

תואמצעה בוי

Tonight, the evening of Friday, April 20, we will count day 18, which is 2 weeks and 4 days of the omer.

"Guardian Of Israel - Watch Over The Remnant Of Israel; Watch Over The State Of Israel."

Yeshivat Har Etzion - Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (Vbm)

Yom Ha-Atzma'ut - Sicha Of Harav Aharon Lichtenstein Shlit" A

"As If He Had Gone Out Himself:"

**Integrating Past, Present And Future In Observing Yom Ha-Atzma'ut
Translated And Adapted By Rav Dov Karoll**

Yom Ha-atzma'ut has been integrated into the calendrical cycle of the Jewish people and of the State of Israel. It is therefore fitting to compare and contrast it with other festivals, especially Pesach, which is the holiday most connected to the history of the Jewish people. By examining three levels of our observance of festivals, we may learn about the nature of Yom Ha-atzma'ut.

We observe every festival in accordance with its inherent nature, and in accordance with our current situation. Clearly, there are specific halakhic and philosophical aspects that remain constant. Nonetheless, there is an aspect that relates to the circumstances of each era. In the Haggada, we proclaim that "In every generation there are those who rise up against us, and the Holy One saves us from them." Even when one drinks the same four cups, eats the same matzot, and reads the same Haggada, one should relate, at some level, to the salvation and dangers that exist in that specific year, in that generation, in the particular historical context in which one finds oneself. This is one aspect: the contemporary, the existential, celebrating in light of one's current situation.

On the opposite extreme, we do not look at our current situation, but rather at the events of the past, at the beginning of the journey, the roots of the process. We examine the source of the holiday's significance and message. Chazal have taught us through the contents of the Haggada that one must relate to two historical aspects of the holiday. On the one hand, there is the original situation of servitude, suffering, and hardship, and on the other hand, there followed redemption, salvation and upliftment. The Mishna (Pesachim 116b) teaches that "In every generation, one must see himself as if he has gone out of Egypt." But in order to experience the salvation from Egypt, one must first feel the experience of the servitude and the suffering that our forefathers experienced, to internalize the notion that "Had God not taken us out of Egypt, we and our children and grandchildren would still be slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt" (Haggada). One must imagine – and it is not easy – that one is enslaved in Egypt, with the mortar and the bricks. Once one has done that, striking the proper balance between the "matza aspect" and the "maror aspect" of the seder night, having experienced some of the suffering, one can properly appreciate the magnitude of the Divine salvation.

The Rambam's formulation of this law (in his Haggada at the end of Hilkhos Chametz u-matza) sharpens this aspect even more. Unlike the usual version, in which each person must "see himself as if he went out of Egypt," the Rambam writes that each person must "present himself as if he is currently leaving Egypt." One is not to retell an old memory from previous years, but rather to re-experience the exodus itself, as if one is currently caught up in the tension and shock of the original experience.

I believe there is also a third aspect to our observance of the festivals. The opening verses of Parashat Bechukkotai (Vayikra 26:3-13) describe a calm and quiet period that stands in stark contrast to the two aspects of which we just spoke. The Egyptian exodus and the birth of the State of Israel, both tempestuous and dramatic periods, presented manifold challenges faced courageously by the Jewish people. In our time, too, like many other

periods of Jewish history, we are constantly called upon to gird our loins to take on the challenges and threats confronting us.

The verses at the beginning of Bechukkotai, on the other hand, describe a world devoid of all these challenges, a pastoral, peaceful existence. The Prophets portray such an ideal time as one of "Each person under his own vine and under his own fig tree" (Melakhim I 5:5, Mikha 4:4). I ask myself: in the midst of such a prosperous period as described in these verses, how would one observe the holidays? Would one emphasize only the original exodus from Egypt, or would the current tranquility become part of what a person is meant to experience and to feel?

Since the Torah presents this pastoral scene as a reward for "follow[ing] My laws and faithfully observ[ing] My commandments" (Vayikra 26:3), apparently this scenario is desirable. Clearly, this parasha does not speak of spiritual stagnation and desiccation; spiritual growth and vitality are the order of the day in such a situation as well. Rather, the calm is promised with regard to the material aspects of life, relieving the pressure in those areas to allow for greater emphasis on the spiritual. However, this does not tell us that one should relate to the festivals with less dynamism.

Beyond that, it seems to me that this peaceful, pastoral element should remain a component of the festival experience even during more difficult periods. I do not subscribe to the dream of "normalization" that exists in certain schools of Zionist thought. We have no interest in the Jewish people or the State of Israel becoming just like the other nations. We wish to experience that which has characterized the Jewish people throughout its history, namely, growth and creativity despite the crises and difficult times. The State of Israel came into being amidst the tempestuous reawakening and revitalization of the Jewish people, and this renewed energy has contributed to its continued existence. However, we yearn for stability and want to feel that our existence here is enduring.

The Torah tells us, "For God's portion is His people" (Devarim 32:9), and the Ramban emphasizes several times in his commentary on the Torah (Bereishit 17:1, 28:12; Vayikra 18:25; Bemidbar 23:23, Devarim 32:7) that this means we are under God's direct supervision. As such, we have no guarantees for ongoing stability if we do not continue to deserve it. Yet we do not strive for precariousness, and we learn from the aforementioned verses that we need not strive for it. Rather, we strive for an element of stability in our existence. Unfortunately, circumstances demand that we constantly fight to maintain this.

This stability and tranquility does not often come to fruition, and is rarely reflected in reality. How many generations experienced "And you shall lie down untroubled by anyone"? Nonetheless, we must not feel that our existence is entirely precarious, but should sense an aspect of permanence and rootedness in our land, in our state, in our daily lives.

The above considerations and feelings should accompany us in all our celebrations of special occasions, but they have special applicability to Yom Ha-atzma'ut, especially in our current situation. On the one hand, we should celebrate Yom Ha-atzma'ut in light of our current situation. On the other hand, we ought to develop a strong experiential connection to our history, along the lines of "In every generation one must see himself as if he has gone out..." In other words, we must grasp the difficulties and suffering we underwent along the winding road of our two thousand years of Exile, as well as the challenges faced here in Israel before the founding of the State. In light of this recognition, we can then appreciate the magnitude of the salvation, both on a national level, and in terms of the personal salvation and revivification of millions of individuals that came about through the establishment of the State.

But it is not physical salvation alone, the deliverance of those who were in peril, for which we are thankful. To apply the model of the exodus from Egypt, we are not speaking exclusively of the first two "phrases of redemption" from Shemot 6 (verses 6-8), "And I shall set you free..." and "I will deliver you from their bondage." The State also has elements of spiritual salvation and rebuilding, the aspects of redemption epitomized by

the latter phrases: "I will redeem you... and I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God... And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov."

In order to appreciate the significance of this salvation, we must comprehend what came before. This is especially difficult for those who were born after the founding of the State. It is hard to imagine what would be if there were no State of Israel, but this thought demands our attention.

Another point deserves consideration. The State of Israel is a unique country. However, part of what we desire is that there be stability and rootedness in our existence here. We wish that the arrival of each Yom Ha-atzma'ut not be cause for astonishment. We wish for a certain measure of normality, and the ability to celebrate Yom Ha-atzma'ut with confidence of our endurance. While the celebration of Yom Ha-atzma'ut ought to differ from the celebrations of other nations, it nevertheless would be nice to have some parallel, in this regard, to Bastille Day in France and to the Fourth of July in America. And this despite the present reality, which does not seem to allow for such thoughts.

What do our enemies say? "A state may have risen, but what are fifty or sixty years in the grand historical picture?" They compare our existence to that of the Crusader state, which lasted a few generations and then was uprooted. The entirety of our Jewish soul, of our Israeli soul, of our Torah soul, rebels against this notion. Even when "You lie down" and you are "troubled by someone," we assert that we are set, rooted, firm, in this land. We will not allow anyone to tell us that we are a relic from the past, or a transient moment in the broad historical picture.

Admittedly, viewing Yom Ha-atzma'ut through the perspective of different time periods may be difficult. It is more complex than focusing upon a single scenario. However, I believe that if we wish to appreciate the full significance of the event, both experientially and philosophically, we must take all of this into consideration.

I have spoken about some parallels between Yom Ha-atzma'ut and the holiday of Pesach. Regarding Pesach, Chazal emphasize an additional aspect. The blessing of "Asher ge'alanu," which is pronounced after telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt, opens with thanking God for redeeming us, and for redeeming our forefathers, from Egypt, and concludes by turning to the future, asking that God allow us to celebrate in the redemption. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Berachot 1:5, as explained by Tosafot, Pesachim 104b, s.v. chutz), in explaining why the blessing contains "barukh" at both its beginning and its end (while according to the rules of blessings we would expect only one in this case), asserts that this is because the blessing speaks of two different redemptions, one past and one future.

This teaches us that our celebration of the Exodus from Egypt is bound up, intrinsically, with our anticipation for the future redemption. On Yom Ha-atzma'ut, as on Pesach, we must not only consider our past and present, but also exhibit yearning and desire for the future. This is part of anticipation of the redemption; we are a dreaming and yearning people, with a vision of what will be in the future.

