

Metzora

28th of 54 sedras; 5th of 10 in Vayikra



Written on 159 lines • ranks: 40th

6 Parshiyot, 3 open and 3 closed

90 p'sukim, rank 42 (5th in Vayikra)

1274 words, rank 39 (4th in Vayikra)

4697 letters, rank 39 (4th in Vayikra)

M'tzora's p'sukim are longer than average, hence its rise in ranking for words & letters

MITZVOT

11 mitzvot - all positive (just 5 other sedras have only positive mitzvot: B'reishit (1), Lech L'cha (1), Chukat (3), Pinchas (6), Vayeilech (2) - M'tzora has the most by far)

FYFI: Vayishlach, B'shalach, Vayakhel are the only sedras with only mitzvot Lo Taasei - one each.



[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND

Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI (positive mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek and pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya 12 p'sukim - 14:1-12

[P> 14:1 (20)] The afflictions presented in Tazria are immediately dealt with by the procedures described in M'tzora.

The main theme of M'tzora is the "ritual purification" of the one afflicted with Tzora'at. These procedures constitute a positive mitzva [173, A110 14:2]. Two birds are to be taken, a ceremony is performed with them, one bird is slaughtered, and the other is set free. The person immerses in a mikve, he cleans his garments, and he shaves all the hair on his body [174, A111 14:9]. The rules of ritual immersion in general, come from this context [175, A109 14:9].

LDT The 12th and final chapter of Mishna Chulin deals with the mitzva of Shilu'ach HaKen (the sending away of the mother bird who is on her nest of eggs or fledglings). The final mishna in that chapter deals with the situation when that mitzva might clash with the purification of the M'tzora. What if the only bird available to the M'tzora for his atoning offerings is a mother sparrow hovering over her nest? Do we say the positive mitzva of Taharat



HaM'tzora overrides the prohibition of taking the mother bird? This would seem to fit a general rule: a positive commandment overrides a prohibition (Asei docheh lo taasei). Yet this is not the case. Even for a mitzva, and even when the bird will be released alive(!), as is the case of the second of the M'tzora's two birds, one may not violate the Shilu'ach HaKen prohibitions. There are technical reasons based on the wording in the text of the Torah for this. And, Shilu'ach HaKen is not a "simple" prohibition, but involves an attached positive command.

But there might be another concept here. Shilu'ach HaKen is a "show-case" mitzva. It is one of the rare mitzvot for which a reward is specified - Arichat Yamim (lengthening of life, the exact meaning of this is not clear - does it apply to this world or the next or both? - but the reward is expressed). The mitzva defies common logic and reasoning. It contains enigmatic qualities of a CHOK - a Divine imperative, not readily explainable. And its reward is implied for many other mitzvot by reasoning of a Kal VaChomer - if this mitzva is rewarded thusly, then certainly the more difficult mitzvot must carry with them great reward. (Although we are cautioned not to act in order to receive reward, and although we cannot compare one mitzva with another since we "don't know how G-d keeps score", we do have a sense of the truth

of the logic expressed by the mishna.) Be that as it may, we can possibly learn that the pursuit of personal improvement may not be at the expense of others, be they human or animal. [Note: this is only food for thought, might not even be "correct" for this issue. One should not generalize to other areas of mitzva.]

BTW, the "rule" mentioned earlier whereby a positive commandment (sometimes) pushes aside a prohibition, does not operate when it is possible to satisfy the command without violating the prohibition. Since there is no requirement to take specifically a mother bird that is hovering over her nest, then the positive commandment of TAHA-RAT HAM'TZORA cannot override the LO TIKACH HA'EIM AL HABANIM prohibition of Shilu'ach HaKen. Additionally, Shilu'ach HaKen is not a pure prohibition because of the positive command to verily chase away the mother bird - SHALEI'ACH T'SHALACH... But the original point is still something to ponder.

Levi - Second Aliya 8 p'sukim - 14:13-20

The purification process is completed after bringing various korbanot, following a seven day period and the other procedures, as mentioned above **[176, A77 14:10]**.

