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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON TAZRIA METZORA - 5772

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From [sefira@torah.org](mailto:sefira@torah.org)  
This is a Sefira reminder for Friday evening, April 27.  
... 21st day, which is 3 weeks of the omer.  
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From: [ravfrand-owner@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand-owner@torah.org) on behalf of **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** [[ryfrand@torah.org](mailto:ryfrand@torah.org)] Sent: Friday, April 28, 2006 10:54 AM To: [ravfrand@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand@torah.org) Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Tazria-Metzorah  
These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 501, Milah and the Sick Baby. Good Shabbos!

Only You Are Called "Adam" -----

The bulk of the Parshiyos of Tazria and Metzorah deal with the intricate laws of a person, his clothing, or his dwelling contracting Tzara'ath, and what the person must do to regain the status of Ta'hara [purity].

These laws begin with the words: "Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Aharon saying: 'If a person will have (Adam ki yiheye) on the skin of his flesh an intensely white pot, or one nearly so, or a shiny white one, and it forms a plague of leprosy in the skin of his flesh, then shall he be brought to Aharon the priest, or to one of his sons, the priests.'" [Vayikra 13:1-2]

I saw an interesting observation from Rav Shlomo Ganzfried. In his commentary on Chumash (Aperion), Rav Ganzfried wonders why the Torah chose the term "Adam" to describe a person at the start of the laws of Tzara'ath (rather than the more common "Ish"). Rav Ganzfried suggests that Adam is a connotation for a human that has no plural form.

(The plural of "ish" is "anashim", but the plural of "adam" is not "adamim"!)

With this principle, Rav Ganzfried explains a famous Gemara that is troubling to many people. In a number of places, the Talmud says, "You are called Adam, but the nations of the world are not called Adam" [Yevamos 61a; Bava Metzia 114b; Kerisus 6b].

The simple meaning of the above-quoted Talmudic passage would be that the connotation of the specific word 'Adam' is only appropriate to use about Jews. However, the meaning of this statement is certainly not that only Jews are considered human and non-Jews are considered sub-human. Heaven forbid! That is not the meaning of the Gemara.

Rav Ganzfried explains as follows. The Hebrew language is extremely precise in terms of the different connotations of apparent synonyms. The singular term "Adam" fits the Jews. All Jews are considered as a single entity. There is no dichotomy. We are all in this together. The reason why the word "Adam" is employed referring to Jews is because this is the only term for humanity that has no plural and the Jewish people are a singular people. Their one-ness is most appropriately expressed by the word "Adam."

With this introduction, Rav Ganzfried adds, we can appreciate why the section of leprosy begins with the term "Adam." As Chazal tell us, Tzara'as comes as a result of speaking Lashon HaRah [slander]. Homiletically, the word Metzorah is linked to the expression Motzi Rah [one who speaks evil]. The pasuk is teaching that when one speaks Lashon Hara, the divisiveness attacks and destroys the singularity of the Jewish people, endangering our status of "Adam."

This idea serves as the introduction to the whole section of Tza'raath laws. We have to remember that we Jews are called "Adam." We must view ourselves as one big body. We are all in this together and dare not slander one another.

I read an incident dating back to the Beilus blood libel. In 1912, in Russia, Mendel Beilus was accused of killing a Christian child and using his blood to bake Matzahs. This slander or variations of it were unfortunately prevalent in Europe for many, many years. They were known as blood libels. Beilus' lawyer was afraid that to buttress their case, the accusers would make the argument that Jews considered non-Jews less than human. He was in fact afraid that they would cite the above-quoted Talmudic reference to prove this very point.

The lawyer therefore visited the Chortkever Rebbe and asked him how he could respond if the opposing lawyers would throw that Gemara at him. The Rebbe said as follows: If an Italian was seized and put on trial, we would not witness a scenario where all Italians were congregating in their churches to pray for this one Italian. The same can be said about the French for a Frenchman, and so too about all other nations. However, when a Jew is seized and put on trial, the solidarity that Jews have toward each other will make every Jew throughout the world stop and pray for the welfare of that other Jew.

We do not have to go back to the Beilus trial to see the accuracy of this observation. In our day and time, we have witnessed many examples of such solidarity. If a single Jew is seized or held hostage, Jews all over the world congregate and pray for that one fellow Jew. Who is like your nation Israel — one nation in the land? Is there another nation where everyone feels a sense of responsibility and one-ness with each other?

This is how the Chortkever Rebbe explained the Gemara "You are called Adam." Only you are considered a single unit, whereby it is impossible to speak of the plural of Adam. This is not a racist interpretation. It is not bigoted. It is an attribute of the Jews that has been demonstrated time and time again in both recent and ancient times.

The Two-Step Process Necessary To Be Pronounced "Tameh" -----  
----- The Torah continues to describe the procedures for determining the presence of the Tzara'as condition: "The Kohen shall look at the affliction on the skin of his

flesh; If hair in the affliction has turned white, and the affliction's appearance is deeper than the skin of his flesh — it is a tzara'as affliction; the Kohen shall look at it and make him impure." [Vayikra 13:3]

The Meshech Chochma cites a Torah Kohanim that is bothered by an apparent redundancy in this pasuk. In fact, this is a redundancy that actually jumps out at us. The pasuk begins with the phrase "The Kohen shall look at" and virtually the same phrase is repeated at the end of the pasuk. Why?

The Meshech Chochma suggests (as opposed to the lesson derived by Torah Kohanim itself) that the pasuk is teaching us that there are two evaluations that need to be made. First the Kohen looks at the affliction (v'ra-ah haKohen es haNega) and sees if it is one that technically meets the definition of a Tzara'as blemish. Then he looks at the person (v'ra-ah-hu haKohen) and sees if it is appropriate to declare him impure.

This means that even after the Kohen has determined that the blemish is a Tzara'as blemish, he still has two options. He still must determine whether it is appropriate to declare the individual impure. The pasuk emphasizes that before the Kohen makes the determination about a person — whether he is tameh or not — the Kohen must look at him!

The Meshech Chochmah cites a Gemara that gives practical application to this insight: "If he is a Chosson (newly-wed) he is given the Seven Days of Feasting (before declaring him Tameh) and the same applies on a Festival." [Moed Katan 7b] In other words, in order to avoid spoiling one's wedding celebration or his Yom Tov, the Kohen has license to delay proclaiming the person a Metzora, even though he knows full well that the skin condition qualifies as Tzara'as!