This brings us to another point. I spoke about how difficult it may be for those who have merited growing up in a time when the State of Israel could be taken for granted, to "See himself as if he had gone out..." It requires more effort, partly intellectual and partly imaginative. The Gemara (Ketubot 75a) cites a verse, "And of Zion it shall be said, This man and that man [meaning everyone] were born there" (Tehillim 87:5). Noting the repetition of the word "ish," "man," the Gemara explains, "Echad ha-nolad bah, ve-echad ha-metzapeh lir'otah" - the appellation "one who was born there" applies both to those who were actually born there and to those who yearned to see it. Each of them has a connection to Zion. In the continuation of the above Gemara, Abbaye says that if one needs to choose between these two, between those in Israel and those who hope to get there, priority is to be given to those born there. He states that one person born in Israel is worth two born in Babylonia. The Gemara then cites the view of Rava, who makes the reverse claim: one person who comes from Babylonia to Israel is worth two who were born there.

What is the nature of this priority? In what way is a person who has come from abroad to be preferred over one who was born in Israel? The answer seems to be clear. Someone who began his life in Israel, was raised on its

holiness and with a deep connection to it, views its existence as entirely normal and takes it for granted. Someone who grew up with a different reality, however, yearns to come, dreams of living his life here, and sees Israel more as a vision than as a reality. In one sense, the Gemara says, one who grew up in Israel is preferable, for he is suffused with its existence. On the other hand, the Gemara adds, one who grew up outside Israel and comes to it has the ability to integrate the yearning and the reality. Though he is not rooted in Israel, he carries with him the yearning and desire for the land.

When we approach this Gemara, we should not view these approaches as mutually exclusive. Each of us should see it as a challenge to integrate these two elements in his consciousness. Even those who were born here should strive for the better aspects of both. If you merited to be born in Israel, you should be deeply rooted in your existence here. Do not lose sight of the natural and normal existence you have had here, remaining firm and rooted in that existence in Israel. On the other hand, you should feel wonder and yearning in your relationship with this land, and not only because we still lack so much. Even if we lacked nothing, the feeling should still be there.

Those who were born in Israel should appreciate the naturalness and rootedness with which they were raised, recognizing that it is far beyond the reality of previous generations. They also should live with the wonder and the recognition of God's great kindness that is inherent in this existence. At the same time, we should all hope and pray for better days.

[This sicha was delivered at the Yeshiva's Mesibat Yom Ha-atzma'ut, 5762 (2002).]

Additional shiurim related to Yom HaZikaron / Yom HaAtzmaut can be found at: <http://www.vbm-torah.org/vyerush.htm>

THE JERUSALEM POST Apr. 19, 2007 'The good jailer' returns Irgun hero's Bible 60 years later Eltgar Lefkovits

A Bible that a condemned member of the pre-state underground gave to his British prison guard minutes before he and a fellow Zionist fighter killed themselves is to be returned by the guard's son in Jerusalem on Thursday, six decades later.

The saga dates back to 1947, when Meir Feinstein, 19, and Moshe Barazani, 21, were sentenced to death by the Mandatory authorities.

Feinstein, of the Irgun, was condemned for his part in the bombing of the Jerusalem train station, and Barazani, of Lehi (the Stern Gang), was arrested with a grenade in his pocket while attempting to kill the city's British military commander.

The two men became friends in the Jerusalem Central Prison and decided to blow themselves up rather than be hanged.

Feinstein and Barazani formed a connection with a British police guard at the prison, Thomas Henry Goodwin, whom they dubbed "the good jailer." Right before their deaths, Feinstein presented Goodwin with a personally inscribed illustrated Bible.

The Hebrew inscription read:

"In the shadow of the gallows, 21.4.47. To the British soldier as you stand guard. Before we go to the gallows, accept this Bible as a memento and remember that we stood in dignity and marched in dignity. It is better to die with a weapon in hand than to live with hands raised. Meir Feinstein"

A separate, similar English inscription was written below.

Minutes later, after asking the guard for a moment of privacy to say a few prayers - thereby saving his life - the two men killed themselves with two booby-trapped oranges they'd hidden in their cell.

Goodwin only realized later that there was an inscription for him in the Bible.

"There is no doubt that they did not want to injure the guard. This is unequivocal," said Underground Prisoners Museum director Yoram Tamir in Jerusalem.

Goodwin returned to the United Kingdom after Israel gained its independence in 1948 and kept the Bible for the next half century. Before his death, he asked his family to return it to the Feinsein family. Several months ago, Goodwin's son Dennis contacted the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem seeking to track down Feinsein's family and return the Bible.

The Underground Prisoners Museum was able to locate Meir Feinsein's nephew, Elazar Feinsein.

On Thursday, Dennis Goodwin will return the Bible to Feinsein at the museum.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert will attend the ceremony, which will be conducted in cooperation with the Menachem Begin Heritage Center, and under the auspices of the Jewish Agency and the Prime Minister's Office.

The Bible will be put on display at the Underground Prisoners Museum.

Feinsein and Barazani are buried on the Mount of Olives.

**EXTREMISM :: Rabbi Berel Wein
Jerusalem Post :: Apr 17 2007**

All rumors and actions to the contrary notwithstanding, Judaism abhors extremism. The great rabbis and teachers of Israel have always preached moderation and the golden mean of staying in the middle. Talmud Yerushalmi compares human choices in life and behavior, attitudes and philosophy, to a person who has a choice between two roads. One road is sunlit but burning hot like a desert at high noon. The other road is snow covered and freezing cold.

If the person goes on the sunlit road he may die of heat prostration and sunstroke. If the person goes on the snow covered road than frostbite and even death may eventually occur. What then should the person do? The person should carve out for one's self a third road, one that is warm but not hot, moderate in temperature and condition and not extreme. Talmud Yerushalmi uses this as a metaphor for life generally and for Jewish life particularly.

Extremes of behavior and of religious fervor are ultimately negative and harmful. One may feel that one's extremism serves God's purposes here on earth. But the Torah teaches us that this is not true. The middle road in life and manners, character traits and lifestyle, is the preferred choice of the Torah and rabbinic tradition. Maimonides called the middle way "the golden path" in life. Extremism, in his opinion, was allowed only in order to achieve a return to the golden middle way.

Extremism negates tolerance, increases hatreds and brings about verbal and physical abuse and inevitability violence as well. It is counterproductive to its own goals and eventually, usually after a heavy price is extracted in human feelings, reputations and even human lives, it collapses of its own weight and misdeeds. But instead of learning this clear lesson of history, extremism on many fronts remains alive and well in our Jewish world not to mention in general human society as well.

There is a great attraction to extremism. It provides certainty in a very uncertain world and gives one's hatreds, prejudices and frustrations a moral underpinning. Extremism is therefore very popular. Moderation is much more difficult to maintain and popularize for it promises no certain, easy answers to the complexities of life that we face. Extremism in religion is especially appealing for then one is convinced that one is accomplishing God's purposes in life in a super fashion. Extremism in religion also breeds, as a byproduct, the rationale of exclusivity. Thus everyone else in the world is wrong, culpable and doomed except for the extremist who knows exactly what God's will on this particular matter is.

Anyone who sees things differently, even slightly differently, is a doomed heretic. And as the Moslem extremists prove to us daily, such doomed heretics are fair game to be maimed and murdered. Extremism allows for the worst crimes to be justified and exalted because it skews any sort of proportion in human life and subverts common sense, rational thought and acceptable behavior.

Senator Barry Goldwater in his acceptance speech of the presidential nomination at the Republican National Convention in 1964 destroyed any hope of actually being elected when he stated that "extremism in the cause

of democracy is a virtue." That statement sufficed to frighten away many a potential voter. The tragic truth is that extremism in defense of a just cause often causes unjust means to be employed.

This is the import of the rabbis' disapproval of mitzvah habah b'veira – a positive commandment of the Torah that was fulfilled through the commission of a sin or an immoral act. The Torah taught us that righteousness as an end goal is ultimately only achieved through righteous means. Zealots and extremists shun such Torah principles and thus poison the atmosphere of life for all of us. Witness the recent debacle of extremist Jews at the Teheran Holocaust denial conference.

Maimonides permits extremism in two areas of life. One is humility. There is no limit to humility for arrogance and false pride creates monstrous people and situations. Moshe is complimented in the Torah not for his strength, intellect or even leadership abilities, only for his humility - for being a true servant of God. And a second area where extremism is permitted is in the control of anger. The rabbis taught us that when a person loses one's temper and becomes raging angry he "has no God." Words spoken and actions committed in anger are lethal to relationships, families, communities and even nations. Therefore one must be extreme in avoiding such angry outbursts. But otherwise in life one must be extreme in avoiding extremism. Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha :: TAZRIA – METZORA :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The disease of tzoraat, the description and cure of which occupies most of the subject matter of these two parshiyot that we read this Shabat, is closely linked in rabbinic thought and literature with the sin of speaking lashon hara – slander and idle gossip. The connection between the sin of lashon hara and the resultant punishment and consequence of tzoraat is not immediately obvious. And, the fact that tzoraat is no longer clearly definable or even present today further complicates this issue.

The sin of lashon hara unfortunately is still hale and hearty today but apparently its consequences have become invisible to us. One of the many explanations given as to the connection between lashon hara and tzoraat is that lashon hara attempted to "kill" and defame a person in private and secret – a discreet stab in the back tactic – so the punishment was a public physical disfigurement able to be seen by all.

