



# ALSHICH

## INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

ספר ויקרא  
פרשת תזריע-מצורה

SERIES 2: ISSUE 27

### WHY PEOPLE CAN BECOME TAMEI

#### Chapter 12

1) Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying.

(א) וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר.

2) "Speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying: When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male child, she shall be impure for a seven-day period; she shall be impure as during the time of separation for her menstrual discharge.

(ב) דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אִשָּׁה כִּי תִזְרִיעַ וַיֵּלֶדָה זָכָר וְטִמְאָה שְׁבַע יָמִים כִּימֵי נִדַת דְּוֹתָהּ תִּטְמָא.

3) And on the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

(ג) וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשָׂר עֶרְלָתוֹ.

#### Consider the following questions:

1. In verse 2, why does it not just say, "A woman who gives birth to a male child"? Why is it necessary to mention, "a woman **who is mazria** and gives birth..."?
2. Why is the mitzvah of *bris milah* mentioned here? It does not seem to be connected to the rest of the *parashah*.
3. Why did Hashem form man with an *orlah* (foreskin) and then command us to remove it? Surely since man was created in the image of God he should have been born without the need to perform this rectification.
4. What is the connection between the beginning of this *parashah* and the end of the previous one, which discussed laws of *tumah* as related to animals?

We know that the *orlah* comes from the force of impurity and, if so, we need to know what caused this impurity to manifest itself in every man. The truth is that initially, Adam was like one of the ministering angels, Hashem's direct handiwork, and there was no element of this impurity in man's form. Thus the Torah (*Bereishis* 1:27) tells us that he was created *b'tzelem Elohim* – i.e., without an iota of impurity, and thus without an *orlah*. But then the snake assailed Chava and injected her with spiritual pollution (*zuhama*) when he caused her to sin by eating from the Tree of Knowledge. The presence of *zuhama* is even more understandable according to the Sages (*Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* Ch. 12) who taught that the *Satan* himself rode upon the snake and directed it in all its actions (and thus the *zuhama* came from the *Satan*).

The main part of this *zuhama* entered Chavah since she was the one whom the snake persuaded to sin; she then transferred this pollution to Adam when she caused him, too, to sin with the Tree of Knowledge. Consequently, she was cursed with *niddah* blood – which is a direct product of this *zuhama* – and from

then on, all children formed in their mothers' wombs, beginning at the time of cohabitation, are formed (in part) by this blood.

Thus, every male is afflicted with the impurity of the snake because of this way of being conceived and developed in the womb, even though the *zuhama* did not originally attach itself to Adam as strongly as it did to Chavah. Nevertheless, Hashem, in His great kindness, arranged it that the majority of this *zuhama* should be centered in one particular part of the male's body, namely in the *orlah* – a part of the body that is extraneous and can be removed through circumcision. **[This answers Question 3.]**

We can now answer why the Torah states “a woman **who is mazria** and gives birth...” and also how this is related to the end of the previous *parashah*. After the Torah lists all the animals that can and cannot be eaten at the end of *Parashas Shemini*, a person may ask why Hashem's holy nation is of less value than all *tahor* animals, in that they always remain pure but man becomes impure when he touches something impure or is afflicted with the various types of *tzara'as*. Furthermore, at his birth his mother becomes impure for seven days, and his own body includes the impure *orlah* until it is removed on the eighth day.

It is Chavah's having caused children to be born with the *zuhama* inherent in *niddah* blood that made it possible for man to be afflicted with a *tum'ah* like *tzara'as*; if not for that, man would have remained pure and holy since he was created *b'tzelem Elohim*. This is the intent of the words “... a woman who is *mazria* (i.e., conceives in this way) and gives birth to a male child”; children are no longer formed by the hand of God the way Adam was formed before the sin. For this reason *she shall be impure for seven days* – that is, it is a result of the child's being formed from *niddah* blood that makes her impure. For this reason too, *on the eighth day, the flesh of his orlah shall be circumcised* – because if it were not for the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge and for the fact that *niddah* blood is involved in childbirth, he would not have an *orlah* in the first place (like Adam before the sin). **[This answers Questions 1 and 2.]**

Regarding the connection between the beginning of this *parashah* and the end of the previous one that talks about animals: R' Shimon ben Elazar says (*Kiddushin* 82b) that animals can sustain themselves without having to struggle even though they were only created to serve man, while man has to struggle although he was created to serve Hashem because man **sinned** and thus forfeited his rights to easy sustenance. Similarly, Hashem was telling the Jewish people here, “Do not be shocked that animals cannot become *tamei* while you can, for the animals did not corrupt their ways while man did. Ever since Chavah began to give birth through being *mazria* from the *niddah* blood which was caused by her corrupting her ways, mankind has become subject to *tum'ah*.” **[This answers Question 4.]**

### THE ALSHICH AND HIS COMMENTARY

The Alshich (1508 - 1600), was one of only five famous rabbis in Jewish history universally known by the title “HaKodosh” (the Holy one). He served on the same Beis Din as Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the Shulchan Aruch. He simultaneously focuses on both the text as well as the context of a series of verses by listing a range of questions and then answering them all using one or two concepts.

These sheets are drawn from the Alshich on the Torah published by Feldheim and are in memory of Yental Bas Yitzchok, Mrs Jean Silkin. They seek to expand the spectrum of readers who can appreciate the Alshich's true greatness.

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