



הַמִּזְרָחִי

HAMIZRACHI

PARSHA WEEKLY










PARSHAT TAZRIA
PARSHAT HACHODESH
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ISRAEL
Parsha Picture









הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֵם רֵאשׁ חֻדְשִׁים...
שמות י"ב, ב

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

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www.mizrachi.org
www.mizrachi.tv
office@mizrachi.org
+972 (0)2 620 9000
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Leah Rubin

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Hope Springs Eternal

Parashat Hachodesh and the Happiest Month of the Year



Rabbi Doron Perez

Executive Chairman, World Mizrahi

Is Adar really the happiest month of the year? I think not.

To me, it seems clear that it is unquestionably Nissan, which we welcome in this Shabbat. This is the prominent and happiest month of the year. There seems to be an unequivocal proof: for the entire month of Nissan we don't recite תחנון, the supplicatory prayer, which is omitted on happy and celebratory occasions. Nissan is the only month to have this halachic distinction for three reasons—

1. It is the time of the original Redemption from Mitzrayim - a miracle of unparalleled proportions which permeates so much of Jewish life until today.
2. The special Torah reading for this week designates Nissan as the first and foremost month of the year simply 'The First Month' (Shemot 12,2) and hence the Shabbat this week of Parashat HaChodesh, 'The Month', the only month to have a special Parasha to announce it.
3. The Mishkan, the place of Hashem's revealed presence which descended on the first of Nissan. (Shemot 40, 17).

Nissan is undoubtedly The Month with a capital 'T'. To be clear – Sukkot/Shemini Atzeret are surely the happiest **festivals**. They are the only ones called שמחתנו in the davening with the unmatched expressions of simcha – שמחת בית השואבה – every night of Chol Hamoad in Temple times. Even so, the month of Tishrei when Sukkot occurs is not the happiest month since it is balanced by the Days of Awe – serious days of awe and judgment, Selichot and supplications, penitence and repentance. We indeed say תחנון, the supplicatory prayer, until Erev Yom Kippur when the mood lifts to simcha mode over Yom Kippur especially in

preparation for Sukkot. So then, Tishrei is not entirely happy, only Nissan – the month of our original miraculous salvation – has complete happiness.

I have therefore often been baffled by the statement of our Sages which seems to imply clearly that Adar is the happiest month. As we are all familiar – 'מי שנכנס אדר מרבים בשמחה' One who enters the month of Adar, increases their Simcha' (Masechet Ta'anit 29a).

How can Adar be the happiest month when we say Tachanun the whole month other than over the days of Purim? The miracles of Purim don't seem to be a match for the miracles of Nissan and Pesach?

This didn't make sense to me until I came across the opinion of Rashi which casts a new light on what it means to enter Adar with happiness. We are happy says Rashi since "these are miraculous times for Israel of Purim and Pesach" "ימי ניסים היו לישראל פורים ופסח"

Wow - what a revelation! It is **not** that Adar is the month of happiness but rather that it **ushers in the months of miracles** and redemption of Purim and Pesach – Adar and Nissan. We enter into Adar with increased happiness not because Adar is necessarily the happiest month, but rather because we now begin a two consecutive month period of miracles and redemption leading up to great and unmatched miracles of Pesach – The 10 plagues, Exodus and Splitting of the Sea.¹

This explains why we celebrate Purim in the **second** Adar in a leap year and not in the first one which would seemingly have been more appropriate. Surely, we should show our anticipation for the celebration of Purim

by celebrating it at the first opportunity? The answer is that we must have Purim and Pesach **juxtaposed** together – Adar and Nissan and their dual redemptions must follow one from the other without interruption. They are a unit of months of Redemption, salvation and Simcha.

Why are the months of Redemption also the happiest months? How are Geula and Simcha related?

The answer is that a **redemptive spirit is at the heart of happiness**. When we believe that the darkest and most despairing situation can and will turn out for the good, we never lose hope. The polar opposite of happiness is not sadness; many inherently happy people sometimes feel saddened. The opposite of happiness is despair. Hope and happiness are close cousins as are despair and misery. The source of our happiness is based on a fundamental faith in a Benevolent G-d – the knowledge that ultimately everything somehow does turn out for the best. Hope for the good is never lost. No matter how deep and dark our plight in Egypt was, there was a brighter future where hope would spring eternal. No matter how difficult it seemed in Adar in Shushan everything turned around that very month

and the terrifying decree of Haman was totally transformed to salvation.

Remarkably, in the modern era, as we have begun to experience the final redemption, we have a third consecutive month- Iyar! Both Yom Ha'Atzmaut, and Yom Yerushalyim are in the same month of Iyar – on the 5th and 28th respectively. In Iyar 1948 and again in Iyar 1967 – Israel, G-d forbid, faced imminent destruction. Both were miraculously turned from darkness to light- resulting in the restoration of Jewish sovereignty and the collective return of the Jewish people to our land in 1948 as well as the reunification and return to our holiest city in 1967. Incredibly, Iyar is now slowly returning to its original grandeur through these events. The Torah designates Iyar as a time of spiritual upliftment and as we count up from our physical redemption in Egypt in Nissan to our spiritual redemption of Matan Torah at Sinai- the counting of the Omer, which encompasses the month of Iyar in it's entirety. Unfortunately circumstances would change much later when it became a time of mourning following the death en masse of Rabbi Akiva's students. This is not, though, the way Iyar was supposed to be experienced. **Thankfully, through the happiness of Lag Be'Omer and now Yom Ha'Atzmaut and Yom Yerushalyim,**

Iyar is now returning to its original lofty designation. How blessed we are now to have **3 consecutive months of redemption – Adar, Nissan and Iyar!** All from different eras but all unite in a 3 month period of hope and salvation, happiness and celebration of the redemptive spirit at the heart of Judaism. What a beautiful preparation leading up to Matan Torah in the beginning of Sivan. It is not by chance that Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook always called the Torah התורה הגואלת – The Torah that brings redemption!

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has created a globally impacted human crisis and great tragedy. The Iranian threat to Israel and global stability is real and impending. This last tragic week of terror attacks in Israeli cities has exacted the largest casualties to terror in Israel in 15 years. May these miraculous months of redemption, hope and happiness be realized for all as we enter Nissan, the preeminent month of Redemption. We live not in our world but in G-d's. In His world, darkness turns to light and despair into hope and happiness.

1. Two Acharonim interpret Rashi in this way – the Eliyahu Raba and the Eitz Yosef in Ein Ya'acov on Masechet Ta'anit 29a.



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Rabbi Reuven Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

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רַבִּי יוֹסֵי אֹמֵר... כָּל מַעֲשֵׂיךָ יְהוָה לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם (אבות ב"ב)

Over the past two weeks, we learned the Mishnayot in Pirkei Avot that define the world's goal as glorifying Hashem. Today we will see additional Mishnayot that see this goal as critical not only to how we ought to choose *what* to do, but also to setting the intention of *why* we choose to do so.

Shelo Lishmah

The Mishnah in the beginning of the first perek cautions us to avoid conditioning *avodat Hashem* on receiving reward. "Do not be like servants who serve the master on the condition that they receive reward. Rather, be like servants who serve the master without the condition of receiving reward, and let the fear of *Shamayim* be upon you." (Avot 1:3). Fear of heaven should dispel ulterior motives.

Chazal describe one who serves Hashem for ulterior motives as one who acts "*shelo lishmah*." Rava taught that "it would be preferable for one who fulfills *shelo lishma* to not have been created!" (Brachot 17a). People who serve Hashem with ulterior motives take what is meant to be focused on Hashem and make it about themselves. As this diametrically opposes the goal of creation, it would be better for such a person to not have been created.

L'Shem Shamayim

In addition to deterring ulterior motives (the *sur mei'rah* perspective), Avot (2:12) also directs us to serve Hashem *lishma* (the proactive *asei tov* perspective). "All of your actions should be for Heaven's sake." Torah cares not only about what we do, but also about why we do it. Rava saw our intentions as critical: "Anyone who engages in Torah *lishmah*, his Torah study will be an elixir of life for him... And anyone who engages in Torah *shelo lishmah*, his Torah will be an elixir of death for him." (Taanit 7a). Our mere intentions can be the difference between life and death.

Rava took this idea even further by seeing proper positive intention as significant even when accompanying an *aveirah*. He explains the *pasuk*, "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths" (Mishlei 3:6) as referring even to sins! (Brachot 63a).

Even when a person is involved in something inappropriate, their *l'shem Shamayim* intention keeps them connected (at least on some level) to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Obviously, one should always do the right thing, but, even when we fail to do so, our connection with Hashem continues as long as we continue focusing on Him.

The Rambam expresses a similar idea in his explanation of the Gemara's interpretation of the words *b'chol levavcha* as teaching us that we should serve Hashem with *both* our *yeitzarim* (the *yetzer tov* and *yetzer hara*). (Brachot 44a). The question is obvious: How do we serve Hashem with our *yetzer hara*?! The Rambam (Peirush Hamishnayot, Brachot, perek 9) explains that even at a time of sin, even when a one acts upon the advice of their *yetzer hara*, they should remember their relationship with Hashem. We should maintain our connection with Him at all times; it can be accomplished (even) through intention and focus.

Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak took the significance of our intentions even further when he said that "an *aveirah* committed *lishma* is greater than a mitzvah performed *shelo lishma*." Not only are positive intentions (even when accompanying sin) valuable, they can be more valuable than even the actual (intentionless) performance of a mitzvah!

Understandably, intentions are significant not only when positive, but also when (*chas v'shalom*) negative. The Gemara (Kiddushin 81b) tells how Rav Chiya bar Ashi did lifelong teshuva for a sin he had intended to commit, even though his actual action was not sinful. Though he did not actually sin, he felt that his (mere) inappropriate intention required *teshuva*.

Kol Ma'aseinu

The previously mentioned Mishnah could have conveyed its message by saying, "Let your actions be for the sake of Heaven." What does the word "*kol*" add? As part of his focus upon pure truth, the Kotsker Rebbe explained that it teaches that *even mitzvot* need to be done *l'shem Shamayim*. We might have assumed that, because they emanate from Hashem, *mitzvot* are automatically

l'shem Shamayim. "*Kol*" teaches (as we learned in the first part of this piece) that intention is important even when performing mitzvot. Rabbeinu Yonah understands the word "*kol*" as extending the Mishna's message beyond *mitzvot*. He explains that it comes to include even *devarim shel reshut* (voluntary [non *mitzvah*] acts). Even actions we generally view as beyond the purview of *avodat Hashem* should also be done *l'shem Shamayim*.

Rav Kook (Mussar Avicha pg. 39) uses this idea to explain the Gemara's explanation for why Rav Hamnuna devoted so much time to tefila despite it being less (objectively) important than Torah learning ("*chayei olam vs chayei sha'ah*"). (Shabbat 10b). Since everything we do *l'shem Shamayim* (including *divrei reshut*) contributes to *kevod Hashem*, we should appreciate and fully focus upon whatever we are doing at each moment without thinking about other opportunities.

The Rambam (Shemonah Perakim, Perek 5. Yad Hachazakah, Hilchot De'ot, Perek 3) develops this idea and connects it to the word "*da'ehu* (know him)" used by the aforementioned *Mishlei pasuk*. The Rambam asserts that *everything* we do should be done with the goal of increasing our knowledge of Hashem and growing closer to Him. Work, eating and drinking, marital relations, and even the most mundane actions should be done for the higher purpose of knowing G-d, of *kevod Shamayim*.

It is crucial for us to remember that our philosophical understanding of the world's purpose ought to trickle down to our daily lives- to the intention that accompanies the actions of our individual (seemingly small and less significant than the universal big picture) lives. Every aspect of our lives (not only *mitzvah* performance) should be directed *l'shem shamayim*, and be motivated by the goal of enhancing *kevod Shamayim*.

● Transcribed by Yedidiah Rosenswasser.

1. Nazir 23b. The Gemara proves this with Yael, who was able to kill Sisera through the *aveira* of seducing him. Since her motives were pure, it was considered a positive act.

