

“The Transformation”

“And on the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised”(12:3). Although we have already been informed of the mitzvah of Brit Milah in the book of Bereishit, when Avraham is commanded in this mitzvah (Bereishit 17:12), nevertheless, it had to be repeated here in parashat Tazria. For every mitzvah we observe must come from Moshe Rabbeinu. So although it was given to Avraham Avinu, it had to be repeated by Moshe Rabbeinu.

According to Rav Soloveitchik, there are two Kiyyumim [fulfillments] in this mitzvah of Milah, [circumcision]. On the one hand, the act of circumcision is conceptually similar to other mitzvot; there is a mitzvah to circumcise one's son, just as there is a mitzvah to eat matzah on Pesach or to hold a lulav on Sukkot. On the other hand, a new status is conferred upon the child (or person) through milah. The lulav is the same object before and after the performance of the mitzvah- its status has not changed. After milah, however, the child is transformed; he becomes a “ben Brit”, and only then can he enter the Mikdash or bring sacrifices. Milah is also an integral part of conversion to Judaism, as well; for after conversion the individual has fundamentally changed.

These two aspects of the mitzvah of milah are reflected in the two Brachot concerning circumcision. The first Bracha, “Baruch Ata HaShem...who commanded us concerning circumcision” refers to the act of Milah. The second Bracha, “who has commanded us to bring him into the covenant of Avraham Avinu”, refers to the change of status resulting from the act of Milah. [Tosafot Pesachim 7a]

The Roman governor Turnus Rufus once asked Rabbi Akiva, “If GD despises the uncircumcised why does He create man in an uncircumcised state?” Rabbi Akiva responded, “Does the earth yield bread?” (Midrash Tanchuma, Tazria 7). Rabbi Akiva's answer conveyed the message that just as GD desires that man bring forth bread through his own effort, it is only man who can and must sanctify himself.

The role of man in the creation of Kedusha (holiness) is a central theme in Judaism. The holiest object of Kedusha is a Sefer Torah. Yet, the raw parchment from which it is made, and the feather used for writing it has no intrinsic Kedusha. It is only when the Sofer (scribe) writes it explicitly with the intention and sanctity of a Sefer Torah does it become endowed with Kedusha. The loftiness of the text itself makes no difference-without the intention of writing the Name, the Tetragrammaton for the purpose of vesting holiness in the scroll. So too, a mere animal, upon being designated by its owner as a Korban Olah, can become transformed into an object of Kodosh Kodashim. Our Chagim (Festivals) including Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur are days of holiness because we, the Beit Din have declared them as such by virtue of declaring the

new moon as Rosh Chodesh. That is the meaning of the Bracha we recited on Pesach-“Mekadesh Yisrael VeHazemanim”. Thus, GD gave us the awesome responsibility and capability of creating Kedusha in this world. Then we, the Jewish people have an important role in spreading holiness unto this world. Let us use these powers by maintaining our mouths pure and holy, our hands clean and ; by dealing honestly and fairly in our worldly activities and thereby transform ourselves into a Holy nation..

Shabbat Shalom, veChodesh Tov Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

QUESTIONS ON PARASHAT TAZRIA-METZORA

1-What two Halachot do we learn from the Mitzva of Brit Mila in our parasha that we would not have known from Bereishit? (see Shabbat 132a)

2-The Torah does not offer reasons for Mitzvot (most times), but the Rabbis often do suggest reasons. What reason is suggested for the Mitzva of Brit Mila being on the 8th day? (see Nida 31b)

3-Which city in Eretz Yisrael was not susceptible to Tzaraat, and why? (see Megilla 26a)

4-There are two reasons why a person who is afflicted with Tzaraat must announce to everyone “I am contaminated” (13:45). Do you know one, or both? (Moed Katan 5a, Bava Kama 82b)

5-Why is the state of impurity for a woman who gives birth to a boy-7days, but for a girl-14 days? (Any logical answer accepted)

** THIS WEEK, 2 CONFERENCE CALLS; TUESDAY APR 21 AND THURSDAY 23. BOTH BEGIN IN U.S -8AM AND 3PM IN ISRAEL..TELEPHONE NUMBERS SAME AS IN PAST. TOPIC FOR TUESDAY=*“HALACHIK DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DAMAGES AND INJURIES”* THURSDAY=*“INSIGHTS INTO HAVDALAH”* SOURCES FOR TUESDAY---=BAVA KAMMA 26A, CM 378;1, 3 CM-RAMA 378;9 TUR CM 421; 5,

SOURCES FOR THURSDAY; GM BERACHOT 33A, O C=294;2, RAMA 296;6,1 BEIT YOSEF OC 296, MISHNA BRURAH 296;27, 262;4.8 MG’A=182;2, OCH-296 ;7, MB-296;12,,TZITZ ELIEZR-14;42, ARUCH HASHULCHAN OCH 272;14, BACH O CH-287,A’H-298;8, MB-298;9,296 ;1

RAMA-296;1 296;8 BIUR HALACHA—296

I SUGGEST YOU TRY CALLING IN 10-15 MIN EARLIER, SO That IF YOU ENCOUNTE ANY PROBLEM WITH CONNECTION –CALL RABBI SHLOMO ZIEGLER [MY SON] 917 453 5273, FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

HATZLACHA!!