

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Tazria 5771

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THE TWO JERUSALEMS :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The haftarat of these weeks that lead up to Pesach all deal eventually and some even directly with Jerusalem. The prophet Yechezkel describes for us a Jerusalem crowded with people coming to the Holy City to celebrate the holiday. The prophet Malachi describes Jerusalem in its rebuilding stage at the beginning of the Second Commonwealth and in its ultimate glory in the time of its final redemption.

Recently a book has been published by a scion of the Montefiore family in which he points out that Jerusalem has no natural or strategic value per se and yet has remained as the most desired and treasured city in the history of humankind.

It has been fought over tens of times in its long history. This is only one of the many mysteries and wonders that have attached themselves to the city of Jerusalem. The whole subject of Jerusalem has always presented the observer with more questions than answers.

Witness the current apparent insoluble impasse regarding the disposition of the city of Jerusalem in the dormant if not already dead Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. Somehow the diplomatic “experts” believe that a general two-state solution implies automatically a two Jerusalem solution as well.

This proposes and assumes a division of Jerusalem on the ground, a horizontal East-West division of space, territory and population. The only problem with this is that there has never been such a splitting of a city in the history of cities that has proved workable and viable. In the case of Jerusalem everyone involved wants to have the Jerusalem of their hopes and dreams exclusively. And that is really where the rub in the matter settles in deeply.

Judaism envisions an entirely different division of Jerusalem – one that is up and down, higher and lower, one of imaginary space and not of any area on the ground itself. The rabbis taught that the heavenly Jerusalem hovers directly over the earthly city itself. It is the heavenly Jerusalem that provokes all of the possessiveness and passion that surrounds the earthly Jerusalem. It is the heavenly Jerusalem that invests the earthly Jerusalem with its eternal qualities and special atmosphere.

The heavenly Jerusalem represents a city of tolerance, peace and harmony, free of bitter contentiousness and constant strife. It serves as a challenge to the earthly Jerusalem, riven as it always has been by sectarianism, bigotry and pettiness of vision and behavior. “Rise up O Jerusalem” the prophet implores us.

He means not only the physical rebuilding of a city that has been destroyed many times in its long centuries of existence. He also means meeting the challenge of emulating the city on high, the heavenly Jerusalem. As long as we will only deal with the earthly Jerusalem as though it is the only Jerusalem that exists for us, then most of its problems are unlikely to be amenable to permanent solutions.

Only those that somehow glimpse the heavenly Jerusalem will also find hope and succor in the earthly Jerusalem. By attempting to infuse the spirit that the heavenly Jerusalem represents into our daily earthly Jerusalem lives and mores, we recognize the reality of the division of the two Jerusalems and our task of somehow narrowing the differences between the two. One who deals only with one of the Jerusalems solely, be it the heavenly one alone or the earthly one alone, without factoring in the other city of Jerusalem does a disservice to one’s self and to the Holy City itself.

How to achieve the connection between the two Jerusalems has been an ongoing challenge for millennia. The two previous Jewish states that had Jerusalem as its capitol were ultimately tragically unsuccessful in their attempts to do so. We are now embarked on another attempt to do so. The problems that faced the first two attempts to attach the two Jerusalems one to another are certainly present in our current situation as well.

Jerusalem is beset with external enmities and internal quarrels. It has a wide variety of individuals and groups, many of whom are convinced that

they and they alone know what is best for the city and the Jewish people generally. Unfortunately they cannot all be right at one and the same time. So, a little more modesty and a little less certainty would probably be of great help to our earthly Jerusalem. The bridge between the Jerusalems is founded on sensitivity to others, an ability to doubt one’s own piety and decisions and an abiding faith in the God and people of Israel. We should all attempt to walk on that bridge and struggle to be able to live in both Jerusalems simultaneously and permanently.

Shabat shalom

Weekly Parsha :: TAZRIA :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The Torah’s concept of cleanliness and uncleanness, of purity and defilement, differs greatly from our ordinarily accepted notions and definitions. We appreciate the necessity for physical cleanliness. So does the Torah. Having a clean body is one of the prerequisites for acceptable prayer and performance of any of the mitzvot. It is also part of our requirement to honor our bodies and to show respect and consideration for other human beings as well.

