
THE TANACH STUDY CENTER www.tanach.org
In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag
Questions for self study - by Menachem Leibtag

for PARSHIOT TAZRIA & METZORA

PART I - QUESTIONS FOR THE 'SHABBOS TABLE'

TUM'A - CAUSE AND EFFECT

[As Parshiot Tazria / Metzora deal with the laws of 'tum'a', a few general questions to 'think about' on this topic:

1. A very popular translation of the word tum'a is spiritual uncleanness. Do you agree? Base your answer on the various causes of tum'a described in Vayikra chapters 11, 12, & 13.
Can you identify any 'physical' reason for tum'a? If so, could this be the only reason? [Relate to what is required to rid oneself from this tum'a.]
In what manner do the various types of tum'a relate to death? Can you explain why?
2. Let's say someone is 'tamei' - how does this affect what he can or cannot do? How many of your answers relate in some manner to the bet ha-mikdash (or mishkan)?
Can you explain why?
Relate to Vayikra 12:4.
3. [During the time of the Temple], let's say someone was planning a visit to the bet ha-mikdash - how would these laws of tum'a affect his visit? How would they affect how 'careful' he needs to be already a week before his planned visit? How careful must he be on the day of his visit? [Relate to the causes of 'one-day' tum'a (in chapter 11), and 'seven-day' tum'a (see Vayikra chapters 12 thru 15).]
Based on your answer, can you suggest how the laws of tum'a (i.e. not becoming tamei) may actually enhance the experience of visiting the bet ha-mikdash?
[See Seforno on 12:8.]
4. In regard to the connection between the laws of "tzaraat" (in clothing) and the Land of Israel, see Ramban on 14:37.

WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT THE NUMBER 'EIGHT'?

[for shiur on Parshat Tazria]

1. Both in the beginning of Parshat Shmini and in Parshat Tazria we find that the number **eight** (i.e. the eighth day) is quite significant. Can you find a thematic connection between these two mitzvot - i.e. between the special events on yom ha-shmini in the mishkan and brit mila on the eighth day after a child's birth?
2. Where else in Sefer Vayikra do we find that the 'eighth day' is significant? Can you find a connection between all of the instances?
[Be sure to note Vayikra chapter 14, especially 14:10-19, Vayikra 22:26-33, and Vayikra 23:33-39.]
3. Review Breishit 17:1-10 [better known as brit mila]. Does the Torah explain why brit mila should be performed specifically on the 'eighth day' (and not earlier or later)? Can you suggest any logical (or medical) reason?
In that narrative of brit mila, i.e. in Breishit 17:3-10 - make special note of the written Name that the Torah uses to describe God. Compare this Name, to the written Name of God that the Torah has used up until this point in all of the prior conversations between God and Avraham Avinu (i.e. since chapter 12).
4. Can you explain why specifically the Name Elokim is used at brit mila, even though same "Havaya" was consistently used beforehand?

Attempt to explain why brit mila is the first time that we find shem Elokim speaking to Avraham Avinu - by relating the Torah's use of shem Elokim in the story of Creation in chapter one!

5. When earlier in Chumash has the Torah used 'shem Elokim' to describe God? Be sure to relate to Breishit 1:1-2:3 and 9:1-17, and their respective topics!

PART II - QUESTIONS FOR PREPARATION (for weekly shiur)

1. Using a Tanach Koren, make a brief outline of all of the parshiot of mitzvot in Sefer Vayikra, beginning with chapter 10 (i.e. after the death of Nadav & Avihu) until the end of chapter 17. Be sure to use only a one line summary for each parshia.
[Look at the opening psukim of chapter 18 and explain why we concluded our outline with chapter 17.]
2. Note the 'tiny' narrative that is implicit in the introductory pasuk to chapter 16 (i.e. 16:1). Based on this short narrative, where in Sefer Vayikra should this section of laws (i.e. 'avodat Yom Kippur') have been recorded? In your answer, relate to the events that transpire in chapter 10. [Is there any obvious reason why the Torah does not record these laws until chapter 16?]
3. Is there a common topic for all of the mitzvot from chapters 11 thru chapter 17? [In other words, can you find one title for this section of your outline?]
Can you divide the outline into several sub-categories? If so, what are they, and what is the logic of flow from one topic to the next? Based on your outline, how 'accurate' are the chapter divisions?
Re: the flow of topic, see Seforno on 11:2 (rather amazing!) and Rashi & Ibn Ezra on 12:1.
See also Ramban in his intro to Sefer Vayikra (before 1:1).
4. In what manner do the mitzvot (in chapters 11-17) relate to:
the korbanot of yom ha-shmini?
the death of Nadav & Avihu?
to the mishkan in general?
to the overall theme of Sefer Vayikra?
5. Review these chapters one more time, noting the headers of each 'dibbur'.
[i.e. note 10:8,12; 11:1-2; 12:1-2; 13:1; 14:1,33; 15:1-2; 16:1-2; 17:1-2.]
Can you explain to whom each dibbur is directed, and why?
[Note both the opening psukim in each dibbur, as well as the 'closing' psukim of each.]
In your opinion, **when** were these mitzvot first given to Moshe Rabeinu [and/or Aharon]? -
On Har Sinai? If so, during which set of forty days?
From the ohel mo'ed? If so, on what day?
[Answer this question for each dibbur / parshia!]
6. Review now your 'outline' of Sefer Vayikra from chapter 1 thru chapter 17. Can you identify a topic that would include all of the subtopics in these 17 chapters? [i.e. a common theme]
Attempt to explain the logic of the flow from one topic to the next?
7. Based on your outline, in our opinion what is the primary topic of chapter 11 - the laws of kashrut, or the laws of one-day tum'a? Explain your answer.
Compare Vayikra chapter 11 to Devarim 14:3-21. What is the same, and what is different? Can you explain why?
Relate as well to Shmot 22:30, and to the concept of tum'a.
8. As you review your outline, note the differences between 'one day' tu'ma and 'seven day' tu'ma. Can you explain the difference between them, and how they relate to one another?

