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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON METZORAH - 5771

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from Shabbat Shalom <postmaster@ou.2dialog.com>
date Thu, Apr 7, 2011 at 10:56 PM
subject The Public Jew - Parshat Metzora - Shabbat Shalom from the OU!
Orthodox Union
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The Art of Speech
Rabbi Eliyahu Safran
We speak, therefore we exist.

When a newly elected member of Parliament approached the esteemed British Prime Minister Disraeli for advice, Disraeli was only too happy to share some profound wisdom and insight. "For the first six months," Disraeli counseled, "you should only listen and not become involved in debate."

The man was perplexed. "But my colleagues will wonder why I do not speak!" the man sputtered in protest. Disraeli considered the man for only a moment more before responding, "better they should wonder why you do not, than why you do."

How true were Disraeli's words! How often our silence resonates more profoundly than our words! In music, it is the balance of notes and rests which create the melody. A song of unrelenting notes is often little more than noise. So too, a man of only words and not silences is little more than empty wind.

Yet, if all we are is rests and silences, we are without substance. For, while it is true that all creatures communicate, it is our ability to speak which distinguishes us and raises us above all other forms of creation. Without speech, only the most basic needs can be communicated. With speech, we can create and glory in art, in poetry, in worship and prayer. Speech is that which epitomizes the Divine gift inherent in each of us.

"... And He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life..."

The Targum translates, l'ruach memamela, "to a communicative, speaking being." That is, our ability to communicate through speech best

characterizes the living soul within us. Our bodies, as Yishayahu the prophet exclaimed, are mere physical entities. "All flesh is grass...The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our G-d shall stand forever." We, like grass, wither. But our words, the power of our speech stand forever.

Speech is power. And with power comes danger. It should come as no surprise then that of all possible human transgressions, the one punishable with tz'aras is the sin of lashon ha'rah – evil speech.

Resh Lakish does not mince words. Referring to the law of metzora he says, "This shall be the law of he who spreads evil talk" (mozi shem ra) One who is guilty of lashon ha'ra forfeits the mantle of spirituality from his being. What is he left with? Just his afflicted and "diseased" physical existence.

A medical doctor can treat leprosy, but only a kohen brings to bear gifts that can realign and rebalance the physical and spiritual aspects of man. The Mishna in Negaim teaches that the ultimate cure for the metzora comes about through the verbal pronouncement of tahor uttered by the kohen. Just as the spiritual imbalance was the result of evil talk, its cure can only be realized through the "pure" talk. As the prophet Malachi declared, "For the kohen's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek Torah at his mouth."

The cure required for the evil talker brings back into alignment the physical and spiritual natures of man. The Torah demands that the leper offer "two living clean birds" for his purification to repent for his idle chatter, "for birds continually chatter and chirp." He must bring cedar wood because the cedar is symbolic of haughtiness and pride, both manifest in his idle and meaningless talk. He must immerse himself in running water. As the Sefer HaChinuch elaborates, "The immersion in water symbolizes that the unclean person is recreated at that moment, just as the world consisted wholly of water at creation, before man came into the world. The renewal effected on his body will prompt him to a reappraisal of his own conduct."

To use the gift of speech for evil is a terrible transgression. To use it for good is a great blessing. Our noblest expression of spirituality is found in our daily need to pray. To pray wholly is to transcend the physical self; to climb above the work of our hands and to surpass the product of our minds. Prayer is "an act of self purification, quarantine for the soul. It gives us the opportunity to be honest, to say what we believe, and to stand for what we say."

"The acceptance of the spirit is prayer."

Our prayer is made possible by our ability to speak. Yet, even in prayer, the blessing and danger of speech is evident. As we enter into prayer, we cry to G-d, "O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Your praise."

We are raised by our prayer. Made more whole. And yet, even after we have uttered our prayer we must guard against the possibility that our words were false, self-serving, and insincere. And so we conclude every prayer with a simple request, "Guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking guile."

Would that those words were forever in our hearts and at our lips!

If they cannot be, better that we choose silence. For our silence will serve our better angels more than any words we might speak.

Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu Safran serves as OU Kosher's Vice President of Communications & Marketing.

from Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org> hide details Apr 11 (4 days ago)

date Apr 11, 2008 12:51 PM

subject **Rabbi Frand on Parshas Metzora**
Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 142, Eyeglasses in Halacha. Good Shabbos!

Learning A Lesson From G-d Through Punishment

The pasuk [verse] in our parsha says, "When you come to the Land of Canaan that I am giving you as an inheritance, and I will place a Tzaraas blemish on a house in the land of your inheritance..." [Vayikra 14:34]. Sometimes a person gets Tzaraas on his house!

There is a very famous comment by Rash"i on this pasuk, where Rash"i states -- in the name of the Medrash -- that the Torah is giving the Jewish people good news. What is the good news? The Emorites hid large amounts of gold, treasures of gold, in the walls of their houses. Blemishes would come on the houses, requiring the Jews to break down the walls, and as a result, they would find the treasures. They would come into easy wealth.

There is a very strange aspect of this Medrash: Tzaraas is a punishment for speaking Lashon Horah [gossip]. How can Tzaraas, which is a punishment, have such a 'rewarding' outcome? It does not make sense!

Rav Bergman, in his work Shaarei Orah, interprets this Medrash and provides us with a very fundamental insight. The Rambam writes at the end of Hilchos Tzaraas [16:10] "a sign and wondrous matter occurred in Israel to warn them against Lashon Horah, for one who spoke Lashon Horah had the walls of his house change in appearance; ... if he persists ... the leather utensils in his house change... if he persists further his clothing changes ... if he still persists his own skin changes..."

We see that there is a progression of Tzaraas: first there was the type which affected the house, which was the initial warning, (the yellow light). If one did not stop, it got a little closer -- it affected the clothes he wore on his body (the red light). If he still did not stop speaking Lashon Horah, then the panic strobe light went off -- it affected his own body, necessitating the whole process of being sent outside the camp, being "excommunicated" as it were, etc., etc.

Rav Bergman contrasts the Tochacha, the rebuke of the Jewish people, in Parshas Bechukosai (in Vayikra, Leviticus) -- which ends with consolation -- with the Tochacha in Parshas Ki Savo (in Devarim, Deuteronomy), which, although longer and more graphic, ends without any words of consolation. Rav Bergman explains that the Tochacha in Parshas Ki Savo does not need a consolation; but the Tochacha in Parshas Bechukosai does.

Why are they different? They are different because in Parshas Ki Savo, G-d speaks in the first person ("I will punish you..."). It is clear that the punishment is coming directly from the Hand of G-d. However, the most prominent theme of the Tochacha in Parshas Bechukosai is the absence of Divine Providence ("And you walked with me in a manner of 'keri'; so too I will deal with you in a wrath of 'keri'" [Vayikra 26:27-28]), which means that the punishment was that G-d told them "You are on your own".

To offer an example: there is one thing worse than being punished by one's father, and that is not having a father to administer punishment, or not having a father who cares enough about the child to punish him. When one has a father that worries and cares about a son enough to punish him when he is bad -- that itself is a consolation. Implicit in the punishment is a tremendous blessing -- there is somebody out there!

Heaven forbid, when one does not have a father -- or even worse -- when the father does not care to punish, but tells the child "you're on your own -- do whatever you want -- I do not care!" That is worse.

This is the distinction, Rav Bergman says, between Parshas Bechukosai and Parshas Ki Savo. In the former, G-d chastises Israel for attributing everything to chance, and says "I will show you what it is like to be without a G-d that is concerned." That is such a terrible punishment that the Tochacha needs to conclude with a consolation.

But the rebuke of Ki Savo, which is given in the language of "G-d will

smite you...", as bad as that is -- at least makes it apparent that it is He who is personally handing out the punishment. This is its own implicit consolation.

What emerges is the following: when a person is aware that the purpose of a punishment is instructive -- it is not really a punishment. If I realize, if I am aware that I am doing something bad and G-d says "Stop", and the way he says it is by punishing me -- then it is no longer really a punishment. It is reassuring. I know that I have a Father who cares about me.

When one speaks Lashon Horah and it affects the walls of his house, it is not a full punishment so much as a message of concern. Therefore if a person reacts to this message from G-d, all is as it should be. No real punishment has transpired here. In fact, reward is in order.

Everyone sins occasionally. Everyone has temporary lapses. If G-d sends an initial message and that suffices to correct one's lapses, then that is exactly what is supposed to be. Not only that, but the person is deserving of reward for listening to G-d.