But disfigurement is disfigurement only in relation to the appearance of the general population. If everyone is disfigured in a like manner, so to speak everyone has tzoraat, then no one is really disfigured and the punishment of tzoraat has lost its punch, its deterrent effect. Thus in biblical times, when lashon hara was not yet very commonplace, tzoraat was deemed a just punishment – a public exposure of the slanderer who "kills" secretly. But in later times, when in the words of the Talmud, "everyone is covered with the dust of lashon hara," then tzoraat loses its effect. For as I stated earlier, a society where everyone is disfigured is a society where no one is deemed to be disfigured.

There is a further relationship between tzoraat and lashon hara. Speech, the gift of verbal communication and intercourse, is a uniquely human characteristic. The Targum Onkelos translates the phrase that God gave man the breath of life as meaning that God gave man the gift of speech and communication. There is nothing therefore more definitive of being a human being than the ability to speak and talk to others.

There is nothing more dehumanizing than being horribly disfigured. All sorts of prosthetic devices have been created to help people minimize their disfigurement. Though our modern society has become more tolerant of people suffering from disfigurement than was the society of our grandparents, we all still feel that the disfigured person is less "human" than the rest of society. Thus the gift of speech promotes the great concept of human uniqueness while the punishment of tzoraat serves to minimize that person's humanity in the eyes of others.

Lashon hara – evil, gossipy speech – dehumanizes us all. It takes a holy vessel, speech and communicative ability, and defiles it and turns it into an instrument of harm and tragedy. Tzoraat came to remind us all of that basic lesson of life. And even though tzoraat is not visible amongst us today, our reading and studying of these two parshiyot of the Shabat serves as a

vehicle for us to think about and appreciate the gift of speech given to humans and arrange our speech accordingly. We must wipe off the dust of lashon hara from our bodies and minds.
Shabat shalom.

TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Tazria - Metzora
For the week ending 21 April 2007 / 3 Iyyar 5767
from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

OVERVIEW

Tazria

The Torah commands a woman to bring a korban after the birth of a child. A son is to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. The Torah introduces the phenomenon of tzara'at (often mistranslated as leprosy) - a miraculous affliction that attacks people, clothing and buildings to awaken a person to spiritual failures. A kohen must be consulted to determine whether a particular mark is tzara'at or not. The kohen isolates the sufferer for a week. If the malady remains unchanged, confinement continues for a second week, after which the kohen decides the person's status. The Torah describes the different forms of tzara'at. One whose tzara'at is confirmed wears torn clothing, does not cut his hair, and must alert others that he is ritually impure. He may not have normal contact with people. The phenomenon of tzara'at on clothing is described in detail.

Metzora

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

Windbag

“This is the law of the Metzora. (14:2)

One of the causes of the spiritual affliction called Tzara'at was gossip and slander. The Torah considers these sins very grave. Habitual gossip and slander is equivalent to all three cardinal sins of idol worship, murder and adultery. Someone who habituates himself to this kind of speech forfeits his place in the future world. (Erchin 15b)

Primarily, we are physical creatures; at best our soul is a lodger in the house of the body. We find spiritual concepts abstruse and difficult to grasp. A blood-strewn battlefield makes more of an impression on us than the silent holocaust of character assassination.

For this reason the metzora is brought to the kohen. This person who was so cavalier with his words, who did not understand the power of speech, stands in front of the kohen, and with one word the kohen decides his fate, “Tahor” or “Tamei”. “Pure” or “Impure.” Just one word can return him to the society of man, and just one word can banish him to solitude and ostracism.

“For behold, He forms mountains and creates winds; He recounts to a person his conversation.” (Amos 4:13)

Ostensibly the first half of this verse has little to do with the second. However, the prophet is answering the question, “Of what importance is a word? Words have no substance.”

“Behold, He forms mountains.”

G-d created lofty mountains, vast expanses of impervious rock. “And creates winds.” - and yet the wind, which has no substance whatsoever, wears them down to an anthill. “He recounts to a person his conversation.” This fact should remind us that even though our words are as formless as the wind, they have the power to reduce great worlds to nothing.

Sources: Dubner Magid and Mayana shel Torah in Iturei Torah

Penim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

PARSHAS TAZRIA/METZORA

When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male (12:2). If a person have on the skin of his flesh a seis, or a sapachas. (13:2)

It seems peculiar that a parsha which deals primarily with the tumah, spiritual contaminations, of tzaraas, spiritual leprosy in its many forms, should be called Parshas Tazria, the Parasha of giving birth. While, in fact, the parsha does begin with the laws concerning a yoledes, woman who just gave birth, it proceeds to focus on tumas tzaraas. Why? The Torah is giving us a subtle message: Bearing a child, procreating, is the act of bringing life into this world. Speaking lashon hora, evil/disparaging speech/slander, takes a life. It is murder, perhaps more discriminating, but no less insidious. It is not violent, but it is, in many instances, just as destructive and fatal. The Torah commences with the positive act of bringing life into this world and the ensuing commitments one has to Hashem vis-?-vis the korbanos, sacrifices, and the period of tumah following the birth. Then the Torah demonstrates simply how derogatory speech and even a negative facial expression can destroy a life.

Lashon hora has dominated the public mindset for quite some time now. The Chafetz Chaim, zl, wrote his classic, Shemiras Halashon, in order to heighten Jewish consciousness concerning this transgression. When we think about it, however, lashon hora is only an expression of another severe character defect that plagues the speaker. He is bitter, because he sees everything from a malignant perspective. Negativity is the way he perceives things and people. The truth is that such a person is probably filled with such self-loathing that he expresses it by denigrating others. Whether it has been the negative experiences in his life or his own feelings of inadequacy, he expresses his emotions by spewing filth and vitriol about, and at, others. One who is secure with himself has no reason to constantly denigrate others. There are other individuals who, although they may have achieved personal success, are intolerant of others who are also doing well. This leads them to speak negatively and disparagingly of others, while simultaneously presenting themselves as noble, refined individuals.

Horav Yissachar Frand, Shlita, quotes the Reishis Chochmah who cites an alarming statement from Chazal. At the moment prior to death, one comes face to face with the Malach Ha'Maves, Angel of Death. The angel's head is full of eyes, and his sword is drawn. He asks the individual four questions, and, based upon the answers, his death will either be serene or terrifying. Those questions are: Did you study Torah, or did you assist your husband in his study of Torah? Did you perform acts of kindness? Did you recite Krias Shma twice daily? Last, the angel asks: Did you treat your fellow Jew as a king?

What does it mean to treat our fellow Jew as a king? How would we treat a king? Respect, admiration, awe, deference, esteem, are just some of the words that come to mind. We certainly would not be condescending or derogatory. Is it not frightening that our entire transition into the next world, the World of Truth, the real world, is dependent upon the manner in which we treat our fellow Jew?

Friendship is a relationship based upon mutual respect. While many of us are able to initiate a relationship, sustaining that relationship to the point that it becomes a full-fledged friendship seems more difficult. First, it is critical to understand the importance of a friend. A young man, far from home and without money, wired his father the following: "I am in the big city without money or friends. What shall I do?" His father wired him back, "Make some friends at once!" If there is one thing without which one cannot survive, it is a friend.

Understanding the importance of friendship is not sufficient unless one values that particular relationship. It must mean something to the person or it will not last. When one values his friends, he will treat them with respect and accord them their proper esteem. The following vignette gives us an idea about the nature of this relationship.

Two soldiers who fought side by side during World War I became fast comrades. When, after an unsuccessful night sortie, one of them was missing, the second youth heard a cry from no man's land. His commanding officer granted permission for a rescue attempt but cautioned,

"It is not worth it. Your friend is probably dead by this time, and you will probably end up throwing your life away." Nonetheless, he made the attempt. Some time later, the rescuer returned, dragging the body of his dead comrade. He himself had been mortally wounded. Looking up at his commanding officer, the soldier said with joy in his voice, "Sir, it was worth it. When I reached him, he looked up at me and said, 'I knew you would come.'" That is friendship.

If a person will have on his skin a seis or a sapachas. (13:2)

In the Talmud Pesachim 118A, Chazal make a powerful statement. "Anyone who is mekabel, accepts/listens to, a derogatory utterance deserves to be thrown to the dogs. For it is stated, (Shemos 22:30) (Regarding the flesh of an animal that was wounded and rendered treifah, unkosher), "To the dog, you shall cast it." Immediately following this (Shemos 23:1), the Torah writes: Lo sisah shema shav, "You shall not accept a vain (false) report." This can also be read as, lo sashi, "Do not cause a vain report to be accepted." In Hilchos Deios, The Rambam goes as far as to posit that one who listens to lashon hora, evil/slandorous speech, is worse than the one who speaks it.

In his sefer, Shemiras HaLashon, the Chafetz Chaim, zl, cites the Maharal M'Prague who explains why the mekabeil lashon hora, one who accepts evil speech, should be thrown to the dogs. In Egypt, when the firstborn were being killed, the dogs controlled themselves and did not growl or whine. This person whom Hashem has endowed with intellect and sense is unable to control himself in order to say no to the slanderer. He is, therefore, on a lower plane than the dog.

