

Tazria- Metzora

April 16-17, 2021

4-5 Iyaar 5781

The power of speech

In this week's parsha we learn about the birth of a child, and the mother's post birth obligations in the form of sacrifices. We also learn of the commandment of circumcising a son on the 8th day. The Medrish Rabba explains (based on Rashi) that the chronology of Parshas Tazria follows much like the chronology of creation. In that, humans were the final living creation, after animals etc. similarly the impurities and sacrifices precede the Parsha of Tazria. One reason perhaps is that just as the world was prepared and created for humans to arrive to accomplish the goals of Hashem, in the same vein, we are provided with our toolbox before we are born into this world. Only once we have the toolkit can we be born and set out to accomplish our goals.

The 8th day for Bris Mila is explained as superseding the natural order of the world. That is, everything about the Earth falls into a 7-day cycle (i.e., the week) and the 8th day represents the messianic, higher plane, that gives a person the power to even break Shabbos for conducting a Bris. (Unlike any other holy mitzvas of the day, should they fall out on Shabbos, Shabbos' spiritual significance can accomplish the goal, such as pushing off blowing shofar, or shaking the lulav. Whereas Bris is not pushed off).

We find later in the parshas when we learn about the physical impurities as a result of bodily emissions, and or leprosy (due to speaking Lashon Hora), the cycle of management, sequestering, and quarantining, falls on the 7-day cycle.

The Alter Rebbe in a Mamer in Lekutei Torah describes birth, and the power given from the father and the mother to create a child. There are traits of Chesed, and traits of Gevura (it seems in absolute form) that derive from the components of the father, and the mother to create the embryo that creates life. Before creation, the lights of the traits exist in their pure forms, (that is before tzimzum), after the lights are contracted to create the 4 worlds including our physical world, the lights are filtered and enmeshed with one another, such that there is a balance of the characteristics, to co-exist. Because pure character of one cannot coexist with an opposing characteristic. The world of chaos is the lights in their pure form, whereas our balanced world is one that places the character traits on a spectrum of balance so coexistence can take place.

In our humans, because pure Chesed and pure Gevura are channeled through to a child, the experience of life seems chaotic, and our mission is to make order out of the chaos. This is a goal of humans, which is to try and explain and rationalize and create order out of chaos. Now it can be understood why stasis in society seems to revert to chaos, as opposed to order, and there is a huge push by people to create order or abide by systems (whether they are true or not).

The parshas are connected to the affliction of leprosy, in that the ailment is a result of spreading/speaking Lashon Hora, which is an addictive frivolous act, that disbenefits all parties involved, and hence why both the listener and communicator are punished. Similarly, if the Loshan Hora is a central tenet in one's life, the leprosy can spread beyond the body, but to the clothes, house etc. The Torah makes so much emphasis on visuals, and the rectification due to the seriousness of speaking evil of someone. (There are laws about what is allowed to be

communicated, and what is healthy communication about others...but one ought to be extremely careful not to convey negative messages). This is why the Talmud in the beginning of Maseches Pesachim covers a lot on exacting language, and in Shekalim, there are references to portraying oneself in a method that cannot be misconstrued.

Because Loshan Hora is so easy to succumb to, and quite addictive, it is evil, and is a bane of fruitful development, for multiple reasons. Perhaps this is why, right after learning about birth, the Torah juxtaposes the laws of Loshan Hora, to exact to us, and communicate to us, what a house ought to be built on. Furthermore, just as there is a physical marking on us (through the Bris Mila) that makes us holy and chooses us from among the nations (At Vichartanu Mikol Ha'amim), the skin affliction that denigrates us from society, and pushes us out of society as a result of the sin of Loshan Hora, is a physical marking. Furthermore, unlike Bris where we physically have to cut in order for the mark to be evident (notwithstanding, the Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that Bris versus Mila are two parts of the same commandment. Mila is the actual removal of the skin, that can or cannot be performed, but Bris is innate, it is a covenant that is not chosen by the people it is inherent.) The skin affliction arises on its own, because Loshan Hora is the result of qualitative speech, not quantitative. Furthermore, we cannot measure or interpret or truly know if something is Loshan Hora, so it appears on its own.

The Alter Rebbe connects the spiritual gap in one's life that causes leprosy, and if we don't necessarily know the manifestation of the skin ailment today, we know about the reduction in the quality of life as a result of

focusing on frivolous information about other people.

On that note, may we have the power to control our speech, and may we merit to the coming of Mashiach now!

Good Shabbos