Although the Talmud does not cite Biblical support for this Halacha, and seems to quote it as part of the Oral Tradition, the Meshech Chochmah finds allusion to this license in the apparent redundancy of our pasuk. The Kohen is not faking the outcome or fudging the facts. Rather, the Torah merely gives him license to evaluate two independent factors: (a) Whether the blemish is Tzara'as and (b) whether at this particular time it is appropriate to make the person into a Metzora. Unless both factors are present, the Kohen will not and should not declare the person tameh.

I saw a story in one of Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski's books involving Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski. A fellow once came to the noted Rabbinic authority in Vilna and told him that his father was trying to obtain a position as Rabbi in a certain European city. He asked Rav Chaim Ozer for a letter of approbation to the community in question, recommending the fellow's father for the position.

Rav Chaim Ozer felt that the person was not appropriate for the position and declined to write the letter. He excused himself saying that he did not want to mix into the politics of that city and apologized for not being able to write the letter. The young man started yelling and cursing Rav Chaim Ozer (the leading Torah authority of his day). Rav Chaim excused himself, walked out of the room, and did not say anything.

Rav Chaim Ozer's disciples questioned their Rebbe — how could he let those insults go by in silence? The audacity of that young man to talk this way to the "Gadol HaDor" demanded a harsh response, they argued. Rav Chaim Ozer explained, "This is a son who is worried about his father's livelihood. His love and concern for his father got the best of him. Of course he said things that he should not have said. However, this was not the time and place to lace into him and put him in his place. He was after all, only a child trying to help his father."

This, perhaps, is a broader application of the principle inherent in our pasuk: Before we can pronounce a person "tameh", we need to look at him, give him a comprehensive evaluation, and determine whether at this particular juncture in time, he deserves to be pronounced "tameh." Not always is it fit for a person who may be "tameh" to be pronounced as such.

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Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore dhoffman@torah.org This write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah Portion. RavFrand, Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. learn@torah.org 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208

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**Rabbi Josh Flug**

**Geirut: The Jewish Conversion Process**

Geirut: The Jewish Conversion Process Part I

Article Date: Tuesday May 18, 2010

Geirut: The Jewish Conversion Process Part I

In order for a non-Jew to convert to Judaism, he must undergo a conversion process. This process is known as geirut. The Gemara, Keritot 9a, quotes a Beraita that there are three components to the conversion process: circumcision, immersion in a mikveh and bringing a sacrifice. The Gemara notes that nowadays, when a sacrifice is not possible, one may still convert without bringing sacrifice. In this issue, we will discuss the relationship between circumcision and immersion in the geirut process. In the next issue, we will discuss the role of the convert's acceptance of mitzvot.

The Role of Circumcision

One can ask the following question regarding the role of circumcision: Is the role of the circumcision merely to remove the foreskin or is the circumcision an integral part of the process? Before we develop this question, it is important to note that the Gemara, Yevamot 46b, states that we do not require a source to teach us that women can undergo a conversion. Rashba (1235-1310), Shabbat 135a, quotes an opinion that one can deduce from here that if one cannot undergo a circumcision there is no requirement for circumcision. This seems to be the basis for the ruling of Tosafot, Yevamot 46b, s.v. D'Rabbi, that one who is castrated may convert even though circumcision is not possible.

The question we presented regarding the role of circumcision may be a factor in a number of disputes among the Rishonim and Acharonim. First, there is a dispute among the Rishonim regarding an individual who wants to convert but already had a circumcision as a non-Jew. R. Yehudai Gaon (8th century), Halachot Gedolot, Hilchot Milah, rules that even if he had a previous circumcision, at the time of his conversion, he must have blood drawn from the area (hatafat dam brit). R. Zerachiah HaLevi (c. 1125-1186), HaMaor HaKatan, Shabbat 54a, suggests that hatafat dam brit is only necessary out of concern that he wasn't really circumcised but rather born with a latent foreskin. However, if we were to know that he had a foreskin and it was removed, there is no requirement for a circumcision for his conversion.

The dispute between R. Yehudai Gaon and R. Zerachiah HaLevi seems to be based on how they understand the role of circumcision in the geirut process. According to R. Yehudai Gaon, a circumcision is an integral part of the process. Therefore, even if there is no foreskin, one must perform hatafat dam brit, which is considered a form of circumcision. According to R. Zerachiah HaLevi, the purpose of the circumcision is to remove the foreskin. If it can be determined that the foreskin was already removed completely, there is no need for circumcision.

Second, the Gemara, Yevamot 46b, states that a conversion must be performed in the presence of three individuals (beit din). Rambam (1138-1204), Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah 13:6, implies that only the immersion

must be performed in front of the beit din. Rambam mentions no requirement to perform the circumcision in the presence of the beit din. R. Ya'akov ben Asher (1269-1343), Tur, Yoreh De'ah no. 268, rules that the circumcision must be performed in the presence of a beit din.

One could explain that Rambam and Tur disagree regarding the role of circumcision in the conversion process. Rambam is of the opinion that its purpose is simply to remove the foreskin. Therefore, there is no need for a beit din to be present. Tur is of the opinion that the circumcision is an integral part of the process and therefore, it must be performed in the presence of the beit din. R. Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986), Igrot Moshe, Yoreh De'ah 1:158, presents a different approach to the dispute. R. Feinstein suggests that one can question whether a beit din is required for the entire conversion process or just for the completion. If one assumes that it is only required for the completion, one would only require a beit din for the immersion and not for the circumcision. R. Feinstein further suggests that even Tur agrees that under normal circumstances there is no requirement for a beit din to be present at the circumcision. Tur only requires a beit din for the circumcision if it is performed after the immersion. In that situation, the circumcision is the final stage in the process and a beit din is required.

Third, there is a dispute among the Acharonim regarding a potential convert who is too ill to receive a circumcision. R. Chaim Ozer Grodzenski (1863-1940), Achiezer, Kovetz Igrot no. 27, rules that he cannot convert without a circumcision. R. Yitzchak Rabinowitz (c. 1853-1918), Zecher Yitzchak no. 3, writes that the question may depend on the role of circumcision. If the circumcision is part of the process, it is arguable that under the circumstances, one is not required to engage in this part of the process because it is dangerous. However, if the purpose is to remove the foreskin, one cannot perform conversion until that foreskin is removed. Being that it is dangerous to remove the foreskin, one cannot convert. R. Rabinowitz concludes that the circumcision plays a dual role in the conversion. One cannot convert without removing the foreskin. Yet, the circumcision is not only for the purpose of removing the foreskin. It is also part of the conversion process. [R. Tzvi Elimelech Shapira of Dinov (1783-1841), Derech Pikudecha, Aseh no. 2, Chelek HaDibur no. 30, writes that if the circumcision is considered dangerous from a medical perspective, but the potential convert wants to endanger himself in order to become Jewish, it is permissible to do so.]