SDT Notice how the M'tzora is



isolated from others during the time he is ritually unclean. That gives him time to examine himself, his deeds, his thoughts. But as part of the process of purification, as part of the process of having a second chance in the world, he is ministered to by a kohen who becomes the first contact in his renewal procedure. There is a significant psychological factor at work in the area of NEGA'IM.

On another note... Notice the use of the blood of the korbanot as well as the oil that the purifying M'tzora brings. Many of the same things are done to both - sprinkling, dabbing the right earlobe, right thumb and right big toe.

Shlishi - Third Aliya 12 p'sukim - 14:21-32

[S> 14:21 (12)] A person who cannot afford the animals for the sacrifices, is to bring one sheep and two birds as his offering. The Torah describes the rituals involved in these offerings.

It is not important how much the sacrifice is worth on a dollars and cents basis (shekels and agorot), but what is relative to the means of the atoner.

Thus ends the section of the Torah dealing with afflictions to the individual. ZOT TORAT... this is the body of law of one afflicted who

cannot afford the full set of korbanot.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya 21 p'sukim - 14:33-53

[P> 14:33 (25)] The Torah next discusses Tzora'at that can afflict a person's house. This can only be in the Land of Israel, in a house made of specific materials, and under specific conditions **[177, A103 14:35]**. Once again, it is the kohen who makes the determination as to whether Tzora'at does exist, or a professional house painter should be consulted. In the case of a "house plague", there are procedures to be followed and purification processes, including korbanot to be brought.

SDT Not only does a person's body contain elements of spirituality, but even his home - specifically in Eretz Yisrael. Although we do not "practice" this whole topic today, the lessons of the bridge and connection between the physical world and the spiritual one cannot be overlooked. A person whose home is a meeting place for Torah scholars, a launching pad for acts of charity and kindness, a training ground for a new generation of sensitive, feeling, enthusiastic Jews, such a home cannot be infected by spiritual plague. A home devoid of spirituality is a prime target for Nig'ei HaBayit. In this case, it is not the anti-rust and anti-mold paint that makes the difference. It is the values

that a Jew lives by and their effect on the next generation.

It is worthwhile to point out that the manifestation of a NEGA and some kind of rot, mold, fungus, or whatever can be EXACTLY the same. If a kohen sees it and declares ritual impurity, then it is a NEGA HABAYIT. And if he doesn't see it (and doesn't say it!), then it isn't. Even if a non-kohen expert in the field identifies it as a NEGA. And it is possible that a kohen was about to declare a house TAMEI and he finds out the homeowner is a CHATAN in his first week of marriage, then he won't make the declaration and there is no TUM'A. It is all "the way a kohen sees it".

Let's contrast this kind of TUM'A to that of TUM'AT MEIT. If a person dies in a tent, let's say, then anyone in the tent becomes TAMEI. Same for objects that are subject to contracting that TUM'A. No one declares them TAMEI. They are automatically TAMEI by virtue of the fact that they were under the same roof as a dead body. But with NEGA HABAYIT, we find different rules. People and personal possessions are removed from the house before the kohein comes in to inspect. When he declares the house TAMEI, then it is and so are certain objects in it. An object that was in the same house minutes before - and nothing physically changed with the house in the meantime - but was removed before the declaration by the kohein, is

TAHOR. Maybe we can say that TUM'AT MEIT is objective while the TUM'A of these N'GA'IM is subjective. There's a lot to ponder here.

GIMATRIYA

based on

L'ORA SHEL TORA by
R. Yaakov Auerbach ש"ת

Our sources clearly state that the (main) cause of Tzora'at is Lashon HaRa. This idea is beautifully reflected in the following Gimatriya.

The numeric value of NEGA TZORA'AT is 883. The prohibition of gossip and "evil tongue" is LO TEILEICH RACHIL B'AMECHA, "do not be a talebearer". Its numeric value is 883. Punishment for violating the 883-prohibition of Lashon HaRa is the 883-affliction of Tzora'at.

More... The proper way to avoid both the violation and its punishment is with MIDOT TOVOT (good personality traits) = 883.