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

HaChodesh: New Beginnings



Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

This Shabbat, the final of the "four parshiyot," is read from Parashat Bo (Shemot 12:1-20) introducing Rosh Chodesh and the subsequent laws of the korban Pesach. Our haftarah for this Shabbat, read from the prophecies of Yechezkel, (45:18-46:15) as instituted by Chazal (Masekhet Megilla 30a), opens with the sacrifice offered on Rosh Chodesh Nissan and concludes with the sacrifices brought on festivals. The Ashkenazic custom is to begin two pesukim earlier with the role of the "Nasi" and end three pesukim later with laws of inheritance for the Nasi.

Study of the parasha and haftarah, both concerning the korban Pesach, serve as preparation for the holiday. Neither of them, however, relate to the korban Pesach of future generations. In Parashat Bo, Moshe and Aharon are instructed by Hashem to teach Bnei Yisrael the special sacrifice offered in Egypt on the eve of *makkat bechorot* and *yetziat Mitzrayim*. Although some overlap exists between the laws relevant to this sacrifice and those regarding the korban Pesach in the years thereafter (see Mishna Pesachim 9:5), there are many differences. Similarly, Yechezkel addresses the korban Pesach that will be sacrificed with the dedication of the future Beit Hamikdash (i.e. the second Mikdash for Yechezkel, and for us, the third), with significant differences (as discussed by Chaza"l Menachot 45a) between the laws familiar to us in *halachah*!

The focus of the haftarah is not to reconcile the laws of Yechezkel with those of the parasha, but to appreciate the dates and the messages addressed. The maftir reading is entitled, "ha-chodesh"

on account of its opening phrase: "This month [ha-chodesh] is for you the first of all months." The first month marks the beginning of a new system of counting time for Bnei Yisrael according to the sighting of the new moon. They are instructed to count ten days from the new moon and then begin watching a paschal lamb. On the fourteenth of the month, the lamb will be sacrificed and eaten at nightfall. The national "birthday" and redemption for Bnei Yisrael began unfolding on Rosh Chodesh Nissan in Egypt and was actualized on year later as they inaugurated the Mishkan. Most of the sacrifices mentioned in the haftarah regarding the *milu'im* of the final redemption, also revolve around three dates: the first of Nissan – Rosh Chodesh of the first month, the seventh of the month (*milu'im*) and the fourteenth, upon which the korban Pesach is brought, followed by the seven day holiday. The haftarah underscores the importance of the korban Pesach as a means and sign of renewed redemption, which ultimately begins on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. Sprinkling of the blood on the doorposts, for example, a unique trademark of the korban Pesach (on the fourteenth), becomes part of the Rosh Chodesh inaugural offerings in Yechezkel's description. Rosh Chodesh Nissan serves not only as a reminder of the miracle of deliverance, but as an expression of the beginning of the Divine selection and sanctity of Israel, ultimately manifest in the Mikdash,

The second theme of the haftarah is the position of the Nasi (Rashi – Kohen Gadol, RaDaK – King). The Nasi is responsible for overseeing that the offerings are brought and is also given a special status in the

Mikdash. He is meant to lead the people and enable their spiritual development responsibly to prevent corruption. The focus on his special status in the Mikdash in particular, is meant to highlight the king as G-d's representative, belonging to the world of sanctity similar to the kohen. Just as the *milu'im* sacrifices mark a new beginning of the resting of the *Shechinah*, so too the renewal of the human monarchy is accompanied by special sacrifices. On appointed days and festivals, however, when even the people merit to stand before Hashem, then the Nasi "shall be in the midst of them; when they go in, he shall go in" (46:10) as part of the nation and not distinct from the people. The Ashkenazi custom to read three additional verses warning the Nasi against exploiting his position highlights the theme of leadership in overseeing sacrifices, parallel to the role of Moshe Rabbenu in the parasha.

All of these beginnings are relevant to Parshat HaChodesh, highlighting the creation and renewal of a connection and covenant between Hashem and Am Yisrael. The maftir teaches us the story of the beginning of redemption as opposed to its culmination. The process began with the korban Pesach in Mitzrayim and concluded (as the Ramban explains in his introduction to Sefer Shemot) with the inauguration of the Mishkan. The haftarah complements the parasha beautifully with the culmination of redemption manifest at the same time of the year; beginning with Rosh Chodesh Nissan and the inauguration of the (final) Mikdash, followed by the korban Pesach and ensuing holidays, offering continued opportunities to celebrate with Hashem.

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot

Question: When I bless my kids on Friday night, does it matter if I use one or two hands?

Answer: This discussion begins with the Gemara in Ketubot (24b), which says that a non-Kohen who says Birkat Kohanim violates an Issur. This seemingly poses a question as to how most of Am Yisrael who are non-Kohanim bless their children Friday night. Many answers are given to this question. One of the answers is based on the Bach, who explains that the Issur only applies if the hands are placed like the Kohanim would place them. Based on this, the Gra was machmir to only bless children with one hand, so as to not emulate the Kohanim. Nevertheless, there are many other answers to the question which do not result in this chumrah, and the common practice is to bless with two hands. In fact, the siddur of the Yavetz writes that it is better to use two hands specifically to try to emulate how Moshe blessed Ahron, the Kohanim blessed Yisrael, and how the Gemara in Shabbat says the angels bless us on Friday night.

Question: Can one say “Kel Melech Rachamim” for somebody whose yahrzeit is on Shabbos of Parshat Parah, or is it better to say it at mincha or not at all?

Answer: We do not say “kel male” during shacharit. There are different minhagim regarding mimcha, and if this is the minhag then it can be said. Nevertheless, the standard Ashkenazi practice is not to say “Kel Male” at mincha.

Question: Today I arrived at minyan at 6 AM but nobody was there. The next minyan was at 7 AM. Was it better for me to do work before davening, or to daven alone so as to not do anything before tefillah?

Answer: While one is not allowed to do melacha before davening, there are certain categories of actions that can be done before tefillah. There are small actions that are not considered significant that can be done (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach includes taking out the trash, turning on the washing machine). Additionally, tzarhei mitzvah and actions that can be viewed as preparatory for tefillah are allowed. If there is a real need to do work, you should first say birchot hashachar and also set a reminder for tefillah. These options are more ideal than davening without a minyan.

Question: If somebody prefers to be called up to the Torah with both of their parents’ names, is that acceptable?

Answer: One one hand, many sources indicate that a person's name goes by the mother (for example, see Shabbat 66b). When we pray for somebody's health, we always use the mothers name. Nevertheless, the minhag amongst ashkenazim is that when called up to the Torah, only the father's name is used. I was taught by Rav Ahron Lichtenstein zt”l in the name of Rav Solovechik that we should be stringent about keeping to this minhag. Therefore, when being called up to the Torah, it should be only with the name of the father.

Question: Our entire family will be together for Pesach, and some members of the family are sefardi and eating kitniyot while others are not. A few questions: 1) Can cooking be done in the same oven at the same time. 2) Can we eat at the same table?

Answer: Cooking should not be done together uncovered, as this would constitute bitul isur lechatchilah. If the cooking was done, then this would be fine bedieved. Additionally, if one of them is covered with tinfoil or the like, cooking together is permissible.

There is no issue with eating together. The Rema allows food that was cooked with kitniyot to be eaten as long as the person does not eat the kitniyot. We see from this that we are not concerned that a person will come to eat the kitniyot, and therefore, we certainly can allow somebody to eat at the same table with kitniyot.

Question: Is there a chiyuv to tear kriyah over hearing about the death of Rav Chaim Kanievesky zt”l? If so, in what manner should this be done?

Answer: It is proper to tear kriyah for Rav Chaim zt”l, even though there is no obligation to do so. The Rema says you only have a chiyuv to tear kriyah if it is your teacher from whom you obtained most of your wisdom.

Nevertheless, it is proper to tear kiryah over a gadol batorah such as Rav Chaim zt”l, and this is what I did. When you tear, you do so like the way one tears for a parent. You tear on the left side and do so until it uncovers the heart. It should be done standing.

● Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.

תקציר לפרשת תזריע

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אלקים לבין תהליך גופני עצמתי – ראוי להביא קרבן חטאת. בנוסף לכך, היולדת עלולה לשקוע בקושי של התהליך הגופני המייסר, ולשכוח את גדולת התהליך, ומתוך כך אפילו להגיע למצב בו היא אינה רוצה ללדת יותר.

התורה מסבירה שייסורי הלידה הינם תוצאה של חטא אדם הראשון. החטא מדגיש את המורכבות של האדם העשוי מגוף ונשמה, ומשלב בין עולם הרוח לעולם החומר, ומתוך כך עלול לעתים לבחור ברע ולחטוא. לכן, חטא אדם הראשון הביא אל העולם את ייסורי הלידה, שמשמעותם היא שבכל לידה של אדם חדש ישנה שוב התנגשות בין עולם החומר לעולם הרוח. קרבן החטאת נובע מההתנגשות ההכרחית הזו שביצירת האדם. החטאת של היולדת מכפרת על חוסר השלמות של כל בני האדם, מצב הבא לידי ביטוי בעוצמה רבה דווקא ברגע החיבור בין הגוף לנשמה ברגע הלידה.

מטומאת הלידה ולא דווקא בעקבות חטא (כדברי רמב"ן). אך מדוע תהליך הלידה מביא לטומאה?

הטומאה מופיעה בעקבות מוות, שמהותו הוא הפרדה בין הרוח לחומר. הלידה אמנם הפוכה ממוות ומביאה לעולם חיים חדשים, אך יש בתוכה גם מימד של מוות – בפרידת העובר מרחם האם, ובניתוק השיליה, המאבדת את חיותה ומתה. ובכל זאת שונה טומאת היולדת משאר הטומאות הנגרמות ממצב של חולי, מכיוון שטומאת היולדת נגרמת ממצב בריא ורצוי.

הלידה היא תהליך של בריאה, בו שותפה האם לבורא עולם בהבאת חיים לעולם. תהליך זה כרוך בשינוי גופני עוצמתי המלווה בקשיים גדולים, ואין זה מקרי – הורדת נשמה מעולם הרוח וכניסתה אל עולם החומר איננו תהליך של מה-בכך, והוא כרוך בהתנגשות עצמתית בין עולם הרוח ועולם החומר. היולדת נמצאת בקרבת א-לוהים גדולה ושותפה לבריאה, ויחד עם זאת נמצאת בתהליך גופני עוצמתי וקשה. על עצם ההתנגשות הזו שבין קרבת

רשת תזריע פותחת בטומאת היולדת וטהרתה. קרבן החטאת שהיולדת צריכה להביא מעורר תמיהה: במה חטאה היולדת, ומדוע עליה להקריב קרבן חטאת?

חלק מהמפרשים מסבירים את הקשר בין תהליך הלידה לחטא: חז"ל ראו חטא בכך שהאישה נשבעת בזמן הלידה לפרוש מבעלה ולהימנע מהולדת ילדים נוספים; אברבנאל טוען שייסורי הלידה מעידים על חטא כלשהו, שעליו צריך לכפר; רבנו בחיי מבאר שקרבן היולדת בא ככפרה על חטא אדם וחווה.

מאחר והלידה היא חלק ממחזור חיים טבעי של יצירת חיים חדשים, ננסה לתת משמעות נוספת לקרבן החטאת של היולדת. המילה "חטאת" יכולה להתפרש לא רק כקשורה ל"חטא", אלא גם כ"חטוי". ואכן, חלק מקרבנות החטאת אינם באים על חטא כחלק מתהליך של חטוי, טהרה וכפרה. כך גם קרבן היולדת הוא קרבן הבא על מנת לטהר את היולדת

בס"ד

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Boundaries



Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

All of us have a lot of sharp comments to make about teachers' organizations, politicians, and of course about the members of our families. Restraint has no good public relations. It's not considered cool to hesitate and to think before answering. The easiest thing is to shout, to curse, to speak harshly. The hardest thing is to control the most deadly weapon we have - the power of speech.