Why is the punishment for one who listens, who is a passive participant, greater than the one who actively speaks the derogatory words? Horav Mordechai Schwab, zl, explains that the listener commits a more insidious act than the speaker. The mekabeil concludes and complements the speaker's act of aggression. The speaker initiates the sin; the listener completes it. Without the listener, the speaker's words would have no essence, no substance, nowhere to go, because no one would be listening. If there is no listener, there is no lashon hora. Everything follows the conclusion. Thus, the listener commits the greater act of malevolence.

On the other hand, one who is careful and guards himself from prohibited behavior will merit great reward. The Gaon, zl, m'Vilna, writes, "The primary merit for gaining entrance into Olam Habah, the World to Come, is by guarding one's tongue. This is greater than all of the Torah study and good deeds that one performs."

Rav Schwab addresses the sin of lashon hora and the grave consequences which result from providing an avenue for the slanderer. What connotes listening to lashon hora? Must the listener participate in the conversation, or may he just provide the channel for the slander to proceed further, continuing its malignant evolution?

The Talmud in Shabbos 56a quotes Rav who states that David HaMelech accepted a slanderous report. After David established his monarchy, he sought out any descendants of Shaul HaMelech, in order to honor them out of his deference to Yehonasan, Shaul's son and David's friend. The king discovered a slave named Tziva from the house of Shaul. He, in turn, informed David that one son of Yehonasan, Mefiboshes, still lived. When Tziva informed David about Mefiboshes, he said it in such a manner as to intimate that Mefiboshes was devoid of Torah knowledge. David HaMelech, however, found Mefiboshes to be learned in Torah. Even though David knew that Tziva had slandered Mefiboshes, he still asked him about his whereabouts later on. Tziva then replied that Mefiboshes had committed treason against the king. David listened to these slanderous words and gave Mefiboshes' property to Tziva. Chazal say that David was punished middah k'neged middah, measure for measure. Since he believed slander and divided Mefiboshes' property between master (Mefiboshes) and slave (Tziva), Hashem divided David's kingdom between king (Rechavam) and slave (Yeravam). This act ultimately prevented the Jewish People from making their pilgrimage to Yerushalayim, which, in turn, led to the exile.

The exile of the Jewish People indirectly had its roots in what was probably an innocuous case of accepting a derogatory implication about someone. No participation, no speaking, just listening. The result: galus, exile. Do we need to hear more?

Parashas Metzora

This shall be the law of the metzora. (14:2)

In Hilchos Tumas Tzaraas, the Rambam writes that tzaraas is not a natural illness, but rather a specific sign and wonder associated only with the Jewish People. The punishment of tzaraas does not affect anyone who is not Jewish. We wonder why this is. Lashon hora, the primary transgression which is the precursor of this dread disease, is a deed that belongs in the category of choveil u'mazik, one who wounds or damages another individual or his property. Bnei Noach, those not of Jewish birth, are commanded in these laws. Therefore, if the laws of damages apply to gentiles, and lashon hora clearly damages, why are they not included in the punishment?

A number of commentators ask this question. One explanation that I heard is that there are two types of dibbur, speech. First, is speech whose source is in the natural world. It has no source of kedushah, holiness, and thus has no hashpaah, influence or impact, in this world. It is comprised of nothing more than empty words. It has no positive or negative effect in a cosmic sense. This is the type of dibbur possessed by one who is not of the Jewish faith. The dibbur ha'Yisraeli, Jewish word, reverts back to its original source, which preceded the creation of the world. Thus, it has kedushah, and the inherent quality of yetzirah, ability to create, to inspire, influence, and impact. Therefore, when Klal Yisrael prays, their tefillos, prayers, which are articulated through the medium of dibbur, have a powerful impact. The power of speech of the Jew originates in the cosmic sphere preceding the creation of the world so that it has the ability to effect change in this world.

Klal Yisrael's speech is holy, because the people are intrinsically holy. Negative, disparaging speech creates a negative ripple in the world, catalyzing tumah, spiritual pollution. Therefore, a Jew who derogates will be punished with tzaraas, rendering him tamei, spiritually unclean. This only applies to a Jew, however, because only his speech has such a compelling effect.

In his commentary on the Torah, the Chafetz Chaim writes concerning the pasuk, "This shall be the law of the metzora. He shall be brought to the Kohen (Vayikra 14:2),' the purification of the metzora is contingent upon the dibbur, words, of the Kohen." Since the plague of tzaraas is the result of a deviation of (the power of) the tongue, the Torah decreed that the therapy for this sin and its rectification derives from the power of speech - the power that comes from those who guard and consecrate their speech. About them it is written in Malachi 2:7, "For the lips of the Kohen shall safeguard knowledge."

The one to whom the house belongs shall come and declare to the Kohen, saying: Something like an affliction appeared to me in the house. (14:35)

Chazal question the word lo, to him. Obviously, it is his house. This teaches us that the lo (the one to whom the house belongs) is the source of his sin. He designates the house and its contents to himself - and only to himself. When he is approached concerning lending one of his possessions, his immediate response is, "I do not own it" or "I do not have one." Therefore, Hashem makes him empty his house of all of its possessions, so that his lie will be exposed for all its ugliness. Negaim, plagues, are the result of tzarus ayin, a selfish eye. One refuses to share his good fortune with others.

In Pirkei Avos 2:8, we learn, "If you have studied much Torah, do not take credit for yourself, for this is the purpose of your creation." On the other hand, as Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Shlita, notes, "If you retain the Torah for yourself, if you refuse to teach and inspire others, then what is the purpose of your existence?" We are all here for a reason, as Horav Chaim, zl, m'Volozhin writes in his preface to the Nefesh HaChaim, L'hoil l'acharini, "To help others." Otherwise, what purpose do we serve in this world?"

In the Talmud Niddah 30b, Chazal teach that when a fetus is in its mother's womb, an angel teaches him the entire Torah. Once he is about to enter the world at birth, the angel slaps him on his mouth, causing him to forget everything that he had learned. Rav Elyashiv explains this practically. If the purpose of creation of man was self-serving, if he was to worry only about himself, his birth would be unnecessary. After all, he has already

studied the entire Torah from an outstanding teacher! This obligates us to acknowledge that man is created to teach and inspire others, to draw out his spiritual treasures and share them with others. Man is only a treasurer, taking care of the wonderful spiritual gifts that the Almighty has granted him. Understandably, he has a responsibility to dispense this treasure to those who need it.

One who feels that the house is "his" refuses to even lend what Hashem has granted him to others. He claims that he does not possess the object, thus demonstrating that he does not take into consideration the many people he could help or even save. Such a person will be visited with a plague on his house. He has misappropriated Hashem's gifts.

Interestingly, this person is acutely aware of what will occur when he goes to the Kohen and says, "Like a plague appeared in my house." He will now have to remove all of his possessions, and the truth will be revealed. All of his lies will be exposed. Yet, he is prepared for all the public humiliation and shame, because that is the halachah. One who has a plague must go to the Kohen. This is not your ordinary sinner. He wants his cake; he wants to eat it; and he is willing to suffer humiliation for it.

Rav Elyashiv comments that this idea applies equally to the individual who keeps his Torah to himself and refuses to share it with others. He must realize that he is but a bursar to allocate his Torah with others. Once Rav Yisrael Salanter, zl, was told about a chasid, pious individual, who was known as Reb Leib of Kelm. Rav Yisrael responded, "I will consider him a chasid only if he is prepared to take the place of the storekeeper for an hour in the middle of the day, so that the storekeeper can take time off and go to the bais ha'medrash to study Torah. A chasid is one who is willing to share his Olam Haba with someone else!

When the Chafetz Chaim zl, became eighty years old, he gathered together his children, his students and his close friends and he made the following declaration: "Today, I have become eighty years old. You must all be wondering why I have called together this august group. Certainly, I am not one to celebrate with a birthday party. Why, then, are you here? Let me tell you why I am doing this. When I published my volume of Shemiras HaLashon, describing the sin of speaking lashon hora, its effect and consequences, I was not simply preaching to others while personally ignoring the message. No! I was meticulous in guarding my tongue, in being careful not to say anything that might be misconstrued as disparaging, but I was afraid. What would I do if I were to die prematurely? What would people say? Here I am underscoring the Chazal that equates long life as a reward for guarding one's tongue, and I, its primary expositor and publicist, dies young? I would have been called a charlatan. Look! The Chafetz Chaim died young! Can you imagine the chillul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's Name that would have resulted from this? Now that I have reached the age of eighty years, I can say, Baruch Hashem, the Name of Heaven will not be profaned."

The Chafetz Chaim was a tzaddik without peer; he lived to be almost one hundred years old. His entire life was a lesson in middas ha'chesed, attribute of kindness, as he lived and breathed for the Jewish People. He wrote his magnum opus, the Mishnah Berurah, which is a sefer, literary work, on halachah that is important for everyone - even the greatest and most erudite Torah scholars. Yet, originally it was written for the purpose of teaching the average Jew how to live and how to observe halachah. It was a labor of love, and a consummate act of chesed. He also wrote the Machne Yisrael, a handbook for the Jewish soldier, which halachically addresses the soldier's needs as he goes into battle. The life of the Chofetz Chaim is an example of a life lived for Klal Yisrael.

Va'ani Tefillah

Az yeranenu atzei ya'ar

Then, the trees of the forest will also jubilate.

