



A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Focus

The Kohen will give the order, and [someone] will take, for the [m'tzora, the] person being purified [from tzara'as], two live, clean birds (tzipporim)... (14:4)

RASHI EXPLAINS THAT SINCE TZARA'AS (A SKIN lesion usually mistranslated as leprosy) comes from *lashon hara*—speaking wrongfully about others—this “patient” needs to purify himself by bringing birds that chirp.

Ramban notes that the Hebrew *tzippor* includes all small birds, which generally wake up early in the morning to chirp and sing. Why does the Ramban feel the need to add that birds sing? What is the connection between birds that sing and the *m'tzora*?

We are now at the time of year (see *Mishna B'rura* 226:1) when we say the special

RABBI TZVI FISHMAN



blessing on fruit trees when they blossom:

Blessed are You... Who left nothing lacking in His world, and made in it fine creatures and good trees, with which to give people pleasure. (Siddur)

Is there a connection between that blessing and the period we're in (that between Pesach and Shavu'os), of *s'firas ha'Omer*?

The Jewish people mourns during *s'fira*. The Talmud (Y'vamos 62b) tells us the reason: There was a lack of respect between man and his fellow. With that said, what better time is there than now to focus on Hashem's amazing creatures, and to try to see the good in every Jew, granting him or her respect?

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A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

This week's Torah reading discusses purification—of a woman who gives birth; of people and property who are afflicted with *tzara'as*; and of various other forms of spiritual uncleanness. I am a mohel, and new mothers often ask me the following, somewhat related question:

At what age must a child, with or without his parents' help, wash his hands properly (*negelvasser*, in Yiddish) upon rising in the morning?

There are a number of opinions.

Some hold the obligation begins when a child reaches the age of *chinuch* (religious training). (*Shulchan Aruch Harav* 4:2, *Hali-chos Shlomo* 20). Depending on the child, that would be approximately 5–6 years old. (M.B. 343:3, 640:4)

Others write that once a child is old enough to touch food, his hands should

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TIDBITS OF CINCINNATI JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

On 5 Iyar, 5674 (1914), Cincinnati hosted the founding and first convention of the Mizrahi Organization of America. Rabbi Meir Berlin (later Bar-Ilan), Mizrahi World Organization's secretary, had been traveling around America, gathering support for an American branch. He chose Cincinnati for its formal founding, possibly because of strong support from several prominent Cincinnatians, including Chief Rabbi Avraham Yaacov Gershon Lesser, Dr. Nathan Isaacs (son of R' Shachna), and Max Manischewitz. This might have also been an attempt to weaken the previously anti-Zionist stance of the Reform movement, which had its home in Cincinnati. Seventy-three delegates from approximately thirty Mizrahi chapters attended. The original mission statement read, “Mizrahi's major goal is to establish a safe life for the Jewish people in Eretz-Israel, based on Torah and Judaism.” However, within the next few years the organization also began work on strengthening Torah life in America. Cincinnati would host another Mizrahi convention in 1919. Rabbi Lesser, then president of the Agudas HoRabbanim, was voted Mizrahi's Honorary President at the Philadelphia convention of 1918. 🕍

SOURCES:

- “RABBIS TO ATTEND FIRST ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE MIZRACHI ZIONISTS SOCIETIES OF AMERICA.” CINCINNATI ENQUIRER, APRIL 26, 1914.
- SALMON, YOSEF (1996). THE MIZRACHI MOVEMENT IN AMERICA: A BELATED BUT STURDY OFFSHOOT. AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES: 161-175.)

A RIDDLE FOR YOU

Which mitzvah has only been fulfilled six times in the history of the world?

Look for the answer in two weeks!

PREVIOUS RIDDLE:

Q As a rule, a *Beis Din* (Jewish court of law) deciding a case involving money may not rely on the testimony of a plaintiff's (or a defendant's) relative. In what situation does Jewish law make an exception?

