

טהרה and טומאה of הלכות discuss the very intricate and important מצורע and פרשת תזריע. What's fascinating is the juxtaposition between לידה, one of the happiest events in our lives, and צרעת, which is a very חמור. Both discuss aspects of טומאה and טהרה, and they are placed together. The point is that we must be able to differentiate between טומאה and טהרה - sometimes the difference is subtle, and sometimes it is obvious. Nonetheless, it is our חיוב, and a great זכות, to learn טהרות. It is one of the hardest parts of ש"ס, but also one of the most rewarding, giving us tremendous insights into the way הקדוש ברוך runs the world. Hashem tells us what is טהור, and Hashem tells us what is טמא, and it has nothing to do with the physical properties of the world. We see His אדנות in the world through טומאה and טהרה.

The מעשה begins with אשה כי תזריע וילדה זכר. The ספר פנינים משלחן גבוה brings down a fascinating story. It is said that when the וילנא גאון, זכותו יגן עלינו, was six years old, the people in shul asked him a question: What is the connection between the last פסוק in שמיי and the beginning of תזריע? The last פסוק in שמיי states: להבדיל בין הטמא ובין הטהור ובין החיה הנאכלת ובין החיה אשר לא תאכל. Then, immediately, the פרשה continues with אשה כי תזריע וילדה זכר. What is the connection?

It is said that the וילנא גאון, just a little boy of six, thought for a moment and then took out a מסכת יומא. He opened it to דף פ"ב ע"ב, which brings down the following מעשה:

There was an אשה מעוברת who, on יום כיפור, smelled food cooking and said, "Oy, I'm fainting; I need to eat something." They brought the שאלה הנשיא to רבי, רב יהודה הנשיא, and he instructed them to whisper in her ear, "Remember, today is יום כיפור." They whispered to her, and she was able to withstand the hunger pangs. When she gave birth, the baby was רבי יוחנן. Another מעוברת אשה had the same experience - she was fainting and starving. They whispered in her ear, but she could not overcome her hunger, and they gave her to eat on יום כיפור. From her came a famous פירי אצור פירי.

The גר"א explained that this is the connection between the two פסוקים. פסוק הטהור ובין הטמא refers to בן החיה, who was טהור, and שבתאי אצור פירי, who was טמא. How was this differentiation made? בן החיה, a play on words. In the פסוק, חיה הנאכלת refers to animals that are כשר to eat. Ordinarily, כשרות and טומאה are not directly related, but here, the גר"א used it to illustrate that even the food we eat affects our level of טהרה. He explained that בן החיה הנאכלת refers to the woman who refrained from eating on יום כיפור and gave birth to רבי יוחנן, while the other woman, who ate on יום כיפור, gave birth to שבתאי אצור פירי. It was all within her ability to control herself. The connection to אשה כי תזריע וילדה זכר is that a mother's actions during pregnancy have an impact on her child.

This מעשה demonstrates the stark difference between טומאה and טהרה and also teaches us about בחירה. If we can control ourselves to the utmost degree, we will benefit. One woman withstood the test, and the other did not. The woman who ate did not do anything wrong, but it had a השפעה פירי. שבתאי אצור פירי was going to be born, but to whom? It could have been to another woman, but it was the one who ate on יום כיפור. This reminds me of a famous קושיה: The פסוק states, וְעָשִׂיתָ מַעֲקָה לְגִגֶּךָ וְלֹא תִשָּׁם דָּמִים בְּבֵיתְךָ, You must put up a מעקה on your roof so that no one falls and gets hurt in your house. But if the הקדוש ברוך was already גוזר that someone was supposed to die, why is the homeowner responsible? The answer is, it didn't have to be your house. It could have been anywhere. Similarly, this woman didn't have to be the one to give birth to שבתאי אצור פירי. It could have been someone else, but since she ate on יום כיפור, it was her. I'm not blaming her, I'm not criticizing her, I'm just telling you what the גמרא says. There is more here than meets the eye - go back, look it up, and tell me what you think.

Everything we do in life has long-term repercussions. I wasn't going to mention this, but it's an interesting example. In my shul, everyone wears their תפילין with the ש' facing inward, but I wear mine with the ש' facing outward. Why? My grandfather originally wore them the other way. When my father went to buy תפילין, his father, my grandfather, told him to go to the store and buy a pair. Not knowing any



better, he accidentally bought תפילין with the 'ש the other way. His father told him it was fine, אלו ואלו, and so for generations, my generation, your generation, the next generation, all of our male offspring are going to wear תפילין the way my father ע"ה did. There's nothing wrong with it, הקודש ברוך הוא wanted us to wear תפילין this way, but it shows how one small decision can shape the future.

Every choice, particularly those made during pregnancy, can have a tremendous effect on a child, even if we don't realize it. That is one of the lessons here. The other lesson is that the גר"א was only six years old when he knew this דרשה. I didn't want to forget to say that because it's such a vital point - six years old, and he was pulling out יומא! I'd like to see anyone do that today.

Life presents many ניסיונות, and we sometimes feel like we cannot withstand them. But the גמרא constantly tells us that the harder we try, the more we will succeed. It all depends on the Boy Scout motto, "Be prepared". If we strengthen our אמונה, learn הלכות properly, and recognize the seriousness of every situation, we will be able to navigate challenges successfully and have הצלחה. Good Shabbos!