This week's parasha - Tazria - offers an alternative perspective on our culture of speech and the commentators are extensively preoccupied with lashon hara (insulting speech or gossip), with the words that come out of our mouths. The commentators contend that speech should be the end of a process and not the beginning of one, and that we must think well before opening our mouths in order to be successful in harnessing the tremendous power of speech.

These days controlling our speech is especially difficult. Who doesn't want to explode, to insult and to scream, even several times a day? The parasha is a yearly reminder that common courtesy, good manners, and thinking two or even three times before saying or writing anything should be the foundation of our interactions with others. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe once wrote: "We put a lot of effort into teaching a baby to talk but do not invest much thought into teaching ourselves to be silent."



The month of Nissan is here. Here's a letter I received from Captain Aviad Chazani:

"This morning, at the bus stop I heard two older women talking about how there's nothing to eat on Passover. Yesterday, a friend muttered something my way about matzot and stomach pains. And over the last few days, I have come across dozens of posts about Passover-cleaning suffering. Dear friends, Passover is being stolen from us! Passover is the most revolutionary holiday in human history: slaves dared to challenge the world's greatest superpower and to attain their freedom through mind-boggling miracles and through a historic show of heroism and national pride. Passover is a holiday of faith in human potential. Passover is about taking bruised and wounded slaves and whispering in their ears that they aren't just numbers. They have dreams, feelings, and strengths. And most importantly- a destiny. A personal, God-given life purpose. On Passover, tell your children about previous generations and educate them to the true belief that they have the ability to follow in their courageous ancestors' footsteps. Passover is the holiday of a nation's great struggle, and of our readiness for the long haul, for a personal investigation (cleaning-out?) of our innermost depths. Passover is a holiday of simplicity: Flour+water+oven and knowing how to enjoy the simple, unsophisticated things in life. Think about Passover. Live Passover. Don't allow shallow supermarket-line conversations to steal it from you. Most of the things people suffer from are related to their decision to take on extra home projects and cleaning. The laws of Passover cleaning are simple and not threatening and are meant to be accompanied by an inner process of spiritual work.

This year, let's not miss the point of Pesach. Let's not steal Pesach from ourselves!"



It's two weeks until Pesach. Dr. Miri Kahana from Efrata Teachers College brings a slightly different perspective on cleaning during this time of year:

"I wanted to share a thought to which I continually return: all of this arduous cleaning is only because we are very rich. Not just me, but all of us. Each of us lives with our family in our own home. There is a separate room for the parents, a kitchen, a shower, and a bathroom. Our houses are full of furniture, clothes, appliances, and food. Our children have more than enough to eat to the point where they forget unopened bags of snacks in their desk drawers and leave sandwiches that they did not even taste in their backpacks. How far we are from those distant halachic discussions regarding a public oven for several families; or the issue of a poor person's cloak taken as collateral for a loan that must be returned each night since the poor person sleeps in the cloak; or the matter of a poor person washing his only shirt Erev Shabbat, despite the prohibition of laundering on this day (prior to the era of washing machines).

Despite the difficulties and challenges of our generation, I am certain that all of us have at least one great-grandfather who would go out of his mind with surprise and joy if he would see the prodigious prosperity in which his great-grandchildren live. Therefore, every once in a while, I remind myself to stop complaining about how much we still have to clean or how much we still have to cook, and simply focus on how much we have."



Continued on next page

For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis
Deputy CEO, World Mizrahi
Rabbi at Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“**A**nd Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, as follows: 'If a person ("adam") will have on the skin of his flesh a swelling or a rash or a discolouration, and it will become on the skin of his flesh a tzara'at affliction, he shall be brought to Aharon the Kohen or to one of his sons, the Kohanim'" (Vayikra 13:1-2).

The major focus of this and next week's Parshiot is tzara'at – a form of leprosy which was a physical manifestation of a spiritual malaise, primarily caused by slander. Other reasons given for tzara'at are haughtiness, selfishness and social sins.

One would assume that tzara'at could only afflict adults, who can be held responsible for their actions. However, the Mishna (Niddah 5:3) teaches us that a newborn child who is only one day old is already susceptible to tzara'at. The Gemara (Niddah 44a) explains that this is derived from the word "adam" in the verse above, meaning any person, regardless of age.

How can we understand the tzara'at of a baby? After all, babies do not have the capacity to speak, let alone slander or commit social sins. Why would a baby be afflicted with tzara'at?



It is important for parents and educators to know that improper speech does not only impact the person speaking and the person being spoken about, but the children of the slanderer as well.

Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch explained:

"Just as an affliction that appears on a garment or house is a warning sign to their owners, so it is with an affliction that appears on the forehead of an innocent child. It is a warning that shocks the hearts of its parents to come and scrutinise their deeds...

"The mark of affliction on their child's body, the declaration of impurity and its consequences, are a harsh warning to its parents: Improve your deeds for your children's sake. Be decent for the sake of your children's future!" (R' S.R. Hirsch's commentary to Parshat Tazria).

It is important for parents and educators to know that improper speech does not only impact the person speaking and the person being spoken about, but the children of the slanderer as well. From the day they are born, our children are influenced by the atmosphere in which they are educated and nurtured. Tzara'at of a baby is not a punishment for its parent's actions, but a natural consequence of the environment it is exposed to.

If our own fate is not enough to motivate us to scrutinise our deeds and improve our ways, we should act for the sake of our children and the example we set for them.

Shabbat Shalom

Continued from previous page

חויה אישית? האם המטרה בחיים היא רק לזרום, או גם לצמוח? האם השאיפה היא רק לאימפולסיביות, או גם לבנייה והתפתחות?

חכמינו לא מפסיקים לכתוב על חשיבותו של הדיבור המתון והשקול. חז"ל מספרים לנו שהעולם מתקיים בזכות מי שמצליח לבלום את פיו בשעת כעס ומריבה.

הרב שלמה וולבה כותב שאנחנו מתאמצים הרבה כדי ללמד ילד לדבר, אבל לא מלמדים אותו גם מתי ראוי לשתוק. הפרשה היא תזכורת שנתית לכך שנימוס, דרך ארץ, מחשבה שנייה ואפילו שלישית לפני שמדברים או כותבים משהו – כל אלה אולי מביאים פחות לייקים, אבל הם התשתית לבנות את החברה שלנו ואת עצמנו.

איזו תוספת מרעננת לשיח שלנו, בפרט בתקופה הזו: להגיד שאני לא יודע הכול.



לאיפוק אין יחסי ציבור טובים. זה לא נחשב מגניב להתלבט ולחשוב לפני שעונים. פרשת השבוע מציעה מבט אלטרנטיבי על תרבות הדיבור שלנו: פרשני הפרשה עוסקים רבות בלשון הרע ובמילים שיוצאות לנו מהפה, וטוענים שאנחנו מעריכים יותר מידי את החשיפה האישית, את הכנות, ומהללים את מי ש"אומר את כל האמת בפרצוף". ומה עם מי שמחליט שלא לפגוע, או לא לגלות לכולם את הכול? בריאליטי, בתקשורת, בפיד, בפוליטיקה, נדמה שיש ערך חדש: להיות אותנטי, ויהי מה. אבל מי קבע שכל מה שמתרוצץ לנו בבטן או בראש ראוי לשידור ולפרסום? שצריך לשתף בכל מחשבה לא-אפויה ובכל

יש שלוש מילים שקשה במיוחד לומר: "אני לא יודע". אנחנו רגילים להיות נחרצים מאוד, עם דעה ברורה על כל דבר, מפוליטיקה ועד קורונה, בלי לתת לעובדות לבלבל אותנו. נדיר לשמוע מישהו באמצע וויכוח אומר "וואלה, אין לי מושג" או "תן לי לחשוב על זה".

רש"י, גדול פרשני התורה, עוצר באמצע הפירוש שלו על פרשת השבוע, פרשת תזריע, כדי לכתוב שלוש מילים: "לא ידעתי פירושו". כלומר, אני לא יודע לפרש את העניין הזה. רש"י היה יכול לבחור שלא לכתוב כלום, אבל בחר לפרסם באוזנינו, 900 שנה אחר כך, שהוא לא יודע. דור אחרי דור של לומדים קוראים בכל שנה מחדש רש"י לא יודע משהו. יש פה לא רק כנות, אלא גם הזמנה – אולי אתם יודעים? אולי לכם יש רעיון?

The Circumcision of Desire



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

It is hard to trace with any precision the moment when a new idea makes its first appearance on the human scene, especially one as amorphous as that of love. But love has a history.¹ There is the contrast we find in Greek, and then Christian, thought between eros and agape: sexual desire and a highly abstract love for humanity in general.

There is the concept of chivalry that makes its appearance in the age of the Crusades, the code of conduct that prized gallantry and feats of bravery to “win the heart of a lady”. There is the romantic love presented in the novels of Jane Austen, hedged with the proviso that the young or not-so-young man destined for the heroine must have the right income and country estate, so as to exemplify the “truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.”² And there is the moment in *Fiddler on the Roof* where, exposed by their children to the new ideas in pre-revolutionary Russia, Tevye turns to his wife Golde, and the following conversation ensues:

Tevye: Do you love me?

Golde: I'm your wife!

Tevye: I know! But do you love me?

Golde: Do I love him? For twenty-five years I've lived with him, fought with him, starved with him. Twenty-five years, my bed is his...

Tevye: Shh!

Golde: If that's not love, what is?

Tevye: Then you love me!

Golde: I suppose I do!

The inner history of humanity is in part the history of the idea of love. And at some stage a new idea makes its appearance in biblical Israel. We can trace it best in a highly suggestive passage in the book of one of the great Prophets of the Bible, Hosea.

Hosea lived in the eighth century BCE. The kingdom had been divided since the death of Solomon. The northern kingdom in particular, where Hosea lived, had lapsed after a period of peace and prosperity into lawlessness, idolatry, and chaos. Between 747 and 732 BCE there were no less than five Kings, the result of a series of intrigues and bloody struggles for power. The people, too, had become lax:

“There is no faithfulness or kindness, and no knowledge of G-d in the land; there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing and committing adultery; they break all bounds and murder follows murder” (Hos. 4:1-2)

Like other Prophets, Hosea knew that Israel's destiny depended on its sense of mission. Faithful to G-d, it was able to do extraordinary things: survive in the face of empires, and generate a society unique in the ancient world, of the equal dignity of all as fellow citizens under the sovereignty of the Creator of Heaven and Earth. Faithless, however, it was just one more minor power in the ancient Near East, whose chances of survival against larger political predators were minimal.

What makes the book of Hosea remarkable is the episode with which it begins. G-d tells the Prophet to marry a prostitute, and see what it feels like to have a love betrayed. Only then will Hosea have a glimpse into G-d's sense of betrayal by the people of Israel. Having liberated them from slavery and brought them into their land, G-d saw them forget the past, forsake the covenant, and worship strange G-ds. Yet He cannot abandon them, despite the fact that they have abandoned Him. It is a powerful passage, conveying the astonishing assertion that more than the Jewish people love G-d, G-d loves the Jewish people. The history of Israel is a love story between the faithful

G-d and his often faithless people. Though G-d is sometimes angry, He cannot but forgive. He will take them on a kind of second honeymoon, and they will renew their marriage vows:

“Therefore I am now going to allure her;

I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her . . .

I will betroth you to Me forever;

I will betroth you in righteousness and justice,

in love and compassion.

I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will know the Lord.” (Hos 2:16-22)

It is this last sentence – with its explicit comparison between the covenant and a marriage – that Jewish men say when they put on the hand-tefillin, winding its strap around the finger like a wedding-ring.