A A father can identify his first-born and entitle that son to a double portion of his estate. (Talmud, Kiddushin 74a). 🕍

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A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

be washed. This is because since *ru'ach ra'a* (a spirit of impurity) adheres to objects that are touched by hands that haven't been ritually washed upon awakening. (M.B. 4:10, based on *P'ri M'gadim*; Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky)

In *Emmes I'Yaakov* (O.C. 4 note 10), Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky is quoted as ruling that once a child is old enough to recite a verse from the Torah, or to answer "Amen" to a blessing, her parents should make sure that her hands are washed properly.

There are those (such as the Ben Ish Chai and the Chida, quoted in *Kaf haChayyim* 4:23) who maintain that even a newborn infant's hands should be washed. This was the recommendation of the Chazon Ish.

Many years ago, I spoke to my Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky, on this topic. After detailing all the various opinions, he suggested that I follow the middle of the road and begin washing a child's hands when he is old enough to touch food and place it in his mouth.

I have heard from R' Shmuel Fuest (in the name of the Steipler Gaon) that a newborn with post-natal physiological jaundice should be washed *negelvasser* every morning. This is a *s'gula* for the baby's bilirubin level to drop, so that the circumcision can take place at its proper time, on the eighth day. 🕊

Focus CONTINUED

Spring is a time when it behooves us to focus on the beautiful world that Hashem created—not only the trees and flowers, but creatures, too! Animals! People!

Rabbi Aharon Leib Shteinman, of blessed memory, points out that Hashem created birds that sing so He could give mankind pleasure. When you wake up on a nice sunny day, with the birds singing, it automatically puts you in a great mood!

The *m'tzora's* downfall was that he did not learn from the beautiful world, the amazing creatures, and the outstanding music of the birds. To correct that, the Torah tells him to take those birds, from which he should have learned, and to bring them as an atonement.

At the Kollel

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WEEKLY

MORE

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Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....
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Monday–Friday 5:50–6:45 AM

🕊️🕊️ Kollel Yisgaber K'ari (amud-a-day of Mishnah B'rurah)

Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....
Monday–Friday 6:55–7:20 AM

🕊️🕊️ Mishnah Kavuah online

two mishnayos and some mussar
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🕊️ Daf Yomi

Rabbi Meir Minster.....
Sunday–Thursday 8–9 PM
Shabbos (at CZE) 1:00 pre-mincha

🕊️🕊️ Night Seder Chabura

in the Annex Library
(Maseches Avodah Zara)
led by Rabbi Tzvi Fishman
Sunday–Thursday 9–9:50 PM
followed by *Ma'ariv* at 9:50

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GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

MIMI AND ALEX WERE A NON-OBSERVANT couple who were learning about Judaism. Mimi, however, was growing much faster than her husband. Mimi even began hosting a regular class given by a local outreach organization. Although her husband dutifully attended, everyone could see he did not appear inspired.

Then the teacher of the class, Rabbi Silverman, had an idea. He started delivering a *Gemara* (Talmud) class prior to the more philosophical class he typically gave. His strategy proved successful. The give

and take of the *Gemara* greatly appealed to Alex. He began to show great enjoyment from the classes.

After several months, the *Siyum haShas* of the *Daf Yomi* (celebrating the completion of its cycle of Talmud learning) was held, and Rabbi Silverman brought along his new pupil.

Awed by the number of Jews gathered to complete the Talmud, Alex asked innocently, "So everyone here really learned the whole Talmud over seven and a half years?"

"Probably many, but not all."

"But they are all rabbis, right?"

"Not at all. There are all kinds of people.

Doctors, lawyers, accountants, computer programmers, professors. You name it, there's probably someone who does it and also learns the *Daf*."

Alex was floored. And inspired.

The next morning he made his way to a *Daf Yomi* class. Pretty soon he was staying for Shacharis (the Morning Service) as well. And seven and a half years later, he made a *siyum* along with the rest of the world.

Then he made a second *siyum* on Shas. Now he's working on a third. 🕊



hitting the books

Our Sages say that every single Jew is as full of mitzvos as a pomegranate is of seeds; it's just a matter of putting oneself into the proper mindset. Focus on the beauty of every Jew! Focus on the beauty of the world! In

that merit, we will no longer have a *s'fira* of mourning but, rather, a *s'fira* of joy, with a rebuilt Beis Hamikdash (Temple) very soon.

Good Shabbos! 🕊