With this, Rav Bergman explains the Gemara in Sota [9b] "Samson went after his eyes, therefore the Philistines put out his eyes". The Sages record that Samson prayed to G-d "In exchange for one of my eyes, I want to have the strength to bring the building down upon the Philistines, and in exchange for my other eye, I want to receive Olam HaBah, the World to Come".

We can ask the same question which we asked concerning Tzaraas: Samson had sinned with his eyes, which is why he was punished. So why is he now asking for reward, based upon the loss of his eyes?

The answer is once again that there is a kind of punishment, which if it is accepted and causes the person to react and learn a lesson from G-d, is considered something positive. By reacting the way he was supposed to react, Samson was able to turn the punishment into a vehicle of reward.

The problem occurs when things happen to people and they do not react.

We now can understand the Medrash in our Parsha. When a person speaks Lashon Horah, the first sign from G-d is "Look at the wall". If a person reacts at that point, realizes that he has spoken Lashon Horah, and decides to repent and take corrective action, if he goes to the Kohen at that point, shows him the wall of his house, and follows the prescribed ritual, then he is deserving of reward -- a treasure in his house. Reacting at the initial stage of suffering is a mitzvah which should be rewarded.

But what happens if the person doesn't react and doesn't take the suffering as an instructive lesson from G-d? Then things get worse and worse. It affects one's clothes. And if he still does not react, it affects his own body. By then, it is strictly a punishment.

If we look closely, this can be inferred from the language of the Torah. Concerning a blemish which strikes a house, the language of the Torah is that "He [the owner of the house] will come and declare to the Kohen" -- voluntarily [Vayikra 14:35]; but concerning a blemish on the skin, the language is "and he is brought to the Kohen" -- against his will [13:9; 14:1].

Happy is the person who has the foresight and the insight, the perception and the honesty, to react in the correct fashion when something like this happens.

Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

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From TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>
To weeklydt@torahweb2.org

Rabbi Hershel Schachter (TorahWeb.org)
Observing Aveilus for the Living

I

The Torah requires one declared to be *tomei* as a *metzora* to wear torn clothing, let his hair grow, and cover his head (Vayikra 13:45). The Talmud (Moed Kattan, beginning of the third chapter) understands the idea behind these requirements is that the *metzora* must observe *aveilus* (mourning). Our tradition has it that a *nega tzoraas* is a supernatural punishment for having violated certain specific sins (Erchin 16a), and one who is a *metzora* is in a certain sense compared to one who is dead (Nedraim 64b; Berachos 25a). The halacha usually requires that the surviving relatives of a deceased observe *aveilus*. Here, because we assume that the *metzora* himself is responsible for his status of being considered "dead", we require him to observe *aveilus* over his own "death".

We have a similar idea regarding one put in "*cherem*". A *cherem* is a curse given by a *beis din* to a sinner that he should die. The Talmud points out (Moed Kattan 17a) that the three letters of the word "*cherem*" correspond to the *ramach eivorim* (248 parts) in the male body, implying that the *cherem*/curse is intended to effect all the 248 parts of the sinner's body, and thereby cause his death. One who dies while in *cherem* is considered like one who was put to death by the *beis din*, and his family may not observe *aveilus* (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah chap. 345:4-5). Because the sinner (who was put into *cherem*) was the cause of his becoming like a "dead person", we therefore require him to observe *aveilus* over his own "death".

One who sinned and was sentenced to death by a *beis din* of twenty three *dayanim* is considered (in a certain sense) as if he were already a "dead man" even before his execution[1]. Similarly, when the *beis din* declares that one is in *cherem*, and when the *Kohein* declares the *metzora* to be "*tomei*", they too have the special status of being partially considered a "*gavra ketilla*".

The *chumash* tells us (Breishis 7:4) that when G-d finally decided to destroy all of mankind with the *mabul*, he waited seven days and only then caused the *mabul* to begin. According to our *mesorah*, Hashme's waiting seven days represents the fact that He observed a mourning period (*shiva*) for mankind. The commentaries point out that it is very strange to observe *aveilus* before the person dies just because he is about to die. The generally accepted understanding of this is that once G-d has declared (as a *beis din*) a death sentence on an individual (or on mankind), that person is now already considered partially a "*gavra ketilla*", and there is already room to begin observing *aveilus* just as there is in the case of one put into *cherem*.

II

Despite the fact that it is a *mitzvah* for a *kohein* to declare a *metzora* as a "*tomei*" if his conditions warrant doing so, this is no longer practiced today. The *Chofetz Chaim* (Shemiras Halashon, Shaar 1 chapter 6) suggests that perhaps the reason for this inaction is the following: since we no longer have a *beis hamikdash* and can not bring *korbanos*, and as such would not be able to complete the *tahara* process once the *tzoraas* clears up, we have no right in the first place to declare the individual *tomei*. The Talmud (Nazir 61a) establishes that a non-Jew can not be *mekabel tumah* because if he would become *tamei* he would not be able to become *tahor*. True, an earthenware vessel (a *kli cheres*) can be *mekabeil tumah*, despite the fact it has no *taharah bemikveh*. But with respect to people becoming *tamei* the rule is that only one who can later purify himself from the *tumah* is able to become *tamei*. Purifying oneself from *tuma* represents the idea of *teshuva* (repentance)[2]. We only

punish the sinner by declaring him to be a living "*gavra ketilla*" if we see a chance for him to do *teshuva*.

The Talmud (Yevamos 90b) and the Shulchan Aruch quote from the *Megillas Taanis* the tradition that *beis din* has the right to punish people, even with death or with lashes (*malkos*), despite the fact that the halacha doesn't dictate this punishment, provided that a) it is only a temporary measure and b) the *beis din* assess the situation and feels that much will be gained - either for the individual or for the community - by this punishment being administered. One could perhaps understand that it might be permissible to throw stones at those driving cars on Shabbos if it would seem that we will thereby a) encourage the drivers to become Sabbath observant or b) prevent others in the community from being *mechaleil* Shabbos. But if we really do not think either of these goals will be accomplished, and the only result we can foresee is that those who are non-observant will simply become more anti-religious, then clearly there was no better to throw the stones in the first place[3].

[1] See *Chidushei haGriz* al *haRambam Hilchos Rotzeach*

[2] See *Mipenei Harav, Parshas Shemini*

[3] See *Eretz haTzvi* p. 266

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From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Jerusalem Post :: Friday, April 8, 2011
OOPS! :: Rabbi Berel Wein

So the Goldstone Report condemning Israel for "war crimes" in the Gazan operation against Hamas got it wrong. Richard Goldstone after whom this infamous document bears its name has come out publicly and declared that the UN Human Rights Commission erred in its findings against Israel. He also recognized that body's prejudice and past animus towards Israel.

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/reconsidering-the-goldstone-report-on-israel-and-war-crimes/2011/04/01/AFg111JC_story.html]

While it certainly is admirable for Richard Goldstone to come forth now, it is undoubtedly impossible to fully correct the damage done to Israel by his initial report. Nevertheless, Richard Goldstone is to be admired for his ability to publicly admit error.

This is a trait that is noticeably absent in public officials who always seem to assert that they have never been wrong in their decisions, statements, judgments and policies. But the damage done to Israel by Goldstone's original report is almost irreparable. And even in his retraction, Judge Goldstone offers no apology for the erroneous report and its vicious conclusions regarding Israeli "war crimes." He still insinuates that Israel's non-cooperation with the commission is of major responsibility in the commission's erroneous report.

Well, Goldstone himself admits that it was naïve in the extreme to think that Hamas would in any way conduct any investigations or regret any of its actions of indiscriminate firing of rockets at Israeli civilian targets. And though he hints at it, it would have been naïve in the extreme for Israel to receive a fair and unbiased hearing from a UN commission blatantly biased against Israel.

The whole sordid process was just another stunt of deligitimatizing Israel by the Moslem and European world, a process begun at the notorious Durban conference and continuing throughout the world since then. All of this being said, Goldstone's admission of error has a certain air of nobility to it. Shimon Peres has never admitted that Oslo was an error. Tzipi Livni or Ehud Olmert have never admitted that their support of the destruction of Gush Katif was badly mistaken. Ehud Barak has never

revisited his shameful abandonment of Lebanon which has led to wars and the rise of Hezbollah.

In our country all of our leaders, religious, governmental, social, societal and educational are never wrong. There is no personal accountability for errors in judgment and policy. It is only the criminal behavior of our leadership that eventually brings them down - but even then there is scant evidence of admission of guilt or of apology to the long suffering public.