#### The Relationship between the Circumcision and the Immersion

The question regarding the role of circumcision relates to the relationship between the circumcision and the immersion. Ordinarily, immersion is performed after the circumcision. There is a dispute among the Rishonim if it is possible to reverse the order. Tosafot, Yevamot 47b, s.v. Matbilin, write that the circumcision must precede the immersion. Ramban (1194-1270) Yevamot 47b, s.v. Nitrapei, is of the opinion that the circumcision may be performed after the immersion.

R. Aryeh L. Grosnas (1912-1996), Lev Aryeh 1:10, explains that the dispute is contingent on the role of circumcision. If the purpose of circumcision is to remove the foreskin, it is arguable that this is a necessary prerequisite to the immersion. One who immerses with a foreskin is comparable to one who tries to removal ritual impurity imparted thorough an insect by immersing with an insect in his hand (tovel v'sheretz b'yado). However, if circumcision is a step in the conversion process, it is arguable that one can accomplish conversion even if the steps are not performed in order.

R. David Povarsky (1902-1999), in his Shiurim to Ketuvot 11a, presents a similar approach to explaining the dispute, but notes that this approach will present an apparent inconsistency in Ramban's opinion. Ramban, Yevamot 46b, cites the opinion of Rambam, op. cit., that if one performed an immersion at night, it is valid. Ramban disagrees and rules that if the immersion was performed at night, one must perform another

immersion during the day. Ramban proves this from the comments of the Gemara, Baba Batra 114, that indicate that if a judgment was issued at night, the judgment is invalid. R. Vidal of Tolosa (late 14th century), Maggid Mishneh, Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah 3:6 defends the position of Ramban based on the statement of the Gemara, Rosh HaShanah 25b, that if a judgment began during the day, it may be concluded at night.

R. Povarsky notes that the issue of whether one may perform the immersion at night should be contingent on the role of circumcision. If circumcision is a stage in the conversion process, once the circumcision takes place, the process is considered to have begun and one can conclude the process at night. If the circumcision is merely a prerequisite to the conversion process, the immersion is the beginning of the process and one cannot begin the process at night. However, such an approach would lead one to the conclusion that vis-à-vis performing the circumcision after the immersion, Ramban is of the opinion that circumcision is part of the process and vis-à-vis immersion at night, Ramban is of the opinion that it is only a prerequisite. Therefore, R. Povarsky explains that because Ramban allows circumcision after immersion, it cannot be considered the beginning of a process, but rather an independent stage. The two different stages do not relate to each other and are two components necessary to achieve conversion. If one already performed circumcision, it does not allow one to perform the independent immersion process at night.

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Rabbi Josh Flug Geirut: The Jewish Conversion Process Part II  
Article Date: Friday June 04, 2010

In the previous issue, we began our discussion of the Jewish conversion process known as geirut. We discussed the role of circumcision and immersion in the process and the relationship between the two. In this issue, we will discuss the role of acceptance of mitzvot (kabalat mitzvot).

#### Three Approaches to Understanding the Role of Acceptance of Mitzvot

The Gemara, Bechorot 30b, cites a Beraita that one cannot allow the conversion of a non-Jew who rejects a single law, whether biblical or rabbinic. R. Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986), Dibrot Moshe, Yevamot no. 35, explains that in the area of transactions, there are three possible outcomes when one places conditions on a transaction. In certain situations, the conditions are valid and the transaction is defined by those conditions. This is not a possible outcome of geirut because conversion requires one to attain the status of a Jew and that cannot happen without being obligated to perform the entire Torah. In certain situations, the transaction is valid but the conditions are considered illegal and are therefore ignored. In other situations, the illegal conditions render the transaction invalid. R. Feinstein notes that the Beraita is teaching that when one rejects a portion of the Torah, the geirut is invalid. We don't accept the geirut and ignore the conditions set by the prospective convert.

It is clear from this Beraita that geirut is not simply a process where one performs certain actions and accepts the basic tenets of Judaism. One must accept Judaism as a whole in order to convert. Yet, there are different opinions as to the role of acceptance of mitzvot in the conversion process. Is the acceptance of mitzvot a prerequisite to conversion or is it an actual part of the conversion process?

Tosafot, Sanhedrin 68b, s.v. Katan, question the ruling of the Gemara, Ketuvot 11a, that a minor can be converted. Tosafot wonder how this can be accomplished without the minor's acceptance of mitzvot. Tosafot answer that when the child becomes an adult, his lack of rejection of the mitzvot is an implied acceptance of mitzvot. R. Baruch B. Leibowitz (1864-1939), Birkat Shmuel, Kiddushin no. 15, explains that Tosafot are of the opinion that acceptance of mitzvot is a prerequisite to the completion of geirut. When the convert accepts mitzvot as an adult, he

becomes Jewish retroactively from the time of his circumcision and immersion as a minor. [See also Tosafot, Ketuvot 11a, s.v. Matbilin, for a different approach regarding conversion of a minor.]

In the previous issue, we briefly discussed the requirement to perform the conversion in the presence of a *beit din*. R. Menachem Meiri (1249-1306), Beit HaBechirah, Yevamot 45b, quotes opinions that the *beit din* must be present for the circumcision, immersion and the acceptance of *mitzvot*. These opinions seem to view acceptance of *mitzvot* as another part of the conversion process. Since circumcision and immersion require the presence of a *beit din*, acceptance of *mitzvot* also requires the presence of a *beit din*.

Rambam (1138-1204), Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah 13:17, writes that if a non-Jew was circumcised and immersed in front of three people without being informed of the *mitzvot*, his conversion may be valid. R. Yoel Sirkes (1561-1640), Bach, Yoreh De'ah no. 168, infers from Rambam's opinion that acceptance of *mitzvot* is not mandatory and therefore rejects Rambam's opinion based on the many Rishonim who disagree. R. Shlomo Z. Lipschitz (1765-1839), Chemdat Shlomo, Yoreh De'ah no. 29, contends that Rambam also requires acceptance of *mitzvot*.

