



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

A Half Blessing

Presented by Rabbi Zacharia Schwartz, Kollel Adjunct

In this week's *Parsha*, the *Torah* describes the *Tzara'as* affliction and the various forms that it can take. When looking at *Chazal's* explanations regarding *Tzara'as*, the overwhelming impression is that it is a spiritual illness that comes as a punishment for certain sins and negative character traits. On the other hand, we have a statement from *Chazal* that the *Tzara'as* found on the walls of a house sometimes served as a means to bring great wealth to its owner. *Chazal* explain that when the house would be torn down in accordance with the laws of *Tzara'as*, the owner of the house would find hidden treasure in the walls of the house, placed there by the previous Canaanite owner. This begs the question: how can it be that *Tzara'as* was simultaneously a punishment and a means to grant wealth?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein explains that while the owner of this afflicted house may have experienced a net material gain, *Hashem* could have brought him or her the treasure in a way that didn't incur any loss at all, had he or she been deserving. Rabbi Feinstein goes on to explain that every dollar that the homeowner lost due to the destruction of the house could have been used for charity and should therefore truly be seen as a loss.

This is an important perspective on the true value of our resources. It is incumbent on us to view every resource that *Hashem* gives to us – whether it is time, money, talent, personality, etc. – as a means to serve *Hashem* better in our own unique way. Let us see to it that we take stock of our resources and recognize their true value, allowing us to take full advantage of them.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos!

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TABLE TALK

Point to Ponder

On the day that healthy flesh appears in it... (13, 14)

Why does the verse say "on the day?" To teach that there are days when a kohen does not go to look at a tzoraas in order to contaminate it... a groom during the seven days of celebration after his wedding. (Moed Kattan 7b)

The seven days of celebration after the wedding are a Rabbinic enactment. (Rosh, Kesubos 1, 5)

How can a Rabbinic enactment delay the fulfillment of the Torah obligation of determining if something or someone has tzoraas?

Parsha Riddle

How does Bris Mila relate to the laws of tumah and tahara (purity and impurity)?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

When did a non-kohen perform the Avoda (Temple Service)?

Answer: Moshe performed the Avoda during the dedication of the Mishkan.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

Parshas Tazria is named for its second verse: "When a woman conceives [tazria] and gives birth to a male ..." This translation (from ArtScroll) of tazria - from the root zera ("seed") - as "conceive" follows Rashbam, but the Talmud interprets this unusual word differently:

If the woman emits seed first, she gives birth to a male, and if the man emits seed first, she gives birth to a female, as it is stated: "If a woman bears seed and gives birth to a male" (Niddah 31a)

What the Talmud means by the woman emitting seed first is unclear, but in any event, it proceeds to suggest that people may utilize this biological information to select the gender of their children. R. J. David Bleich infers from this that the Torah has no fundamental objection to gender selection per se, and any halachic concerns will be only with regard to the particular methods employed (Judaism and Healing 129).

With modern technology, gender selection is generally performed using one of two methods:

- Sperm sorting: sperm is sorted into X and Y chromosome bearing populations, and the appropriate sperm is then utilized for artificial insemination (IUI) or in-vitro fertilization (IVF).
- Preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD): embryos created via IVF are biopsied to determine their gender, and those of the desired gender are then transferred to the uterus.

Halachic authorities are generally opposed to the use of IUI and IVF for purely elective reasons, and so are reluctant to endorse the use of the above methods of gender selection (which require the use of IUI or IVF) for couples able to conceive normally. Where parents already have a number of children of one gender, and strongly desire a child of the other, some authorities do permit these methods of gender selection in limited circumstances.

Where IUI or IVF is being performed regardless (such as in cases of infertility), there is less reason to object to the use of gender selection technology. Some authorities are still uncomfortable with it on theological grounds, as per the Talmudic exhortation "**Why do you involve yourself with the secrets of the Holy One, Blessed be He?**" (Berachos 10a), although it is difficult to articulate the precise principle being invoked here (Nishmas Avraham (2nd edition) EH pp. 8-9, Tradition 40.1 pp. 45-78).

PRESENTED BY
RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I stopped travel.
2. I separate.
3. I am a treasure hunt.
4. I am bad in the middle.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I cause double.
2. I came from man.
3. Man comes from me.
4. I am not bound by time bound.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Shemini/Eight (I am for the covenant, I was for the consecration, I am for an extra yomtov, I name this week.)

#2 Scales (I don't measure weight, I am fishy business, I am a sign of purity, I am not for climbing a cliff)

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Mazel Tov to all the participants who recently completed Hilchos Muktzah and to all those who took the test!

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