They are all innocent even when found to be guilty. The necessity for admitting guilt and identifying one's sins of commission and omission is a central tenet of Judaism. The Torah teaches us that no one individual, great as that person may be, is truly infallible. Jewish tradition teaches us that the main difference between Saul and David lay in Saul's inability to admit his error in the war against Amalek while David publicly admitted his errors and sins.

Judaism recognizes that people in leadership roles make mistakes. Such is our human condition. But it always demands accountability and remorse from those leaders for those errors. Therefore, in effect, it is this second statement of Richard Goldstone, his admission of error, which should serve as a reprimand to our society and its leaders.

King Solomon in Proverbs states that "one who admits [errors] and forsakes repeating them will be mercifully pardoned." Without personal admission of error there can be no pardon or forgiveness. The High Priest of Israel had to confess his own personal shortcomings on Yom Kippur before he could beseech Heaven for forgiveness on behalf of all of Israel.

One sees throughout rabbinic literature the willingness of great men to admit that they overlooked something or that they erred in their judgment or logic in a previous decision. We see numerous instances in rabbinic responsa where a later response to an issue admits that the original response was wrong and should no longer be followed.

Every author will tell you that if it were not for the insistence of the editor of his or her work, no precious original word of that work would have been changed or corrected. It is difficult to erase or delete. It is even more difficult to admit to one's self, let alone publicly, that one has made an error.

Judge Goldstone has perhaps redeemed his name from eternal infamy in Jewish history by his statement retracting his earlier judgment regarding Israeli actions against Hamas in Gaza. It is not my task to decide what type of action he should take to try and undo the effects of his original report. But I feel he is to be complimented for issuing this new statement on the matter and owning up to the error that originally was his. If only there would be more that would emulate him in this regard.

Berel Wein

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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: METZORA :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Rashi quotes a tradition appearing in Midrash in this week's parsha to the effect that the discovery of a plague that infected the house of a Jew that settled in the Land of Israel in biblical times was in reality a blessing in disguise.

The Canaanites, anticipating the arrival of the Jews into the Land of Israel, stored their valuables in hollowed out sanctuaries within the walls of their houses. When a Jew settled in that house after the Canaanites had been defeated and had abandoned their homes, this mysterious plague descended upon the house. The appearance of this plague forced the house to be dismembered in order to be purified from the plague.

When this occurred, the hidden Canaanite treasure was revealed and acquired by the Jewish owner of the house.

This somewhat strange Midrashic tradition contradicts the opinion expressed in the Talmud that house plagues never really occurred in real life and that the Torah included this subject only so that we would reap reward for studying and analyzing this purely theoretical subject matter..

There is another opinion in the Talmud that this house plague did actually occur but there is no mention in the Talmud of the blessing of hidden treasure being discovered. However it is obvious that Rashi chose this Midrashic tradition to highlight this particular subject of the parsha of this week. In so doing he undoubtedly signaled to us - his students - that there is an important lesson to be learned from this tradition.

It is not only that this tradition comes to teach us the old - and often true - platitude that in every cloud there is somehow a silver lining. It teaches us something far deeper, namely that the ways of the Lord, and the vagaries of life, are inscrutable, unpredictable and not always given to rational explanation and analysis.

The Lord wants us to somehow inherit Canaanite treasure. But it is not given to us directly, clearly or simply. Rather, it somehow comes through initial pain and disappointment - the apparent destruction of our house and the shame of being found residing in a dwelling of spiritual impurity. Only then, when one has passed through these difficulties - has had consultations with the kohein, has been quarantined and has taken apart his house - does the apparent purpose and gift of God become apparent.

We would all certainly prefer being granted hidden treasure and other good fortune directly and clearly. But that is not the reality of life. Many times we suffer disappointments and trials and only later are we able to realize how much true good fortune came to us through those seemingly unpleasant events.

That is why the rabbis admonished us to make a blessing on seemingly bad events in the same manner that we make a blessing when we feel that good things have happened to us. In life we are always bidden to accept what the Lord has granted to us, for many times the "bad" event may turn out not to be so bad after all.

Shabat shalom.

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>

To weekly@ohr.edu

Subject Torah Weekly

TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Metzora

For the week ending 9 April 2011 / 4 Nisan 5771

from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

OVERVIEW

The Torah describes the procedure for a metzora (a person afflicted with tzara'at) upon conclusion of his isolation. This process extends for a week and involves korbanot and immersions in the mikveh. Then, a kohen must pronounce the metzora pure. A metzora of limited financial means may substitute lesser offerings for the more expensive animals. Before a kohen diagnoses that a house has tzara'at, household possessions are removed to prevent them from also being declared ritually impure. The tzara'at is removed by smashing and rebuilding that section of the house. If it reappears, the entire building must be razed. The Torah details those bodily secretions that render a person spiritually impure, thereby preventing his contact with holy items, and the Torah defines how one regains a state of ritual purity.

INSIGHTS

Picking Up And Putting Down "...metzora" (14:2)

In what seems about a hundred years ago in the late sixties, when all manner of New Age spirituality was taking off, some of us started to take

an interest in the teachings of an arcane 19th century Russian mystic called Gurdjieff.

A friend of mine described how, as a young spiritual seeker, he joined a Gurdjieff group. (The leader of the group just happened to be Jewish, surprise, surprise). The group was 'working on itself' to try and internalize the principle that the biggest barrier to our psychological and spiritual awakening is the desire to put other people down. The study group's maxim was "Don't let a putdown pass your lips!"

At the tender age of 19, putdowns didn't seem like such a big deal to him and he found it strange that the promised path to spiritual awakening should be something that seemed rather peripheral to life. However, my friend took it upon himself to uphold this principle.

After a few months of somewhat episodic performance of this maxim, my friend was intrigued to find that this single discipline had started to illuminate many hidden and sometimes uncomfortable feelings. This one piece of self-restraint was uncovering a deeper negativity that was self-directed.

Ultimately, my friend found his way back to Judaism, and when he started to learn this week's Torah portion, he was amazed to find that the principles he had ascribed to a Russian mystic were, in fact, from a much older source.

The title of this week's parsha is Metzora. Metzora can be read as an acronym for Motzei shem rah – denigrating remarks about others. This week's reading begins with the process that has to be undertaken by someone who has sullied the power of speech.

What is the secret power of positive speech? Why does what one says have such a great influence on one's sense of spiritual well-being?

G-d created the world by speaking. "And G-d said, 'Let there be light...'" "And G-d said..." "And G-d said..."

In Hebrew, the word for a "thing" – davar — and the word for "word" are identical. On a deeper level, every 'thing' in this world, the entire Creation and its continued existence, is nothing more than G-d speaking.

When our speech contains no putdowns, obscenity, nor innuendo of obscenity; when our lips articulate the support of our fellow man and every word that leaves our mouths carries the stamp of kosher speech, it's no wonder that we feel in touch with ourselves, for we are in touch with the essence of Creation itself.

Whereas Gurdjieff-like disciplines focus on the benefits to the individual and society, the Torah is equally concerned with a wider agenda. For when our speech is correct and appropriate we become partners with G-d in the work of the Creation. Our words literally become things. Our speech metamorphoses into the fabric of existence itself.

Source: Based on a story by Mrs Sarah Shapiro in American Jewish Spirit

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair
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From Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>

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Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Parshas Metzora

And cedarwood, crimson thread and hyssop. (14:4)

The crimson thread is dyed with a pigment made from a type of lowly creature, either insect or related to the worm family. The hyssop is a lowly bush. Together, they symbolize the idea of humility. The individual who allows himself to speak degradingly of others feels that he is better than they are. His arrogance is cured by the tzaraas, spiritual leprosy, from which he has now been healed. His newly-found humility is symbolized by the crimson thread and hyssop. The metzora's lack of humility has catalyzed his present situation. His lack of respect for people deprived him of continuing to be a member of society. As a

metzora, he was isolated from people, so that he would have time to introspect his ways. As an outcast, he had the opportunity to learn the value of friendship, as well as how one who does not have friends looks and feels. Now, as he returns to society, he has a deeper understanding and appreciation of human interaction, friendship and relationships. His educational process, however, does not end with his isolation. Now, he has to focus on the cause of his sin, his arrogance which led him to believe that he was better than everyone else. His earlier sense of contempt for people resulted from a lack of humility. We speak disparagingly of others, because we have lost sight of the value of people, especially those who are the subject of our derogatory remarks. Humility is the correct manner in which to live, because it reinforces the notion that all people have value, all people are special in one way or another. It is not just about "me"; it is about "us."

