



Ohr Yerushalayim News

ח - תשע"ח - איר תשע"ח - תזריע מצורע - 21st April 2018 - Volume 10 - Issue 38

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Charles Bursk on the birth of a baby girl Miriam Shifra
Kiddush This Shabbos

There will be a Kiddush after Davening sponsored by Mr & Mrs Lenny Horwitz in honour of their forthcoming aliya. We wish them all the best with their move and thank them for their dedication to the Kehilla over the years.

Siyum Mishnayos

Once again we will have a Siyum Mishnayos the Shabbos after Shavuot that we have learned together as a Kehilla. This year we will be learning Sedorim Taharos and Zeroim. Members are encouraged to learn Mishnayos individually or Bechavrusa, the list is on the notice wall in the foyer.

Surprises aren't always bad

Dani Epstein

The Alfa Romeo 4C is a mid-engined sports car with a 1.7 litre engine that can hit 100kmh from a standing start in 4.5 seconds. Hardly surprising, since the car only weighs 895kg. So, when a quarter mile race is proposed between a car like this and a seven-seater electric car, no surprises are expected. Except that this electric Previa is in fact a Tesla Model X, which despite it being a nice SUV with plenty of luggage space beat the Alfa Romeo hands down. But here is the real shocker: it was pulling another Alfa Romeo on a trailer while racing the first one. Yup, no-one expects the Spanish Inquisition.

Here is the thing: we have certain expectations that have become ingrained in our cultural psyche, and when the really unexpected comes along it's usually quite a surprise. Then there are things that are quite the opposite; you walk past a building every day to work, for example, and after many years you suddenly realise that the top window is round and has a mogen dovid in it. Despite seeing the building every day, there was that single element that eluded your attention until now.

So it is with the metzora. We know all about him. His skin underwent an unnatural colour change, after a close examination the kohen declared him tomei, and off he sadly tootled to the little hut outside the city limits where his ilk were secluded. Nothing to see here, keep moving.

Now he's back, and already right at the kick-off there are many odd things going on that one would hardly notice unless you hang around and stop to look.

"ואת תהיה תזרת המצורע ביום שהתרתו" - this should be the law of the metzora on the day of his purification".

I'm very reluctant to use words like "pure" or "holy", because they are in my oh-so-considered opinions way off the mark and have been imported from Christianity, so when I do employ them, kindly regard them as placeholders rather than actual translations. Thank you.

The next thing we are told is: "והובא אל-הכהן" - and he should be brought to the Kohen". Things take a strange turn at the very next verse, however.

"והוצא הכהן אל-מחוז למחנה" - and the Kohen shall go outside of the camp". Wait a minute, didn't we just read that the metzora should be brought to the kohen? So where is he he? In or out? Is he going to the kohen, or the kohen to him?

OK, never mind that, how about the next bit. We have the metzora standing by to start the purification procedure, and there is some kit he needs to gather first. Specifically: "תולעת ואבן שתי-צפירים תיות טהרות ועץ ארז ושני" - two live kosher birds, some cedar wood, wool (or silk) dyed red (with something similar to cochineal) and hyssop."

לעלו נשמת דוב יצחק ב"ר אפרים אלחנן ז"ל

הגבהה - גלילה

The person who is honoured with the מצוה of הגבהה should open the ספר to the nearest seam. Showing just three columns he should lift the ספר and turn to his left, showing the writing to the people on his right. Then, turning back again to his right to show the writing to the people on his left. Then stepping backward he is facing the ארון קודש and the writing is facing the people behind the בימה. At each point he should pause long enough for people who are close enough to be able to read from the כתב.

When sitting down the גולל should roll the two sides together ensuring that the parchment is not creased and that the side containing בראשית is above the other roll. Ensuring that the binding is correct he should then put on the mantel to complete his מצוה.

Both the גולל and מגביה should wait on the בימה to follow the ספר תורה back to the ארון קודש.

So what kind of birds were specified here? For every other korban that involved birds only two species were allowed: בני יונה or תורים; turtledoves or pigeons. Here the specification is much looser; they just have to be "live" and kosher. Otherwise, anything will do.

What happened with them anyway? One was set free, and the other was not treated in the same way as all the other bird korbonos - it was shechted outside of the Mishkon or city limits rather than killed using melika and was neither נחטאת, עולה nor חטאת. This again was unique to the metzora.

Then there is the mysterious purpose of the red string, a lump of cedar and some hyssop? These were not the sort of thing that was brought as a korbon altogether. And on the eighth day, which was the most important part of the process, there is no mention of cedar, red string or hyssop.

Why did the metzora have to go through two essentially identical processes, on the first and eighth day, when he had to shave his whole body and toivel himself and his clothes in a mikveh? Surely this seems to be an unnecessary duplication?

