

TAZRIA

Summary

Parshas Tazria begins with Hashem teaching Moshe the halachos that apply after a baby is born. On the eighth day, every Jewish baby boy must be given a Bris Milah. When a woman has a baby boy, she is tamei and cannot enter the Mishkan or Mikdash for a total of 40 days. After 40 days, she brings a Korban Olah and Korban Chatas to the Mishkan or Mikdash. Once the korbanos have been offered, she becomes tahor once again. If she gives birth to a girl, she must wait 80 days before offering her korbanos to become tahor.

Hashem tells Moshe and Aharon that someone who has one or more white spots on his skin is brought to the Kohein to be checked. If the Kohein sees white hairs in the discolored spot or a piece of healthy skin in the middle of any white spot, he declares the person tamei. If the Kohein doesn't observe either of these signs, he places the person in quarantine for seven days.

After the week is over, the Kohein reexamines the spots. The Kohein declares the person tamei if two white hairs have grown there, or a spot grew, or a piece of healthy skin appeared in any spot. If the Kohein does not observe any of these three

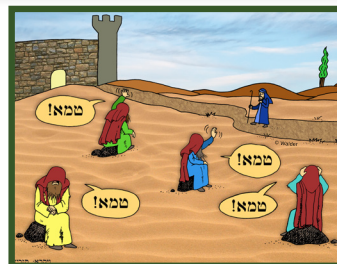
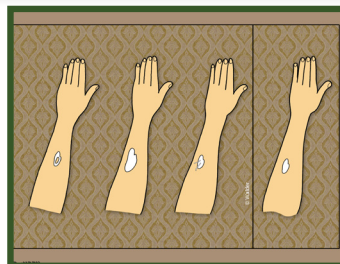
signs, he places the person in quarantine for another week.

If none of these three signs appear a week later, the Kohein pronounces the person tahor. However, if the Kohein checks him and sees even one of these signs, he declares the person tamei. The metzora calls out, "Tameil! Tameil!" to warn others not to touch him, and he is sent outside the machaneh. The metzora must also tear his clothes, cover his face until his mustache, stay away from others, and let his hair grow.

Tzaraas also can be found on clothing as a warning before it appears on a person's skin. If someone notices dark green

or dark red spots on clothing made of wool, linen, or leather, he shows it to the Kohein. The Kohein quarantines the piece of clothing for seven days.

After the week, the Kohein checks to see if the spots have spread. If the tzaraas has indeed spread on the clothing, it is burned. If the spots have not spread on the clothing, the person can wash the garment and close it up for seven more days. If, after the second inspection, the tzaraas disappears, the clothing is immersed in a mikvah and is tahor.



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Middah of the Week: Shemiras Halashon

Parshas Tazria teaches us the punishment for someone who speaks lashon hara. A person may get spots on his house, clothes, or skin. The Kohein would decide if it was tzaraas, a disease that often comes as a punishment for the sin of lashon hara. If a person indeed had tzaraas, he was declared tamei and left the camp for seven days. To become tahor again, he had to bring two birds to the Mikdash. Birds chatter much like the person who chattered inappropriately.

Imagine if tzaraas existed today. How embarrassing it would be to have it on your skin or your clothing! Let's remember not to be like chattering birds and be careful that the words that come out of our mouths don't contain lashon hara.

Making It Real

Rav Yisroel Meir Kagan wrote about the laws of proper speech in his Sefer Chofetz Chaim. He was careful never to speak lashon hara. You might think this was easy for him since he probably was a man of few words and didn't speak much at all. This is not true. The Chofetz Chaim was a very talkative person. He chose to stay away from topics of conversation that could lead to lashon hara. The Chofetz Chaim distanced himself from speaking about people in general. He used his speech for Torah and mitzvos. He talked about things that brought him closer to Hashem.

Did You Know?

- A person who has a habit of speaking lashon hara is called a רכיל. This word makes us think of a peddler who goes door-to-door selling his wares. The lashon hara speaker goes around from person to person sharing juicy bits of gossip and lashon hara.
- One who listens to lashon hara is worse than the person who speaks it. There would be no lashon hara spoken if there were nobody to whom to tell it!
- It is possible to be guilty of lashon hara without saying a single word. Making a face to indicate a negative opinion of someone or writing something bad about someone in a note or text is considered lashon hara too.

Making It Mine

What can you and your friends do to minimize speaking about others?



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Dvar Torah

Parshas Tazria teaches us the laws of tzaraas. The Gemara in Erchin (16a) lists the seven sins for which Hashem punishes a person with tzaraas. The best known of those seven is the aveirah of lashon hara.