One verse in the midst of this prophecy deserves the closest scrutiny. It contains two complex metaphors that must be unraveled strand by strand:

"On that day," declares the Lord,

"you will call Me 'my Husband' [*ishi*];

you will no longer call Me 'my Master' [*baali*]. (Hos. 2:18)

This is a double pun. *Baal*, in biblical Hebrew, meant ‘a husband’, but in a highly specific sense – namely, ‘master, owner, possessor, controller.’ It signalled physical, legal, and economic dominance. It was also the name of the Canaanite G-d – whose prophets Elijah challenged in the famous confrontation at Mount Carmel. Baal (often portrayed as a bull) was the G-d of the storm, who defeated Mot, the G-d of sterility and death. Baal was the rain that impregnated the earth and made it fertile. The religion of Baal is the worship of G-d as power.

Hosea contrasts this kind of relationship with the other Hebrew word for husband, *ish*. Here he is recalling the words of the first man to the first woman:

“This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called “woman” [*ishah*],
Because she was taken from man [*ish*].”
(Gen. 2:23)

Here the male-female relationship is predicated on something quite other than power and dominance, ownership and control. Man and woman confront one another in sameness and difference. Each is an image of the other, yet each is separate and distinct. The only relationship able to bind them together without the use of force is marriage-as-covenant – a bond of mutual loyalty and love in which each makes a pledge to the other to serve one another.

Not only is this a radical way of reconceptualizing the relationship between man and woman. It is also, implies Hosea, the way we should think of the relationship between human beings and G-d. G-d reaches out to humanity not as power – the storm, the thunder, the rain – but as love, and not an abstract, philosophical love but a deep and abiding passion that survives all the disappointments and betrayals. Israel may not always behave lovingly toward G-d, says Hosea, but G-d loves Israel and will never cease to do so.

How we relate to G-d affects how we relate to other people. That is Hosea’s message – and vice versa: *how we relate to other people affects the way we think of G-d.* Israel’s political chaos in the eighth century BCE was intimately connected to its religious waywardness. A society built on corruption and exploitation is one where might prevails over right. That is not Judaism but idolatry, Baal-worship.

Now we understand why the sign of the covenant is circumcision, the commandment given in this week’s parsha of Tazria. For faith to be more than the worship of power, it must affect the most intimate relationship between men and women. In a society founded on covenant, male-female relationships are built on something other and gentler than

male dominance, masculine power, sexual desire and the drive to own, control and possess. *Baal* must become *ish*. The alpha male must become the caring husband. Sex must be sanctified and tempered by mutual respect. The sexual drive must be circumscribed and circumscribed so that it no longer seeks to possess and is instead content to love.

There is thus more than an accidental connection between *monotheism* and *monogamy*. Although biblical law does not command monogamy, it nonetheless depicts it as the normative state from the start of the human story: Adam and Eve, one man, one woman. Whenever in Genesis a patriarch marries more than one woman there is tension and anguish. The commitment to one G-d is mirrored in the commitment to one person.

The Hebrew word *emunah*, often translated as “faith,” in fact means faithfulness, fidelity, precisely the commitment one undertakes in making a marriage. Conversely, for the prophets there is a connection between idolatry and adultery. That is how G-d describes Israel to Hosea. G-d married the Israelites but they, in serving idols, acted the part of a promiscuous woman (Hos. 1-2).

The love of husband and wife – a love at once personal and moral, passionate and responsible – is as close as we come to understanding G-d’s love for us and our ideal love for Him. When Hosea says, “You will know the Lord,” he does not mean knowledge in an abstract sense. He means the knowledge of intimacy and relationship, the touch of two selves across the metaphysical abyss that separates one consciousness from another. That is the theme of *The Song of Songs*, that deeply human yet deeply mystical expression of eros, the love between humanity and G-d. It is also the meaning of one of the definitive sentences in Judaism:

“You shall love the Lord your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (Deut. 6:5)

Judaism from the beginning made a connection between sexuality and violence on the one hand, marital faithfulness and social order on the other. Not by chance is marriage called *kiddushin*,

“sanctification.” Like covenant itself, marriage is a pledge of loyalty between two parties, each recognizing the other’s integrity, honouring their differences even as they come together to bring new life into being. Marriage is to society what covenant is to religious faith: a decision to make love – not power, wealth or *force majeure* – the generative principle of life.

Just as spirituality is the most intimate relationship between us and G-d, so sex is the most intimate relationship between us and another person. Circumcision is the eternal sign of Jewish faith because it unites the life of the soul with the passions of the body, reminding us that both must be governed by humility, self-restraint, and love.

Brit milah helps transform the male from *baal* to *ish*, from dominant partner to loving husband, just as G-d tells Hosea that this is what He seeks in His relationship with the people of the covenant. Circumcision turns biology into spirituality. The instinctive male urge to reproduce becomes instead a covenantal act of partnership and mutual affirmation. It was thus as decisive a turn in human civilisation as Abrahamic monotheism itself. Both are about abandoning power as the basis of relationship, and instead aligning ourselves with what Dante called “the love that moves the sun and other stars.”³ Circumcision is the physical expression of the faith that lives in love.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Does this week’s article alter the way you think of love and marriage?
- Does this week’s article alter the way you think of G-d’s relationship with His people?
- “*More than the Jewish people love G-d, G-d loves the Jewish people.*” What evidence can you find in Jewish history to support this statement?

1. See, e.g., C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960. Also Simon May’s, *Love: A History*, New Haven: Yale UP, 2011.
2. The famous first line of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*.
3. *The Divine Comedy*, 33:143-45.

Tzaddik Vera Lo



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

Rashi at the beginning of Parshas Tazria (Vayikra 12:2) brings an interesting teaching of the Midrash Rabbah in the name of Rabbi Simla'i: "Just as the fashioning of man came after all cattle, beasts, and fowl in the act of Creation, so is his law explained after the law of cattle, beast, and fowl." This is why the dinim of human tum'ah and taharah in the parshiyos of Tazria and Metzora follow the dinim outlining the kashrus and tum'ah of animals in Parshas Shemini. Rashi is alluding here to the symmetry that exists between the physical world and the Torah's halachic system. What is true for the account of the creation of the world holds true in the realm of ritual law as well.

This teaching echoes the well-known teaching of Chazal, - "[Hashem] looked into the Torah and created the world" (Zohar, Terumah 161:1). The physical world is patterned after the words of the Torah, which served as the blueprint of Creation itself. Here, Chazal underscore the parallel relationship between teva ha'olam (nature) and the dinim of the Torah.

Similarly, the Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 61:1), when teaching that Avraham Avinu observed Torah Law even before Matan Torah, explains that Avraham was aware of the dinim of the Torah because כליות יועצות - "the kidneys (seen as the seat of intellect) advise." Because he was especially attuned to it, Avraham was able to intuit the Torah's laws by observing nature itself. Since the Torah is a blueprint of the world, careful observation of nature can lead to an understanding of Torah Law.

The Rambam (Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 2:10) expresses the idea: "He is the Knower, and He is the Known, and He is the Knowledge." The Ba'al HaTanya (Likutei Amarim,

perek 2) explains this to mean that אחד וחכמתו הוא - He and His Wisdom are One. The Torah is הקדוש ברוך הוא, and since He and His Wisdom are one, the Torah is, in its essence, a description of Elokus (G-dliness). Indeed, any author or artist who creates a work of art imparts some of his personality into the product that he produces. If he creates enough, he will present his full inner-self within his creations.

This is the underlying message of the perfect symmetry described in this Midrash. Hashem patterned the world after the blueprint of the Torah because both the Torah and the Creation reflect their Creator; both are descriptions of Elokus.

To us, nature and the dinim of the Torah not only seem to lack symmetry, but seem to be contradictory. We see צדיק ורע לו - the righteous one who suffers - and רשע וטוב לו - the wicked one who prospers. The ethical and moral standards of the Religious Law seem to be at odds with Natural Law. Nevertheless, we believe that these two laws do blend together, and that a person attuned to it will be able to appreciate this correspondence. Thus, the Midrash teaches us that teva ha'olam is patterned after Torah Law, and that even the order in which those dinim appear in the Torah corresponds to the order in which the various elements of Creation appeared in the world.

The following passuk in מזמור שיר ליום השבת relates to this symmetry as well: עלי עשור ועלי נבל עלי הגיין וכינור - Upon a ten-stringed instrument and upon lyre, with singing accompanied by a harp" (Tehillim 92:4). Chazal tell us that the harp of the Beis HaMikdash consisted of seven strings, the harp of the days of Mashiach will be of eight strings, and the harp of

Olam HaBa will be of ten strings (Arachin 13b). The ten-stringed instrument used for the mizmor of Shabbos can be viewed as an allusion to both the Aseres HaDibros as well as to the Asarah Ma'amaros - the Ten Statements through which the world was created (see Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin's LeTorah U'LeMo'adim, Parshas Kedoshim, ma'amar 3). The Aseres HaDibros represent Religious Law, while the Asarah Ma'amaros represent Natural Law. These two systems should conform to each other and should exhibit the correspondence that we mentioned above.

However, when we are confronted with the question of צדיק ורע לו ורשע וטוב לו, when the righteous seem to suffer while the wicked seem to prosper, we face a perceived breakdown of this uniformity. According to Religious Law, as outlined in the Aseres HaDibros, those righteous individuals who live in consonance with the Torah's ideals should enjoy a prosperous existence; the wicked individuals who live in a manner contrary to the Torah's ideals should suffer as a consequence of their misdeeds. All too often, however, what we observe within the realm of Natural Law is exactly the opposite. What we have here is an apparent contradiction between the Aseres HaDibros and the Asarah Ma'amaros.

Part of the approach that can be used to resolve this conflict is to endeavor to attain the faith in Hashem that allows us to shift our focus from the present reality and to instead set our eyes towards the time of Olam HaBa.

● From 'Rav Schachter on the Parsha'.

A Specific Mission



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

As we are aware, Parshat Tazria contains within it all of the different ways to recognize a מצורע, and what is considered מצורע and what is not. Beyond that, in Parshat Naso, we find an additional rule about a מצורע, that one of the consequences of being a מצורע is that he must be sent outside of the Jewish camp, along with other impure people.

”צו, אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְיִשְׁלְחוּ מִן-הַמַּחֲנֶה, כָּל-צָרוּעַ וְכָל-זָב; וְכָל, טִמְא לְנֶפֶשׁ.”

The Satmar Rebbe, in his commentary of דברי יואל on Parshat Naso, comments that the Pasuk is written in a different way than most other commands that we find in the Torah. The Pasuk in Parshat Naso about sending the מצורע outside of the camp is seemingly talking to the entire nation, commanding them to send out anyone with צרעת. Yet, the obligation is ultimately on the impure person himself, that he is commanded to leave the camp, and therefore normally the Torah would just speak to the מצורע himself, commanding him to leave the camp. Why, then, did the Torah choose to express this rule as if placing an obligation on the entire Jewish nation? Furthermore, right after the Jewish people were commanded about sending out the people with צרעת, the Pesukim talk about the fact that the Jews immediately listened. Not often do we find in the Torah cases when Moshe tells over a Mitzvah to the Jewish people and that the Torah records that they immediately kept that Mitzvah. For example, we don't find that the Jewish people were commanded about the Mitzvah of Lulav and Esrog, and that they immediately followed that Mitzvah.

The Satmar Rebbe answers both of these questions through a proper analysis on the wording used to describe the sending out of the מצורע. In a different context, the מדרש איכה comments on the difference between two words in the Hebrew language that seem very similar but really have very different connotations, לגרש vs. לשלח. Both mean to send someone away, however with very different connotations. The Midrash explains that לגרש is to send someone away simply because he should not be there, without regard to where he is going. On the other hand, the word לשלח is to send someone with a purpose to arrive at a certain point, giving significance to where you are sending him to and why he is going. The Midrash uses this to explain how Hashem views our exile, noting that we were not sent out of Eretz Yisrael as “לגרש”, but rather as “לשלח”. We were not exiled simply, we do not deserve Eretz Yisrael any more, but rather we were sent into exile with some specific purpose, some aspect of the world to fix. This is the distinction made by the מדרש איכה between these two words.