If these were the only strange things going on, that in itself would be sufficient for a great deal of curiosity, but there is in fact an entire world of difference between the metzora and just about everyone else, so let's

The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת תזריע מצורע

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|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1st Mincha / Candle Lighting | 6.30pm / Not before 6.50pm |
| 2nd Mincha / Candle Lighting | 7.15pm / 7.23pm - 7.40pm |
| Seder HaLimud | 8.40am |
| Shacharis | 9.00am |
| סוף זמן ק"ש | 9.32am |
| 1st Mincha | 2.00pm |
| 2nd Mincha | 6.00pm |
| 3rd Mincha | 8.11pm |
| Rov's Shiur | Following |
| Maariv & Motzei Shabbos | 9.16pm |
| Sun | 7.15am / 8.20am |
| Mon / Thurs | 6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am |
| Tues / Wed / Fri | 6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am |
| Mincha & Maariv | 7.45pm |
| Late Maariv | 10.00pm |

see what the Abravanel has to offer in clarification.

First, let's deal with the little conundrum at the beginning. Who goes to whom? Does the kohen go out to the metzora, or does the metzora bring things to the kohen- והובא אל-הכהן or מהחזן למחנה ויצא הכהן אל-? Well, the metzora was still in a tomei state, so he clearly could not enter the camp. What והובא אל-הכהן means is that these items were brought to the kohen outside the camp where he had conducted his final examination of the metzora, and that these were paid for out of the metzora's finances. The metzora wasn't going anywhere. Not just yet.

So, what's with the birds? They had to be wild birds as opposed to domestic – that's the meaning of תיית, capable of long flight, unlike chickens who can fly but not very far. That rules out turkeys in a big way. More on that in a moment, however.

The cedar wood came in the form of a staff, and cedar is a highly prized wood, known for its fine grain, attractive colour and fragrance. Trees grow up to 40m in height and up to 2.5m in diameter.

The אזוב however has left me rather mystified. The Abravanel seems to think it's a very lowly tree physically, but neither Hyssopus officinalis nor Origanum syriacum (also known as bible hyssop) fit the bill. Both are native to the Middle East; the former includes the chemicals thujone and phenol, which give it antiseptic properties and latter is used as a spice and grow to about a meter in height. Neither of them are "lowly" plants as the Abravanel and others suggest, based on the posuk in Melochim 1:13 which describes the breadth of King Shlomo's intelligence. אשר יצא – and he [Shlomo] spoke [of] the trees, from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop [that grows] out of the wall". Here the suggestion is that the אזוב plant is the other end of the spectrum of trees. Whatever it was, it certainly was nothing grand.

is well know to us from the construction of the Mishkon. The confluence of all these things within the purification process of the metzora is quite puzzling however.

In order to get a handle on all this, we have to understand a fundamental concept that carries right across the board for every mitzvah. Simply carrying out a mitzvah without understanding the thought that goes behind it misses the point; we have to have some kind of understanding at whatever level we can muster in order to achieve the purpose of the actions of the mitzvah. There is a symbiotic relationship between the intellectual and physical nature of mitzvos, and therefore the symbolism has to be appreciated inasmuch as the complex details have to be studied as well. One without the other is like a body without a soul.

When I went to school I was told that tzora'as was an affliction brought about by loshon hora'ah. Nothing wrong with that other than Chazal saying something quite different in Pesikta Rabosi (14):

וידבר על העצים מן הארז ועד האזוב אשר יצא בקיר וכי אפשר לו לאדם לדבר על העצים אלא אמר שלמה מן הארז ועד האזוב אשר יצא לקיר מפני מה מצורע מטהר בגבוה שבגבוהים ובנמוך שבנמוכים בעצי ארז ואזוב שני תולעת ע"י שאדם מגביה כארז לוקה בצרעת וכיון שהוא משפיל עצמו כאזוב מתרפא

"and he [Shlomo] spoke to the trees, from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop [that grows] out of the wall. Is it possible for a man to speak to trees? No, [it means that] Shlomo said '...from the cedars of Lebanon to the ezov that grows from the walls, how does a metzora purify, with the tallest of the tall and lowest of the low with the wood of cedar and ezov and scarlet thread, through which a person who as tall as cedar is struck with tzora'as and brings himself as low as ezov and is cured."

Therein lies the symbolism of the cedar staff and, well, clearly not hyssop as it is not a wood, but ezov – whatever it is. The combination of the two contrasting woods were there to ram home a simple point.