And if we all can avoid Lashon HaRa and its punishment by developing those good traits, then TIZKU L'GEULA SHLEIMA (you shall merit the Complete Redemption) = 883.

Chamishi 5th Aliya 19 p'sukim - 14:54-15:15

This portion begins with a summary of different types of N'GA'IM.



The smallest p'sukim in the Torah have 3 words each. There are only 13 in the whole Torah. Here in M'tzora are two 3-word p'sukim back-to-back - unique. Is there anything special about these 3-word p'sukim? Perhaps. In some Sidurim there is the list of the 3-word p'sukim (plus some "special" p'sukim from Tanach) in the Motza'ei Shabbat readings (after Z'mirot). It is probably Kabbalistic.

[P> 15:1 (15)] Next the Torah speaks of the status of a man with an "unnatural discharge" (probably a form of venereal disease). In such cases, the Torah view matters as a combination of physical symptoms with spiritual causes - in the case of "Zav" and "Zava", most probably attributable to sexual misconduct. (As such, there is a close relationship between the different themes of the sedra. Interesting, is it not, that there are doctors and clinics today that specialize in dermatology and venereal diseases. Interesting combination of specialties in light of this week's sedra.)

The one afflicted is himself "Tamei" as well as causing other people and objects to become "ritually impure" through contact, both direct and indirect [178, A104 15:2]. The one afflicted, must bring special korbanot after a purification process [179, A74 15:13].

Shishi - Sixth Aliya 13 p'sukim - 15:16-28

[S> 15:16 (3)] There is also a "ritual impurity" (of a lesser degree - one-day type) in cases of normal seminal emissions [180, A105 15:17]. A woman who has relations with a man also contracts this one-day Tum'a.

A menstruating woman is "ritually unclean". This is counted as a positive mitzva [181, A99 15:19]; its negative counterpart is in the next sedra.

[P> 15:19 (6)] A woman with an unnatural discharge has a specific set of rules. In the case of a Zava, there are differences in her status depending upon how many sightings of blood there are, and how frequent. These rules and procedures constitute a mitzva [182, A106 15:19].

[S> 15:25 (9)] The longer-term Zava is presented in its own parsha, a S'TUMA that can be seen as a sub-parsha of the previous P'TUCHA that introduced the topic of ZAVA. These rules and procedures constitute a mitzva [182, A106 15:19].

Sh'VII Seventh Aliya 5 p'sukim - 15:29-33

The requirement of the korbanot at the conclusion of the period of impurity constitutes a positive



commandment **[183,A75 15:29]**. The people of Israel have a great potential for attaining spiritual heights. They have an equally great potential for descending to low levels of spiritual impurity.

Generally, when there is a rich man's korban and a poor man's korban for the same situation, if a rich man brings the less expensive version of the korban, he fulfills his obligation, after the fact. Tzora'at is an exception. If a rich man brought a poor man's offering, he has not fulfilled his obligation. The son of the Nodeh B'Yehuda beautifully explained why this is so. One of the causes of Tzora'at is stinginess. Even the term in our Vidui can be seen as a play on words - TZAROT AYIN. If a rich man brings a poor person's korban, in this case it is an indication that he hasn't healed. The korban cannot bring atonement.

The last 3 p'sukim of the sedra (which are reread for Maftir) serve as a summary to the topics of ritual purity and impurity and present the challenge to the Jewish People to rise above mundane physical existence by scrupulously avoiding "impurity".

SDT Commentaries note that the laws pertaining to human beings (the sedras of Tazria and M'tzora) follow the laws pertaining to animals (Vayikra, Tzav, Shmini). This corresponds to the sequence of creation - animals were created before humans. If a person behaves in an

improper manner, he is lower than an animal. And is reminded that "the mosquito preceded him". If however, he behaves properly, keeps the Torah and mitzvot, rises to the challenge of being holy, then he is worthy of having been created in the image of G-d.