Humility was the hallmark of many of our gedolim, Torah giants. The greater their status in Torah erudition, the more profound their sense of humility. Sure, they knew who they were. Specifically due to their encyclopedic Torah knowledge and their closeness with Hashem, they were that much more aware of what was expected of them. That is what made them humble.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates an interesting story concerning the Brisker Rav, zl, which underscores his incredible humility. Horav Yechiel Michel Feinstein, zl, son-in-law of the Brisker Rav, recalled his amazement that, upon walking in Brisk with his revered father-in-law, every Jew in whose proximity they came would halt what he was doing and stand up for the Rav. Even the wagon-drivers would stand up in their coaches/wagons as a display of respect. He was the Rav, and they revered him.

Rav Michel was reasonably impressed with this display of kavod haTorah, respect for the Torah. After all, the simplest Jew in town acknowledged the greatness of their beloved Rav. This was no small thing in his eyes, and he conveyed his feelings to his father-in-law. The Brisker Rav replied: "They are not standing up for me. They still remember the image of my saintly father (Horav Chaim Brisker, zl). Thus, they are standing up for me, but really it is my father for whom they rise."

These remarks unquestionably reflect the Brisker Rav's total self-abnegation, his extraordinary humility, to the point that he actually believed that it was for his father for whom they were standing, not for him.

I think we can add to this. This is undoubtedly a wonderful and meaningful message. The Brisker Rav never believed that they were standing up for him. It was his father for whom they were standing. I think we might derive another powerful lesson from here concerning the awesome respect one should show to his parents. Although Rav Chaim was no longer alive, his son continued to manifest deep respect for him. In order to understand this concept, it is essential that we are cognizant of the meaning of Kabeid es avicha v'es imecha, "Honor your father and your mother." Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl, explains the word kabeid as being related to kaved, heavy/weight. Thus, kavod, honor, is the expression of the spiritual and moral worth of an individual. Kavod is the spiritual and moral "weight" of a person. Thus, kabeid means "demonstrating your estimation of the value of." To honor parents is to show in our every endeavor, in our whole behavior, how thoroughly permeated we are with our parents' great significance. The very fact that Hashem selected them as His partners in our creation speaks volumes about their value. Taking this idea further, to give kavod is to lend "weight" to our parents, to sort of make them "heavier," more important, to hold them in greater esteem. Everything that they do has that much more significance in our eyes. Therefore, when the Brisker Rav attributed the respect he received to his father, he was actually carrying out the mitzvah of honoring one's parents to the degree that one should venerate them and attribute

whatever distinction that he can to them. He should "add weight" to their names.

Something like an affliction has appeared to me in the house. (14:35)

The Baal HaTurim notes that the phrase nireh li, "appeared to me," is found in only one other place in Tanach. In Yirmiyah 31:2, Klal Yisrael responds to Hashem, Meirachok Hashem nireh li, "From the distant past, Hashem appeared to me." Radak explains that when Hashem began His dialogue by recalling the nation's early days, Klal Yisrael interjected, "You have found favor with us in the past, but now You have removed Yourself from our presence." Alternatively, this clause is part of the Navi's prophecy, which emphasizes Hashem's love for Klal Yisrael in the past. This love will continue throughout the present and into the future, despite the numerous iniquities of the nation in the course of the years. The Baal HaTurim explains the correlation of the two pesukim as teaching us a lesson. Regardless of one's level of erudition, he should not say nega nireh li, "an affliction appeared to me." Rather, he should say k'nega, "something like an affliction." One should not decide the validity of an affliction himself. He should make the decision meirachok, "from afar," and rely on the Kohen's determination.

Horav Aharon Levin, zl, popularly known as the Raisha Rav, suggests a profound lesson to be derived from the correlation of these two pesukim. If a person notices what appears to be a nega, affliction, in his house; if he sees his children beginning to deviate from the Torah way of life, he should acknowledge that meirachok Hashem nireh li, "Hashem appears distant to me" - too. The father should take to heart and realize that the "apple" often does not fall far from the tree. It has to start someplace. When children begin to present a dim view of a life of adherence to Torah, the parents should begin to introspect, reflecting on their own level of commitment. We do not realize how powerful and far-reaching the influence the home is. Even the most subtle changes in a father and mother's attitude, can -- and will-- affect their children. This is something that one should bear in mind at all times. Your children are watching and observing your every move. Be careful that it does not come back to haunt you one day.

In his Sefer Mishmar HaLeviim, Horav Moshe Mordechai Shulsinger, relates two stories, about two fathers, about the two letters they wrote, and the ensuing impact on their sons' lives. Well, it was not only the letters, but what these letters indicated about each father's values, what he considered important, and the message it conveyed to his son.

Rav Shulsinger heard the first episode from the Steipler Rav, zl. In 1914, shortly prior to World War I, the Steipler, then still a yeshivah student, had occasion to spend some time in a small village. During his visit, he encountered a man whose son studied in the yeshivah with the Steipler. The man asked the Steipler if he would mind taking along a letter for his son upon his return trip to the yeshivah. The Steipler acquiesced gladly. The man sat down, penned the letter, sealed it in an envelope and gave it to the Steipler, who planned on leaving the very next day. Regrettably, World War I broke out and travel became hazardous. The letter remained in the Steipler's care for the next eight years!

The war was finally over, and life returned to normal. Eight years after the Steipler had the conversation with the man, he met his son. True to form, the Steipler still had with him the letter and was only too happy to have finally carried out his mission. Upon hearing that the Steipler had a letter from his father, the young man brushed away tears and remarked, "It is the last thing I will receive from my father, as he has already passed away from this world."

With trembling hands, the young man opened the envelope, removed the letter and began to read. For some reason, he asked to share the contents of the letter with the Steipler. It was a simple letter, no profundities, just the usual. The father wrote, "How are you? I hope that you are well and studying to the best of your abilities, looking forward to seeing you in the near future. One favor, please. You know that a good schmaltz

herring is not to be found in our tiny village. Could you possibly bring home a few herrings? It would mean so much to me."

This was the gist of his father's letter - which, essentially, became more of a last will and testament. He hoped his son would succeed - and, please, do not forget the herring. His father cared about his learning, but he also cared about his herring.

Letter number two surfaced, compliments of Horav Aizik Sher, zl, who, prior to becoming Rosh Yehivah of Slabodka, was Rosh Yeshivah in Halusk. It was a small town with a small yeshivah, but the level of learning and intensity of the students was outstanding. The young men were very diligent, spending every waking moment engrossed in the study of Torah. They were completely divorced from materialism and its demands. One student in the yeshivah would frequently receive a letter from his father. These letters were lessons in life, learning and ethical character refinement.

While every letter had a different message, one idea was reiterated in each letter. The father would write, "My dear son. In any area of life's endeavor, when a question arises concerning which path to take, which avenue to pursue, always keep one thing in mind: make believe that 'today' is the last day of your life, and that this is the last decision you will ever make. For instance, if you have a question, "should I go to the bais hamedrash, or somewhere else? While the "somewhere else" may be important, you must ask yourself: "is this where I want to spend the last day of my life?" The letter was signed Nosson Tzvi and sent to his son, Leizer Yudil. Yes, the letter writer was none other than Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, zl, the Alter of Slabodka, rebbe to the greatest Roshei Yeshivah in the Torah world, who was addressing his son, Horav Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, zl, the future Mirrer Rosh Yeshivah.

Two letters: one emphasizes herring, while the other focuses on self-improvement. The consequences are staggering. I do want to add something. We cannot forget that the father who was concerned with his schmaltz herring was still an individual who had the foresight to send his son to yeshivah. This was not a common practice in those days. The father was probably an unschooled individual, but he was aware that Torah reigns supreme and that he was obligated to provide his son with a Torah education - regardless of the sacrifice. Indeed, I think this individual deserves tremendous credit for going against his personal proclivities. This is quite unlike those who are not only themselves into "herring", but they force-feed it to their children! It is difficult for them to accept a son or daughter whose devotion to Torah triumphs over their personal attachment to a materialistic way of life. Indeed, that villager should be praised for having the foresight, fortitude and resolution to send his son to yeshivah.

In memory of our beloved parents Rabbi Dr. Avrohom Yitzchok Wolf, Rebbetzin Anna Moses. Sruly and Chaya Wolf and Family, Ari and Rivky Wolf and Family, Abba and Sarah Spero and Family, Pesach and Esther Ostroy and Family, Sruly and Chaya Wolf and Family

<http://www.ou.org/>

**Orthodox Union / www.ou.org
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb's Torah Column, Parshas Metzora
A Time for Silence, a Time for Speech**

He did most of his writing and public speaking almost exactly one hundred years ago. He had no secular education, and it is doubtful that he even read the newspapers of his day. Nevertheless, he had insights into the problems of his era that were astounding, even prophetic. His diagnosis of the ills of the early 20th century holds true even now, a century later. He understood the power of words. He knew how written and spoken language could be used as weapons to destroy humanity.