When the world community recognizes Hashem, when the End of the Days, which has long been predicted by the Neviim, prophets, becomes a reality, the joy in the world will be unprecedented. The oceans and cultivated fields and everything in them will jubilate, as well as the trees of the forest, representing all the uncultivated components of nature. Why does the Psalmist underscore the word az, then? The Chafetz Chaim, zl, explains that now, when a person cuts down a tree and uses its wood for fashioning an idol or erecting an edifice to serve idol-worship, then the tree

does not fulfill its G-d-given purpose on this world. On the contrary, it is used to anger its Creator. When Hashem's reign spreads to the entire world, His monarchy will be accepted by all nations. They will all "tremble before Him," as the new world order is ushered in with the advent of Moshiach. Then, every creation will be used to fulfill its true G-d-given objective. Then the trees will sanctify Hashem's Name in jubilation, for they will have finally attained their true purpose.

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h a a r e t z

Portion of the Week / On untarnished love

By Benjamin Lau

This week's double portion deals with leprosy, a disease humanity has known since the dawn of history, which was until recently considered incurable and extremely contagious. The Torah instructs us that only people who have been definitely diagnosed with the disease should be isolated from other members of society: "He shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be" (Leviticus 13:46).

Throughout history, there have been two diametrically opposed approaches to lepers: on the one hand, utter revulsion of them; on the other, pity and a search for ways of protecting and preserving them. In the Talmud (Tractate Ktubot, page 77b), we read of these two approaches: "Rabbi Zera never sat beside someone suffering from raatan (a form of leprosy); Rabbi Elazar never entered a leper's home (tent); Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Assi never ate eggs laid in a leper's courtyard. However, Rabbi Joshua Ben Levi would enter the homes of lepers, would sit with them and study Torah with them. Citing Proverbs [5:19], 'Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe,' he would ask, 'If the Torah charms those who study it, does it not protect them as well?'"

The first four Talmudic scholars mentioned here behaved in a natural, logical manner, taking the view that people with a contagious disease must be isolated, and each found a different method of protecting himself from it. Only the last scholar mentioned, Rabbi Joshua (who chronologically preceded them), acted differently. He sat together with lepers, studying Torah with them. He felt he was protected - a feeling that stemmed from a wonderful interpretation of the verse from Proverbs which likens the Torah to a beloved woman: According to Rabbi Joshua, love will protect you, and thus the Torah is like a preventive medicine, defending one from contagion. His approach never became popular. Generally speaking, isolated, remote communities were established for lepers to protect the rest of society. A recent book, Victoria Hislop's "The Island" depicts such a situation.

There is, nevertheless, something in Rabbi Joshua's words that suggests that a different approach is needed toward lepers. He understands that the Torah can protect us because it is like a well-loved woman. In other words, love enables us to overcome the hurdles that the disease presents.

Rashi's wisdom

This is precisely how the great 11th-century French-born commentator Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki) ruled in a case that was presented to the rabbinical court over which he presided. A man requested the court's authorization to divorce his wife because of the leprosy that had spread throughout her body, while the wife claimed that the leprous sores erupted after her husband humiliated her by banishing her from their home.

Rashi accepted the wife's position and said of the husband, "He has not acted as a descendant of Abraham, who treated everyone compassionately ... Had he tried to draw closer to her with the same passion he has distanced himself from her, her charm would have captivated him, as our sages state: The place charms its residents, even though it is accursed, the water is bad and the land barren.' Similarly, a wife charms her husband, and fortunate is the man who has been privileged to have a wife and to purchase heaven through her. Even among the blasphemers, we find that many of them do not banish their wives ... Yet here we have this man, who has adopted a harsh attitude toward the house of our heavenly father, and

who has testified in a courtroom against the woman who has been his wife since he was a young man. He should treat her as all Jewish women deserve to be treated. However, if he is unwilling to draw closer to her in a spirit of mercy and respect, then he should divorce her and give her everything that is specified in their marriage contract."

Rashi was trying to teach the man both the essence of love and Judaism's inherent compassion for all human beings. If the husband's heart were bonded to his wife's, he would not see her defects. Rashi compared a wife's charms with the attraction that a place can hold for those who dwell in it. The phrase "the place charms its residents" originates in a passage in the Talmud (Tractate Sota, p. 47a), where there is a discussion concerning Jericho. In that city, contaminated water is purified by the prophet Elisha. When he comes there to correct the problem, the local inhabitants explain: "And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren" (2 Kings 2:19). The Talmud finds this assertion puzzling: If the water is contaminated and the land barren, why do the residents state that the "situation of this city is pleasant"? However, the Talmud replies, "the place charms its residents": That is, if you love the place in which you live, you cannot see its blemishes.

Next week we will be marking Memorial Day, immediately followed by Independence Day. Even though the land may be barren, even though holding on to it may cost human lives, we can say, to paraphrase the Talmud's reply: "The Land of Israel charms its residents." When we love someone, we can overlook many of that person's blemishes, as we read in the Song of Songs: "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee" (4:7).

That does not mean that we must not try to treat diseases, infections and other disorders. Everything that needs mending must be attended to - but with love.

It would be appropriate to quote the words of Dan Almagor (in an unofficial translation from the Hebrew), from "At the Volcano's Mouth": "When you read in the newspapers about a volcano erupting in Sicily, about two villages being buried / In Nicaragua, Chile or India / When you read this in the newspapers, you ask yourself, 'Why? Why do the farmers return / To those same slopes which betrayed them? ... They could perhaps leave this place and find another that is safer / Where they could finally live in peace, once and for all.' / But they cling to the hill's slopes and wait ... Perhaps, perhaps tomorrow things will be different ... / And they hope that one day, the mountain's anger will pass / And, then, on the black basalt rock, how green will the grass grow and how it will flourish, once and for all."

Shabbat Shalom | www.ou.org

Parashat Tazriah-Metzora: Waiting for a Sign

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Parashat Tazriah - Metzora 5767

Part One:

This devar Torah is dedicated to a prominent rabbi in "yeshiveshe" circles in the United States, whom I met last Leil Shabbat (Friday night). He is very learned and a sweet man, who according to his words is awaiting a sign from Hashem that the time has come to return to Eretz Yisrael.

Rashi in the beginning of parashat Tazriah comments on the pasuk (Vayikra 12,2) מימי תעבש האמטו רכו הדליו עירות יכ השא רמאל לארשי יב לא רבד (מימי תעבש האמטו רכו הדליו עירות יכ השא רמאל לארשי יב לא רבד) which deals with the laws regarding a woman whose has just given birth.

Rashi states regarding the sequence of the laws of kosher and non-kosher animals at the end of last week's parasha She'mini and the laws of childbirth which begin parashat Tazriah:

ותרות רכ תישארב השעמב פועו היה המהב לכ רחא מדה לש ותריציש משכ יאלמש ר רמא פועו היה המהב תרות רחא השרפתנ

R. Simla'ey notes that just as the creation of man followed the creation of the animal world so too do the expounding of the laws of human birth follow the laws of the animals.

The midrash in Beraysheet chapter 8 enlarges on R. Simla'ey's words and says:

The prophet Yishayahu says, "And the spirit of God rested upon him" (meaning): If man is meritorious we say to him 'You preceded the angels in creation, but if man is not meritorious we say to him 'a fly preceded you, a mosquito preceded you, an earthworm preceded you."

Man has the ability to rise above the angels, but he can also sink below the level of the most primitive life forms.

I am writing this on the 27th of Nisan, the day we in Eretz Yisrael commemorate the holocaust on a national scale.

It is also the sixtieth anniversary of the hanging of four Jewish heroes of the underground by the British in the Acco fortress: Dov Gruner, Mordechai Alkachai, Yechiel Drezner and Eliezer Kashani - HaShem Yinkom Damam (May G-d avenge their blood). They were awakened at midnight without prior warning, ordered to don the red clothing of the condemned to die and were led away to be hung. Dov Gruner sang Hatikva while they were being taken away to the gallows room, and succeeded in finishing just when a black hood was put over his head.

The Germans are the personification of the midrash, whereby man sinks lower than the cruelest life forms. They murdered millions of our brothers and sisters. But they had accomplices, not only in the primitive peoples of the Ukraine, Poland, Netherlands France etc, but even the people who gave us Shakespeare and the House of Windsor stand in the docket of the accused for closing the gates to Eretz Yisrael before tens of thousands of Jews who had succeeded in escaping the inferno of Europe. In the name of historical truth, we should not omit the United States, whose president refused to bomb the rail tracks to the concentration camps, when the disruption of the "train schedule" would have saved 10,000 Jews a day at Auschwitz alone.

When the day of judgement will arrive, when the world will be divided between those who aided the chosen people of HaShem and those who harmed us, the German nation will be called to explain their murderous conduct. The German will reply that their hatred of the Jews is genetic, having received it from their progenitor Amalek, the son of Elifaz, the son of Esau. So the Jews should have known that their place was not to be near the German nation. And furthermore, many could have been saved had the United States accepted the escapees, and not close their borders and had England not initiated the White Paper limiting immigration to Eretz Yisrael.

The next to be asked to explain their conduct will be the British government. They will admit that their policy was pro-Arab and hence anti-Jew, but there was good reason for this.