However, there are two different components of *geirut* that relate to the convert's perspective on *mitzvot*. One component is acceptance of *mitzvot*. Rambam, op. cit., 13:4, states that when a non-Jew wants to enter the Jewish covenant and accept *mitzvot*, he must do so through circumcision and immersion. Rambam, op. cit., 14:2, also states that before the conversion, the potential convert is informed of some of the major *mitzvot* and some of the minor *mitzvot* as well as their reward and punishment. R. Lipschitz contends that Rambam's ruling that a conversion is valid if the convert was not informed of the *mitzvot* is limited to the requirement to inform the potential convert about some of the major and minor *mitzvot*. Acceptance of all *mitzvot*, whether he is currently aware of them or not, is absolutely critical to the *geirut*. R. Lipschitz explains that acceptance of *mitzvot* is not a prerequisite to the conversion nor is it a part of the process. It is the actual conversion. Conversion is the means by which one can accept *mitzvot* and the process to accomplish that involves circumcision and immersion.

The Relationship between Acceptance of *Mitzvot* and Other Components of *Geirut*

Tosafot, Yevamot 45b, s.v. Mi Lo, rule that the requirement to have a *beit din* present only applies to the acceptance of *mitzvot*. The circumcision and immersion may be performed without a *beit din*. R. Yosef Karo (1488-1575), Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 268:3, rules that ideally, circumcision, immersion and acceptance of *mitzvot* should be performed in the presence of a *beit din*. However, if circumcision or immersion were performed without the presence of a *beit din*, the conversion is nevertheless valid.

The opinion of Tosafot can be explained according to all three approaches to the role of acceptance of *mitzvot*. R. Feinstein, op. cit., suggests that Tosafot are of the opinion that the role of *beit din* is to approve the candidate's validity for conversion. Therefore, the *beit din* is only required to verify that the candidate has accepted the *mitzvot*. Once the candidate is approved, the circumcision and immersion may be performed privately. R. Feinstein seems to view the acceptance of *mitzvot* as a prerequisite to the conversion.

Rabbeinu Asher (c. 1250-1327), Yevamot 4:31, follows the opinion of Tosafot that a *beit din* is only required the acceptance of *mitzvot*. Rabbeinu Asher implies (see Shach, Yoreh De'ah 268:8) that one reason why a *beit din* is not required for circumcision and immersion is that the *beit din* is only required for the beginning of the process. Rabbeinu Asher's comments seem to indicate that there are three components of the conversion process: circumcision, immersion and acceptance of *mitzvot*.

Tosafot and Rabbeinu Asher agree with the approach quoted by Meiri. It is only for technical reasons that a *beit din* is not required for circumcision and immersion.

R. Lipschitz provides a third explanation for the opinion of Tosafot. The acceptance of *mitzvot* is the actual conversion. For this reason, the presence of *beit din* is critical for the acceptance of *mitzvot*. The presence of *beit din* is not required for the actions necessary to accomplish the conversion.

Ramban (1194-1270), Yevamot 45b, proves that one must accept *mitzvot* at the time of the immersion from the fact that a *beit din* is required (at least ideally) at the time of the immersion. Ramban's comments indicate that the only purpose for the *beit din* is acceptance of *mitzvot*. Ramban also states that acceptance of *mitzvot* is required at the time of the immersion even if it was already performed at the time of circumcision. One can explain that Ramban is of the opinion that the acceptance of *mitzvot* is the actual conversion. The circumcision and immersion serve to allow the conversion to come to fruition. Ideally, the acceptance of *mitzvot* should occur at the time of the circumcision and immersion so that the actual conversion and the process by which the conversion comes to fruition occur simultaneously. Nevertheless, Ramban is of the opinion that if the acceptance of *mitzvot* did not occur in conjunction with the immersion, the conversion is partially valid. [In that situation, Ramban considers the conversion to be valid, but requires an additional immersion in the presence of *beit din* in order for the convert to marry another Jew.]

#### Does a Fetus Require a Conversion?

In the previous two issues, we provided an overview of the Jewish conversion process. We discussed the role of circumcision and immersion and the role of acceptance of *mitzvot*. In the discussion about acceptance of *mitzvot*, we briefly presented two approaches to understanding how a minor can be converted. The first approach assumes that the rabbinical court (*beit din*) can perform the conversion on behalf of the minor. The second approach assumes that the minor must accept *mitzvot* upon becoming an adult. In this issue, we will discuss the case of a woman who converts while pregnant. Does the fetus require a conversion?

#### Talmudic Sources

There is one source that seems to indicate that the fetus does not require conversion. The Gemara, Yevamot 97b, cites a Beraita that if two twin boys convert after they are born, they are technically not considered brothers. This is based on the concept that a convert is considered as if he is newly born and is not related to his previous relatives (*ger shenitgayer k'katan shenolad*). However, the Beraita does state that if a woman is pregnant with twin boys and converts while pregnant, those twins are considered brothers. The implication is that we don't employ the *ger shenitgayer k'katan shenolad* principle because there is no need to convert the two fetuses who stand to be born to a Jewish mother.

Yet, there is another source that explicitly discusses the conversion process of a fetus. The Gemara, Yevamot 78a, introduces the conversion of a fetus as a proof to the debate as to whether a fetus is considered a limb of the mother (*ubar yerech imo*) or whether it is not considered a limb of the mother. The Gemara states that when a pregnant woman converts, the fetus does not require an additional immersion after birth. The Gemara implies that this proves that the fetus is a limb of the mother and her conversion includes the fetus. The Gemara rejects this assertion by claiming that when the mother immerses, the fetus is immersed as well and the mother's body does not serve as an interposition (*chatzitzah*). It is for this reason that the fetus does not require an additional immersion after the birth.

The Gemara, in finding a means to accomplish immersion on the fetus, implies that the fetus requires a conversion. This prompts many Rishonim, in their comments to Yevamot 47b (see Tosafot s.v. Matbilin, Ramban, s.v. Nitrapei, and Ritva, s.v. Shihui) to question whether one can extrapolate from the conversion of a fetus that in general, the

immersion can take place prior to the circumcision. We are then left with the following problem: how is it possible that a conversion takes place in-utero and the two twins remain siblings? Why don't we employ the ger shenitgayer k'katan shenolad principle?