A Kohein declares a person with white hairs on his skin tamei and sends him into quarantine. However, the Torah tells us that if a person's skin turns completely white, he is declared tahor by the Kohein (Vayikra 13:13). Why is the person who experiences a total change to white not tamei?

The Chofetz Chaim suggests that the person with some white hairs might easily misinterpret the meaning of his white hairs. He might convince himself that the hairs are meaningless and are a coincidence. When the Kohein informs the metzora that he is tamei, the metzora will understand that Hashem has punished him for his sins.

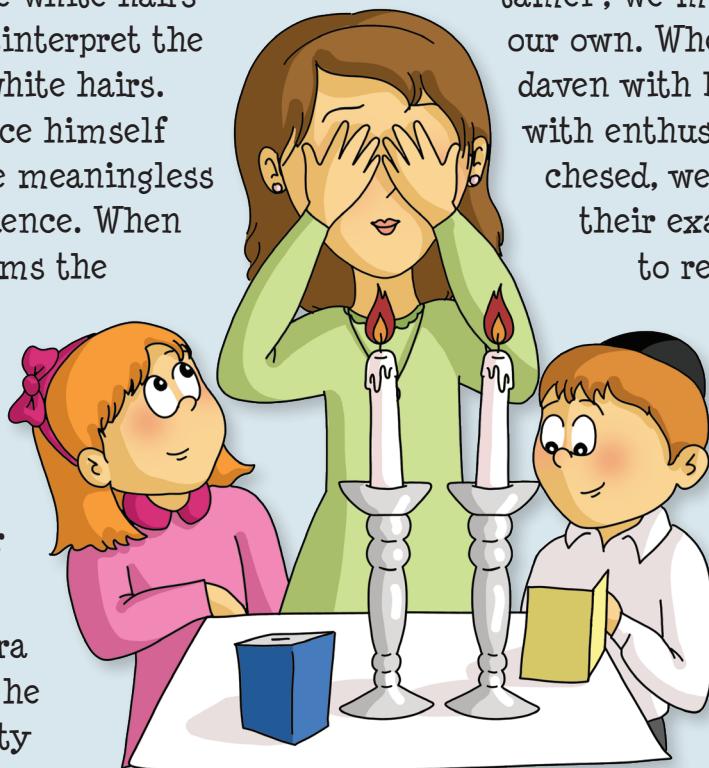
While the metzora is in quarantine, he has an opportunity

to become humble and do teshuvah. He should try to figure out his sins and what caused his poor conduct. The metzora will need to learn how to overcome his faults and improve his middos.

However, the person whose entire skin turned white does not require any help to receive this message. His sad situation demands humility and teshuvah without any additional reminders. He may remain tahor.

As members of Klal Yisrael, we must always try to reach our potential. We cannot wait for a Kohein to declare "tamei"; we must improve on our own. When we see others daven with kavanah, learn with enthusiasm, and perform chesed, we should try to follow their example. We need

to review our actions daily to make sure we are humble and behaving correctly. Our constant efforts to be better Bnei Torah and Bnos Yisrael will bring us closer to Hashem.



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Dvar Torah

In Parshas Tazria, we learn that a person needed to go to Aharon or one of his children, the kohanim, to find out if his affliction was tzaraas (Vayikra 13:2). Rav Yaakov of Aleksander explains why the Torah wanted Aharon and the kohanim to be the ones a person needed to approach to find out if he had tzaraas.

Chazal tell us that tzaraas often came as a punishment for speaking lashon hara. Some people may think that giving factual information is not considered lashon hara. This is not correct.

People justify talking about someone's faults by saying the statement is true. Actually, if there is not a halachically acceptable reason, talking about someone's faults is lashon hara only if the statement is true. If someone says something derogatory about someone that is not true, it is called motzi shem ra.

Aharon Hakohein spent time making peace between people involved in disputes. He would approach one of the people involved and tell them that the other

person regretted what they had done and sincerely wanted to make peace. Aharon would then go to the other person and tell him that the first person regretted his actions. The two people in the argument would reunite and be friends again.

Aharon would tell each person that the other one felt bad about what had happened without knowing that the two people wanted to make up. He did this since one may say something for the sake of shalom, even if it isn't emes.

Rav Yaakov explains that this is why the metzora needed to go to Aharon or a kohein who acted like Aharon. The metzora didn't understand that he should not have made negative statements about someone, even if they were true. Talking with a kohein would teach a metzora that keeping harmony between people is more important than being factual.

When we read Parshas Tazria, we should remind ourselves of what we can learn from Aharon and remember how important it is to Hashem for us to speak nicely about others.