In a side note, although appropriate as we begin to prepare for Pesach, this distinction between שליחות and גירושין can also be used to explain a difficult Pasuk regarding the Jews leaving Egypt. The Pasuk there says:

”כִּי בְיַד חֲזָקָה, יִשְׁלַחֶם, וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה, יִגְרְשֶׁם מֵאֶרֶצוֹ.”

Hashem tells Moshe that the Jews will go out of Egypt, although uses a redundant wording of “strong hand” twice, and also alternates between ישלחם and יגרשם. Rashi explains that the first “strong hand” is referring to the hand of Hashem, while the second “strong hand” is referring to

the hand of Pharaoh. Based on the idea from the מדרש איכה, this fits beautifully with the Pasuk. When Hashem sends us out of Egypt, it is with a specific purpose, and therefore uses the wording of ישלחם. However, when Pharaoh sends us out of Egypt, it is obviously with no other intention other than us leaving the country, and therefore uses the word of יגרשם.

Going back to the discussion of מצורע, the Satmar Rebbe uses this idea to explain the Pesukim in Parshat Naso. Obviously, the actual obligation of being sent out of the camp is incumbent specifically on those with צרעת. However, the Pasuk is commanding the rest of the nation to convey to those with צרעת that they are going out as a שליחות, and not as a גירושין. Immediately, the Jews headed to this command. They sent those people with צרעת out of the camp, although encouraged them that they were not simply being sent away, but rather being sent out of the camp with a specific goal, a specific mission for them to accomplish. This is ultimately the responsibility of the entire nation, that whoever has to leave the camp for whatever impurity it may be, be encouraged that it is merely a temporary שליחות, a purposeful sending, and not, chas v'shalom, a permanent גירושין. This is the meaning of the Pesukim in Parshat Naso, and the proper understanding on how the Jews were instructed to send out the people afflicted with צרעת.

● Edited by Jay Eisenstadt and Ari Levine.

The Month of Nissan



Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef zt"l
Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel

The month of Nissan is a joyous time for Israel; it has been in the past, it is in the present, and will continue to be in the future.

This is because on the First of Nissan, the Mishkan (Tabernacle) was erected and the twelve leaders of the Twelve Tribes of Israel commenced offering their sacrifices in honor of the inauguration of the Mizbe'ach (altar). The day following the twelfth day, meaning the Thirteenth of Nissan, was Isru Chag for them and the Fourteenth of Nissan was already Erev Pesach.

After this, the seven days of Pesach commenced followed by the Twenty-Second of Nissan which was Isru Chag. The building of the third Bet Hamikdash, which we pray should take place speedily

and in our days, will take place on the first day of Pesach and this is why this day will be especially joyous forever.

Although the Bet Hamikdash may not be built on Yom Tov, for building entails several works that are prohibited on Yom Tov, nevertheless, the third Bet Hamikdash shall be built by Hashem which is indeed permissible on Yom Tov. It is written, "In Nissan they were redeemed and in Nissan they shall once again be redeemed in the future," as the verse states, "As it was in the days you left Egypt, I shall show them wonders." The inauguration of the third Bet Hamikdash shall last for seven days but will not be able to begin until after the holiday of Pesach, for two joyous occasions may not be combined (it is for this reason

that one may not get married during the holiday). Thus, the entire month of Nissan is dedicated to joy and happiness for the Jewish nation. It is therefore improper to recite Viduy and Tachanun (supplication prayers) during these days and it is for this reason that we do not recite Nefilat Apayim (Tachanun prayer) during the entire month of Nissan.

Similarly, a fast cannot be decreed upon the public during this month. Nevertheless, one should customarily fast in honor of the anniversary of the passing of either of one's parents during this month. (This means that it is customary to fast on the anniversary of a parent's death and this fast should not be pushed off, even if it falls out during the month of Nissan.)

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The Secret to Parenting Hidden in the Parsha



Rabbi Shalom Rosner
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

After a woman gives birth, she is commanded to offer two *korbanos*. As the *pasuk* states: “*Keves ben shenaso l’olah, uben Yonah oh sor l’chatas*” (Vayikra 12:6). The Torah clearly dictates that the first offering is an *olah*, that is to be consumed totally and man may not partake in the meat of the offering, and the second is a *chatas*, which may be consumed by the Kohen. Offering an *olah* is appropriate as an expression of appreciation for having been granted a child. But why bring a *chatas*, which is typically required of someone who committed an unintentional transgression? Several *mefarshim* (based on Niddah 31b) explain that perhaps while experiencing the pain of child labor, the women may have sworn not to get pregnant again and go through this agony. She therefore offers a *chatas*, to atone for her inadvertent promise, which she likely regrets after seeing the results of her labor.

There is something unusual though with respect to the order of the *korbanos* that the *yoldes* offers. The gemara (Zevachin 7b) states that when one offers both a *Korban chatas* and a *korban olah*, the *korban chatas* should be brought first- to symbolize *sur mei’rah* (requesting forgiveness from the unintentional transgression), followed by the *korban olah*, which represents the *asei tov* (a complete submission to Hashem), and an expression of gratitude. First you wipe the slate clean before you offer a present.

If that is the case, then why are the *korbanos* offered by the *yoldes* in the opposite order, as the *pasuk* dictates that she first offers an *olah*, followed by a *chatas*?

The Menachem Zion (son-in-law of R’ Tzvi Pesach) offers a fascinating insight highlighting the relevance of the symbolic nature of these *korbanos*.

Perhaps, hidden in this slight nuance is the secret to successful parenting. On the one hand a parent has aspirations for a child. Dreams and hopes of their future success. In Hebrew this is referred to a *she’ifos*. On the other hand, reality or *met’zius*, kicks in and often those original hopes and goals are not attained. It is crucial for a parent to set the bar high, have their children reach for the stars, yet be appreciative and satisfied with what their hard efforts actually achieved. A parent should provide a child with all the tools necessary for his or her success, bearing in mind, *chanoch l’na’ar al pi darko*, that each child is different and is blessed with unique capabilities with which they can flourish. We must proceed cautiously as not to expect too much, but be certain not to shoot for mediocrity, or the result will be inferiority.

Unfortunately, sometimes as parents and grandparents, we are negligent in both directions. On the one hand, we often try to push the children even beyond their capabilities, maybe trying to have them do what WE want to accomplish, instead of thinking about what’s good for them. This could then lead to our feelings of disappointment, and their feelings of failure. But on the other hand, we sometimes are too reticent and passive with our children. In our very open world, we as parents, at times, forget that we are tasked with educating our children and not leaving the child with the freedom to choose at every corner. We need to motivate them as much as possible to reach for the stars, and make the most

out of every spiritual opportunity that presents itself.

The *yoldes* brings the *olah* first, to symbolize that a parent should reach for the stars and expect the best from their child. Yet, the *olah* is followed by a *chatas*, to symbolize that in reality, even if our child is not perfect, he or she is still holy, as a *chatas*, that is partly offered to Hashem and partly consumed here on earth by the Kohen.

There is a halacha quoted in the *Shulchan Aruch* (YD 81:7), that states that a Jewish child should not nurse from an Egyptian woman. The reason given is that Moshe Rabbeinu would not drink from an Egyptian woman, because the mouth that would speak directly with the *Shechinah* could not be fed by an Egyptian source. Is this applicable to anyone else, other than Moshe Rabbeinu?! If not, then why is this halacha quoted in the *Shulchan Aruch*? It is highly unlikely that other children will reach that level. Yet, Rav Yaakov Kamintetzky suggests that every one of our children is a potential Moshe Rabbeinu. Every child should be looked at as the next *gadol hador*, the next unbelievable man and woman who will change the destiny of Klal Yisrael! There’s an *oleh* in front of me!

That should be our *sheifa*, our goal, but *l’maaseh*, if my child is not a R’ Moshe Feinstein, if he is not an *oleh*, at least he will be a *chatas*, which is *chatzi l’Hashem*. It’s all *kadosh*. He or she can be a ben or bas Torah, a *gomel chesed* and a *yerei shamayim*. Let’s shoot for the stars (*olah*), yet remain with our feet on the ground (*chatas*) and properly balance the expectations that we have from our children with the proper appreciation of their actual achievements.

Parshas Tazria: The Affliction of Tzaraas



Michal Horowitz
Judaic Studies Teacher

In this week's *parsha*, *Parshas Tazria*, we learn about the affliction of *Tzaraas*. Often erroneously translated as leprosy (which is a contagious illness), *tzaraas* can be more precisely defined as: *a spiritual illness with a physical manifestation*. The *nega tzaraas*, the *tzaraas* affliction, is not contagious. It is limited to the afflicted individual as a sign of deficiency in his character traits, behavior and soul.

Chazal (Arachin 16a) teach that the *nega tzaraas* is brought upon the person due to a number of possible sins.

א"ר שמואל בר נחמני א"ר יוחנן על
שבעה דברים נגעים באין

על לשון הרע ועל שפיכות דמים ועל שבועת שוא ועל
גילוי עריות ועל גסות הרוח ועל הגדול ועל צרות העין
R' Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of
R' Yochanan: *Tzaraas afflictions come upon a person for any one of seven sinful things: (1) for lashon harah (2) for murder (3) for vain oaths (4) for illicit relations (5) for haughtiness (6) for theft and (7) for stinginess.*

Rashi explains: **צרות העין** - שצרה עינו
באחרים ואינו מהנה שכיניו מכליו ע"י שאלה
He is stingy with others, not allowing them to benefit from him. (For example), he does not lend his utensils out to his neighbors.

The person of warped character, who lacks respect for others (a common theme in the above seven sins), is ill on the level of his soul, and Hashem sends him the *nega tzaraas* as a physical sign and reminder of his spiritual illness.

R' Pam zt'l teaches, "One of the seven possible causes of *tzaraas* is *gasus ha'ruach*, arrogance. Every person has the inborn need to be special, which is an expression of the unique *tafkid* (mission) which he has come down to this world to achieve.

"Some people are able to attain greatness (on their own accord and accomplish their task here by bringing their positive character traits to fruition).

"There are others who satisfy their need to feel accomplished in a different way. They derive pleasure and elevation by degrading those around them. They criticize the shortcomings of their friends and acquaintances and belittle their attainments. They feel uplifted when they can deflate others. The method of doing this is usually through *lashon ha'rah* and other violations of the laws of proper speech.

"*Tzaras* is the punishment for such behavior, and the sinner must sit alone outside the town. If someone approaches him, he is to call out about himself: *Impure! Impure!* (Vayikra 13:45). His isolation gives him the opportunity to contemplate his improper behavior and speech and will hopefully motivate him to do *teshuvah* (to repent for his sins).

"After he resolves to eradicate the feelings of haughtiness that brought him to gossip about and slander his fellow Jew, he can begin the purification process. As described in the beginning of *Parshas Metzora*, he must bring two birds whose constant chirping is symbolic of his verbal misdeeds. Next he brings cedar wood, which is a type of tree that grows very tall and wide and whose imposing, regal bearing is similar to the arrogance displayed by the *metzora*.

"He then brings a crimson-colored wool thread, which comes from a lowly creature, and binds the thread with a hyssop plant, a lowly bush. This represents the *metzora's* task to uproot his arrogant behavior and strive to be humble" (A Vort from R' Pam, p.143).

Every person is uniquely endowed with talents, capabilities and strengths, and each person must *recognize* his or her own positive traits. It is those positive aspects that we must channel and use to better ourselves, to help our fellow Jews, and ultimately, to serve HKB"H in all that we do. And yet, while we must appreciate our talents and use them well, we must remember

the Source of all that we have - from material to spiritual, from our physical abilities to our character traits, from our talents to our wisdom and intellect. Every single aspect of our lives is a gift from Hashem. To use our capabilities to aggrandize ourselves over others, to look down upon others who have less than we have, to build ourselves up by putting other people down, is a haughtiness that will not be tolerated by the *Ribbono Shel Olam*.

The very last teaching in *Mishna Avos* exhorts us to always remember that **כל מה שברא** - *all that HKB"H created in His world, He created only for His kavod* (glory and honor) (Avos 6:11).