PART III - PARSHANUT

For shiur on 'The CAUSE of TZARA'AT'

1. To the best of your recollection, what causes 'tzara'at' [leprosy]? Does Sefer Vayikra provide a reason? If not, what is the source of your answer?

Does Sefer Vayikra give a reason for the cause of any type of tum'a? Can you explain why it does or why it doesn't?

Have you heard of a reason before? If so, what is the source?

2. For general background, review two key stories that discuss someone contracting tzara'at - the story about Miriam in Bamidbar 12:1-16, and the story about Uziyahu, King of Yehuda, in II Divrei Ha-yamim 26:11-22.)

Based on these two stories, what appears to be the cause of tzara'at?

3. Carefully study Devarim 24:8-9. In your opinion, which of these two psukim makes the primary point, and which pasuk is 'secondary' (or is the Torah making two unrelated statements)?

Based on these psukim, does the Torah 'hint' to a specific cause of tzara'at?

How do these psukim relate to Bamidbar 12:1-16?

In what manner is 24:9 similar to other psukim in Chumash that begin with 'zachor'?

How does the topic of these two psukim relate to other topics that are discussed in Parshat Ki Tetze?

4. Now, let's see how the various commentators relate to this topic in Sefer Devarim. To appreciate the various opinions, read Devarim 24:8-9 once again and carefully try to understand each phrase, and explain how each phrase relates to the next. Be sure that you can explain how 24:9 relates to 24:8, and what the word 'hishamer' implies [i.e. does it imply something you **must** do or something you **must not** do?]

5. We'll start with Rashi on 24:8-9.

Note how Rashi begins by providing a precise explanation of what hishamer is referring to [basically that one should be careful not to be 'his own doctor' when he sees a sign of leprosy, i.e. hishamer is telling you **not** to cut off the sign, but instead to show it to the kohanim.

Based on this, how does Rashi understand the second half of 24:8?

Now see Rashi on 24:9. According to Rashi, how do these psukim relate to one another?

From where does Rashi learn that 'lashon ha-ra' causes leprosy? [As we continue, note how other parshanim answer this question.]

6. See now Ramban. Is his commentary to 24:8 the same as Rashi's or different? Explain your answer.

How does Ramban explain why the laws of tzaarat found in Sefer Vayikra are not recorded in Sefer Devarim?

Now see Ramban on 24:9. Note how he quotes Rashi and then offers an alternate opinion [i.e. that zachor implies something active that one **must** do!]. How does he prove his opinion?

In your opinion, is Ramban's approach more methodological than Rashi's? How does each commentator explain the connection from 24:8 to 24:9?

[Note how Ramban considers this pasuk a 'full fledged' 'mitzvot ase'i', thus arguing with all of the others who counted the mitzvot before him. See also Sefer Mitzvot of the Rambam, at the end of his list of mitzvot ase'i, where Ramban lists and explains the mitzvot that he feels that Rambam left out. See Ramban's addition #7! See also Sefer ha-Chinuch mitzva #584; note that he seems to disagree with Ramban.]

[Do you think that it is 'worthwhile' for one to be 'choshesh' for the Ramban's shitta?]

7. See Ibn Ezra on 24:9. Note how he is short and to the point. Why do you think that Ibn Ezra finds it important to support a Midrash from Vayikra Rabba [16:1] from these psukim in Sefer Devarim? How does this relate to Ibn Ezra's general approach to Midrashim (in contrast to pshat)?

8. Now, for a totally different approach - see Rashbam!

How does he explain hishamer and the connection between 24:8 and 24:9!! In your opinion, is Rashbam's explanation closer to pshat? What do you think leads Rashbam to his peirush?

9. Finally, see Chizkuni. Is his commentary the same as Rashbam's? If so, why do you think that he prefers Rashbam's commentary to Rashi & Ramban's?

According to Rashbam & Chizkuni, is there any connection between tzara'at and lashon ha-ra? If so, why don't they mention it in their peirush to Devarim 24:8-9?

[The answers to this section are discussed in the TSC shiur on Parshat Ki Tetze / www.tanach.org/dvarim/kitey2.txt.]

be-hatzlacha,
menachem