#### Resolving the Apparent Contradiction

The Acharonim present four approaches to resolve the apparent contradiction between the law that twins whose mother converted while pregnant are considered siblings and the law that a fetus (theoretically) requires immersion. First, R. Chaim Ozer Grodzenski (1863-1940), *Achiezer* 2:29, is of the opinion that the in-utero conversion would not prevent the twins from becoming siblings. If one is converted in-utero, one is nevertheless related to one's mother. Therefore, all children born to that mother after her conversion are considered siblings.

Second, R. Yitzchak Rabinowitz (c. 1853-1918), *Zecher Yitzchak* no. 4, and R. Naftali Trop (1871-1928), *Chiddushei HaGarnat*, Ketuvot no. 28, suggest that there is no real conversion that takes place in-utero. R. Rabinowitz explains that it is nevertheless a mitzvah to perform immersion on the child because he comes from a non-Jewish background. Without that immersion, the child is nevertheless considered Jewish. R. Trop explains that if there is a non-Jewish father, an immersion is required in order for the child to enter into kedushat Yisrael (sanctity of the Jewish People). As such, the Gemara's discussion about immersing the fetus is only relevant for the additional benefit of immersion, not to conversion.

Third, R. Avraham D. Kahana-Shapira (1870-1943), *D'var Avraham* 3:7, suggests that the question of whether a conversion is required for a fetus is contingent on the question of whether a fetus is considered a limb of the mother or an independent entity. If the fetus is a limb of the mother, there is no need for a conversion. If it is an independent entity, it requires a conversion. The Beraita that considered the twins to be siblings follows the opinion that a fetus is a limb of the mother.

Fourth, R. Kahana-Shapira suggests another approach to resolve the apparent contradiction. He suggests that if the fetus did not undergo a conversion, the child would be considered partially Jewish and partially non-Jewish. The Jewish portion would be a function of the development of the fetus subsequent to the conversion of the mother. The non-Jewish portion would be a function of the development of the fetus prior to the conversion. Therefore, the twins would be considered siblings because a portion of their fetal development was after their mother's conversion. Yet, the twins require their own conversion to convert their non-Jewish portion.

#### Practical Ramifications of the Conversion

One might ask: What is the difference if the child is Jewish by virtue of the fact that his mother's conversion also applied to the fetus or by virtue of the fact that the child was born to a Jewish mother? Isn't the child Jewish either way? There are a number of practical differences. First, Ramban, op. cit., notes that if the child is a male, he requires a circumcision in order to complete the conversion. Ritva, op. cit., quotes his teacher who disagrees and maintains that even if conversion is required, it is accomplished in-utero and the circumcision that he undergoes is not a circumcision of conversion, but rather the ordinary circumcision that is required for each Jewish male.

The Gemara, Shabbat 135b, cites a Beraita that circumcision of conversion does not need to take place on the eighth day. R. Kahana-Shapira op. cit., notes that ostensibly, if the conversion takes place in-utero, and the circumcision after the birth is a circumcision of conversion, that circumcision should not be delayed until the eighth day. However, if the circumcision is not a circumcision of conversion, the circumcision would take place on the eighth day. R. Kahana-Shapira adds that if one assumes that the conversion of the fetus is only necessary for the fetal development as a non-Jew, the circumcision required for the Jewish portion of the child must take place on the eighth day.

Second, the Gemara, Ketuvot 11a, states that if someone was converted as a minor, he/she has the option to reject the conversion upon reaching bar/bat mitzvah. R. Aryeh Leib Heller (1745-1813), *Avnei Miluim* 4:3, notes if a conversion takes place in-utero, the child would then have the right to reject the conversion. If the child is Jewish by virtue of being born to a Jewish mother, there would be no option to reject the conversion.

Third, in the previous two issues, we noted that a beit din is required for a conversion. R. Yechezkel Landa (1713-1793), *Dagul Mer'vavah*, *Yoreh De'ah* 268:6, discusses the case of a woman who converted without informing the beit din that she is pregnant. He notes that the question of whether the child is Jewish is contingent on a dispute. Ostensibly, R. Landa is of the opinion that the question is contingent on whether there is a conversion takes place in-utero. If there is a conversion, the beit din would be required to know that the mother is pregnant. If there is no conversion in-utero, there is no requirement for the beit din to know that she is pregnant.

Fourth, this discussion is very relevant in determining motherhood in the case of an egg donor or surrogate motherhood. Do we assume that the woman who provided the egg, the genetic mother, is the halachic mother or do we assume that the woman who carried the fetus is the halachic mother? If conversion of a fetus is not necessary, it might indicate that motherhood is determined by the woman who carried the fetus. This is because this approach views birth as automatically establishing a relationship between the fetus and the woman who gave birth to the fetus. If conversion of a fetus is necessary, it might indicate that motherhood is determined by the genetic mother. This is because this approach rejects the notion that birth establishes a relationship between the fetus and the woman who gave birth to the fetus. However, there are a number of nuances specific to egg donation and surrogate motherhood that are beyond the scope of this presentation.

The Practical Halacha Overview, authored by Rabbi Joshua Flug, is a project of Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future- Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. If you would like to subscribe to this series click here. Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future 500 W 185th St. New York, New York 10033

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From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein  
<info@jewishdestiny.com>  
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

**Jerusalem Post :: Friday, April 27, 2012**  
**ISRAEL AT SIXTY-FOUR :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

This week will mark the sixty fourth anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel. That fact by itself represents a monumental achievement. There were great people in the Jewish world who were skeptical of the entire enterprise. There were those who were convinced that the state somehow would not survive for more than fifteen years let alone fifty.

Ringed by violent enemies, threatened with extinction by one of the then super powers in the world, forced to accept millions of destitute refugees, plagued by deep and stubborn internal religious and ideological confrontations, hobbled by a socialist economy that discouraged economic development, the situation looked to be a bleak one. Yet all of the doomsday prophets have been confounded. The Arab world is currently in deep disarray, economically, politically and socially. All of the champions of Israel's destruction, the Grand

Mufti, Nasser, the Assads, Arafat, etc. are all in the dustbin of history. The Soviet Union is no longer and much of Soviet Jewry now finds itself settled in Israel and doing quite well on the whole. The ingathering of the exiles has been the difficult process that the Talmud predicted that it would be, but, again, to a great extent it has been accomplished.

There is still a great deal of work to do on that front but we certainly have come a long way even on that difficult issue. Israel is a first world country, economically, socially and politically. And perhaps for the first time in Jewish history there are six million Jews living in this small but great place. This is no small miracle.