As great as any mortal may become, he is, ultimately, a *servant* of Hashem, and haughtiness, which inevitably leads to *lashon harah*, is a great sin before Hashem and fellow man.

The true giants amongst us take no pride in who they are or what they have, always knowing it is only by the grace of G-d, in His infinite kindness, that life and blessing have been bestowed upon them.

It happened one time that the upstairs neighbor of R' Aharon Leib Shteinman zt'l, R' Yitzchak Grodzenski, inquired about R' Shteinman's trip to the United States. "They tried feeding me *chazir* (pig) in America!" R' Aharon Leib lamented. R' Yitzchak, who had been to the United States several times, was very surprised. "Who tried giving you *chazir*?" he demanded. "Everywhere I went," R' Aharon Leib replied, "people tried giving me *kavod* (honor). I'm working to make sure that none of the *chazir* has any effect on me!" (Reb Aharon Leib, Artscroll, p.234)

May we be proud enough to embrace our unique *kochos* and use them well, and humble enough to know that *all that we have* is only a gift from Hashem.

The Magic Number



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag
Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

Is 'eight' a magic number in Sefer Vayikra? The 'eighth day' is chosen for the dedication of the Mishkan. The 'eighth day' is chosen for the "brit Milah" of a male child. The 'eighth day' is chosen for the day on which the cleansed Metzora, Zav, and Zavah bring their special korbanot. The final holiday is "**Shmini** Atzeret"

There is a special relationship between the number **seven** and the "shalosh regalim," it is not by chance that the Torah commands us to: Celebrate specifically **seven** days of Chag HaMatzot in the spring, and then count **seven** weeks until the grain harvest holiday of Shavuot; and finally celebrate our fruit harvest during the **seven** days of Succot.

The Torah reminds us of the connection between these agricultural holidays and our belief that 'nature' is G-d's creation.

Eight appears to be significant simply because it follows seven:

"Yom HaShmini" follows the **seven** days of the "miluim", the korbanot on the eighth day of the Metzora and Zav follow their minimum **seven** day "tahara" period, "Shmini Atzeret" follows the **seven** days of Succot.

Brit Milah is an exception. Although the mother happens to be "tamey" for the first seven days after her son's birth, there does not appear to be any logical connection between these seven days and the commandment to perform "milah" on the eighth day. In that parsha, there does not seem to be any reason why specifically the eighth day is chosen.

In What 'Name' Does G-d Speak to Man?

G-d's creation of the universe is presented in Chumash from two perspectives:

- 1) "B'shem **Elokim**" (1:1-2:4) - which focused on G-d's creation of **nature**
 - 2) "B'shem **Havaya**" (2:5-4:26) - which focused on G-d's special relationship with Man
- G-d may talk to man b'shem Elokim, while other times He may speak to him b'shem Havaya - each Name reflecting a distinct perspective of that developing relationship.

We find that from chapters 11 until 16 in Sefer Breishit, G-d speaks to man exclusively b'shem Havaya. In chapter 17, when G-d commands Avraham to perform Brit Milah, this pattern suddenly changes! for the **first** time, He speaks to Avraham Avinu b'shem **Elokim**:

One Step 'Above' Nature

This background can help us understand the commandment that "brit milah" be performed specifically on the eighth day.

Note the progression of G-d's relationship with man from the perspective of 'shem Elokim':

- 1) The Creation of **nature** in **seven** days (1:1-2:4);
- 2) The covenant with Noach after the Flood (9:1-17);
- 3) The "Brit Milah" covenant with Avraham Avinu to be performed on the **eighth** day (17:1-14).

One could suggest that circumcision on the **eighth** day relates to this elevation of man's spiritual level, **one** step above the level of his original creation in **seven** days.

This is based on these three stages of this progression b'shem Elokim:

- (1) The first seven days - G-d brought the universe to a stage of development where it appears to 'take care of itself.' Be it vegetation, animal or man, all species of life secure their existence by their ability to reproduce; they become fruitful and multiply (e.g. "zo'ray'ah zera," "zachar u'nekeyvah," "pru u'rvu," etc.). Man's mastery of this creation, his desire to conquer and his ability to harness it, are all part of this phenomenon that we call **nature**.
- (2) After the "mabul,"- G-d (b'shem Elokim) 'starts over' by re-establishing His relationship with mankind in a covenant with Noach, known as "brit ha'keshet." This covenant reflects a relationship very similar to that in G-d's original creation in seven days, with some 'minor' changes: Man remains master of His universe, with a 'small change' in his diet, and a commandment that it is forbidden to murder a fellow human. However, the basic laws of nature remain the same.

(3) At Brit Milah, Avraham is raised to a higher level. He and his offspring are chosen to represent G-d as His special nation, and towards that purpose, they are awarded a special relationship - "li'hivot lachem l'Elokim." As an "ot," a sign of this relationship, they are commanded to circumcise their children on the 'eighth day.'

Thus, the **eighth** day represents yet one more level of progression in the creation process, which first took place in **seven** days. It reflects the very nature of our special relationship with G-d.

Seven Days of "Miluim" / "Yom HaShmini"

The seven days necessary to dedicate the Mishkan reflect the parallel between our construction of the Mishkan, to serve G-d, to G-d's creation of nature in seven days, to serve Him. On the 'eighth day,' the Sh'china descends upon the Mishkan, allowing it to become the focal point for the development of the special relationship between G-d and Bnei Yisrael.

Seven Days of Succot / Shmini Atzeret

All the agricultural holidays follow cycles of seven. Chag ha'aviv - as the grain harvest begins, we bring "korban ha'omer" and celebrate chag ha'matzot for **seven** days. Then we count **seven weeks** until the completion of the wheat harvest, bring "korban shte'i ha'lechem," and celebrate chag ha'**shavu'ot**. On succot, "chag ha'asif," at the end of the agricultural year, we thank G-d for our fruit harvest by celebrating for seven days and bringing the "arba minim" to the Mikdash. At the very end of this cycle of agricultural holidays, we add **Shmini Atzeret**, a special gathering with no special agricultural mitzvah. On this 'eighth day,' we focus on the special relationship between G-d and Bnei Yisrael.

This special relationship between G-d and Bnei Yisrael, that begins with Brit Milah, reaches its fullest expression with Matan Torah at Brit Har Sinai.

● Edited by Aron Lipczer

A Gossiper's Prayer



Rabbi Eli Mansour

Edmond J Safra Synagogue, Brooklyn

Parashat Tazria speaks at length of the laws of the Sara'at skin disease that would descend upon a person as a punishment for Lashon Hara – speaking negatively about other people. A person who was determined to have been stricken with Sara'at was quarantined, and was required to live in solitude outside his city. The Torah writes that as the person made his way from his home to his place of solitary confinement, he would have to announce, "Tameh Tameh!" ("Impure! Impure!" -13:45). On the simple level of interpretation, this announcement was required in order to warn people to keep away from this individual. People were urged not to come near the person stricken with Sara'at so that they would not become Tameh (ritually impure).

The Sages, however, noted an additional reason for this announcement. The Metzora (person stricken with Sara'at) would inform everyone of his condition so that they would pray on his behalf. Essentially, he was saying, "Help me! I have Sara'at! Please pray to G-d that I will soon be healed!"

The obvious question arises, why doesn't the Metzora pray for himself? Why must he implore others to pray for him?



If our mouths bear the stain of forbidden speech, then our prayers are ineffective.

The Hafetz Haim (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan of Radin, 1839-1933) explained, quite simply, that the Metzora's prayers cannot be accepted. Having contaminated his mouth through sins of speech, by speaking derisively about other people and indulging in gossip, he has lost the power of Tefila. The prayers that come from such a mouth are tainted and damaged; they cannot achieve the desired effect. For this reason, the Metzora has no choice but to ask others to pray on his behalf, until he corrected his sinful tendency and repented, thereby regaining

his mouth's purity which we need for our prayers to gain acceptance.

This is also why we begin the observance of Yom Kippur with the "Kol Nidreh" service, in which we formally annul any vows that we had taken. Before we spend Yom Kippur praying for forgiveness, we must first ensure that we are not guilty of sins involving speech. Otherwise, our prayers are futile. If our mouths bear the stain of forbidden speech, then our prayers are ineffective.

A gossip not only hurts the people he speaks about; he hurts himself. We all have difficult problems and concerns, we all desperately need the Almighty's help on so many levels. Nobody can afford to forfeit the power of prayer by contaminating his mouth. Let us ensure to keep our mouths free of sin, so that our prayers will have the desired effect and proceed directly to the heavens, where they will be lovingly and eagerly accepted by G-d.

The Birth Pangs before Every New Beginning



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger
Congregation Aish Kodesh, Woodmere

Parshas Tazria, which starts with the laws of impurity associated with birth, rarely coincides with Parshas Hachodesh as it does this year. In Parshas Hachodesh, we read about the mitzvah to sanctify the new month, which is related to renewal and rebirth. The beginning of parshas Tazria discusses birth as well, but with a puzzling twist. Impurity is almost always associated with death. The ultimate state of impurity is that of a dead body. Dead animals are also impure and virtually all other types of impurity connect to death in some way. The only exception is the halacha that a woman becomes impure when she gives birth to a child. Why is this? On the surface, this is the opposite of anything associated with death. It is a new life! Why does that come with a state of impurity?

The truth is that there is more than one kind of birth. Birth is actually the process of growth throughout the life of the world as a whole, of each community, and of each individual. Birth is the progression from a lower level to a higher level. If the transition to a new, higher level is called birth, then one's prior, lower level must be "pregnancy." The Zohar says that the completion of any stage, or level, is called "death." This is because leaving behind something familiar, even if it is on a lower level than one's destination, is painful and the transition is as difficult as death.

Every person and community naturally resists change and seeks to cling to the inertia of the status quo. It hurts to let go of old habits. But Hashem created the world in such a way that it continues its inexorable progression forward toward redemption. It is just like the process of birth. Birth pangs hurt.

Only a human being can transmit a state of impurity to another person or object while he is alive. Animals only transmit impurity after death. But a person can transmit

impurity while he is alive because, unlike an animal, he is born and dies many times during his life. A person constantly evolves to higher and higher levels. And every time he leaves his former level behind, the Zohar calls that an aspect of death. A person's state of impurity testifies to the fact that he is ascending to a higher level. It also indicates that there was something deficient about his prior state. But a Jew's impurity is only temporary. It is not an essential part of his nature. He emerges from that state on a higher level than he was before he became impure.

Prior to a person's new birth, what is the nature of the lower level called "pregnancy" which preceded it? The Gemara (Nida 30b) describes the amazing life of a soul during pregnancy before it comes into this world at birth. It says that the child has "a candle lit over his head and he gazes and looks from one end of the world to the other..." The Gemara continues that an angel teaches him the entire Torah. What could be better than this? Yet when the time for birth comes, the angel comes and strikes the child on his mouth and he forgets all of his Torah.

The Maharal explains that birth appears to be a profound descent for the child. He is thrust down into this physical world which seems to contradict everything he experienced on his prior level! It is quite literally a "slap in the face." This traumatic loss is an aspect of death and that is why the birth process creates a state of impurity.

Birth pangs (חבלי לידה) are a confusing paradox. On one hand, there is a cord ("חבל") that connects the fetus to his mother and provides him everything he needs. On the other hand, the word for the pain of giving birth is also "חבל." This is because in order to rise from one level to another, one must cut the cord connecting him to his prior state. Severing that connection is painful. This is also reflected in the fact that a child

is called a "תינוק" in Hebrew. In order to be born, to come into the world as a child, the cord tying him to his prior state must be cut ("ניתוק"), which has the same letters as the word for "child." Only after the pain, the "death," of cutting himself off from his prior level can a child become an independent person.

One's prior state must "die" in order for him to attain a qualitatively new level of purity and holiness in his life. Shlomo Hamelech even equates the womb with the grave (Mishlei 30:16). The words for grave (קבר) and rot (רקב) share the same letters, and are both associated with death. But those same letters also spell "בקר, morning." One can only attain the morning of a new day, a new level of existence, after his prior level dies and rots. Once the difficulty of the transition is in the past, one overcomes the impurity of death and begins to experience the joy and purity of redemption in his new level.