But that is not the thrust of the cleanliness and purity that the Torah indicates in this week’s parsha. The Torah speaks of a type of uncleanness of spirit and soul that somehow manifests itself physically. This type of spiritual uncleanness stems from human behavior that violates Torah principles and values – especially evil speech.

This type of behavior sullies our souls. In Biblical times the physical effects of such behavior could literally be seen on one’s body. Painful and ignominious as the skin eruption was, it had a positive result of warning one as to the consequences of one’s negative behavior and speech.

In our time this physical manifestation and warning is no longer present. But the dreadful process of damaging our souls by such behavior and speech continues to apply even today. We say in our prayers daily that the Lord granted us at the beginning of our lives a soul that was pure. When we return it to our Maker we should try to return it as close to its original state as possible. That is in effect what the entire parsha of Tazria is about.

The task entrusted to the kohein was to somehow assess the damage, if any, done to the soul. He had the expertise to be able to do so simply by examining the physical body of the person. It was one of the gifts of the kohein. He possessed such an ability to discern spiritual damage from viewing external symptoms. Apparently a holy person is able to do so.

Legend has it that the famed ARI (Rabbi Isaac Luria of sixteenth century Safed) was able to tell a person what one’s sins and spiritual defects were simply by looking at the person’s face. Legend also tells us that, because of this power, people rarely visited or conversed with him. We are reticent to know the real truth about ourselves and the state of our souls.

In Biblical times the Lord, so to speak, forced us by physical symptoms to come to the kohein and confront our true spiritual state. This was a blessing, albeit in disguise, for it allowed for the necessary diagnosis that could eventually lead to spiritual repair, improvement and advancement. This is the supreme task of the kohein in helping others achieve their betterment. It was therefore a spiritual experience of advancement for the kohein as well. Helping others always helps to cleanse one’s soul and advance one’s spirit.

Shabat shalom.

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly
For the week ending 2 April 2011 / 26 Adar II 5771
Parshat Tazria
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Insights

“...and it will become a tzara’at affliction on the skin of his flesh...” (13:2)

When G-d created the world, the light of G-dliness radiated from the entire universe like a beacon. Everyone could see clearly the Creator through His creation. As yet, evil had not dulled and masked His radiance in the world. After the sin of the first man, however, G-d hid His presence in the world behind the veil of nature. Thus, nature became more opaque, coarser, until it was well nigh impossible to perceive that it is G-d Who sustains the world.

In Bereishet it says, “And the L-rd, G-d, made for Adam and his wife garments of skin, and He clothed them.” (3:21)

The world was covered by a thick membrane — ‘a garment of skin’ — hiding the inside of nature, just as the skin conceals the inside of the human body.

It’s interesting to note that the word for skin in Hebrew, *ohr*, can be pronounced *eeveir*, which means a blind person. Just as the skin, as it were, ‘blinds’ us to the inner reality and workings of the body, so the opacity of nature ‘blinds’ us to the inner reality of G-d’s running the world.

Of course, the skin is no more than a surface covering, and just as skin has pores, microscopic openings that allow air to enter the body and sweat to be expelled, so too does the “skin” of the world have its ‘pores’ that allow us a view beyond the natural world. If we choose to look we can see the rays of Divine Providence filtering through the cracks of existence.

It’s not by coincidence that the words in Hebrew for both “skin” and “light” are pronounced the same way – *ohr*. For if we open up our eyes, the “skin” of the world that masks G-d’s Hand becomes a light that illuminates His Presence.

However, if those spiritual pores become clogged with the grime of this physical existence, then we lose that sensitivity to the transparency of the world’s “skin” and see nothing but happenstance in a random world.

This is “...the tzara’at affliction on the skin of his flesh...” From Above, the skin is afflicted when a person disconnects from the inner spiritual world and sees nothing but the outer world of nature.

It is the job of the kohen and the kohanim of all generations — those who teach Torah to the Jewish People — to turn that membrane of doubt and denial into a light which will light up the universe.

Source: Based on the Sfat Emet

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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Tazria

If a woman will conceive and give birth to a boy, she will be impure seven days. (12:2)

Parashas Shemini concludes with the laws concerning animals. Parashas Tazria commences with the laws that address the human condition. Should it not be the other way, the laws of animals following those of humans? Rashi cites the Midrash which notes that, actually, this sequence reflects the creation of the universe, where we find the creation of man following the creation of the animal kingdom. Thus, following this precedent in creation, the Torah writes the laws of man following those of animals. This might solve the issue of precedent, but it ignores the original question of “Why?” Why is man one step lower on the totem pole? Why does man follow after animal - and everything else, for that matter?

