

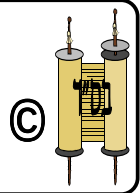


Kinder Torah

Parashas Tazria/Metzora

Dedicated in Loving Memory of Avigdor Ben Avraham and Breina Chaya Bas Efraim

Mr. and Mrs. Victor Groffman ז"ל ♦ Yahrtzeit ז'איר ז'איר



A Beautiful Building

"Good morning my dear husband, how are you?"

"Wonderful, my dear wife. How are you?"

"Fantastic. Did you have a good talk with Hashem this morning?"

"Yes dear, my *tefillah* was wonderful. I also had another inspiring experience while I was sitting in our new Beit HaKnesset which is still under construction."

"What happened?"

"The workers are in the process of building a wall made of cinder blocks. After the *tefillah*, I watched them work for a few minutes. They were finishing off one row of blocks. The worker cemented the last block in the row. He stepped back for a moment, took a deep breath, and admired his work. The wall was straight and strong. He had accomplished something important. Then he picked up another block, filled his trowel with cement, and began to build the next row."

"That is wonderful! The building is really progressing. Everyone must be so happy. However, you said that the experience was inspiring. What is so inspiring about a worker building a wall of cinder blocks?"

"The building of the wall reminded me of Sefiras HaOmer. There is a famous question asked about the way that we count the Omer. Why do we count the Omer upward from one to forty-nine? Why don't we count downward from forty-nine to one? After all, we are eagerly anticipating the arrival of Shavuot, the day of Matan Torah. Wouldn't it make sense to count the days left until that great event?"

"Yes, it seems so."

"**R**av Shimshon Pincus ז"ל relates another aspect of Sefiras HaOmer which answers this question. As we all know, this period of time is a tremendous opportunity for spiritual growth. We are 'building our *neshamos* (souls)' up to higher and higher spiritual levels. That can be compared to the worker building the wall of cinder blocks. He builds it one row at a time. Each row rests upon the previous one. Each one reaches a higher level than the row before it. The worker experienced a feeling of satisfaction when he completed a row of the wall.

"So too it is with Sefiras HaOmer. We count upward because we are moving upward. We are working on our *middos* (character traits), trying to perfect ourselves. Each day is like another block, another step on the road to completion. Each week we work on a different *middah*. Finishing a week is like finishing a row of the wall. We can gaze with satisfaction upon our work. Look at how

much I have built! What an accomplishment! Look at how beautiful it is! Then we must move on to the next week, the next *middah*, the next row of the wall. Until finally, after seven weeks, we have finished the structure and built . . . a complete human being. A person with superlative *middos*, who is now fit to receive Hashem's Torah. What a beautiful structure! What a sight to behold!"

"That is so inspiring! May I add something to your lovely words?"

"Yes, of course."

"**T**he *middah* that we work on this week is *tiferes*, which means beauty. Not physical attractiveness, but spiritual beauty. During this week we attach ourselves to beautiful things – Hashem's mitzvos. There is nothing in Hashem's glorious world that is more beautiful than a mitzvah. A beautiful person is one who is always busy with beautiful things. He has no interest in foolishness. If it is not beautiful, he wants no part of it. It is not fitting for him. Therefore he puts his full energy into glorifying his soul with Hashem's wonderful mitzvos."

"Splendid."

"There is one more point. When we beautify our souls with mitzvos, we allow Hashem to bring more beauty into this world. He can bestow more and more Torah and mitzvos upon our nation, making the world an even more beautiful place. It is an upward cycle. Row after row of beauty, glory, and splendor."



Kinderlach . . .

The Mishna states, "Rebbe says, 'Which is the straight path that a person should choose? Everything that brings *tiferes* to the one who does it, and people glorify him for it' (Pirkei Avos 2:1). Rashi comments that a person who commits an *aveyra* (sin) will surely regret it. However, if he is presented with the opportunity to take the straight path and do a mitzvah, he should do it. This will bring him great personal happiness. Additionally, others will glorify and praise him for the wonderful thing that he has done. Rabbeinu Yona adds that Hashem glorifies a person when he performs a mitzvah. This is the only true beauty that a person can acquire. Therefore we should all choose this path. Kinderlach, live a life of beauty. Follow the advice of our sages and take the mitzvos. Every one is a true beauty."

The Disease

"If a person will have on the skin of his flesh *s'eis* (a swelling), *sapachas* (a scab), or *baheres* (a bright spot)" (Vayikra 13:2). These are types of *tsoraas*, a terrible skin disease that existed in the times of our forefathers. There are many opinions as to

the causes of *tsoraas*. The Keli Yakar offers his explanation. *Tsoraas* comes from the word *metzarah*. *Metzarah* is a contraction of *motzi ra* (brings out the bad). If we have sinned in private, the effects of that sin remain hidden inside of us. The disease brings the bad effects of that sin to the surface of our bodies for all to see. The Keli Yakar continues by enumerating some of the sins that can cause *tsoraas*.

"**S**'eis" is a swelling of the skin to above normal height. This is a result of a swelling of the ego. Pride and haughtiness are sinful character traits. When a person contracted *s'eis*, it was a sign from Hashem that he needed to humble himself. "*Sapachas*" was a growth on the skin similar to a scab. The desire to acquire money caused *sapachas*. Spiritual acquisitions that a person makes (such as wisdom, good character traits, and integrity) become a permanently fixed part of him. Material possessions just surround the person (like a scab) and ultimately do not stay with him. "*Baheres*", a white patch of skin comes from speaking *loshon hora*. The speaker embarrasses his friend and "whitens" his face in public. Therefore, his skin turns white.

Kinderlach . . .

Do you remember the Megilla that we read on Purim? "Haman told them about the honor of his wealth, and his many sons, and the many ways which the king had promoted him and elevated him above the officers and royal servants" (Esther 5:1). "Haman said in his heart, 'Whom would the king especially want to honor more than me?'" (Esther 6:6). Haman is an excellent example of pride and haughtiness. "I want this." "I need money to go buy that." "I have no money for *tsedaka* (charity) because I spent it all on candy." If you find yourself saying things like this, it is a sign of a desire for money. "He's fat." "She cheated." "Her charm is all a fake act to win friends." These are all *loshon hora*. All of these sins brought *tsoraas* to the person. Guard yourself from this terrible plague.

Parasha Questions:

- How long is the first seclusion period of the metzarah who has *seis*, *sapachas*, or *baheres*? (13:4) The second period? (13:5)
- What part of the body does *nesek* afflict? (13:29,30)
- What does the *tsoruah* do to his clothing and hair? (13:45) Where does he sit? (13:46)

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