They will say," On November 2, 1917 HM Government adopted the Balfour Declaration to establish a "Jewish National Home" in Palestine on both sides of the Jordan river, as stated in the Bible. We expected waves of returning Jews to the holy land, as expressed in the prayers the Jews recite three times a day and in grace after meals and at the close of the sacred passover Seder.

We planned for a western orientated country of the Jewish people to enlighten the primitive Middle East, in which we had strategic interests.

But except for a small trickle, the Jews did not come!

They didn't come in 1917, nor did they come in 1918, nor did they come in the twenties and not even in the early thirties. Because they were waiting for their Messiah to bring them back on the "wings of eagles" or on "magic carpets."

So we had no choice but to turn to the Arabs for allies, who demanded limiting Jewish Immigration to zero. Hence the British governments White Paper of 1939, where section 2 reads: "Immigration: Jewish immigration to Palestine under the British Mandate was to be limited to 75,000 for the first five years, and would later be contingent on Arab consent."

Then the leaders of Jewry will be called upon to explain their conduct in those years.

"We prayed for a sign from the Almighty that the time has come to leave the galut. But the sign did not come, so we remained in the shtetlach and ghettos of Europe."

Then HaShem will reply: "You kept shabbat without a sign from the shamayim; as you did with tefillin and all the other mitzvot because they are written in the Torah and Shulchan Aruch. So why did you demand a sign regarding the mitzva of living in my holy land? Isn't the true reason

because you were comfortable in the galut, just as the meraglim (spies) were comfortable in the desert?"

HaShem's tribunal will continue until the appropriate punishments will be meted out in accordance with the exact halachic letter of the law.

While I was sitting across from the above mentioned rabbi, who was bemoaning the six million Jews who waited for a sign as he does now, my feeling was: "how pathetic is this man and what he represents."

Part Two:

Next week we will celebrate the 59th Yom Ha'atzmaut of the State of Israel. When I say "we", I refer to the enlightened among us, who have ever opened a history book of the Jewish nation to learn from where we came and the impossible path of survival which Hashem has taken us.

No one can comprehend the forces which banded together to prevent the return of Am Yisrael to the Holy land. Christianity, Islam, political and economic interest and sheer anti-Jewishness forged a common bond to maintain the 2000 year state of degradation of the Jew, in order to prove that we are not God's "Chosen People."

But despite it all, three years after the Germans were making soap of us, the gates of Eretz Yisrael were opened for the return home of Rachel's children (Yirmiyahu chap. 31.)

In order to proclaim our awareness of the great miracle wrought by Hashem in re-instating Jewish sovereignty in at least part of the biblical Eretz Yisrael, we recite the complete Hallel with a bracha. This is based on the halachic principle quoted in many sources that if we are required to recite Hallel to commemorate our emergence from slavery to freedom (the exodus from Egypt) then certainly one must say Hallel when emerging from near certain death to life.

The dispute regarding Hallel was resolved for me when I ask a known talmid chacham concerning the matter. He replied that if one feels in his heart that the establishment of the State was a miracle from Hashem he must say Hallel; but if one does not feel this he is exempt.

In light (or rather darkness) of the policies of the political leadership of Israel with regard to their inexcusable and unforgettable actions in Gush Katif, the northern Shomron and Amona, people here and abroad are asking me if they should continue to say Hallel.

It is to them that I address these words.

Firstly, let us put the question in proper proportion.

The people governing our holy country have been called many uncomplimentary names for up-rooting Jews from their homes in Eretz Yisrael and then giving Jewish land to our enemies: resha'im (evil doers), traitors etc.

I will not argue with this but I would add, that even when the Sharon-Ohlmert government relinquished some areas, they are still many degrees better than any Jew living in the galut, who by doing so has de facto relinquished all the land to our enemies?

We must continue to say Hallel because the good in our lives in Eretz Yisrael was performed by Hashem; the evil is the work of man.

We must continue to go to the army and indulge in all walks of life, because the future belongs to those who trust and believe in Hashem, while the others will eventually be thrown off in eternal disgrace from the platform of history.

But the question we must relate to is: Why is this happening to the holy people of Eretz Yisrael. Why are the leaders of this land so blind to the miraculous survival of the State since its inception? Six wars fought against forces many times greater than us, and six magnificent victories?

I suggest:

The prophet Yishayahu :(22,06)

הַנְּשִׂיחָה הַתֶּעֶבֶר הֵיא מוֹצֵעַ יוֹגֵל רִיעוּצוֹהוּ פְּלֵאָל הִיהִי וְשָׁקָה

"The small will become a thousand and the young (will become) a huge nation, says God, in its time I will hasten its coming."

The Gemara in Sanhedrin 98a points out the contradiction between the word 'be'eeta' - in its appropriate time, and 'acheeshenu' - God will hasten its arrival before its appropriate time?

And explains that the redemption will come "in its appropriate time" if the Jewish people are not meritorious; however, if we do merit redemption Hashem will hasten its coming.

What is this special "merit" the gemara is referring to, and how do we gain it?

The Mashiach is not an insular Jewish event. It is the ultimate crescendo of the symphony of all human events, from the first man and woman until the sounding of the great shofar in the farthest corners of the world. The Mashiach will usher in a period when Man will recognize HaShem, the creator, and willingly submit to His will.

This revolutionary period will come about in one of two ways. 1- When the Jewish nation reaches its loftiest level of spirituality, meriting the appearance of the Mashiach, then the nations of the world will recognize Hashem and the unique role for which the Jewish people were chosen. 2- If we fail to realize our spiritual potential and choose to be just one more nation in the world, proud to have a flag in the UN plaza and place our destiny in their hands.

The two parallel redemptions of "in its time" and "in haste" are functions of our trust in Hashem as apart from our choice to rely on the nations of the world for our salvation.

If the Jewish nation conducts itself as a separate entity from the nations, an Am Kadosh - a holy people - than Hashem will hasten our redemption. But if we choose to depend on the moral and ethical mores of the "enlightened" nations then the time for redemption will linger on.

As long as there are sizeable numbers of Jews in the galut where they "play the international scene begging to be admitted to their unholy portals" the next chapter in our redemption will have to wait.

Shabbat Shalom

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Tazria : Shiloh and the Birth-Offerings

The Torah portion of Tazria begins with the special offerings of women who recently gave birth. Amazingly, it was over these birth-offerings that a family of priests was disqualified from serving in the Temple. Even worse: according to the Talmud in Yoma 9a, this sorry affair led to the destruction of the Shiloh Tabernacle, the forerunner to the Temple, after functioning for 369 years.

The Sin of Eli's Sons

The book of Samuel describes the ignominious state of the holy service in the Shiloh Tabernacle. The sons of Eli were insensitive priests who would take their portions by force and "treated God's offerings with contempt" [I Sam. II:17]. Their worst sin, according to the reports reaching the ears of their father, was that "they slept with the women who streamed to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting" [v. 22].

The Talmud states, however, that this verse should not be taken literally. "Anyone who says the sons of Eli actually sinned is mistaken" [Shabbat 55b]. So what does it mean that "they slept with the women"? According to the Sages, they failed to offer the birth-offerings of the women promptly, and thus indirectly prevented them from returning home. The women did not trust the priests to bring their offerings, so they would remain in Shiloh until they saw with their own eyes that their offering was completed. Since the inattentive service of Eli's sons caused the women to be unnecessarily separated from their husbands, the verse refers to their irresponsible behavior as if they slept with them.

Is this just a case of Talmudic whitewash, a rabbinic cover-up? Why should this be the cause for the destruction of the Tabernacle?

The Purpose of the Temple Service

If we want to analyze what brought about the fall of the Tabernacle in Shiloh, we should not give too much weight to passing incidents, grave though they may be. Rather we should search for indications of an underlying moral decay that undermined the very foundations of the Temple service and its objectives.

The Divine service is integrally connected with the concept of uplifting and sanctifying life. We cannot fully elevate life in all of its aspects, in its heights and depths, unless we are able to connect life to its Source, to the Creator of all life.

Life also includes times of trouble and distress. What will give it light, restoring its natural happiness and joy? What will rejuvenate it and grant it nobility and grace? This can only be accomplished by uncovering the Godliness to be found in all aspects of life.

The Birth-Offering

The birth of a child is a wonderful occasion, bringing new life and joy to the family. But the birthing experience is a challenging one, as it also involves pain and suffering. The complex emotions felt by the woman giving birth can bring stress and conflict to the family, and are only forgotten with the passage of time, as life returns to its usual joy and happiness.

What can cleanse the dark impressions and hard feelings that come from this suffering, rooted in the sin of our mother in the beginnings of humanity? Their remedy requires an act of drawing near to God. As the new mother elevates her birthing experience with her chatat and olah offerings, she rectifies the shortcomings caused by the rebellious tendencies of the human heart. These offerings allow her soul to be lifted up in feelings of love for the greatness of the Creator of all life, the Source of love for all creatures.

In short: the Temple offerings must reflect a harmony between the Divine service and the goal of elevating life. This is especially true for the offerings brought after giving birth. True morality cannot sanction the idea of a mechanical Temple service, disconnected from the people and their lives.