In the Talmud Sanhedrin 38a, Chazal address this issue and offer the following solution. We tend to allow things to go to our head, thereby laying the seeds for unabashed arrogance to take hold of our lives. Yes, we humans tend to think that we are “it.” Haughtiness is especially evident in an individual who, by nature, is insecure. The Torah “encourages” the arrogant person to ask himself, “Who do you think you are? What makes you so smug? Do you know that the lowliest creature, the tiniest insect, preceded you in Creation?” This should raise his awareness. When man realizes his place in the sequence of Creation, he will have second thoughts about elevating himself above and beyond the reach of reality. Incredibly, Hashem designed the entire sequence of Creation, with man being the last creature He created, all for the purpose of humbling him, of making him realize that it is not “all about him.” The rest of the world out there deserves to be acknowledged.

It seems unusual that the extraordinary sequence of Creation was executed in this manner for the extreme purpose of humbling the human psyche. Let us face it; we cannot exist for one second without Hashem's beneficent will. We are dependent upon Him for everything. Yet, there is a realistic fear that we might become haughty. Why? For what? Exactly what do we have to be arrogant about? Horav A. Henschel Leibowitz, zl, explains that, regrettably, we forget all of this. We conveniently forget our own inherent frailty, our constant need for Hashem's support and favor. We subsist entirely on Him, but, as soon as we receive what we need, we forget its Source.

This might, indeed, be true, but there is a counterargument to consider. Man is the crowning glory of Creation. It all exists for him. Therefore, it makes sense that he should be last in the sequence of Creation. He entered into a world that had been fully prepared for him, like the master surgeon who enters the operating room after everything has been prepared for his arrival. He administers his expertise and leaves. This argument is actually presented by Chazal as another reason for the sequence of Creation. Man is last by design, not due to his haughtiness, but because he is the purpose of Creation. This explanation gives him reason to be arrogant. After all, he is “it.”

The Rosh Yeshivah explains that while the above is true, and a haughty person can always conveniently find a way to justify his behavior, after all is said and done, he still possesses an intuitive receptivity to the truth. He knows that it is all just talk. Without Hashem, he is nothing. He has, therefore, no excuse to be arrogant. Essentially, both interpretations of Chazal are true. Given the gifts with which Hashem has blessed man, he has the capacity to soar; his potential for spiritual growth is phenomenal. After all, he has been created in Hashem's image. Concomitantly, man possesses nothing of his own. All of his merits are G-d- given; his potential for growth is amazing, but - he cannot do it on his own. Therefore, man is confronted with two truths: his potential greatness; and his corporeality, which means that, without Hashem, he really has and is nothing. Each truth has its own unique application. A haughty person who hears the message of humility might convince h

imself to argue intellectually, but, deep within his heart, he knows better. A resonating voice echoes throughout his body, pointing out the truth: “You may think that you are something. The real truth is that, indeed, you are something and, with Divine assistance, you will become even more. You must, however, face the fact that, of your own accord, you are powerless.”

The Rosh Yeshivah notes that it does not take much to detour our road toward self-improvement. Progress is slow and, thus, discouraging. We want to get better, to mend our ways, but, for some reason, whenever we take two steps forward, we fall one step backward. Chazal, however, have placed great confidence in the power of truth to penetrate and break through even the most formidable obstacles which the human personality throws in our way. They believe that truth will prevail. This reality should inspire us to continue upon the path of renewal, purifying and elevating ourselves to heights previously unknown. They believed in us; so should we.

If a woman will conceive and give birth to a boy, she will be impure seven days. (12:2)

Rashi explains that the sequence of the laws addressing the human condition follows those of the members of the animal kingdom, which follows the sequence of Creation. Animals were created prior to man. Thus, the toras ha'adam, laws inherent to man, follow the toras beheimah, the laws pertaining to animals. Rashi's choice of words, “toras” ha'adam, the Torah/law concerning man, is striking. What specifically, is toras ha'adam? Is not the entire Torah toras ha'adam? After all, for whom else is it relevant, if not for man? This parshah addresses only a few of the mitzvos imposed on man, yet, they are referred to as toras ha'adam. Why?

