

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT TAZRIA

12-13 APRIL | 5 NISAN

Scattered Feathers



MICHAL MANN

Tribe Israel

In this week's parasha, Tazria, we learn about a person who suffers from *tzara'at* – a skin disease with a spiritual cause. The Torah tells us that when a person gets *tzara'at*, they need to leave the camp and can only come back after they are cleared by the Kohen (priest). It is not clear from the Torah why a person gets *tzara'at*, but our Rabbis teach us that one of the reasons is as a punishment for speaking *Lashon Hara*, any damaging statement against another person (Talmud Arachin 16a).

Now we know that *tzara'at* is a punishment for speaking *Lashon Hara*, we may wonder what the connection is between these two

things, how is one connected to the other?

The Rabbis of the Talmud asked: "What is unique about someone with *tzara'at* that the Torah states: 'They shall dwell alone; outside of the camp shall be their dwelling' (Vayikra 13:46)?" The answer is given: "By speaking evil speech they separated between husband and wife and between one person and another; therefore, they are punished with *tzara'at* and the Torah says, 'They shall dwell alone; outside of the camp shall be their dwelling.'"¹ (Talmud Arachin 16b)

This indeed is a very harsh punishment, but nasty words can have a very harsh outcome and lead to terrible things.

There is a story of a man who came to Chacham Yosef Chaim of Baghdad (known as the Ben Ish Chai, 1839-1909) asking how he can do complete *teshuva* (making amends) for speaking *Lashon*

Hara. The Ben Ish Chai, instead of answering the question, asked him to go and bring him a feather pillow. Then, in front of the man, the Ben Ish Chai cut open the pillow and started scattering the feathers all over the place, with many feathers flying far away in the wind. The Ben Ish Chai then asked the man to collect and put back all the feathers. The man suddenly realised the frightening reality. Just as it is impossible to collect all the feathers, it can be extremely difficult to make up for the damage caused by speaking *Lashon Hara*, because negative words can fly and spread to a point where it is too late to take them back.

Whilst *tzara'at* does not exist anymore, we cannot forget that *Lashon Hara* is so damaging, as it is so difficult to fix what has already been said. Let's always remember to be careful with what we say, and only speak positively about others.

Tazria Teaser

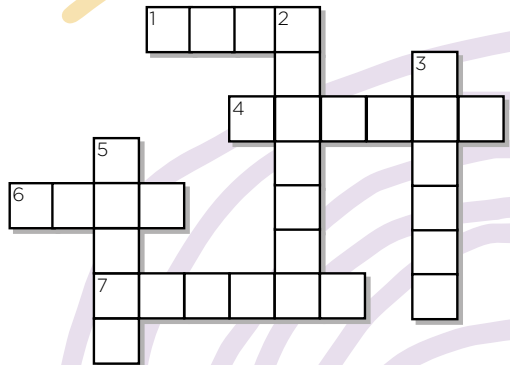
Can you solve the crossword clues below?

Across

1. Circumcision is called ____ Milah
4. Name of the parasha
6. An affliction found in clothing of ____, linen or leather must be examined
7. A male child is circumcised on which day?

Down

2. Disease which can appear on the skin, head, beard, clothing or house
3. An impure person immerses in a special body of water called a ____
5. The person you go to to confirm if you have *tzara'at*



Answers

Down: 2. Tzara'at 3. Mikvah 5. Kohen
Across: 1. Brit 4. Tazria 6. Wool 7. Eighth