The Service in Shiloh

The unfeeling, even tyrannical atmosphere that existed in the Shiloh Tabernacle - the absence of ethical sensitivity, the lack of integrity and compassion, the disconnect from the needs and feelings of the people, by an order of hardhearted priests who paraded their elevated position over the people by force - this spirit created an artificial divide between the principles of morality and the Temple service, and in the end destroyed the reign of the priestly family of Eli. These callous priests saw no connection between their service and the sanctification of life. Ultimately, their actions brought about the fall of the Tabernacle in Shiloh.

The priests should have seen the birth-offering as a vehicle to rectify and purify life. How could they delay these offerings, thus impairing their primary purpose, that which God desires in His world - "shalom bayit" - harmony and quietude in family life?

But Eli's sons mistakenly viewed their priesthood as an entitlement. Instead of a service based on purity and holiness, theirs was a service capable of arrogance and ugliness. They only sought to fulfill the external, technical side of the Temple service.

This corrupted form of service is what led to the destruction of the Tabernacle - something that an individual sinful act could not cause. If Eli's sons had actually sinned as written, such a state could not have gone on for long without correction. The service in Shiloh did not suffer from any particular sinful act, but rather from a moral decay in its very foundations, for which it needed to be destroyed in order to be corrected and rebuilt.

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Comments and inquiries may be sent to: RavKookList@gmail.com

The Alter on The Parsha

Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt'l, The Alter of Slabodka

Compiled from Sefer Ohr Hatzafun

Edited & Compiled by Rabbi Eliezer Grunberg Chaver Kollel Ner David

The posuk says, "וַיִּקְרָא" (ויקרא) "ובא אשר לו הבית והגיד לכהן לאמר, כַּנְגַע נִרְאָה לִי בְּבֵית" (י"ד:ל"ה) (When a tzara'as like affliction appears on a person's house, he should come to the Kohen and say, "Something like a Nega has appeared to me in the house." The Mishna (נגעים י"ב:ה) teaches that even if the owner of the house is a *Talmid Chacham* and he knows for sure that the affliction is a *Nega*, he should still say "כַּנְגַע" – "like a *Nega*, rather than

"נגע נראה לי בבית" - "A *Nega* has appeared to me in the house." The Tosfos Yom Tov explaining the Maharal, says, that until the Kohen views the *Nega* and actually proclaims it *Tamei*, it does not have a Halachic status of impurity. Therefore, to precede the Kohen and call it a *Nega*, giving the impression that it is impure, would be a statement tainted by falsehood, falling under the category of telling a lie.

This person has no doubt about the status of this *Nega* and shortly the Kohen will definitely declare it impure. Yet, until the Kohen renders his decision, which in actuality gives it its legal status of impurity, in the eyes of the Torah it would be an untruth to state, "This is a *Nega*."

Furthermore, this *Halacha* applies even in a situation where the Kohen is ignorant of the laws of *Negaim* and is relying on the knowledge of the owner of the house who is a *Talmid Chacham* in order to declare it an impure *Nega*.

In such a situation, the whole basis of the Kohen's proclamation that this is a *Nega* stems from the knowledge and statement of the owner. Nevertheless, the Torah still considers it untruthful for him to make a definitive statement that it is a *Nega* before the Kohen does.

Additionally, in a situation where the Kohen is ignorant, the owner of the house is presented with a tremendous *nisayon*. He can choose to either divulge the truth or deceive the Kohen by telling him that in reality, his house does not possess the signs of a true *Tamei Nega*, and thereby save his house from destruction. Yet, even at this moment of overcoming the great challenge of revealing the truth to the Kohen, a slight lack of preciseness in the owner's words can cause his overall statement of truth to be viewed as a lie.

If the Torah obligates us to be so careful to avoid even the slightest appearance of an untruth, how much more careful we must be to avoid any true lie or dishonest conduct. In today's world where lies and deceit are common practice, this lesson is so important to help us reach the high standards of truth that the Torah mandates and to combat the dishonesty that permeates society.

R. Joshua Flug (YUTorah) Construction of a Mikveh

Part I

The mikveh (ritualarium) is the ultimate symbol of Jewish purity today. This article will discuss the basic requirements of constructing a mikveh. In the next issue we will discuss some of the modern-day methods used to construct a mikveh that complies with current hygienic standards.

Ma'ayan and Mikveh

The Torah (Vayikra 11:36 as explained by Sifra, Shemini, Parsha no. 9) presents two methods of purification through immersion. The first is a ma'ayan, a body of flowing water. The second is a mikveh, a body of standing water. The Sifra explains that a ma'ayan and a mikveh operate differently. A ma'ayan is only valid if it is comprised of naturally flowing water. A mikveh is only valid if it is comprised of standing water. Based on the comments of the Sifra, a ma'ayan that is not comprised of natural flowing waters is invalid. Similarly, a mikveh whose water is flowing is invalid.

Another difference between a ma'ayan and a mikveh is the requisite amount of water. The Sifra as well as the Mishna, Mikva'ot 1:7, state that a ma'ayan has no requisite amount of water. However, a mikveh is not valid unless it contains forty se'ah (approximately 200-250 gallons). [Rivash, in his responsa, no. 292, claims that the lack of a minimum requirement of water for a ma'ayan is a function of a ma'ayan being composed of flowing water. R. Chaim Soloveitchik, Chiddushei Rabbeinu Chaim HaLevi, Hilchot Mikva'ot 9:6, in explaining Rambam's opinion, does not view the requisite amount of water as a function of flowing water. See Kehilat Ya'akov, Taharot no. 50.]

The Status of Rivers

A river is a body of flowing water and should constitute a ma'ayan. However, use of a river for immersion is all but simple. The Gemara, Nedarim 40a, cites numerous opinions as to whether a river constitutes a ma'ayan. The central question in this discussion is whether the majority

composition of the river is rain-water or water that originated from its original source. If majority of the water in the river is rain-water, the river cannot be considered a ma'ayan. If majority of the water in the river is water that originated from the source of the river, the river can be considered a ma'ayan. The various opinions in the Gemara argue about what is considered "rain-water" and which seasons present a concern that there is majority "rain-water" in the rivers. The Gemara notes that if a river does not constitute a ma'ayan, the river can be converted into a mikveh by enclosing a portion of the river so that the flow of water is stopped within the enclosure.

Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 201:2, rules that one should not immerse in a river that is mostly rain-water. Rama, ad loc., rules that if there is no available mikveh, one may rely on the opinion that a river is always comprised of a majority of water from the original source of the river. Rama adds that one may not apply this leniency to a river that originates from surface runoff since the entire flow ceases during the dry season.

A Mikveh with Flowing Water

As mentioned previously, a mikveh is only valid if the water is collected. In this section, we will focus on three discussions regarding a mikveh that may be invalid because of flowing waters. First, The Mishna, Mikva'ot 5:5, alludes to the invalidity of a mikveh that contains a leak because the water is now flowing water (see the comments of Rash, ad loc.). Rabbeinu Asher, in his responsa 31:4, claims that one can only entertain invalidating a mikveh due to a leak if the nature of the leak is such that the mikveh will eventually contain less than the requisite forty se'ah of water as a result of the leak. Mordechai, Hilchot Niddah no. 745, disagrees and invalidates any leak even if it will not affect the minimum requirement of forty se'ah. Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 201:50, codifies the opinion of Rabbeinu Asher. Rama, ad loc., notes that one should ideally be concerned for the opinion of Mordechai.

Second, Rashba, Sha'ar HaMayim no. 2, rules that if there is a small leak in the mikveh such that the depletion of water is not recognizable, the mikveh is valid. Rashba's ruling is codified by Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 201:51.

The Vilna Gaon, Biur HaGra ad loc., questions the ruling of Shulchan Aruch. Rashba, in presenting his opinion, states that he too is of the opinion that any leak is invalid even if forty se'ah will remain in the water. As such, there is room to distinguish between leaks that are recognizable and leaks that are not recognizable. However, Shulchan Aruch follows the opinion of Rabbeinu Asher that a leak that does not affect the requisite amount of water does not invalidate the mikveh. Therefore, there should be no reason to distinguish between leaks that are recognizable and leaks that are not recognizable. If the leak will eventually deplete the mikveh of the requisite amount of water, the mikveh is invalid. Otherwise it is valid.

R. Ovadia Yosef, Yabia Omer, Yoreh De'ah 8:18, cites numerous Acharonim who were not concerned for the question of the Vilna Gaon and permit a leak that is not recognizable even if it will eventually deplete the mikveh of its forty se'ah. He also cites some Acharonim who were very meticulous to inspect the mikveh for even the slightest leakage. R. Yosef concludes that a mikveh with an unrecognizable leak is valid, but it is preferable to repair the leak.

Third, Rivash, op. cit., states that if there is water that is flowing out of the mikveh but returning back to the mikvah, the mikveh is valid. Rivash's ruling is codified by Rama, Yoreh De'ah 201:50. As such, if a mikveh contains a water pump that filters the water by pumping the water out of the mikveh, through the filter and back into the mikveh, one would not consider the mikveh invalid due to flowing water. [R. Moshe Feinstein, Igrot Moshe, Yoreh De'ah 1:110, rules that one should nevertheless disable the filter prior to immersion because he has a minor doubt that the filter may be problematic.]