How incredibly relevant his words are in our age, when words can be communicated electronically!

He based his teachings and preaching upon the verse in Psalms which reads:

"Who is the man who is eager for life,

Who desires years of good fortune?

Guard your tongue from evil,

Your lips from deceitful speech." (Psalms 34:13-14)

He took this biblical advice seriously and urged all who would listen to guard their tongues and speak no malice and no falsehood.

His name was Israel Meir HaCohen, and he named his first major work "Chafetz Chaim", "Eager for Life", after the above verse in Psalms. He is now part of Jewish history and forever known as the Chafetz Chaim.

His teachings have a special connection to this week's Torah portion, Metzora (Leviticus 14 and 15), and to its Haftarah (II Kings 7:3-20).

Note that there is no explicit reference in the text of our parsha to the theme of the negative powers of language, nor is there any such reference in the Haftarah.

Our text this week deals, rather, with the detailed laws of the metzora, usually translated as "leper", and the selection from II Kings tells the story of the four lepers who dwelled outside the gates of Jerusalem, who were the first to discover the abandoned camp of the Aramean army that had laid siege to the city.

Rabbinic tradition, however, looks to understand why the metzora has been afflicted with his disease. The Talmud in the tractate Arachin understands the word metzora as a contraction of the phrase "motzi shem ra", "one who spreads a 'bad name'" about his fellow. And so the metzora has come to symbolize the person who is guilty of malicious gossip (lashon hora), or other abuse of words – deception, profanity, verbal assassination.

Interestingly, another early 20th century rabbinic sage, Rabbi Baruch Epstein, author of Torah Temima, points out that the Talmudic rabbis had the license to thus interpret the word metzora. This is because the usual term for the leper is "tzarua", not "metzora". The use of the unusual term suggests another, in this case, homiletic, meaning – he who speaks evil.

When the Chafetz Chaim urged us all to "guard our tongues" and "speak no evil", was he suggesting that we adopt silence as a guide to our behavior, avoiding speech and self-expression entirely?

The answer to this is a resounding "no", and this is illustrated in a fascinating story about Rabbi Israel Meir and his son-in-law, Rabbi Hershel Levinson. I found this story in a Yiddish language biography of the Chafetz Chaim, written by Moshe Mayer Yashar. An excerpted edition of this book is available in English, but without some of the more interesting and personal anecdotes.

Rabbi Hershel, the son-in-law, was a very pious man who spent his days in the study hall who seldom spoke at all. Many believed that he was even more saintly than his revered father-in-law. After all, his father-in-law spoke all over the place and taught and preached, and even joked, at every opportunity.

However, the Chafetz Chaim did not entirely approve of his son-in-law's avoidance of speech and devotion to almost complete silence about worldly matters. Rather, he insisted that one must use his gifts of speech, and use them widely and frequently, yet wisely and carefully.

Silence, for the Chafetz Chaim, was not the preferred way of life. Speech that carefully avoided gossip, insults, and profanity was the preferred behavior.

Today, there are groups of very well-intentioned individuals who emphasize the evils of lashon hora. Sometimes, I am afraid, they do so by avoiding to speak negatively when such speech is necessary. They sometimes refrain from protesting criminal behavior out of fear that, in doing so, they are maliciously gossiping about a criminal.

This was not the Chafetz Chaim's way. In the book mentioned above, by the title of which he is known to the ages, he emphasizes that there are opportunities when one must use speech to warn against sinful or dangerous individuals, or to protest breaches of Torah or of universal moral law. When negative talk has a beneficial objective, it is no longer to be considered negative, but actually becomes a mitzvah.

The four lepers who are described in the narrative contained in this week's Haftarah were stationed outside the gates of Jerusalem because such was what the Torah required of lepers. They were to have no contact with the residents of the city, perhaps because of the fear that their condition was contagious.

They were thus doomed, in a sense, to silence. They could not communicate with their friends and family within the city's gates. And so it is no wonder, then, that when they found that the Aramean besieging Jerusalem had been abandoned overnight, their first inclination was to keep that secret to themselves. But then, in II Kings 7:9, they came to their senses, and their sound consciences prevailed:

"Then they said to one another,

'We are not doing right.

This is a day of good news,

And we are keeping silent!

If we wait until the light of morning,

We shall incur guilt.

Come, let us go and inform the king's palace.'

They went and called out to the gate keepers of the city

And told them..."

Words can harm, but they can also heal. This was the teaching of Rabbi Israel Meir HaCohen. It is perhaps best encapsulated in the words of Kohelet:

"There is a time for all things...

A time for silence

And a time for speaking" (Ecclesiastes 3:7)

From Rabbi Yissocher Frand ryfrand@torah.org & genesis@torah.org

To ravfrand@torah.org

Subject Rabbi Frand on Parsha

Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas Metzarah

A Plague Turns Into a Blessing

The pasuk says, "When you come to Land of Canaan which I give to you for a possession, and I will put a plague of Tzaraas in a house of the land of your possession" [Vayikra 14:34]. Rash"i quotes the Medrash Rabbah, which says that this was in fact good news for the Jewish people.

Tzaraas (or Nega(im)) is a spiritual plague causing various types of discoloration of skin, clothing, or house walls; and associated with various sins of speech. Why would the appearance of Tzaraas on their houses be good news? If Tzaraas is found on the walls of the house, one is required to demolish the house! How many of us would consider that good news?

The answer is, as Rash"i says, that the inhabitants of the Land of Canaan hid great wealth and treasures in the walls of their houses. If a person would get a plague of Tzaraas on his house and follow the halacha of tearing it down, he would find a fortune inside. Therefore, this was good news.

Many of us have, no doubt, been bothered by the following question: If G-d wants me to receive a present, this is a very strange way for Him to go about giving it. We all know that Tzaraas comes as punishment for a sin. The Talmud [Eruchin 16a] lists a number of sins for which Negaim come. They come for slander, they come for being stingy, etc. So which

way is it? Is Tzaraas coming for a sin or is it coming as a way to provide a treasure?

Would it not be more logical and sensible that there should be a halacha that when one puts up his Mezuzah in Eretz Yisroel, it is necessary to bore into the door post, so he could find his treasure that way? It is certainly a very strange teaching of our Sages that I should find my treasure specifically when I am in the midst of suffering a punishment which I deserve.

Additionally, the language of the section of 'Nigei Batim' [Plagues on houses] is different from the language used by the Torah in connection with other types of Tzaraas. There are three types of Tzaraas. One type appears on the house, one type appears on clothes, and one type appears on the human body.

Concerning the negah of the house, the Torah says "And I will put a negah on the house of the land of your inheritance" [14:34]. By the other types of Tzaraas, it says, "And the garment will be brought..." or "And the person will be brought..." The Torah speaks in third person -- the Jew will find that he has a Tzaraas. Only by the house does G-d speak in first person -- "I will put..."

The Rambam says [Hilchos Tumas Tzaraas 16:10] that the three categories of Tzaraas (house, clothing, person) have an order to them. The purpose of Tzaraas was to remove a person from the sin of Lashon HaRa [evil tongue; slander]. If a person would speak Lashon HaRa, first he would get Tzaraas in his house. If he would persist in speaking Lashon HaRa, it would begin to affect his clothing. If he persisted in his evil ways, it would affect his body.

Rav Bergman, in his Share Orach, mentions a principle that we have mentioned a number of times in this shiur: At the end of the Tochacha in Bechukosai, the Torah concludes with words of consolation [Vayikra 26:42]. "And I will remember my covenant with Yaakov, and even my covenant with Yitzchak, and even my covenant with Avraham, and the Land I will remember." However, the Tochacha [chastisement] in Parshas Ki Savo does not end with any words of consolation.

The Zohar says that they asked in the Beis Medrash regarding the reason for this discrepancy. Rav Shimon Bar Yochai answered that in the Tochacha of Parshas Bechukosai, the thrust and theme of the chastisement was "Your dealings with Me is with 'keri,' so too, my dealings with you will be with a fury of 'keri.'" In other words, if you think things are just 'happening' (mikreh); if you don't take Me seriously; if you don't believe in Divine Providence, then the response will be that I too will deal with you such that you will be subject to all the evils that "nature" can offer. I will stand, so to speak, on the sidelines.