Horav Elyakim Schlessinger, Shlita, gives a novel interpretation for toras ha'adam. By nature, man is unique and quite different from any other creation. His uniqueness lies in his ability to change from good to bad, *tamei* to *tahor*, ritually contaminated to spiritually pure. An animal that is born kosher will, by its very nature, remain kosher - unless it falls ill or is involved in an accident. A human being, however, can be born *tahor* and

fall prey to sin, which contaminates him. He then repents, returns to favor, and is once again tavor. This cycle is part of life. This is the meaning of toras ha'adam.

Man's spiritual ups and downs are commensurate with his spiritual plateau. The simple Jew falls into the clutches of the yetzer hora often, because the evil inclination knows its customers. It knows who is easily influenced and who rarely falls for its ruses. The average man, however, is subject to this rollercoaster of life, in which he is tavor, becomes tamei, purifies himself - only to become tamei once again. And then the cycle begins anew. It can become very depressing, until the yetzer hora taunts us, "Why bother? It is only going to happen again." The toras ha'adam challenges this accusation, presenting the notion that this is intrinsic to the human condition. Man sins, regrets, atones, and sins again. Each time that he repents, however, he receives a Heavenly reward.

Rav Schlessinger compares this to a homemaker who sweeps the floor only to have it become dirty once again. So, she sweeps it one more time. This is a constant endeavor - clean, dirty, clean, dirty. The alternative is to ignore the dirt and allow it to pile up; then, the house would be considered a filthy home. By cleaning it daily, it develops a reputation as a tidy home. The fact that it becomes soiled later is part of the cleaning process. This is what living in a home is all about. One can seal the home, and it would never get dirty, but then he would not be living in it.

Toras ha'adam challenges the person not to give up and say, "Since I am going to sin again anyway, why bother cleaning up?" The law of man replies that this is all part of the foibles of the human condition. He has ups and downs. The alternative is, regrettably, all downs.

Then she shall take two turtledoves or two young doves, one for a burnt-offering and one for a sin-offering. (12:8)

Rashi comments that, in the sequence of offerings brought by a yoledes, a woman who gives birth, the Chatas, sin-offering, precedes the Olah, burnt-offering. This law applies, despite the fact that the Torah mentions the Olah first. We must endeavor to understand the rationale which requires the Korban Chattas to precede the Korban Olah. First, of course, let us understand why each korban is brought. The Chattas is brought "just in case." Perhaps, as a result of a painful labor, the woman intended never to go through this again. As a result, even though she did not actually verbalize an oath, she may have made a mental note not to be in such a situation again. Thus, she must bring a sin-offering.

Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, explains the rationale behind the burnt-offering. A woman is required to know that the goal of all education is for the child to know that he belongs completely to Hashem, and that everything - life, livelihood, and all one possesses - is a gift from G-d. While every believing Jew takes this for granted, the mother is the child's primary teacher at home. She infuses him with emunah, faith, in Hashem. She inculcates within him the meaning and passion of serving the Almighty. Therefore, she must herself know what Judaism demands. She must herself be cognizant of - and adhere to - its tenets.

Since this is the goal of education, the Torah makes a point of conveying to us the laws of the burnt-offering before those of the sin-offering. The Korban Olah is completely consumed upon the Altar, thereby indicating that everything belongs to Hashem. This awareness is not inherent. Rather, one develops such a perspective as he follows and studies the Torah. Meticulous adherence to a Torah way of life brings a person to understand and acknowledge this concept of avodas Hashem, serving the Almighty. One does, at times, fail. Our faults often interfere with our perfect service, tainting it. If something inappropriate does occur, one is expected to repent immediately, before the taint of sin becomes a scourge that controls his life. Thus, the burnt-offering is written first, as this is the goal of every Jewish mother in raising a child; in practice, however, the sin-offering atones for anything inappropriate in the mother's life. The sin must be "cleaned up" and the slate wiped

clean before the symbolism of the burnt-offering can be realistic.

