

Taz/Metz

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*Y*ou know how sometimes during a conversation you start to zoom out because the topic fails to grab your attention? That's kind of what this week's *parshios*, *Tazria* and *Metzora*, do. They begin a lengthy discussion about laws of spiritual impurity before going on to cover the incredibly exciting topic of *tzara'as*, the *Metzora*, and their laws of purification. Can't wait, huh?

But, before we go there, the Torah reminds us about the need to perform the *Bris* on an eight-day old male which, quite frankly, seems out of place. True, the *parsha* starts off talking about birth, but there are other more relevant places for the mitzvah of *Bris*, which is why commentators try to learn something from it.

Personally, I think the juxtaposition has to do with our opening statement. Torah history does not lack drama, and some *mitzvos* are not only relevant to everyone, they are exciting to do. For that reason, it might be easier to forget what makes the Jewish People unique in the world, and qualifies them to be a "nation of *kohanim*."

For example, keeping *Shabbos* can be very self-serving. The rest, the good food, the good company...what's not to like? Some people love to give *tzedakah* because it makes them feel generous and good about themselves. Others enjoy putting on *Tefillin*, grateful that it is a *mitzvah*. Even going to the *mikvah* is a cleansing experience.

But all *mitzvos* do one thing: they spiritually refine the person doing them. The better the person performs a *mitzvah*, the more it can refine them. This refinement is not only crucial for self-development, but it is essential for having and improving a relationship with God, and that's what life is all about. It's the only reason why God took us out of Egypt in the first place.

That is easier to recall when having to deal with laws that you'd rather avoid, laws that do not seem to have much personal benefit. No other society has laws prohibiting the speaking of *loshon hara*, leaders of most world religions probably doing it freely. You only get sued if it is libel. Certainly no other religion has such dramatical spiritual and physical consequences for speaking it, and a complicated procedure for getting out of them.

There is only one kind of *Bris Milah*, but we made three *brisos*—covenants—with God. *Bris Milah* in general says that a Jew must be holy and only act in holy ways, even when doing that which is permissible (*Ramban, Kedoshim*). But there is also *Bris HaLashon*—Covenant of the Tongue, and *Bris HaEinayim*—Covenant of the Eyes. The first is our commitment to try to only engage in holy speech and the second is our commitment to try to use our eyes in holy ways, the operating words here being “to try.”

Because ever since Adam HaRishon ate from the *Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Ra*, everything in Creation, including man, be-

came a combination of good and evil. The “devil” doesn’t make us do it, but he has a corroborator inside of us that pushes us in the wrong direction in life. As the Gemora says, the *yetzer hara* wants to kill us each day in one way or another, and *our* spiritual defilement is one of *his* trophies.

Bris reminds us of this, and of our commitment to fight back. It reiterates our desire to be holy and remain that way, according to God’s definition. Because, at the end of the day, “holy” is just a word that can be prefixed to *yetzer hara*-directed activities, like “holy war,” for example. But kedushah is a concept with only one definition, as God will soon tell us, “*Be holy, because I am holy*” (*Vayikra* 19:2).

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SHA’AR HAGILGULIM COURSE: Many societies believe in the idea of reincarnation, but no source understands and explains the concept better than Sha'ar HaGilgulim—Gate of Reincarnations—based upon the teachings of the great kabbalist, the Arizal (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, 1537–1572).

Reincarnation is not just about the transmigration of souls. It is about personal rectification over the course of many lifetimes, and that requires extensive knowledge of that rectification and how it works. This course, given by Rabbi Pinchas Winston—who translated and annotated the work (three editions)—will follow the sefer word-by-word, and reveal some of that wisdom for personal growth, as well as a fascinating look at how reincarnation has directed the course of history.

Registrants will be able to purchase the hardcopy version of the sefer with a 15% discount (plus shipping), and re-

ceive the PDF version free of charge.

The course will be taught in stages, each consisting of six weekly, 45-minute recorded sessions through Zoom, b"H. The cost for each stage is NIS 180.00, but PayPal allows the usage of credit cards of any currency.

After registration, a confirmation email will be sent with the Zoom link and the date and time of each session. The recording will be sent to each registrant so it is not essential to see the live presentation, though it will be easier to ask questions.

Registration Link: <https://www.paypal.com/ncp/payment/NYK2EB26DQ9XG>.

Alternative means of payment are available. Write me at pinchasw@shaarnun.org.

Have a great Shabbos,
Pinchas Winston