There were also those in the leadership echelons of the nascent state who were convinced that religious practice and Torah study in the new state were doomed to attrition and eventual extinction. Marx was destined to be the new Moses and the old ways of observance and tradition, customs and Torah study were to be discarded. I remember that in the United States then there were leading rabbinic figures that also held that pessimistic view of the Jewish religious future and I am certain that this was the case in Israel as well.

They painted the new state in dark colors, convinced that secularism as an ideal had triumphed and that ironically Torah study and its values and life style would be unable to survive, let alone thrive in Israel. But again, the very existence of the state has confounded that our view of the future of the state. The Lord promised us that the bond between the Jewish people and Torah would never be completely severed and that promise has proven itself valid once more in our time and in our state. After decades of indifference and ignorance the Jewish population in Israel, across the entire wide spectrum of its makeup, has renewed its interest in Torah and in being Jewish. Even if one is not observant, one can still be Jewish in loyalty, outlook and hopes. And anyone who has the privilege of living in Israel very soon realizes that in spite of all of the noise, static and negative rants, one is living in a very Jewish state. Well, you will correctly point out to me, "What about Iran? What about Shabat in Tel Aviv and Haifa? What about civil marriage laws being proposed, and what about our Palestinian cousins? What about the Jewish boycotters and doomsday prophets and how about the UN and the EU?" Well, I will certainly admit that the Lord has left us with a rather full plate of issues and problems.

But on the whole I am convinced that somehow we will be able to deal with all of these assorted existential issues. After all, we now have sixty-four years of experience in dealing with these matters. In the Torah discipline of gematria, where letters serve as numbers and vice versa, sixty four represents the Hebrew letters of samach and dalet. In Jewish tradition samach and dalet represent the words *siyata dshaya*, meaning with the help of Heaven.

There is no doubt that we will need Heavenly aid to confront all of the problems that are before us currently. But upon reviewing the enormous difficulties that Israel has overcome in its first sixty-four years – the wars and terror, the enmities and hatred, the distortions and lies, etc. – there is much room for optimism and hope. History has shown that our enemies always came to a bitter end and so shall it be in the present and future as well. Heavenly help will somehow be available. Shabat shalom.

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From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein  
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**Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein**  
**Weekly Parsha :: TAZRIA – METZORA :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

One of the more interesting points to note in this week's parshiyot is the fact that the Torah places the entire determination of purity or impurity in the decision making process of the kohein – the priest before whom

the afflicted person appears. He alone decides the matter of the person's fate. And even though the Torah does describe for the kohein the standards and methods of diagnosis of the disease, it ultimately leaves the decision up to the kohein himself.

The kohein's determination of the matter ultimately is but a subjective one. It is the kohein who creates the impurity within the person afflicted and not, so to speak, the disease and its symptoms itself. This is truly a remarkable and necessary insight into the mystery of tzoraas particularly and halacha generally.

Though there are always rules, structures and limitations that govern the halachic decision making process, the ultimate decision on the particular matter in question rests in the subjective mind and hands of the halachic decisor himself. So that within the objective standards set by the Torah in halachic matters and issues, there is always space left for human thought, intuition and creativity. The person, garment or building is not impure until and unless the kohein declares it to be so. It is the kohein's declaration that decides the issue and that declaration emanating from human lips like all human decisions and declarations is of necessity a subjective one.

Over all of the centuries of Jewish life and law there has been general agreement regarding the outlines – the so-called objective standards - of Jewish law, tradition and halacha. But there has always been differing opinions amongst the scholars regarding the actual details of implementing those general principles. This is because the Torah itself allows for human participation in the halachic process, for the debates and arguments that constantly construct and amplify the halachic process.

Many a great decisor and scholar in Jewish law has admitted to the fact that his intuition and/or bent of mind influenced his final decision. This thought process is then broadened further by the Jewish tradition and idea that human intuition in halachic matters is enhanced by aid from Heaven. "The Lord is with him" – the halacha is according to his opinion in all matters, is the succinct way that the Talmud phrased this idea.

A person who is devoted to Torah ideals and lives them in practice, and who is possessed of great Torah scholarship, subconsciously obtains a holy intuition that guides him in his decision making process. The Torah allows and indeed encourages human participation and its attendant subjectivity in the halachic decision making process. But it also will help that subjectivity to arrive at a correct decision on the matter at hand.

The Torah inherently promises the kohein that his subjective decision on the matter of purity or impurity at hand before him will be adjudicated correctly. This idea has been the under pinning of the halachic process of Judaism throughout the ages from the time of Sinai forward.

Shabat shalom

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**Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column, Parshas Tazria-Metzora**

*Sponsored in memory of Nathan and Louise Schwartz a"h*

**Going At It Alone**

"No man is an island." "It takes a village."

These are just some of the clichés that are used to convey the importance of social groups, of the realization that people cannot "go at it alone".

But just as it is vital that each of us learns that we are ultimately limited in what we can accomplish by ourselves, it is equally vital that we learn of the benefits of occasional solitude and of the need to sometimes just be alone.

In this week's double Torah portion, Tazria-Metzora, we read at length and in great detail about an individual who is afflicted by a condition known as *tzora't*, often translated as leprosy. It is a condition which is

characterized by specific discolorations of the skin and which is understood by our sages to be the consequence of immoral behavior, particularly malicious gossip.

The Torah prescribes that such an individual rend his clothes and let his hair grow. He is considered ritually unclean, and "... he shall dwell apart; his dwelling shall be outside that camp." (Leviticus 13:46)

Opinions vary as to why he must be removed from society. Some say simply that he is quarantined because his condition is contagious. Others insist that since his misdeeds caused harm to others, he must be punished by living apart from others.

I prefer, however, the view that believes that a period of solitude is imposed upon this individual to afford him an opportunity to think, to reconsider his actions, and to resolve to live a new moral life style. He is afforded the social isolation necessary for thoroughgoing introspection, a chance to think for himself.

There is a lesson here about the benefits of solitude that is of renewed relevance in our day and age.

The most recent edition of *The American Scholar* (Spring 2010) carries an essay by William Deresiewicz which he delivered to the plebe class at the United States Military Academy at West Point in October of last year. The essay is entitled "Solitude and Leadership."

Mr. Deresiewicz eloquently conveys the message to these future military leaders that leadership demands a mindset which can only come about with frequent and sustained periods of solitude.