This connects to Parshas Hachodesh, where we read about the mitzvah to sanctify the new month, particularly Rosh Chodesh Nissan, which is this week. The Gemara (Rosh Hashana 11a) teaches us that "One who goes out in the days of Nissan and sees the trees blossoming should say the blessing, 'Blessed is He who left nothing lacking from His world...'" Just like we cannot witness the springtime of the world without "going out," so too any transition from one level to a new birth involves "going out."

It has been a long winter. While it may be hard to leave the comfort of our homes to which we have become accustomed, springtime demands that we "Go out and see" (Shir Hashirim 3:11). As the Baal Hatanya taught in his ma'amar (discourse), "Go out from the 'I' and see G-d," we must not remain self-absorbed, only seeking the comfort of the old. We must "go out" and embrace the discomfort of G-d's plan for a higher level of existence.

How to Criticize Your Husband



Rabbi YY Jacobson
TheYeshiva.net

A couple had two little mischievous boys, ages 8 and 10. They were always getting into trouble, and their parents knew that if any mischief occurred in their town, their sons would get the blame.

The boys' mother heard that a rabbi in town had been successful in disciplining children, so she asked if he would speak with her boys. The rabbi agreed and asked to see them individually.

So, the mother sent her 8-year-old first, in the morning, with the older boy to see the rabbi in the afternoon.

The rabbi, a huge man with a booming voice, sat the younger boy down and asked him sternly, "Where is G-d?"

The boy's mouth dropped open, but he made no response, sitting there with his mouth hanging open.

The rabbi repeated the question. "Where is G-d?"

Again, the boy made no attempt to answer. So, the rabbi raised his voice some more and shook his finger in the boy's face and bellowed, "Where is G-d!?"

The boy screamed and bolted from the room. He ran directly home and dove into his closet, slamming the door behind him. When his older brother found him in the closet, he asked, "What happened?"

The younger brother, gasping for breath, replied: "We are in real big trouble this time! G-d is missing, and they think we did it!"

The Torah portion of Tazria, discusses the laws of tzaraat, an unusual illness, identified by a white patch appearing on the skin of a person, that was symptomatic of a profound emotional and spiritual blemish within this individual. This, plus several secondary symptoms, determined the person as being temporarily "impure," and required him or her to separate from

the community and undergo an intense program of introspection and healing.

The Torah states that only a Kohen was authorized to diagnose a tzaraat and pronounce the malady as such. Even in a case where all the symptoms of the illness are clearly present and a multitude of scholars recognize it as tzaraat, the person cannot be diagnosed as possessing this malady unless a Kohen states so explicitly.

Why was the Kohen so indispensable to this process? Shouldn't the scholar, who is intricately familiar with the symptoms of this malady, be trusted more than a child-Kohen who can do nothing more than utter a diagnosis determined by someone else? What is needed here is an expert in these illnesses and symptoms, not a priest!

More than three millennia ago the Kohanim were charged with the mission of blessing the Jewish people. To this day in the Holy Land, there is an interval during every morning service, at which the Kohanim spread out their hands and extend Divine blessings on their Jewish brethren. Among Diaspora Jewry, this tradition is practiced only on holidays.

The Kabbalah explains that the reason the Kohanim were designated to be the conduits for Divine blessings is that their souls evolve from the celestial chamber of love, granting them a unique ability to cultivate compassion and kindness toward others and hence making them uniquely suitable conduits for G-d's love and grace.

This is the reason for the Jewish law which states that a Kohen who is disliked by the congregation or dislikes the congregation is forbidden to bless the people, because the negative energy that surrounds this man may severely obstruct the flow of the blessings. Indeed,

the blessing recited by the Kohanim prior to the priestly blessings states: "He (G-d) commanded us to bless his people Israel with love." The Zohar explains that this is also the reason for the tradition that an unmarried Kohen could not serve as an agent of the Jewish people performing the services in the Beit Hamikdash.

In order for the Kohen to be worthy of this extraordinary position, he needed to fully develop his innate capacity for love and selflessness, and it is only through marriage, in which one learns to share one's life with another human being, that a person is challenged to bring out his full potential for caring and affection. When you are unmarried, you may be extremely kind and sensitive, but at the end of the day, you have the luxury of retreating to your own hub and doing things your own way.

Ultimately, you need not answer but to yourself, which is why so many people today opt for the single life. It is only in the institution of marriage that you are consistently called upon to take another person and their needs and feelings seriously. For a marriage to work and blossom, you can't be selfish. That is why it was only the Married Kohen who was charged with the responsibility of serving G-d in the Jerusalem Holy Temple.

The Torah is imparting to us a critical lesson: Before you diagnose another person as being spiritually ill and deserving temporary isolation, you must make sure that your heart is filled with love toward this person. For it is only then that we are certain that your diagnosis is not coming from your own bias or lack of refinement, but it is objectively true and thus productive and beneficial; it is only then that you will no doubt search for every possible way to rehabilitate this wounded soul.

Continued on next page

Poor Women!



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

In the week before Pesach, it is very easy to see women as "poor things."

A young mother of small children who also has to clean.

A single woman who has no one to clean up after.

A grandmother who remembers her stronger years,

A high-tech worker who works until Seder night and does not have enough time,

A hostess who senses they are coming on Seder night, all ten plagues,

A young bride who is a first-time guest at her in-laws' home and just wants to cry. And on Erev Pesach, all the "poor" are right.

But the righteous - they laugh. Mostly at themselves. All the way to Afikoman.

Pharaoh orders the daughters of Israel (yes! women!) to build "poor" cities. Cities are built with endless toil, and he? will destroy them and demand that they be rebuilt. There are no such dangers in the whole world. Those who want to cry are right because if there is something that embodies Sisypus' work, it is cleanliness and even more - order! It

is work that crumbles in the end, like crispy cake crumbs on Erev Pesach, nonsensical work, hard work.

Then the righteous will come. They know that cleanliness - is dirty in the end, while order - will be destroyed in the end, and it will happen suddenly, without hesitation, holey and ramming. But the righteous will laugh and clean, because they will remember that cleanliness and order are not a value, but the way. The righteous will remember the justification for all this, the goal, the time that waits at the end of the road. They will not wait for it to pass. They will shed tears and remember, "For this!" This goal is worth everything, and when Chazal wanted to praise the greatness of the blessings, they said, "Your house will be destroyed and your table will be confused," because the main thing is that we sit while Matzah and Maror are in front of us and feel everything, everything is groundless in the face of this meeting, the children and the adults and the noise and Hallel as sheep, as sheep, like the sheep of Jerusalem in their time ...

And who will always remain? Standing, never getting dirty, not ruined and desperate, not contradicting and hardened? Always solid and to the right of all the girls? The pyramids, the "poor".

Because what single woman wants them to walk by, ask for a photo and move on, like a tourist attraction?

And what woman wants a house full of mummified creatures, lifeless?

And what woman wants that superfluous, barren beauty?

And what woman wants to be one of the seven wonders of the world, never to be mistaken when all her dreams have long since sunk into the abyss of oblivion. Who wants to remain a woman without needs?

So I refuse to be right and "poor" on Erev Pesach, and I am like all people in Israel, clean and tearful, and I always remember that order and cleanliness will always be at the end of absurd things, but for this moment we sit in Bnei Brak and Jerusalem and New York and give each other, just for a moment, the fruits of our hands - Dayenu.

Continued from previous page

As parents, educators, spouses, employers and colleagues, we often find ourselves with the need to rebuke, denounce, criticize and sometimes penalize. Yet all-too-often these are done more as an outlet for our own anger and frustration, rather than as a tool to help these people become the best they can be. We may call it discipline and justice, but if it is not based on kindness and the desire to help the other person, they may end up being more destructive than constructive.

It is easy to define somebody as "impure" if you do not understand their pain, but it is unethical. Before you punish, you must first learn how to be a Kohen, how to really care about others. When criticism, punishment and even dismissal are motivated by concern for the person rather than your own rage or incompetence, it will have a totally different effect on the person you are punishing. Your criticism will build, rather than destroy, this person's character. What is equally important, you will

not cease to labor that the situation be reversed and the individual returns to his or her potential glory.

So next time before you criticize your spouse, stop and ask yourself if you are doing it as a "Kohen," out of concern and care for them, or as a result of your stress or anger. If that is the case, you ought to remain silent until you can transcend your self-absorption and enter into the world of another human being.

Solar and Lunar



Charlie Harary

This week we read a special parsha called Parshat Hachodesh. It comes from Parshat Bo and tells of the first mitzvah given to the Jewish people, the mitzvah of sanctifying the moon. The fascinating thing about it is that Shabbat this year is at a very special juncture. It is the meeting point of the moon, Rosh Chodesh and the sun, the beginning of the new season according to the solar calendar. In fact, this year, which is a leap year, the moon and the sun are right on top of each other. We are in the last minutes of this realignment that is taking place this year.

What is the sun? What is the moon? How do they relate to each other? In the Sefer *בכל לבבך*, a compilation of essays by Jewish hero Roi Klein ז"ל, he talks about this concept and quotes Rav Kook in *עולת הרואה*. He explains that in Rav Kook's eyes, there are two types of growth. Rav Kook describes two different aspects of growth. The ability to grow, to stretch, to yearn, to always evolve and change, this is symbolized by the moon. The moon waxes and wanes, it falls and just when it seems like it has completely disappeared, it returns in its strongest form. This is the concept of renewal, *התחדשות*. (Note that

it is connected to Hachodesh.) Rav Kook says that every Jew must have moments when he strives and reaches out for new aspects in his Avodat Hashem.



We reach beyond ourselves, achieve something that is beyond us, through the moon in us, but then we turn to the sun to preserve it in our lives.

In life, however, there is another central facet, stability. Stability is embodied in the sun, it rises and sets, it remains constant, it does not change its relationship to the earth as we experience it. As Shlomo Hamelech says "אין חדיש תחת" *השמש*". Stability and preservation are a necessary quality to counterbalance growth. Because if you only had the moon, we would constantly grow and fall, the sun comes to create stability. We stretch and grow, and then we preserve. We reach beyond ourselves, achieve something that is beyond us, through the moon in us, but then we turn to the sun to preserve it in our lives. Shabbat, defined by the sun,

comes to preserve our weeks, to give us the *menucha* we need to have the right head to move forward.

The Sun is an important aspect of our growth, because it allows us to preserve our achievements. The moon, however, is what moves us up and down. Therefore, it establishes the *Zmanim* (holidays), that is, the time that constantly moves and changes depending on the position of the moon and the Sanhedrin. The moon brings new *Yom Tovs* and lights into the world.

Rav Kook says with regard to this week's parsha, especially in this leap year when spring falls on Parshat Hachodesh in the solar calendar. The realignment of the solar and lunar calendars. We have a lesson for our lives. We need to be like the moon and achieve and overcome our challenges and take on new things, but we also need to be like the sun and know when to preserve and rest. We need to know when to hold on to our achievements and incorporate them into our lives. It is the moon and the sun that govern the Jewish calendar, and that is what ultimately leads us to the greatness within ourselves.

● Edited by Ian Schwartz.

Tazria: Mirror Image



Rabbi Judah Mischel

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

In 1848, Eastern Europe was ravaged by a deadly cholera epidemic. Tens of thousands died that year, and the city of Vilna was hit particularly hard. Jews gathered to daven, gave extra tzedakah, and added Torah and mitzvos in order to generate *rachamei shamayim*, Heavenly mercy. It was a true *eis tzarah*, an exceptionally difficult time, and the Rabbanim of the city urged people to engage in *teshuvah*. Among them was the young, dynamic Rav Yisrael Salanter, *zt'l*, who was later to become the famed founder of the Mussar movement. He encouraged his constituents to conduct a *cheshbon ha-nefesh*, soul searching and improvement of their character traits.