We mentioned earlier that it is the mother's overriding responsibility to infuse her children with a sense of total commitment to Torah. Since I am observing my mother's *yahrzeit* this week, this would be an appropriate time and venue to elaborate on the subject. Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, expounds on the valuable educational lessons that he received from

his mother. She imbued him with a reverence for Torah scholars and a desire to learn whatever he could from them -both by lecture, and example. Whenever the opportunity availed itself for him to be in the presence of *talmidei chachamim*, Torah scholars, his mother arranged for him to take advantage of the moment. Commitment to Torah study and its proficiency was paramount. She would negate the aspects of material benefits and emphasize the significance of spiritual success.

Rav Zilberstein relates that during the *shivah*, seven day mourning period for his mother, he was visited by the present day Ozorover Rebbe, Shlita. The Rebbe quoted his grandfather, the venerable author of the *Aish Dos*, who asked a question that surely is on our mind during Rosh Hashanah. The Torah portion which we read on the first day of Rosh Hashanah addresses Sarah Imeinu, her experience as a first-time mother, and the incident with her maidservant, Hagar. On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, we read the episode of Avraham Avinu and his son, Yitzchak (Avinu) and their preparation for the *Akeidah*. In other words, the first day we read about the *Imahos*, Matriarchs, while on the second day, we read about the *Avos*, Patriarchs. Why is this? Why do the Matriarchs precede the Patriarchs?

The *Aish Dos* explains that when a child falls down, his father scoops him up and supports him as he continues along his way. His mother, on the other hand, guides and educates their son to exert care, so that he will not fall altogether. A father offers comfort after the fall. The mother sees to it that the child is prevented from falling. This is why the merit of the Matriarchs exceeds that of the Patriarchs. Mothers provide the foundation that prevent us from falling in the first place.

It is not always about intensity of service; it is also about appreciating the value and premium one places upon Torah and its overriding significance in Jewish life. There is no dearth of stories to demonstrate a mother's impact on her son's distinction in Torah learning. Examples include the mothers of famous Torah leaders, such as: Rashi; the Chafetz Chaim, zl; Horav Meir Shapiro, zl; and Horav Betzalel Zolti, zl. Their stories have been recorded in these pages in the past. They were stories of extreme *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, for Torah. This time, I would like to record an episode which depicts a mother's love for Torah and how she imbued her son with this appreciation.

Rabbi Yechiel Spero relates the story of an eleven-year-old boy in Europe. He was an exceptional student in cheder, who went out of his way to make his parents proud of him. Clearly, the feeling was reciprocated, as evidenced by the following episode. In the beginning of the twentieth century, most Jews did not have large bank accounts. In fact, most had no bank accounts. Indeed, those who could provide three meals a day were considered quite fortunate. Clothing was a different story altogether. One purchased new garments only after the old garments could no longer be adequately mended. *Yom Tov* was usually the time to purchase a new garment. Purchasing a dress, for instance, was no walk in the park. It meant picking out the fabric, going to the seamstress a number of times for fittings, and then waiting until she completed the garment. Yitzchak, which was the young boy's name, was very excited that his mother was finally getting a new dress. It was supposed to be finished some time before *Pesach*, and the whole family could not wait. Their mother was so devoted to them. Now, she was finally doing something for herself. Since this purchase was such a major event, she would not wear the new dress until *Pesach*. The children were disappointed, but anxiously, and with great anticipation, they counted the days until *Pesach*.

Yitzchak was really getting into his learning. He had recently been elevated into an accelerated class and had completed *Meseches Bava Kamma*, which was a significant feat for a young boy. He mentioned this to his mother as an aside, not wanting to bring attention to his achievement. His mother *kvelled* with pride. This is what mattered most in her life. When she expressed her enthusiasm about his accomplishment, Yitzchak simply shrugged it off. "It is nothing," he said. There was so much more to be learned. He had barely begun to scratch the surface.

The next evening, when Yitzchak returned from cheder, he was met with an incredible sight. The table was bedecked with their finest linen tablecloth; the dishes which were usually set aside for special occasions were set, candles were lit, and his mother was wearing her new dress!

The young boy was shocked and unable to speak. Finally, after collecting his thoughts, he asked, "What is happening? Why is the table set with our fancy dishes and the candles lit? And, why are you wearing your new dress? I thought you were waiting for Yom Tov?"

His mother smiled, as she asked her son to sit down at the table. "Yes, I was saving the dress for Yom Tov, but yesterday you told me that you were mesayeim, completed, Meseches Bava Kamma. What bigger Yom Tov is there than that? It is what I live for. Nothing is more important to me than my child's Torah study. And if you are making a siyum, then it is a Yom Tov."

