive to repent and serve God. This parallels the redemption that we recall during Pesach. Just as the Bnei Yisrael were redeemed from Egypt after generations of

slavery, so too will we be redeemed I"YH, with the coming of Mashiach quickly in our days.

KASHERING DENTURES FOR PESACH PART IV

By Rabbi Ephraim Rudolph ('98) DDS

Editors' note: The following article by Rabbi Dr. Ephraim Rudolph is the fourth part of a series on Kashering one's mouth for Pesach. The first, second, and third articles of the series can be found on <https://www.koltorah.org>.

In last week's issue, we left off with a discussion of the opinion of Rama (Darchei Moshe Orach Chaim 451:19) that one may be lenient about kashering glass from Chameitz in a BeDi'eved scenario (which would then apply to our scenario, a Sha'at HaDechak). There is a debate about how lenient one can be. Magein Avraham (49) explains that if the glass was only used with cold foods and liquids, it does not have to be kashered. However, if it was used with hot foods and liquids, it needs to be kashered. The Taz (30) on the other hand, writes that Rama means that we are completely lenient and follow the Shulchan Aruch that glass does not even absorb. Therefore, the glass-like dental implants should be permitted without kashering. The Peri Megadim (451 s.v. *Mishbatzot Zahav*) rules against the Taz. If we follow Magein Avraham, then the new ceramic crowns will follow the same Halachic guidelines as Rav Shlomo Zalman's crowns, since the glass crowns do absorb and can be kashered. Additionally, if we wait twenty-four hours to allow the Beli'ot to become Notein Ta'am LiFgam, then the Mishnah Berurah (451:155) writes that there is room to be lenient in a case of Hefsed Merubah. However, the Mishnah Berurah explains that the Magein Avraham says that if Rov Tashmisho is with cold food (even if once in a while the object is used with hot food), then it does not need to be kashered and it does not absorb Ta'am. Based on this Mishnah Berurah, as well as the Taz and the Peri Chadash (451 who follows the opinion of the Shulchan Aruch), perhaps even the Ashkenazim can be lenient and need not kasher their crowns, as this is a scenario of Sha'at HaDechak KeDi'eved Dami.

However, there is a very popular ceramic crown being used that is made out of a material called zirconia (zirconium oxide). On a molecular level, zirconia is similar to metals like silver and iron, even though it looks like ceramics and glass. Zirconia is not an amorphous material like glass, but rather, a crystalline structure akin to a metal. It does not contain all the properties of a true metal, but molecularly it is considered to be similar to a metal or transition metal. Should zirconia be classified following its molecular structure, or by its appearance? Moreover, it may be a Davar Chadash (new category entirely). Rav Moshe Feinstein claims that rubber is a Davar Chadash, so perhaps zirconia is, as well. I saw this discussion in an article about being Toveil zirconia knives for Tevilat Keilim, and there was no real conclusion as to its status. However, the Orthodoxy Union released a statement



that Zirconia can be kashered. This statement implies that it is a metal.

Interestingly, zirconia is often covered by a porcelain layer which, as explained previously, is like glass. In such a case, the halachah is the same as a porcelain material that is covering a metal material. The Sepharadim hold that it is a metal, while the Ashkenazim hold that it is considered glass and subject to the discussion of glass above. However, it must at least be kashered, because the surrounding glass or porcelain could halachically assume the status of metal.

Temporary crowns are almost always made out of plastic, so they would follow the guidelines of plastic, which may be kashered.

With regard to dental fillings, there have been advancements in materials and technology recently. During the time of Rav Shlomo Zalman, fillings were made of silver or amalgam in dental terms, and gold. Nowadays (since thirty years ago) there are white fillings, or composites, instead of the earlier types of dental implants. At first glance, it would appear that composite fillings would have the status of plastic, as they are made out of inorganic polymers, much like plastic. However, a closer look may allow us to establish composites as halachically equivalent to glass, rather than plastic. Composites, in general terms, can be divided into two parts: the matrix and the filler. The matrix is the frame which hardens and bonds to the tooth structure. The matrix is filled up with a filler material, and the filler particles bind to the matrix. The matrix is made out of polymers, or plastic, but the fillers are glass-like materials, like leucite, quartz, or even actual glass. The majority of the composite is the filler, and the lesser portion is the matrix. Perhaps one can say based on the principle of Rov, majority, that the classification and categorization of composite will follow glass, as the glassy filler is the majority of the implant. If this is the case, white fillings will not pose any problems for Sepharadim, but Ashkenazim will have to utilize the same leniencies explained in Parts I-III of this series. However, perhaps we cannot follow Rov, because the matrix could be a Ma'amid, something that is essential to the whole; without it, the material would fall apart and fail to function properly, because the matrix is what binds the filling to the tooth. A Ma'amid is not halachically considered null and void even when it is a minority component, but rather is considered the main part of the item. Therefore, perhaps the implant must be viewed as a plastic, which, as explained previously, is subject to a major debate among the Poskim, and even the Sephardim would need to rely on the leniencies mentioned earlier by our discussion of plastic dentures. However, there is one relatively new filling material whose matrix component is made out of glass, namely silicone dioxide. This material may be gaining popularity and is currently being used in many dental offices. For Sepharadim, this material would be beneficial, but for the Ashkenazim the same leniencies as before would need to be utilized. In conclusion, the new materials used in dental crowns, dentures, and dental fillings may help alleviate the concerns of Beli'ot (absorption of Chametz into the dental work) in the mouth due to the fact that the new fillings and the new crowns may be viewed

as glass. In that case, Sephardic Jews may be able to avoid Beli'ot of crowns and fillings by always making sure that the fillings and crowns used are all ceramic and the fillings are the composite fillings that are all glass based. For the Ashkenazim, perhaps they can be lenient and follow the Mishnah Berurah that BeDi'eved (or in a Sha'at HaDeChak, such as our situation of dental implants), if Rov Tashmisho (the majority of its usage) is with cold food and drink, then one does not have to kasher glass, coupled with the opinion of the Taz, who holds that the BeDi'eved of the Darchei Moshe means that one does not have to kasher glass. In addition, since this case is a She'at HaDechak, maybe Ashkenazim can rely on the Peri Chadash, who holds like the Shulchan Aruch, against the Rama, that glass does not absorb. At the very least, it could be another Senif for the Ashkenazim to be lenient, as perhaps these materials are glass and are not able to absorb taste. Both Ashkenazim and Sepharadim who are not diligent to make sure that everything permanent in their mouth is glass, as well as for people who already have fillings and crowns from previous generations of dentistry, would still need to rely on the approach of Rav Shlomo Zalman that one should not eat hot food within twenty-four hours of Pesach. Furthermore, if one must eat a Davar Charif on Pesach, then he or she would need to rely on Rav Shlomo Zalman's novel idea that saliva and heat corrode the Beli'ot of Chameitz completely. Additionally, we should kasher our mouths the way that Rav Shlomo Zalman suggested: one should drink water heated to the maximum temperature that one can handle. By the Zechut of following these halachot diligently, may we see the fulfillment of our fervent hope for the Ge'ulah, expressed in the ultimate line of the Haggadah: LeShanah HaBa'ah BeYerushalayim HaBenuyah.

Editor's note: Many and perhaps most observant Jews follow the lenient view of Rav Ovadia Yosef that one need not kasher dentures or dental work for Pesach. Rav Mordechai Willig told Rabbi Chaim Jachter (in 1989) that one may rely on the lenient opinion.

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