On the other hand, the Tochacha of Parshas Ki Savo constantly says, "I will do this to you; I will do that to you; etc." When it is G-d Himself that is handing out the punishment, the relationship between the Jewish People and their Creator has not been severed. G-d is punishing, but there still is a relationship. It is analogous to the case where the father knows the child is doing bad and spans him. He punishes him, but the relationship is still there.

Sometimes, however, there is a situation where the father walks out of the room and says, "I am going to teach this child a lesson. Let whatever happens to him, happen. Let him play with matches and get burnt. I will show him, by leaving." This is the Tochacha of Parshas Bechukosai. This is a far worse curse; therefore it needs a consolation.

This is the difference between nigei batim and all other Nega'im. With nigei batim, where one has just strayed and spoken Lashon HaRa, perhaps occasionally, G-d says "Our relationship is still there" -- I will personally punish. "I will place the nega..." But if one persists and goes further and further away; then eventually, it will no longer be "I will place..." It will be that the plague will come, but the relationship will no longer be there.

Now we can begin to understand how there can be a treasure in a punishment. Chazal tell us that when Shimshon [Samson] was in the

house of the Plishtim [Philistines] and his two eyes were taken out, Samson prayed to G-d: "With the merit of the loss of one of my eyes, let me bring down the house upon the Plishtim; and with the merit of the loss of my other eye, let me have the merit to enter Olam Haba." This is amazing. The Talmud tells us [Sotah 9b] that "Shimshon went after his eyes..." He sinned with his eyes and as a result of that, he lost his eyes. How then, does he come and claim to have merit based on the loss of his eyes? Rav Bergman says, herein lies a great principle. If G-d gives a person a punishment and he responds to that punishment, then he turns the punishment into a merit. That is what suffering and punishment is all about. The purpose is to strengthen the relationship between G-d and man. If Shimshon responded and knew that he did Teshuva [repentance] for the sin that he did with his eyes, he could then come back to G-d and say "with the fact that I lost my eyes and I realized the lesson in that and am thereby turning it into a merit for myself, with that merit, grant me the ability to kill the Plishtim and get into Olam Haba." With this we can now understand how the Nega Tzaraas can be hiding a treasure. We had asked, if it comes from a sin, how can it be the source of a treasure? The answer is that with the nega of Nigei Batim, which is the first level of Loshon HaRa that a person commits, there is still a personal involvement of G-d. ("And I will place...") If a person then responds, and as the Rambam says, rectifies his ways, he can in fact turn that punishment into a merit. Therefore, it is appropriate for this correct response to merit the treasures that the inhabitants of Canaan left behind. Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD
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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parsha Parables **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky** *Stories & Anecdotes that Illuminate the Weekly Torah Portion and Holidays*

Dedicated in memory of Morris Schertz of blessed memory Moshe ben Zvi by Heshie and Bonnie Schertz

Eternal Sabbath

I was always troubled by the very famous verse in this week's portion. "Wherefore the Children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, (Shabbos) to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant" (Exodus 31:16).

The Torah has to speak to each of its adherents as if they are the sole adherents to the faith. How can Israel be commanded to "observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant." Obviously, each generation must keep the Shabbos and thus it shall be observed through generations. But the words "La'asos as hashabos l'dortosom bris olam, which literally means to make the Shabbos for generations as a perpetual covenant, is a difficult concept to grasp.

The Story

Recently, my friend and colleague, Rabbi Baruch Lederman retold an anecdote in his wonderful weekly bulletin, ShulWeek. After a bit of research, I was unable to verify all the facts of his version of the story, but what I will relate is as poignant. (Some of this I quote verbatim.) Back in the mid nineties a Jewish philanthropist together with an advertising executive collaborated in having the prestigious New York Times place a small box on its front page of the Friday edition. In the box was the weekly Shabbos candle lighting time. The idea lasted a

number of years but at two thousand dollars a week, in June 1999, the little notice stopped appearing in the Friday Times.

But it did appear one more time. On January 1, 2000, the NY Times ran a Millennium edition. It was a special issue that featured three front pages. One had the news from January 1, 1900. The second was the actual news of the day, January 1, 2000. And then they had a third front page a futuristic January 1, 2100.

This fictional page included things like a welcome to the fifty-first state: Cuba, and whether robots should be allowed to vote. And so on. And in addition to the fascinating articles, there was one more thing. Down on the bottom of the Year 2100 front page, was the candle lighting time in New York for January 1, 2100. Nobody paid for it. It was just put in by the Times.

I was unable to verify a quote by the production manager of the New York Times or whether he was Irish Catholic or whether he really did explain the small box by saying, "We don't know what will happen in the year 2100. It is impossible to predict the future. But of one thing you can be certain. That in the year 2100 Jewish women will be lighting Shabbos candles." That part of the story may be apocryphal. However, a letter by Elie Rosenfeld, which did appear in the Times certainly attests to that very theme.

To the Editor:

I enjoyed the "very early edition" of the front page from Friday, Jan. 1, 2100 (The Millennium section, Jan. 1), especially the little "advertisement" that ran on the bottom left-hand corner of the page. It is telling that you ran the Sabbath candle-lighting time for that Friday. Although it is normally a paid advertisement, the editors seemed to feel that the ad had its rightful place on that page, knowing that it may be the only current advertising client that will be around in the next century.

ELIE ROSENFELD

Teaneck, N.J., Jan. 2, 2000

The Message

Perhaps the Torah is not commanding, but predicting. Wherefore the Children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, (Shabbos) to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant" (Exodus 31:16). The Children of Israel are exhorted to keep the Shabbos in a manner in which it shall indeed last forever. Perhaps the thousands upon thousands who continue to glow in the light of Shabbos are indeed glowing in the light of the Shabbos of their forebears. And our observance will in turn ensure the observance of Shabbos for future generations as well.

Good Shabbos © 2010 Rabbi Mordecai Kamenetzky

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From Jeffrey Gross <jgross@torah.org>

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Subject Weekly Halacha - Parshas Terumah

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com)

Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

Weekly Halacha

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Chametz: Search and Destroy

Question: Should ten pieces of chametz be hidden throughout the house before the search for chametz takes place?

Discussion: The poskim differ in their views regarding this practice.

There are four basic approaches:

1. The Rama¹ states that the custom is to hide pieces of chametz around the house before the search takes place. Since it often happens that no

chametz is found during the course of the search, the blessing over the bedikah could possibly be a berachah l'vatalah. To avoid this eventuality, one would be required to hide some chametz before the search begins.

2. Although l'chatchilah pieces of chametz should be hidden, the Rama himself holds that if they were not, the blessing would nonetheless be valid, for the mitzvah is to search for chametz, even in the event that one does not find any.

3. Many poskim² hold that one need not be concerned about a berachah l'vatalah at all and one need not hide any chametz before the search.

4. Some poskim³ hold that the practice of hiding chametz should be abandoned. They are concerned that some pieces may be lost or overlooked, with the result that chametz will remain in the house over Pesach.

The Mishnah Berurah agrees with the poskim who are not concerned about the possibility of a berachah l'vatalah. He nevertheless states that it is not proper to discontinue a long-standing Jewish custom.⁴ Indeed, the majority of homes today observe this time-honored practice.⁵

Nowadays, there is an additional reason for maintaining this custom. The halachah demands that the home be thoroughly searched during bedikas chametz. Any place into which chametz may have been brought during the year must be checked. In many homes, unfortunately, the search has become merely ritualistic, taking but a few minutes with no serious search conducted. One reason why the bedikah has become perfunctory is that today, homes are thoroughly cleaned and scrubbed for days or even weeks before the search takes place. Consequently, most people assume that no chametz will be found and are satisfied with going through the motions. Although there is a possible justification (limud zechus) for people who conduct such a perfunctory bedikah,⁶ many other poskim do not agree with this leniency and require that a proper bedikah be conducted.

In order to satisfy the views of all poskim, it is recommended⁷ that one hide chametz around the house before the bedikah. Since the searcher is aware that there definitely is some chametz to be found, he will necessarily have to conduct a proper bedikah. Therefore:

* Unless one has a custom to the contrary, ten⁸ pieces of bread should be hidden in various places around the house before the bedikah begins.

* Care must be taken that the pieces are wrapped well so that no crumbs will escape. Only hard pieces should be used. The exact location of the pieces should be recorded and carefully checked. Upon concluding the search the pieces must be properly discarded.⁹

* Each piece should be smaller than 1 fl. oz.¹⁰

* The custom has become that the pieces are hidden by household members who are not going to be searching the house.¹¹ However, the searcher himself may also hide the pieces.¹²

Some poskim¹³ rule that a person who is leaving home for Pesach and therefore conducts his bedikah in advance of the 14th of Nissan without a blessing,¹⁴ need not hide pieces of chametz.