He emphasizes the importance of thinking and writes, "Thinking means concentrating on one thing long enough to develop an idea about it."

He further emphasizes the importance of concentrating, and writes that it means "gathering yourself together into a single point rather than letting yourself be dispersed everywhere into a cloud of electronic and social input."

Ralph Waldo Emerson made Mr. Deresiewicz's point long ago when he said, "He who should inspire and lead his race must be defended from traveling with the souls of other men, from living, breathing, reading, and writing in the daily, time-worn yoke of their opinions."

These opinions of a famous 19th century essayist and one of his contemporary counterparts stress and amplify a message implicit in this week's Torah portion. The message is that time by oneself, reflecting and engaging in serious introspection, is an essential component of self improvement and a prerequisite not only for membership in society, but for leadership of society.

Jewish sources go much further than Emerson and Deresiewicz. The latter restrict their insightful comments to the importance of solitude in everyday, mundane affairs. Our tradition goes beyond that and teaches that solitude is necessary for spiritual growth and for religious leadership.

The sages of the Talmud insist upon the necessity of cheshbon hanefesh self-reckoning. The Jewish ethical treatises of medieval times recommend that one regularly withdraw from society to engage in such self reckoning. Chassidim, and most particularly the followers of Rabbi Nachman of Breslav, daily engage in periods of hitbodedut, solitary contemplation.

The secular writers quoted above are helpful in that they make it clear that solitude need not entail mystical practices or spiritual techniques. Rather, solitude provides an opportunity for thinking on one's own and for concentrating deeply without the undue influences of one's social surround.

I personally am convinced that occasional solitude would be a healthy antidote to the blind conformity which is imposed upon all of us by our contemporary world.

Once again, the Torah, in the midst of a passage which seems most out of tune with modernity, gives us a lesson essential for coping with modernity.

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### **Rav Kook List**

#### **Rav Kook on the Torah Portion**

##### **Tazria/Metzora: A Return to Ritual Purity**

These Torah readings discuss at length topics that are among the most challenging for us to relate to. What relevance do the laws of ritual purity and impurity - after childbirth, for lepers and for various types of male and female discharges - hold for us? Why does the Torah place such emphasis on these matters? Why do we feel so far removed from them?

##### **The Taharah Axiom**

In his book *Orot*, Rav Kook posited the following principle: The degree of purity required is a function of the comprehensiveness of the spiritual framework. The more inclusive a framework is, encompassing more aspects of life, the more rigorous are the requirements for taharah, ritual purity.

The Temple and its service are a classic example. The Temple projected an ethical and holy influence on a wide range of life's aspects - from the noble heights of divine inspiration and prophecy, through the powers of imagination and the emotions (the outbursts of joy and awe in the Temple service), all the way down to the physical level of flesh and blood (the actual sacrifices). Because its impact reached even the lowest levels of physical existence - which are nonetheless integrally connected to all other aspects of life in an organic whole - the Temple and its service required an exact and precise purity.

By contrast, a spiritual and moral influence that is directed only towards the intellect does not require such a refined degree of physical purity.

Thus, the Sages taught, Torah may be studied even when impure. "Is not My word like fire? says the Lord' (Jer. 23:29) - Just as fire does not become impure, so too, words of Torah cannot become impure." (Berachot 22a)

##### **Changes throughout History**

As the Jewish people returned from exile in Babylonia and rebuilt the Temple, it was necessary to revive the Temple's strict requirements of taharah. For this reason, Ezra enacted a series of enactments stressing the need for greater ritual purity during this period.

The long exile that followed the Second Temple period, however, greatly weakened the emotive and imaginative abilities of the people. The intensity and aesthetic quality of spiritual life became impoverished, and the corresponding need for a rigorous degree of purity was accordingly diminished. Thus we find that one of the six orders of the Mishnah (compiled in the Land of Israel) is Taharot, dealing exclusively with matters of ritual purity. Of the 37 tractates of the Talmud (composed in the Babylonian exile), however, only one belongs to this order. Similarly, the Talmud repealed Ezra's decree obligating immersion before Torah study.

What remained for the Jewish people in exile? Only the Torah and its intellectual influence. It still involved the physical realm through the practical observance of mitzvot, but the intermediate stages of imagination and feeling were bypassed. In exile, we lament, "Nothing remains but this Torah" (from the Selichot prayers).

In the long centuries of exile, meticulousness in matters of ritual purity lost its obligatory nature. It became associated with idealistic longings, the province of the pious few.

##### **A Return to Taharah**

The Hasidic movement of the 1700's aspired to restore the concepts of physical purity to the masses. Hasidism places a greater emphasis on the imaginative and emotional faculties - particularly through prayer and song - than the intellectual. As a result, it awakened a greater need for

personal and physical purity. This objective certainly contains a healthy kernel, although it needs additional direction and refinement. Especially now, with the national renaissance of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel, these aspirations for physical taharah should be renewed and expanded. Our national renewal complements the renewed yearning for spirituality; and the healthy desire to restore the nation and heal its national soul applies to all aspects of life, including physical purity. It is precisely in the camps of the Jewish army that the Torah demands a high level of purity:

"For the Lord your God makes His presence known in your camp, so as to deliver you and grant you victory over your enemy. Your camp must therefore be holy." (Deut. 23:15)

Together with the renewal of our national strength and vitality, there must be a corresponding reinforcement of emotive and physical purity. This will help prepare the basis for an integrated national life that encompasses a complete rebirth of the people: from the highest intellectual pursuits, to the simple joy in life and living.

(Gold from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Orot, p .81 (Orot HaTehiyah, section 35).)

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**Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu Safran**  
**A Day Worthy of Celebration**  
*www.israelnationalnews.com*  
*Iyar 3, 5772, 25/04/12 07:29*

For me, Israel is personal.

I was born as the War of Independence raged, just weeks after the State's own miraculous birth. As I lay in the hospital room with my mother, the windows shattered with the relentless attacks of those who sought, once again, to destroy us – this time not on their blood-stained soil but on our own sacred land. Once again, by God's hand, we prevailed. The few against the many. The weak against the so-called strong.

My parents arrived in Palestine on the very last boat to sail from Romania. They were broken, demeaned and degraded but they were determined to find renewal in the holy land. For my family, Galut and Geula are not chapters in a history book. They are real life experiences. For me and my family, Yom Hashoah and Yom Ha'atzmaut were not mere dates on the calendar but days filled with piercing memories that called for reflection, remembrance, and, ultimately, celebration.