The young boy remembered these words all of his life. Even when he became the distinguished Rosh Yeshivah of Mesivta Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin, Horav Yitzchak Hutner, zl, he kept dear to him those special words that his mother expressed to him that day.

If a tzaraas affliction will be in a person. (13:9)

Much has been written about the evils of lashon hora, evil speech. Regrettably, it is an evil that affects everyone in one way or another, and I do not think that my pen will have any ability to curb this scourge. Therefore, I have decided to take the opposite road, and, instead of writing about the evils of lashon hora, I will write instead about the benefits of lashon tov, good, positive speech.

Words are important. The right word can make someone's day, change someone's life, lift someone's spirits, while the wrong word can do the converse. We can speak with feeling, with compassion, with empathy. When we do so, we create joy, imbue self-confidence, engender positive feelings, raise hopes. When a poor man comes to the door, some individuals can help him by giving him a check. Others, however, have unfortunately fallen on hard times and can no longer help financially. What should they do? Talk to the man; make him feel good; lend him hope; give him courage; help him to understand that he is not alone; tell him that there are people who care about his plight.

Loneliness is a terrible predicament. When one is alone, every situation, no matter how benign, becomes that much more threatening. Loneliness brings on feelings of hopelessness, which is the source of most sin. A person who has lost hope has no where to turn and is at risk for deviating from all rational activity. One can be surrounded by people and still feel alone. It all depends on one criterion: Does anybody care?

Every Jewish community is blessed with elderly Jews, most of whom have outlived their friends, and, who, for the most part, are very much alone. Some live within the community, while others are carefully "placed" in retirement homes, senior citizen villas, assisted living and nursing homes. Many of them are lying around in old, frail gowns and pajamas, staring at their windows, or the ceiling. We think that senility is the by-product of old age. No - it does not come from old age. It is the result of a feeling that one is unloved, one is not useful, no one cares. Psychologists have proven time and again that when the elderly are visited, spoken to, made to feel important, they respond with vigor, enthusiasm and excitement. Suddenly, they feel important - someone cares.

Es chatoai ani mazkir ha'yom. I have been planning on visiting a number of elderly friends for some time now, but "somehow" my plans seldom achieve fruition. I do not think that I am an isolated case. We all conjure up excuses to justify why we refrain from doing what is right. Regrettably, the excuses do not take the place of a visit. The elderly person is still alone, while we have nothing but an excuse.

We can use our positive speech to make someone feel good, to calm his nerves, to raise his self-esteem. The best part about it is that it takes very little effort on our part to generate a positive feeling within someone else. Regrettably, many of us do not have it in them to expend even the slightest effort in order to help another person. We are so wrapped up in ourselves, in our lives, that we forget that others around us are crying out.

What about giving someone a compliment, telling them they look good, spoke well, wrote an inspiring article, did a great job, prepared a good dinner? This is just another situation in which a few words can go a long way. Another way that positive speech can make a difference is by promoting peace between two people, two groups, two factions. Dispute is a reality we cannot ignore. Controversy is a scourge that threatens the finest communities, families, groups. While there are some disturbed

people who relish controversy, who thrive on discord, and who go out of their way to fan the fires of dispute, for the most part, most of us seek to distance ourselves from machlokes, controversy. While this is a noble and proper approach, we must strive to attain a higher, more desirable plateau: creating peace; promoting harmony; attempting to iron out the discord between various factions; helping them to see that nothing good can come out of a machlokes. Giving good advice, and providin

g good counsel, are yet other ways in which good speech helps others. Last, is the idea of praying for others. The Jewish community is plagued with illness. Jews are falling prey to disease, both physical and mental. Prayer can spare a person. We all know someone who is in need of rachamei Shomayim, Heavenly mercy. What does it take to encourage our prayer? The shul recites Tehillim at the conclusion of davening. Many are already starting their motors, while others are busy texting. The day has started. The fact that the community is reciting Tehillim does not seem to be a legitimate deterrent to the supremacy of routine. Praying for the sick is part of the mitzvah of Bikur Cholim. This is especially true when one prays for another Jew at a point when he, the petitioner, is himself in need of the same blessing. In fact, Chazal teach us that the petitioner will be blessed first!