The sincere and religiously sensitive Jews of Vilna engaged in much reflection, introspection and self-improvement. There were some among them, however, who instead of focusing on examining their own spiritual lack turned their attention toward examining the faults and shortcomings of their neighbors and friends. Some even attributed the cause of the suffering to be a result of various *aveiros* they observed in their neighbors.

One day, as the epidemic continued to rage, a well meaning Jew approached Reb Yisrael with urgency to discuss a certain family in their *kehillah*. “I’ve noticed that their commitment to *tzniyus* has waned somewhat in recent months; there are members of the household who are not up to standard. Who knows if it is not their sin which is causing this terrible plague. Dear Rabbi, something must be done!”

Reb Yisrael became serious. “As you know, a person who searches for and points out faults in other people is considered a *baal lashon ha-ra*,” he began. “In the ancient past, someone who spoke *lashon hara* was afflicted with *tzara’as*, leprosy, and as a consequence, the *baal lashon ha-ra* would be sent away from the encampment and remain outside the city until their condition cleared up.

“Indeed,” continued Reb Yisrael... “something must be done! Since you seem to think that you are an expert at discovering sins, I suggest you ‘go out of the camp’: get out of Vilna and isolate yourself for some time. Alone, you won’t be able to see anyone else’s shortcomings in *avodas Hashem*, and you won’t see another’s sins. But you will certainly be able to uncover your own.”



Our *sedra* addresses this procedure, describing an individual who is afflicted with *tzara’as* and pronounced as such by the Kohen:

אִישׁ-צָרוּעַ הוּא טְמֵא הוּא... כָּל-יְמֵי אֲשֶׁר הִנָּגַע בוֹ יְטֵמֵא טְמֵא הוּא בְּדָד יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה מוֹשְׁבוֹ:

“He is a man afflicted with *tzara’as*; he is unclean... All the days the lesion is upon him, he shall remain unclean. He is unclean; he shall dwell isolated; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.” (13:44-46)

Rashi provides a premise why those who have spoken *lashon ha-ra* and have been stricken with *tzara’as* must remain isolated:

הוֹאִיל וְהוּא הַבְּדִיל בְּלִשׁוֹן הָרַע בֵּין אִישׁ לְאַשְׁתּוֹ וּבֵין אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ, אָף הוּא יִבְדֵּל:

“Since, with his slander, he caused a separation, a rift between spouses, partners, friends, he too, must be separated from society.” When we judge others negatively and speak derogatorily of others, although we are perhaps telling the truth, we have eroded the moral fibers that create and bind a relationship, family and community. The repercussions are as much rehabilitative as they are punitive. Being put in a proverbial ‘time-out’ by the Kohen is not simply a punishment; we are sent *out*, so that we will focus *inward*.

The Ba’al Shem Tov haKadosh teaches (on *Bereishis*, 126) that our relationships and interactions with others, and even our feelings toward others, serve as a *shpiegel*, a mirror, in which we can see ourselves more

clearly. The beauty we see in the world is a reflection of who we really are; the blemishes we see in others are only a reflection of our own inner defects. We are likely to be oblivious to our own defects, but we can somehow detect shortcomings in other people with great ease.

This insight ‘reflects’ a teaching of the Gemara (Kidushin 70a) regarding lineage:

וכל הפוסל פסול ואינו מדבר בשבחה.. במומו פוסל

“Anyone who disqualifies others by stating that their lineage is flawed, that is a sign that he himself is of flawed lineage. The flaw he accuses them of having is in fact the one that he has.” When we perceive flaws or observe negative traits and behaviors in others it is an indication that we have these shortcomings in ourselves, and we have seen them ‘out there’ for the sole purpose of alerting us to turn ‘inward’ in *teshuvah*.

כָּל הַנִּגְעִים אֲדָם רוּאָה, חוּץ מִנִּגְעֵי עַצְמוֹ

“All *negaim* may be examined by a person, except his own.”

(Mishnah Nega’im, 2:5)

Offering an expansive interpretation of this mishnah, the Ba’al Shem Tov says, *Chutz me-atzmo* (“except his own”) means that what one sees *chutz*, ‘outside’ or in others, is *me-atzmo*, ‘from oneself’. The mishnah then reads: *‘All blemishes that a person sees out there are blemishes projected from within oneself.’*

The gaze of one person to another is like glancing in the mirror — if our face is dirty, we will see a dirty face in the mirror. So it is when we look at each other; the extent to which we are pure and refined internally, we will look more generously upon the other and see their positive attributes ... and our own.

May we all be blessed to see the pure soul of a Jew in the mirror of each other’s faces.

Rejuvenation and Relationship

Mrs. Shira Smiles

international lecturer and curriculum developer

The last of the four special Parshiot we read as we approach Pesach is Parshat Hachodesh. This reading includes the very first mitzvah Hashem commanded the Jewish people as a nation, even preceding the bringing of korban Pesach, the Pascal sacrifice. Rabbi Schwab raises some very simple questions. First, what is so fundamental about this mitzvah of sanctifying the new moon that it even preempts the mitzvah of korban Pesach? We must assume that there is some connection to the redemption itself. Further, why designate a special Shabbat for reading about this mitzvah in the Shabbat services?

The Slonimer Rebbe, the Netivot Shalom, presents the idea that indeed this Shabbat and sanctifying this new moon have a connection to Pesach. But the Netivot Shalom goes one step further. He compares the first two weeks of the month of Nissan to the first two weeks of the New Year. As such, the first ten days correspond to the Ten Days of Repentance culminating in Yom Kippur and the day we prepare our Pascal sacrifice. Four days after Yom Kippur, we celebrate Sukkot, a time of deep love and intimacy between Hashem and Bnei Yisroel. Similarly, we begin our Pesach Seder after four days as a celebration and commemoration of Hashem's tremendous love for us in redeeming us from Egypt. In fact, notes the Netivot Shalom, the Seder night is a time not just for the child at the table to "ask" the Mah Nishtanoh of his father, but it is also a time when G-d's child within each of us can ask our Father for His help or to reverse a negative decree. But we need to prepare ourselves for this encounter with Hakodosh Boruch Hu starting with Rosh Chodesh Nissan, just as we prepare ourselves from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur to enter the Sukkah with Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

We know that the moon does not shine its own light as the sun does, but rather reflects

the light of the sun. This perhaps provides much of the underlying philosophy behind our following a lunar-based calendar while the rest of the world follows a solar-based calendar. Just as the moon depends on the light of the sun for its significance, so too does Bnei Yisroel depend on the Great Light of Hakodosh Boruch Hu to give us purpose and existence, writes Rabbi Eliyahu Roth in *Sichot Eliyahu*. Rosh Chodesh reminds us of this mission and is, therefore, the first of the Mitzvot.

Rosh Chodesh signifies renewal and new beginnings, and Rosh Chodesh Nissan, since it is so close to the rebirth of our people and our witnessing how G-d can control and change nature itself, notes Rabbi Leff, is the paradigmatic New Moon signaling a day for a new beginning, repentance and atonement. This idea is then carried through to every Rosh Chodesh, albeit with less fanfare.

But renewal is not limited to nature, writes Rabbi Rothberg in *Moda Labinah*. The message of Rosh Chodesh is that we can renew ourselves as well and we can prepare ourselves again to receive G-d and His Torah. The whole purpose of leaving Egypt was to receive the Torah. Every morning we should renew that commitment as we wash our hands to receive the new day, for that washing is reminiscent of the High Priest washing his hands before he began his daily service in the Temple. The day is full of opportunities to "talk" to Hashem and build a relationship. As *Mesilot Be'ohr Hachasidus* of Belz notes, the two aspects of renewal are linked, for when I appreciate the daily renewal of the world, I can also appreciate the renewal in myself, and if I begin with appreciating the renewal in myself, I can appreciate all that Hashem does to maintain and renew the world.

The mitzvah of sanctifying the new moon was given during the darkest times in Egypt, notes the Netivot Shalom, as a message that

in the darkest times we should recognize that the sliver of light will yet appear and grow, and we will be rejuvenated.

The moon has several names in Hebrew, one of which is *levanah*, derived from *libun*, clarification writes Rabbi Leff. Just as the light of the moon is hidden and only partially reflected back to us, so too are the spiritual aspects of the world hidden from us. This concealment is necessary to preserve the free will of man. However, in the future world, the light of the moon will be equal to that of the sun, as the physical world will reach a state of perfection.

Our mission is to live our lives revealing that connection to the Creator, and through our Torah observance be a light unto the nations. It is a light proven by the waxing and waning of moon, writes Rabbi Kluger in *My Sole Desire*, for its shining proves that the light comes from a higher source. After every darkness and time of G-d's hiddenness, comes a time of greater revelation. This is the truth the women in the desert recognized, that even if Moshe would not return, even in apparent darkness, Hashem had a purpose in mind. Therefore they refused to donate to the creation of the golden calf, and therefore they were rewarded with Rosh Chodesh as their special holiday.

The Psalmist writes, "With a violin I will solve my riddle," continues Rabbi Kluger. In a beautiful analogy, Rabbi Kluger writes that a song, like a life, must be made up of both high notes and low notes. While the high notes are inspiring and soaring, without the low notes, the song would have no beauty and no texture. As we bless the new month each month and especially before Rosh Chodesh Nissan, we must remember that we are always connected to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, ready to receive His light, and willing and able to reflect that light to the world even in times of darkness.

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin
balashon.com

Parashat Tazria contains the detailed laws of tzara'at. One section (Vayikra 13:29-37) describes what do if an afflicted person has a bald patch. The color of the surrounding hair determines the diagnosis. For example:

כִּי־רָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־נֶגַע הַנֶּחֱתָק וְהָיָה אִי־מְרֹאֵהוּ עֹמֵק מִן־הָעוֹר וְשַׁעַר שְׁחֹר אִיּוֹ בּוֹ וְהִסְגִּיר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־נֶגַע הַנֶּחֱתָק שְׁבַעַת יָמִים:

“However, if, when the priest examines the bald patch, [the affliction] does not appear to have penetrated the skin, but it does not have black hair in it, the priest shall quarantine the person afflicted by the bald patch for seven days.” (Vayikra 13:31)

The word translated here as “black” is the Hebrew word שָׁחַר. In other Biblical

verses) שָׁחַר means “dark.” For example, שְׁחֹרָה אֲנִי וְנֹאמָה “I am dark, but comely” (Shir HaShirim 1:5).

But another similar looking Hebrew word, שָׁחַר, means “dawn.” Why would a word for the breaking of daylight and a word for darkness be homonyms?

Some scholars say that this is just a coincidence, and the two words have different origins. They point out cognates to each in other Semitic languages that do not indicate any connection.

Others, however, do think they are related. According to those theories, at night the sky is black - שָׁחַר and the end of the night period is the dawn - שָׁחַר. This idea is reflected by the common saying “it’s always darkest before the dawn.”

While that expression is attributed to the 17th century English theologian Thomas Fuller, a similar quote can be found in the midrash, written centuries earlier:

“Yet even though it is night, there is still the light of the moon and stars. When is it dark? At dawn: the moon and stars exit, the planets depart and there is no time that is darker.” (Midrash Shocheh Tov 22:3)

If you noticed that the name of this midrash, “Shocheh Tov,” also looks like שָׁחַר and שָׁחַר, that’s not a coincidence. The midrash took its name from Mishlei 11:27, which says, “He who earnestly seeks what is good [שָׁחַר טוֹב] pursues what is pleasing.” The word שָׁחַר means to seek, because after a dark night, one would go out early in the morning to seek.

Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh
Mizrachi Melbourne

I appear several times in Parshat Tazria. Another word appearing many times in Parshat Metzora has exactly the same letters, in the same order, but with a completely different meaning. What am I, and what is the other word?

Answer to the Parsha Riddle

Some suggest the following connection. In the evening we get ready to sleep when our bodies are horizontal like the wool of a garment.

בָּרָה = The wool. (Tazria 13:52, and other places)
בָּרָה = The evening. (Metzora 14:46 and many other places)



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