Haftara 21+1 p'sukim Mal'achi 3:4-24

See Word of the Month - p.2

The haftara speaks of faithfulness to Torah and the promise of the coming of Eliyahu HaNavi as the harbinger of the Complete Redemption. That the second, to some extent, depends on the first can be seen in the closeness of the following two phrases: ZICHRU TORAT MOSHE... (remember the Torah, and keep it), and HINEI ANOCHI SHOLEI'ACH LACHEM and if you do, then I will send Eliyahu...

Note: The penultimate (next to the last) pasuk is repeated as the concluding pasuk of the haftara. This is done to end Malachi and Trei-Asar and the Nevi'im portion of Tanach on a positive note. (This is done three other times - end of Yeshayahu, Eicha, and Kohelet.)

PROBING the PROPHETS

Over these many years, I have always understood this week's Haftarah selection from the final chapter in the book of the final navi, Malachi, to be



based upon the vision of a future redemption. We should be aware of the fact that the holiday of Pesach is meant to be more than just a reminder of past events and even more than a reenactment of those events. The Yom Tov is, after all, Chag HaGeula, a celebration of our redemption and, therefore, is also meant to celebrate our not-yet-realized future redemption.

In fact, the order of Seder reflects this very idea. The practices we follow and the text we recite before the Seder meal are all based upon our past redemption from Egypt. The bitter maror that brings to mind the bitter slavery in Egypt, the salt water representing the tears of suffering and the charoset symbolizing the mortar used for the brick, all relate back to our slave experience. Likewise, the recitation of "Avadim Hayinu" and "Met'chila Ovdei Avoda Zarah" fulfill Talmud's insistence of beginning the Magid section with "g'nut", the shame we suffered during our Egyptian enslavement. Even the Hallel that we begin reciting before the meal is known as Hallel HaMitzri," the Egyptian Hallel, and we end that pre-meal section with the verses that refer to Egypt and our release from slavery.

In contrast, the post-meal Seder practices and recitations rely heavily upon our vision of the future redemption. It is during this time, therefore, that we drink the fourth cup of wine, a cup introducing our prayers for the geula to come. It is at this point that we ask Hashem to punish those who deny His existence and

oppress His people, as we open the door for Eliyahu HaNavi, the future harbinger of the messianic era, as related to us by the navi Malachi in the haftarah we read on this Shabbat HaGadol. We continue the recitation of Hallel HaMitzri by completing its final part, the part that makes no mention of Egypt or our enslavement. We then praise Hashem with the Hallel HaGadol, the great Hallel as praise for G-d for our future geula. It is no wonder then that, as we conclude this final section we pray that Hashem will bring us, redeemed, to Tziyon in song, and we declare: "L'shana Haba'ah Berushalyim."

Our haftarah does not, at first glance, reflect the joy of redemption. In fact, much of the selection is filled with Malachi's criticism of the nation, including a litany of their sins and misdeeds over the years. It would appear that only the final psukim, with their mention of the arrival of Eliya(hu) HaNavi, make a direct connection to the future for which we yearn.

I believe, however, that one verse in the middle of our haftarah reflects a crucial pre-Pesach message that reverberated over the years to our oppressed nation and speaks to us today as well. "Ki Ani Hashem-lo shaniti"- "For I, Hashem, have not changed," I am as I was; I am still a righteous judge Who demands obedience and One who will punish the evildoers. And yet, "V'atem bnei Ya'akov lo chlitem,"-"You, descendants of Jacob, have not perished," despite the sins the navi detailed, despite your failure to live up to standards set by the Torah and despite that you have



been punished by G- for those misdeeds....you are still here. The eternity of G-d and the eternity of Israel.

As Jews sat down to their Seder reeling from edicts, attacks and murders they had little to celebrate and little reason to believe in a future redemption. And so, on Shabbat HaGadol they read these words of Malachi. You have sinned, Hashem does punish and yet....you're still here. Your geula is guaranteed as is your national survival. So we remember our suffering in Egypt and beyond but still can cry out: "L'shana Haba'ah Berushalyim." Not as a prayer nor as a dream, but as a confident statement. Next year we WILL be in Yerushalayim, a rebuilt and renewed Yerushalayim.