

תזורי

Following G-d

דָבָר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאמֹר אַהֲרֹן כִּי תִזְרִיעַ וְיַלְדָה זָכָר וְטָמֵאָה שְׁבָעַת יְמִים

Speak to the Israelite people thus: When a woman at childbirth bears a male, she shall be *tamei* seven days

ת"ר שלשה שותפים הן באדם הקב"ה ואביו ואמו

There are three partners in the forming of a person: The Holy One, Blessed be He, who provides the soul, and his father and his mother

"Babies are bits of star-dust blown from the hand of God. Lucky the woman who knows the pangs of birth for she has held a star."

– Larry Barretto

A woman goes through the pain of birth, bringing new life into the world and fulfilling the primary commandment to be fruitful, multiply, and populate the earth. Her reward for her heroic endeavor? She becomes *Tamei* for seven days, fourteen if she has a girl. How can the great and beautiful act of bringing a new life into the world bring someone to *tumah*?

The Kotzker Rebbe, in his great wisdom, noted that *tumah* is the net effect of the removal of *kedusha*. When something had *kedusha* and that sanctity was removed, the forces of *tumah* move in to take the place of the *kedusha*. The greater the *kedusha*, the greater the resultant *tumah*.

The Kotzker explains that when a woman gives birth, the *shechinah*, the Divine Presence is there with her. It is the departure of the *shechina* after childbirth that gives way for *tumah* to take hold.

To elaborate on the beautiful thought of the Kotzker: The Gemara in kiddushin tells us that there are three partners in the creation of a human being. Father, mother, and *Hakadosh Baruch hu*. The Gemara continues with a description of the contribution that each of the partners makes in the development of the child. One thing however, is clear. While the *Ribono Shel Olam* forms, shapes, nourishes, and sustains a baby through nine months in the womb, once the baby is born, *Hashem* takes a step back. Then, the Creator of All Life moves Himself into the background and shifts the responsibility for sustaining, nourishing, and raising the child to the parents. It is an amazing thought to consider. The Creator of the Universe hands over the keys to the nurturing and shaping of a new life to human beings. We call those human beings parents.

There is an overarching rule of conduct and practice that

permeates the thought of the *rishonim*. That rule is the principle of *imitatio dei*, the idea that we are supposed to act as G-d acts. We are to follow His lead in acts of kindness and compassion. The greatest manifestation of our following G-d is in creating and raising a new life. It is why the mitzvah to raise a family is considered the greatest mitzvah (*gittin* 42a). It is a great responsibility. It is also the most wonderful privilege.

For nine months, Hashem partners with us in the early stages of the development of a new life. Then he hands the keys to us. He tells us to follow in His path to build a human being. And, just as Hashem created man *b'tzalmo, kidmuso*, so too, He gave us the power to produce offspring *b'tzalmeinu, kidmuseinu*. Being a parent is the greatest G-d-like act we can do.

Parenting is difficult at times and harder at others. But, like all areas, the reward is commensurate with the difficulty. We often get caught in the details of parenthood, from dirty diapers to carpool to PTA conferences and lose sight of the bigger picture. Parenting is a 24/7 exercise in the Divine. It is Hashem himself entrusting us to build His world, and it is a full-time immersion in the first and in some ways, greatest mitzvah in the Torah.

Bear that in mind the next time you feel overwhelmed and underappreciated

Good Shabbos,
Rabbi Yisroel Gottlieb
Principal

מצורע

If You Don't Have Anything Nice to Say – Find Something

זהו על המטהר מן הזרען שבע פעמים וטהרו ושלח את הצפר החיים על פניו השדה

He shall then sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed of the eruption and cleanse him; and he shall set the live bird free in the open country.

It is nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice.

-John Templeton

The *metzorah* has undergone his penance. He has lived in isolation, cast out from the community, and contemplated his place as part of a broader society. Now it is time for him to be rehabilitated and to rejoin the community of the Jewish People. Part of that process is the taking of two birds. One of them will be slaughtered. The other will be dipped into the blood of the slaughtered bird and then set free. Clearly, there is a message to the *metzorah* in the process.

There is a *medrash* that offers that the two birds actually correspond to two types of speech. One represents *lashon hara*, which is what presumably got the *metzorah* in trouble to begin with. The second bird corresponds to *lashon tov*, speaking positively, which at first glance seems out of place in the process. The *medrash* is highlighting a very important idea in the reintegration of the *metzorah* into the social fabric of the community. It would be natural for the *metzorah*, who got into trouble with his speech, to shy away from socialization and conversation. What better way is there to safeguard oneself from *lashon hara* than to not talk at all?

The Torah tells the *metzorah* that this is not what is wanted or expected from him. He is to engage socially and talk to and about others, but he is to engage in only positive speech, not negative. The *metzorah* brings two birds. One that represents gossip and slander is killed, embodying the slaying of the inclination to speak evil. The other, representing good and proper speech is sent out to the field, capturing the idea that good speech should be spread and shared. But, the bird of *lashon tov* is first dipped in the blood of the slaughtered bird, reminding the *metzora* and us that one is never far from gossip and slander and he needs to be ever-vigilant to avoid it.

The *medrash* tells us a fabulous idea. People are very rightly focused on avoiding gossip and evil speech. We do not, however spend nearly enough time on training ourselves in positive speech and conversation.

The *metzora* is purified using a combination of the lowly hyssop and the mighty cedar tree. The hyssop reminds the *metzora* of

the need for humility as he contemplates the inappropriateness of his looking down on others. The cedar represents confidence and self-assuredness. Those are essential elements in *lashon tov*, in positive, good speech. Often, people don't bother to say nice things to another not because they are evil or even unkind. Many people simply think too little of themselves to imagine that a compliment that they pay to another will mean. The cedar wood reminds the *metzorah* of his importance and the importance and value of his *lashon tov*, his kind word.

We have become very cognizant of the need to train our children to avoid speaking *lashon hara*. We have myriad programs and organizations that do incredible work in raising awareness of this most-important issue. We do not spend enough time on training our children in *lashon tov*, in speaking nicely.

In my youth, the oft-repeated adage was "If you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all." It is not terrible advice. But, better advice would be "If you don't have something nice to say, figure out what's wrong with you."

The *shelah* in a beautiful read of *possuk* in this week's first *Parsha* explains the double phrase *tamei tamei yikra* to mean that he who is *tamei* will call everything else impure. If one sees only impurity and flaws in others, that is a sure sign of impurity and flaws within himself. Having nothing nice to say is an indication that you are in need of some serious spiritual help.

We must train our children from their youth to judge others favorably, to speak positively and to recognize the power that is contained in their words, even as small children. Let's teach them to compliment one another and the adults in their world, to always find something positive to say, and to make *lashon tov* a habit. Let's make them feel important enough to be nice!

Good Shabbos,
Rabbi Yisroel Gottlieb
Principal



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פרשיות חורף ומצורע שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום



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First

Last

Name of תלמיד (Please Print Clearly)

Class: (Please Check One)

- 1st Grade – 5 פסוקים
- 2nd Grade – 10 פסוקים
- 3rd Grade – 15 פסוקים
- 4th Grade – 20 פסוקים
- 5th Grade – 25 פסוקים
- 6th Grade – 30 פסוקים
- 7th Grade – 40 פסוקים
- 8th Grade – The whole פרשה

שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום for this in the amount specified for his class.

Parent's signature