It does not stop there, however. The Abravanel lists four things that the afflicted suffered from. His flesh, his bodily fluids, his appearance and his smell. The flesh was clearly affected, and that could be seen even from a distance. His bodily fluids were also affected, and they changed his pallor, as well as making him smell bad. All in all, it was quite an unpleasant experience.

In addition to all this, he was distanced in two spheres: that of the rest of the populace since he had to live outside the city limits, and from Hashem as well.

In order to reverse this he needed two processes of purification. One to return him to civilisation and another to bring him back to Hashem, since once he was tohor he was allowed to touch and consume all things kodesh again.

The first process involved bringing two live birds of no specific species, and that symbolised his physical cure, and that he was now fully alive, so to speak. Lebanon Cedar is quite well known for lasting considerably

longer than most woods – Wikipedia has it as: "it is exceptionally durable and immune to insect ravages", and symbolised the cure of his physical weaknesses. The scarlet thread symbolised the cure of his blood, which affected his pallor. The ezov symbolised the return of a pleasant body odour, in contrast to the mouldering smell the tzoraas caused.

The first bird was slaughtered over a bowl of fresh water, and it's blood ran into it and mixed into the water.

These three symbols – cedar, ezov and scarlet thread as well as the second bird were dipped into the bowl to symbolise that although both birds were brought alive to the kohen, by the command of Hashem one died and the other lived. So it is with man; one lives whilst the other dies, and there occasions where it leaves us mystified.

The earthenware bowl symbolises man, who is like a piece of pottery, formed by His maker and everyone stands before Him כחומר ביד היוצר, like clay in the hands of a potter.

Fresh water symbolises the Torah, and this individual who failed to keep the Torah correctly caused the death of the bird that was slaughtered.

All of the symbols were dipped into the water to signify that tzoraas was not a physical ailment, but a physical manifestation of a spiritual illness.

The mixture of water and blood was then sprinkled seven times in order to hint to the verse "שבע יפול צדיק וקם – the righteous falls seven times and gets up. Just because this metzora fell does not mean he cannot rise again, and rise to greatness.

Finally the live bird was let free to fly away and go about its business just like the metzora is now enjoined to do, and the slaughtered bird was not burnt on the mizbeach because it was not a korban.

When it comes to the mikveh, the washing of body and clothing as well as the shaving, this was giving the metzora a fresh start. Some of his air would have fallen out, his clothing became dishevelled and contaminated by the tzoraas and he smelled quite ripe at that point. Upon his return, he was going to have to look presentable, and these last steps facilitated that. The waters used to clean himself and his clothing also reinforced the spiritual nature of tzoraas in that he did not need medication to effect a cure, but simply water.

The seven days he spent back in the city but outside of his house was to give him an additional step before returning fully to society and Hashem, in that although he was back to civilisation, he was still in physical recovery and needed that extra week to adjust, recover and be fully fit when returning to Hashem and his wife.

The three korbonos he brought represented – above all – the acknowledgement that he had sinned, and that he required teshuvah. He might have know which incident caused him to finally be struck by tzoraas, so for that he brought a chatos. If he was not sure, that would require an oshom, hence those two korbonos. Once he had atoned for his sins, the final korbon, the olah, was there to bring him back and closer to Hashem.

We no longer have tzoraas, and so it begs the question why we should still invest any effort in studying it. You might argue that מהרה יבנה המקדש and it will return. Who knows? Yet there is a fundamental lesson to be learned from all this.

Yiddishkeit is all about balance. אם אין אני לי מי לי? If I don't stick up for myself, who will? בשבילי נברא העולם - the world was created for me. This is all true, and all vital for a normal existence. The flip side of the coin is and if I do stick up for myself, what am I? This is the full spectrum of self-worth: nothing to everything. We have to find the happy medium.

In the case of the metzora, he took things too far. Perhaps he was an important public figure with a budget of billions to deal with. He was the Minister of Health, and by his word people lived or died. Fine, it's an important job. You are an important person. But then again, so is the window cleaner in the eyes of Hashem, and therefore he has to be important in your eyes too. He is not a number, a cost, a process; he is one of Hashem's children, so don't lord it over him.

This is an astonishing yet fundamental concept in that as much as we are not socialists or communists, in fact we are more capitalistic than anything, we still have to ensure that we afford the proper kovod to everyone and anyone, not just externally but internally as well. Tzoraas was an external manifestation of an internal malaise. In this day and age, how easy is it for us to mistreat someone on the basis of some perceived fault – they are not frum enough, too frum, wrong kind of frum, who knows what. It's not our business. It's not our job. It's not what Hashem is asking from us. We are neither judge, nor jury nor executioner.

If you want to know how to treat someone, ask yourself how you would treat them if tzoraas could manifest itself for simply thinking or doing the wrong thing to them and take it from there.