Question: Must one actually burn the remnants of his chametz on erev Pesach, or can one get rid of the chametz in another way?

Discussion: There are two views in the Mishnah¹⁵ concerning the proper procedure for fulfilling the mitzvah of tashbisu, the Biblical command to destroy all chametz before Pesach. The basic halachah is that tashbisu is accomplished by getting rid of chametz in any of the following ways: burning it; crumbling it and throwing it to the winds; crumbling it and throwing it into an ocean or river; flushing it down the toilet.¹⁶

L'chatchilah, though, it has become customary to follow the view of Rav Yehudah who holds that burning in fire is the only valid method for getting rid of chametz (beir chametz).¹⁷ In addition to the halachic consideration, kabbalistic and chasidic literature teach that there is a special significance to actually burning the chametz, as burning symbolizes the destruction of the evil inclination and the power of tumah.¹⁸

There is a debate among the latter poskim¹⁹ as to whether the mitzvah of beir chametz applies if one does not happen to own any chametz. There are poskim who contend that one who does not possess any chametz should buy some so that he can fulfill the mitzvah of beir chametz. While many authorities do not agree with this stringency, all agree that it is proper to leave (and not sell to a non-Jew) at least a k'zayis (about 1 oz.) of chametz in order to properly fulfill the mitzvah of beir chametz.²⁰ Since, as mentioned earlier, the proper way to fulfill the mitzvah of tashbisu is by burning the chametz, we shall review the relevant halachos:

Question: How is the chametz burned?

Discussion: The proper time to burn the chametz is during the fifth hour²¹ of the day of erev Pesach.²² The chametz must be completely burned—to the degree that even a dog would not be able to eat it²³—by the time the fifth hour ends. [Chametz which has turned into charcoal is sufficiently burned.²⁴] A loaf of bread or a chunk of cake should be thinly sliced so that the fire will be able to consume it totally.²⁵

Several contemporary poskim²⁶ mention that it is not advisable to pour gasoline or other combustible materials over the chametz before burning it, for then the chametz becomes inedible—“destroyed”—by the gasoline, etc., rather than by the fire, and as mentioned before, this should be avoided. Note, however, that if the end of the fifth hour arrives and the chametz is not yet burned, gasoline etc. should quickly be poured over the remaining chametz so that it becomes inedible.

One should recite the daytime kol chamira, which nullifies the chametz, after the burning of the chametz²⁷ but before the sixth hour of the day begins.²⁸

One who forgot or neglected to recite the proper blessing the night before during the search for chametz may recite the blessing at the time of the burning.²⁹

Customs and hiddurim of burning chametz

There is a custom to burn other “mitzvah” items along with the chametz, e.g., the ten pieces of chametz that were hidden for the bedikah,³⁰ the wooden spoon used for the bedikah,³¹ hoshanos,³² lulav,³³ leftover oil and wicks from the Chanukah candles; fingernails (which, according to halachah, should be burned).³⁴

The chametz should be thrown into the fire with one's right hand.³⁵

There is a view that holds that the fire must be started with wood,³⁶ not gas, coal or paper.

It is preferable to burn the chametz in one's own yard or at least in one's own vessel.³⁷ It is also preferable for one to burn his own chametz and not to appoint someone else to do it for him.³⁸

When burning is not an option

If one has a great deal of chametz left before Pesach and finds it impractical to burn it all, he should not just deposit it in the garbage.

The garbage is liable to remain on his property (in his garage, on his tree-lawn, etc.) after the time for beir chametz,³⁹ and this could result in the violation of a Biblical prohibition.⁴⁰ Even moving the garbage into the street does not solve the problem, since technically the chametz which is in the garbage can or bag is still “his property.”⁴¹

Contemporary poskim offer several possible solutions:

* Before the deadline arrives, pour a chemical substance over the chametz which will render it completely inedible.⁴²

* Leave the garbage can on the street and renounce possession of it (by declaring it hefker in the presence of three adult males). The can may still be used on Pesach.⁴³

* Include the garbage can and its chametz contents with the items being sold to a non-Jew⁴⁴ (mechiras chametz). In this case, the garbage can may not be used on Pesach.⁴⁵

Chametz reminders

* Many people get rid of all of their actual chametz and assume that they have nothing to sell to a non-Jew. Even so, it is a good idea for them to sell their chametz because it is possible that they possess chametz without realizing it—in deodorants, shaving lotions, or colognes which may be chametz if they contain denatured ethyl alcohol.

* Parents who have children in yeshivos or seminaries must remember to specifically include their children's chametz when selling or nullifying their own chametz.

* One who owns shares of stock in a chametz food company (or in a conglomerate which owns such a company) should sell those shares to a non-Jew together with the rest of his chametz.⁴⁶ Such stocks should not be bought or sold during Chol ha-Moed.

- 1 O.C. 432:2.
- 2 Gra, Chayei Adam and Chok Yaakov quoting the Ra'avad.
- 3 Taz, quoted by Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 432:11.
- 4 There are also additional reasons, especially according to Kabbalah, for this ancient custom.
- 5 Chok Yaakov, Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch and Aruch ha-Shulchan all note this custom.
- 6 See Sha'arei Teshuvah, O.C. 433:11 (also quoted by Kaf ha-Chayim) who says that the masses do not conduct a thorough check since they rely on the cleaning process done before the bedikah. In his view, this may be relied upon even if a professional non-Jew did the cleaning. See Chochmas Shelomo (433:11) and Da'as Torah (433:2) for similar rulings.
- 7 Ruling of Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Seder ha-Aruch, vol. 3, pg. 27-28). See also Chok Yaakov 232:14 and Machazik Berachah 232 who advance a similar idea.
- 8 This is the custom, based on the Arizal, quoted by the Mishnah Berurah.
- 9 Mishnah Berurah 232:13-14.
- 10 Sha'arei Teshuvah 432:7. Together, though, all the pieces should total at least one ounce; see Orchos Rabbeinu, Pesach 5 quoting Rav Y.Y. Kanievsky.
- 11 See Chok Yaakov 232:14.
- 12 Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Seder ha-Aruch, vol. 3, pg. 27-28.). This was the also the custom of Rav Y.Y. Kanievsky (Orchos Rabbeinu, Pesach 5) and the Satmar Rebbe (Hagadah Divrei Yoel 108).
- 13 Minchas Yitzchak 8:35. See Kinyan Torah 2:82 and Koveitz Teshuvos 3:73 who disagree.
- 14 As ruled in O.C. 436:1.
- 15 Pesachim 21a.
- 16 Mishnah Berurah 445:5. Although Chazon Ish (O.C. 118:3) hesitates, he, too, would agree that flushing it down a modern toilet is similar to throwing it into the ocean (Kinyan Torah 2:86).
- 17 Rama, O.C. 445:1. If chametz is found after the sixth hour of erev Pesach [or during Pesach itself] all agree that burning is the proper method; see Mishnah Berurah 445:6 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 17.
- 18 See Kaf ha-Chayim 445:11.
- 19 See the various views in Minchas Chinuch 9; Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 436:21; Mekor Chayim 431; Chelkas Yo'av, O.C. 20; Maharash Engel 8:196; Divrei Chayim 1:9; Avnei Nezer, O.C. 318.
- 20 Mishnah Berurah 445:10 quoting several poskim. See also Kaf ha-Chayim 445:18.
- 21 A halachic "hour" is one twelfth of the day. A day (for this purpose) is from 72 minutes before sunrise till 50 minutes after sunset.
- 22 A minority view advises not to burn chametz earlier than the fifth hour (see Hagadah Moadim u'Zemanim), and indeed, that is the custom observed by many people. But surely if it is difficult or troublesome to wait till that time, the burning may certainly be done any time on the morning of erev Pesach. Preferably, the beir should not be done at night, see Rama 445:1.
- 23 O.C. 442:2.
- 24 Mishnah Berurah 445:1.
- 25 Chazon Ovadyah, pg. 40.
- 26 Hagadah Moadim u'Zemanim; Be'er Moshe 5:122; Siddur Pesach K'hilchaso, pg. 173.
- 27 Rama 434:2, otherwise the burning will be done on chametz which is not his and the mitzvah will not be properly fulfilled.
- 28 Mishnah Berurah 432:12.
- 29 Mishnah Berurah 423:4.
- 30 Arizal (quoted in Kaf ha-Chayim 432:1).
- 31 Chok I'Yisrael, pg. 38. See Rama 445:3.