For many years, my family was not alone in fervently claiming these dates, these searing modern commemorations, as our own. Growing up in Forest Hills, NY, I remember the crowds of Jews, all Jews – of every age and background; survivors and their children, Jews three generation Americans; all the wonderful Jewish community – that came together in synagogues and sanctuaries to remember, to pray, and to promise.

I remember the power those long ago days held for those of us who gathered to commemorate and to celebrate them. But now? Many progressive Jewish communities continue to celebrate Israel but in the majority of today's major Orthodox communities, it's rare to find a recognition let alone an active celebration of these most sacred days.

How do we explain this Orthodox response, or lack of it, to the State of Israel? Can any of us deny the miracle Israel represents? For the first time in two thousand years the ingathering of exiles is realized, Jewish people have returned home to the land promised by God, Israel. The city of Jerusalem is rebuilt.

The desert once again blooms.

All of this on the heels of the greatest churban in Jewish history, the Holocaust. Miracle of miracles! The gates of Auschwitz closed and the gates of Haifa opened! If ever there was a confirmation of the Divine Covenant, of the eternal relationship between a people, a Torah, God,

and a land . . . if ever there was a fulfillment of prophecies that in spite of a bitter Galut and the terror of persecution there would be ultimate Geula and return to the land and its God... if ever there was a period of Messianic possibility and challenge – it is now.

More Jews are engaged in serious, regular, and creative Torah learning in Israel than at any time in the last five centuries. "From Zion the Torah will come forth and the word of God from Jerusalem!" And so it does.

The world's Torah is nourished from its source in Jerusalem. A distinguished Chassidic leader recently told me that most Jews are not aware that "the government of the State of Israel is the world's most generous donor in support of Torah study."

The silence of the Soviet Jews ended. The influence of Jews in America and Europe is palpable. Chaim Herzog stood before the United Nations, the world's representatives of Esau and tore up the "Zionism is racism" resolution.

All this, and more, only because Israel exists.

Yet the majority of Orthodox Jews in America act as though nothing of note happened on May 14, 1948. They refuse to acknowledge God's out stretched arm or recognize our generation's restored glory. What arrogance causes them to summarily reject the opportunity to celebrate and rejoice on new Yamim Tovim? How do they show such disregard for those who love, support and sacrifice for Israel? What thinking is behind the rejection of the Hebrew language and the distancing of all that speaks of Tziyonim?

There are Orthodox schools of thought and practice that educate their children – toddlers even! – to think and live as kanaaim.

The fact that modern Israel may not as yet be the fulfillment of all Messianic dreams and aspirations does not, cannot and must not mean its rejection, denial, or disdain.

In light of this, what, then, do we expect from the all Jews?

Rabbi Yaakov Rabinowitz responded poignantly in the first issue of Ten Da 'at that our expectation is first to k'lal Yisrael, "We can expect a feeling of love for all Jews, whatever their background, whatever their status. There will be those whom we will applaud, those whom we will oppose, those who will give us pain, even make us cry. But we will try never to forget that we are one and that the inner door should never be closed. And we will keep an outer door, to the outside world, open as well. To be sure, it will have a screen. Not everything is needed or wanted. But it is, after all, God's world and we live in it, not despite it. And, finally-Israel. That state which is focal to our people. It is not an afterthought. It is not something to be tolerated for the sake of unity or because it is home and protector to so many of our brothers and sisters. It is a step, small or large is irrelevant, toward redemption. Its triumphs and celebrations are our triumphs and celebrations. There may be differences in the manner of celebration, but we affirm, with strength and conviction and without apology, that it is our simcha and that we want to, and need to, be a part of it. We are proud of its symbols, be they flag or anthem, for they have become sanctified..."

My grandfather, the Romanian Gaon, Rav Bezalel Ze'ev Shafran was asked, "Why is it that in the Nusach S'fard Keter Kedusha we ask, V'hu yigaleinu sh'einit?" Why do we ask that God redeem us for the second time? The second redemption has already occurred! Are we not eagerly anticipating the third and ultimate redemption?

Citing the verses in Isaiah 11, "and it shall come to pass on that day, that the Lord will set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people... And will assemble the dispersed of Israel, and gather together the scattered of Judah from the four corners of the earth..."

Rashi comments that it will be the "second time" just as He redeemed them from Egypt, where the redemption was crystal clear and obvious (be'rura) with no vestige of bondage remaining. The redemption leading to the rebuilding of the Second Temple was incomplete, as the people Israel remained under Cyrus' rule.

He notes the Ramban at the end of Ha'azinu, describing the mockery of the world's nations during the time of the Second Temple, when the best among them worked in heichal ha'melech bavel.

Most striking, my grandfather cites the Talmud in Yoma (21:b) discussing the five major elements that were lacking from the second Temple: the Ark, Ark cover and Cherubim, the fire from Heaven, the Shechina Divine Providence, the Holy Spirit and the Urim VeTumim. Commentaries elaborate and explain that these were merely the major elements missing from Bayit Sheni. In reality, more was missing. So we pray that we be worthy of the second geula, one as absolute and complete as the first geula, geulat Mitzrayim. We pray in the nusach S'fard, "U'maer l'gealenu geula sh'leimah"; we pray that He speedily redeem us with a complete and whole geula. Not a geula as existed during the time of the Second Temple but an absolute geula where nothing that is required for completeness is missing.

As I understand my grandfather's insightful response, the ultimate geula is yet to come; a geula synonymous with geulat Mitzrayim, complete, with no doubt or hesitation as to its authenticity. In the meantime, God provides various categories of geula – as during the time of Bayit Sheni when the Ark and even the Shechina itself was absent. Yes, lacking. Yes, incomplete. Yes, not perfect. But, nevertheless, geula, geula with all that was the splendor of Bayit Sheni.

In our own lifetimes, God has also provided geula; incomplete though it may be. It is true that it lacks even more components than geulat Bayit Sheni but it is undoubtedly geula, geula after endless galut, endless wanderings and suffering that culminated in the most terrible churban of all times, the Shoah.

Yes, we need to continue praying that He redeem us a second time. In the meanwhile, let us never close our eyes to the geula we live or to the miracles God brings to our own lives. Let us never fail to embrace the geula which is Israel. Let us celebrate it even as we commemorate the tragedy upon which it rose.