Drawn Water

The Mishna, Mikva'ot 2:4, states that if three lugin (a log is the volume of six eggs) of drawn water are placed into a mikveh that is lacking forty se'ah, the mikveh is invalid. There is a dispute among the Rishonim as to whether the invalidity of drawn water is of biblical origin or of rabbinic origin. Rabbeinu Yitzchak (cited in Tosafot, Pesachim 17b, s.v. Ela) is of the opinion that the invalidity of drawn water is only rabbinic in nature.

Rabbeinu Asher, Hilchot Mikva'ot no.1, is of the opinion that if majority of the water that comprises the first forty se'ah of the mikveh is drawn water, the mikveh is invalid on a biblical level. If majority of the water is not drawn water, but three lugin of drawn water entered the mikveh, the mikveh is invalid on a rabbinic level. [There are other opinions among the Rishonim. See Sefer HaYashar, Chiddushim no. 671, Rash, Mikva'ot 2:3, and Ra'avad (cited in Ran, Shavuot 5a).]

The practical difference between the opinion that drawn water can invalidate the mikveh on a biblical level and the opinion that it can only invalidate on a rabbinic level is with regards to doubt. According to Rabbeinu Yitzchak, if there is a doubt whether the mikveh is comprised of drawn water, the mikveh is valid. However, Rabbeinu Asher notes that if the doubt extends to whether majority of the mikveh was filled with drawn water, the mikveh is invalid. Rama, Yoreh De'ah 201:3, codifies the opinion of Rabbeinu Asher.

Due to the invalidity of drawn water, water that is used for a mikveh is generally gathered from rain-water that enters the mikveh through pipes. The Mishna, Mikva'ot 4:2, states that water that runs through pipes is valid and is not considered drawn water as long as the pipes don't contain grooves or pockets that collect water.

R. Joshua Flug is the Rosh Kollel of the Boca Raton Community Kollel

TALMUDIGEST :: Chagigah 16-20

For the week ending 21 April 2007 / 3 Iyyar 5767

from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

FORCED ADMISSION Chagigah 16a

A man may be tempted to sin when his evil inclination promises him that G-d will forgive him. The Prophet Micha (7:5) warns such a man "trust not such an evil force" and "have no confidence in the forgiveness of G-d". There is no Divine forgiveness without repentance, and even if one sins with the commitment to later repent, he may be prevented by Heaven from achieving that repentance.

And yet a person may be persuaded to believe that his secret sin will remain unknown. To destroy this illusion four categories of witnesses are listed who will testify against him:

- 1) The stones and walls of his home will testify as the Prophet Chabakuk (2:11) warns: "The stone shall cry out of the wall."
- 2) Two Heavenly angels who accompany him shall testify, as King David states (Tehillim 91:11): "For He shall appoint angels to accompany you."
- 3) Man's soul will testify as the Prophet Micha (ibid.) cautions: "Keep the doors of your mouth shut from what lies in your bosom."
- 4) Man's organs and limbs will testify, as the Prophet Yeshayahu (43:10) quotes G-d as declaring "You are my witnesses."

Although it is obvious that G-d needs no witnesses in His trial of man for "He is both judge and witness" (Avot 4:22), it is His desire to have man admit his sin. Maharsha points out the different sins to which man will admit as a result of irrefutable testimony.

- 1) Refers to the futility of man's attempt to commit a sin hidden from public knowledge such as eating in the privacy of his home while the entire community is fasting because of lack of rain. (See Ta'anit 11a). His sinful act will inevitably be revealed.
- 2) Refers to those violations of prohibitions that create angels who accompany him and will testify against him in the judgment of the hereafter.
- 3) Refers to the sins of speech for man's power of speech is an expression of the soul that G-d breathed into him. (See Targum Onkeles on Bereishet 2:7)
- 4) Refers to the positive commands which man failed to do since the 365 positive mitzvot correspond to the parts of man.

WHAT THE SAGES SAY

"If the evil inclination tries to persuade you to sin by assuring you that G-d will anyway forgive you, don't listen to him."

Rabbi Yehuda ben Rabbi Nachmeini - Chagigah 16a

THE WEEKLY DAF :: Chagiga 18 - 24
For the week ending 21 April 2007 / 3 Iyyar 5767
from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu
by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

CHOL HAMO'ED - THE GREAT DEBATE

Chol Hamo'ed, the Intermediate Days of the Festivals of Pesach and Succot, was the principal subject of the previous mesechta, Mo'ed Katan, and makes a brief reappearance in our current mesechta, Chagiga. Several Torah sources are cited as proof that it is forbidden to perform some forms of labor during these days. It would, therefore, seem that the ban on forbidden labor on Chol Hamo'ed is of Torah origin, just as the ban on a broader range of labors on the first and last days of these festivals is certainly of Torah origin.

Such is indeed the opinion of some leading commentaries such as Rashi and Rif. Tosefot, however, finds difficulty with this approach and concludes that the ban on Chol Hamo'ed labors is of rabbinic origin. The passages cited in our gemara, says Tosefot, are merely the sort of "asmachta" which the Sages frequently employ in order to connect their decrees with some hint in the Torah.

One of the principal objections raised by Tosefot to the opinion that Chol Hamo'ed labor is of Torah origin is the fact that there are certain categories of labor such as something which cannot be put off till after the festival without sustaining a serious loss - which are permitted on Chol Hamo'ed. Where, asks Tosefot, do we find something banned by the Torah with exceptions to the rule?

The rebuttal to this argument can be found in the text of a beraita in our gemara. After posing apparently conflicting signals from the Torah as to whether any labor is prohibited on Chol Hamo'ed, the conclusion is reached that the Torah delegated to the Sages the authority to determine which labors should be prohibited and which permitted. This, then, is the key to the approach of Rashi and Rif. The Torah did, indeed, ban labor on Chol Hamo'ed, but gave the Sages the power to decide which categories of labor to exclude from this rule.

It is this approach, suggests Mishna Berura (530:1), which the Rema (ibid.) adopts when he follows the words of the Shulchan Aruch that "On Chol Hamo'ed some labors are prohibited and some permitted" with the comment "According to the needs which the Sages saw as justifying exception."

A third approach, which is something of a compromise, is cited by the above Mishna Berura in his Biyur Halacha. According to this view, the Torah itself made some broad exceptions to its ban on Chol Hamo'ed labor, and it was the Sages who instituted their own ban to limit some of these exceptions. Chagiga 18a

KEEPING THE PEACE

Even though there was a suspicion in Beit Hamikdash days that an "am ha'aretz" (a Jew ignorant of the laws of the Torah) was not careful regarding the laws of ritual purity, and the vessels he handled were treated as impure, some exceptions were made. The wine he contributed for libations on the altar and the oil he donated for flour offerings were accepted. So too were vessels which he brought from his home to use for the ashes or water in the purification process of the Red Heifer.

The rationale for adopting this liberal attitude, explains Rabbi Yossi, is to prevent a situation in which the am ha'aretz develops such a hatred for the Sages because his materials are refused that he is tempted to establish his own altar and burn his own red heifer.

Rabbi Papa extends this consideration even to accepting the testimony of an am ha'aretz lest we create bad feeling with that element of Jewry. Tosefot applies this as well to counting, in our day, an am ha'aretz as part of a "zimun" for grace after meals despite the ruling of the gemara (Mesechta Berachot 47b) not to include him.

This is the approach of the Tosefist Rabbi Elchanan. The Tosefist Rabbi Yitzchak, however, sees no need to justify including an am ha'aretz in a zimun on the basis of avoiding discord. Who are we, he challenges, to assume that we are Torah scholars whose socializing with those ignorant of Torah was discouraged by the Sages? His response to this rhetorical question is that we indeed do not consider ourselves Torah scholars in regard to this matter and therefore have no problem in joining together with the am ha'aretz for a zimun. Chagiga 22a

Rabbi Daniel Muskat, Daf Yomi Digest
Chicago Center for Torah & Chesed
STORIES off the Daf

The Torah of the Jewish People

On today's daf, Rav Ami says that one may not transmit Torah to a non-Jew.

About 350 years ago, someone asked Rav Avraham Amigo, zt"l, an interesting question. "A notzri who is connected to the authorities has been buying our books in an effort to complete a library of all the basic Torah texts. He has also offered to pay a certain Jew to teach him Torah. It is not clear whether this is preparatory to conversion or because he is seeking a way to undermine the Jewish community. Is it permissible to teach him or sell him seforim?"

The Gadol responded, "It is prohibited to teach him, as we find in the Gemara in Chagiga 13a. However, if there is a potential threat to Jewish life involved it is definitely permitted to teach them, as we learn from the Gemara in Bava Kama 38b. If it does not appear that there is an element of danger in this case, I forbid teaching him or selling him books. Whether he truly intends to convert is difficult to ascertain because he could endanger himself by showing an interest in Judaism as the citizen of a Catholic country. In any case, the Gemara in Gittin 85a states that conversion is not likely, and we also find many references in Shas that prove that heretics often try to capitalize on whatever little learning they do have to defame the sages and undermine the Jewish community." The Rav continued, "In any event, we must guard against the possibility that he will travel where he is unknown and get the confidence of a Jew on the road. The Jew will trust him because he is learned. Once he wins his confidence he may very well kill him. This is the logic of the Gemara in Menachos 43a regarding the prohibition to sell a non-Jew techeiles.

If he was wearing techeiles, he could easily fool a Jew on the road and kill him for his possessions!"

Please address all comments and requests to
HAMELAKET@hotmail.com