32 Mishnah Berurah 445:7.
 33 Kaf ha-Chayim 445:16.
 34 Custom of the Chazon Ish (quoted in Orchos Rabbeinu, pg. 104).
 35 Orchos Chayim 451:1.
 36 Rashes (Shabbos 66a) quoted in Minchas Yitzchak 2:53 (who rules that one need not be particular about this); Chok l'Yisrael, pg. 40.
 37 Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 1:192, based on the view of the Ramban who holds that the Biblical mitzvah of burning chametz applies only to chametz which is in one's own domain. Rav Y. Y. Kanievsky (quoted in Hagadah Arzei ha-Levanon, pg. 23) holds that this is unnecessary.
 38 Kinyan Torah 5:37. See Mishnah Berurah 232:8 and 234:15.
 39 Unless it was prearranged that the municipality will collect the garbage before the deadline arrives.
 40 Several poskim hold that this is only a problem if there are large, clean pieces of chametz in the garbage cans; crumbs or soiled pieces of chametz are not a real problem, especially once they have been thrown into the garbage; see Mishnah Berurah 442:33; Minchas Yitzchak 4:56; Kinyan Torah 2:87; 7:36.
 41 If the cans belong to the city (outside of Israel) then there is no problem, Minchas Yitzchak 4:56.
 42 Minchas Yitzchak 4:56; Shevet ha-Levi 1:137.
 43 Chelkas Yaakov 3:165.
 44 Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:211, quoting Rav Y.Y. Kanievsky.
 45 Be'er Moshe 1:41; 3:74.
 46 Minchas Yitzchak 3:1; Moadim u'Zemanim 3:269.
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 By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

**Traveling for Pesach
 By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

*This week's article is somewhat different from what I usually send. It is a combination of:
 An interview that I responded to for a recent issue of Mishpacha in their Advice Line column and various questions I have answered via e-mail.
 Obviously, the answers are much briefer than the style I write for an article, and usually are not explained.*

Advice question asked from Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question:
 We are a young married couple with one child living in Eretz Yisrael. Both of our parents live in the States but about a 3-4 hour drive apart. As Pesach approaches and we made our plans to visit them it became clear that only one set of parents was willing to pay towards our tickets to visit, and that they would pay half the airfare. After taking this into account, we decided that we still wanted to visit and would pay the other half ourselves. However, when deciding where to be over Yom Tov we are undecided how to divide our time for Yom Tov. Please help.
 Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff: There are no obvious halachic guidelines for such an issue; it falls into the category of the "fifth shulchan aruch." I'm therefore offering you my personal thoughts and judgment. One family is paying for half of your tickets; the other side is not contributing. It does seem fair that you should spend some more time with the side that is putting up money. However there are several mitigating factors that must be kept in mind:
 Firstly, I'm assuming that the side that isn't paying is not doing so because they are stingy but rather because they simply don't have the resources. This brings up an important question: Should a family be

penalized for not having the financial wherewithal that another family has been blessed with?

Secondly, if one side has more resources than the other side, it's probable that they come to visit in Eretz Yisrael on occasion, while the financially-strapped family probably comes rarely, if at all. This means that if you don't go visit them, you may never see them.

All these factors point to the fact that you need to sit down and have an open, honest conversation about the issue and reach a decision together. Although such discussions are not easy, realize that the making of a strong marriage comes through discussing sticky situations and working out issues.

Try to depersonalize the discussion and really focus on the points that the other person is making. Sometimes, it's helpful for you each to "plead" the other side. Let the spouse whose parents are paying enumerate why the Yom Tov should be split evenly and let the one whose parents aren't able to chip in list the reasons why one should more time visiting the parents who are paying. Keep speaking until you reach a decision that you're both comfortable with. I wish you much hatzlacha.

At this point, we are quoting some select e-mail shaylos I have received pursuant to Pesach

Pesach Cleaning
 Sent: Monday, March 08, 2010 10:36 PM
 To: Rabbi Kaganoff
 Subject: URGENT - cleaning toys, pens, etc for pesach!
 Importance: High

Question: I just organised the toys today, without wiping any of them down. I did not see any crumbs, and even if there were, they certainly would not be edible. But I understand that we are supposed to actually wash in bleach anything that has a chance of ending up on our table during Pesach.

Please explain. I don't want to waste precious time and energy on shuyot - i don't have that luxury this year - limited time, energy and finances.

Answer: I do not know the source of this misinformation. It sounds like what you are doing is 100% fine. My wife follows the same approach, with my approval.

Bedikas Chometz

Question from someone else:

We are renting out our apartment for pesach and the couple only needs one out of four bedrooms. Are we required to do bedikas chometz in the three remaining rooms?

Answer: If you want to avoid doing bedika in the other rooms, you can "close them off" by putting signs on the doors that they are sold/rented to the gentile and therefore not checked for chometz. Ask the rav who is doing your mechiras chometz to sell your chometz in these rooms on the 13th of Nisan.

Yom Tov Sheini in Israel Shaylah

Dear Rabbi Kaganoff

We have been in eretz yisrael for four years, and still keep two days. Essentially, it is still clear to us that we will go back to the USA and raise our family there. But we have no location picked out, no timetable when we intend to return there, and aside from a few things in my parents and in- laws house, we really have nothing in the USA. Inertia is powerful, and who knows how long we will really be here. I cannot see that working out financially, or practically, but if the economy in the USA really collapsed, then I definitely would stay. If I want to shop for a psak, I know what different poskim will tell me, and I could easily ask from the posek who will give me the answer I

want. Am I mechuyav to go through the sugya, and make my own conclusion? Do you think we ought to keep two days this Pesach? Thanks a ton!

Answer:

The Chazon Ish (Yoreh Deah 150:1) explains that in a situation like this, one follows one's rebbe (which he defines there), and if one has no rebbe, one can be meikil by a derabbanan.

Another Yom Tov Sheini in Israel Shaylah

Question: My mother and sister are not religious and will be coming to us for all of Pesach from the U.S. How should I handle their second day Yom Tov?

Answer: Don't plan on any family activities that require them to do work, but don't say anything to them about their doing work. In other terms, don't cause them to do melacha, since most poskim hold that they are required to keep the second day Yom Tov.

Question: What should I do about a second day seder for them? (They would have no interest in it on their own and find it a burden.)

Answer: Do nothing. You are not required to make a seder for them, and I do not see anything gained by attempting them to keep/attend a seder.

Question: My elderly father, who is not observant, will be having surgery during Pesach, and I will therefore be visiting them. This has therefore generated many questions:

1. Can I do laundry on chol hamoed for my parents (who will be at the time unable to do it for themselves)?

Answer: Do all their laundry before Yom Tov, and see that they have everything that they need for the entire Yom Tov. If they are short items, they should be purchased- preferably before Yom Tov, but if necessary they can be purchased on Chol Hamoed.

2. What can I purchase on chol hamoed? Can I buy something that could wait until after Pesach, but my parents would prefer to have it sooner?

Answer: If they will use it on Chol hamoed or Yom Tov, you may but it on CHol Hamoed if there is no time to purchase it earlier, or you were unable to purchase it earlier.

3. I read your article about not doing melacha on the 2nd day of yom tov while in chutz l'aretz. If my mother would like a second seder, or to light candles for the second night of yom tov, am I allowed to do it for her? My mom lights shabbos candles, but not yom tov candles, but since it is yom tov for her, can I be motzi her? [the questioner lives in Eretz Yisrael and her parents in chutz la'aretz.]

Answer: You cannot be a shaliach for her to perform these mitzvos because you are not required to observe them.

Question: What about my making kiddush on the second night/day for them?

Answer: Also not.

4. I will be bringing with me my nursing baby who is, as is my husband, a kohen. Since I do not know people where my parents live, it may be difficult for me to find a babysitter while I visit my dad after his surgery. May I bring my baby to the hospital?

Answer: Try to find a babysitter for him. If you cannot find a sitter, and it means not visiting your father, then bring the baby along. [I permitted this since there is a very small Jewish population in the city where her parents live. The halacha will be different in an area with a large Jewish population.]

Dental Cleaning on Chol Hamoed

Dear Rabbi Kaganoff,

Hope this finds everyone well.

Is it permissible to go to the dentist for a cleaning on chol hamoed Pesach. The dentist now only has a dental hygienist in the office on

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. I am at work all those days and can't leave to go to the dentist.

Answer: One should not schedule this dental cleaning for chol hamoed.

All my best regards—