In summation, the power of speech is awesome. We often focus on the negative efforts, so that we tend to deemphasize its positive powers. Words do make a difference. Each of us has the power to make a difference in someone's life simply by using the right words at the right time.

Va'ani Tefillah

Natasa yemincha tivla'eimo aretz.

You stretched out Your right hand - the earth swallowed them.

Rashi cites the Mechilta that derives from here that the Egyptians merited burial. This is because they had earlier declared, Hashem Hu hatzadik, "Hashem, He is righteous" (Shemos 9:7). This is a reference to the plea rendered by Pharaoh and his people following the devastation wrought by makas barad, the plague of hail. Although this concession on their part was short-lived, it was, for all intents and purposes, an affirmation of sorts reflecting their teshuvah, repentance. Hashem applied this to their credit. In his Aznaim L'Torah, Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, quotes the well-known phrase we say in the Shemoneh Esrai of Neilah, Yemincha peshutah l'kabel shavim, "Your right hand is stretched out to receive penitents." This indicates that Hashem's yemin, right hand, is equated with the acceptance of baalei teshuvah, those who return, those who shift to committing themselves to a Torah life.

The Rosh attributes the Egyptian merit to burial to something their ancestors had done. When the coffin of Yaakov Avinu was taken to be buried in the Meoras Ha'Machpelah, the Egyptians joined in the funeral procession. As a result of this chesed, Hashem returned the favor, rewarding them with burial. No good deed goes unrequited.

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Parsha Parables - Tazria - Shout Out!

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Stories & Anecdotes that Illuminate the Weekly Torah Portion and Holidays

Dedicated in honor of Shmuel Krigsman's Birthday

As we approach the holiday of Pesach (Passover) I'd like to begin this week's Fakhomily by quoting a Gemara in Tractate Pesachim 3a. The first Mishneh begins by telling us that upon the light of the 14th of Nissan one should search for the Chametz. It actually means the evening of the 14th (following the day of the 13th). The Talmud is bothered, asking, "so our Tanna, why does he not employ night?" The Talmud explains: "[Our Mishneh] employs a refined expression, (the light of the 14th) in accordance with R. Yehoshua ben Levi who said: 'A person should never emit a harsh expression from his mouth, that is why in Parshas Noach when the Torah tells us that Noach animals into his ark it takes pain to add letters.'" The Torah tells us that "Noach took sets of seven males and females of each of the tavor (kosher) animal species, and a set of two animals from the non-tavor (kosher) species" (Genesis 7:8-9). "The

Torah,” continues Rabbi Yehoshua, “could have used just one simple word to describe the non-kosher animals -tamei! (treif). Yet to teach us the importance of clean speech, the Torah uses an elaborate Hebrew terminology, animals that are not kosher, instead of the simpler and shorter expression, treif animals. The Torah avoids calling creatures, even non-kosher ones, tamei (impure) rather it labels them as ‘animals that are not classified as tahor.’”

However, in this week’s Torah portion as well in last week’s, the Torah is not as tempered. In this week’s portion, the Torah tells us about the metzora, a man afflicted with a skin disease, a spiritual response to the sin of lashon horah, gossip and slander. When the man is proclaimed tamei (impure) he is sent out of the camp, “And the tzarua in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and the hair of his head shall go loose, and he shall cover his upper lip, and shall cry: ‘Tamei Tamei!’” (Lev. 14:35). The Torah does not say “he shall cry, ‘I am not pure!’”

Even in ParshasShmini, where the Torah prescribes the laws of kosher and non-kosher animals, it seems to backtrack from the protocol set forth in the portion of Noach. When it discusses the non kosher animals that are forbidden to be eaten, including the hare, the camel, the hyrax, and of course, the pig, the Torah waives the refined expression of “not pure” and opts to call them “tamei.” It calls them treif! Why the curt classification? What happened to the gentle etiquette so beautifully professed by Rabbi Yehoshua?

The Story

In July of 1864, during the height of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln inspected a Union fortress, Fort Stevens. During his assessment, Confederate troops began firing on the fort, making Lincoln the only sitting President to be shot at in the course of a war.

A young soldier named Oliver Wendell Holmes, who would one day become a Justice of the United States Supreme Court, saw the President being shot at, his tall frame protruding over the ramparts of the fortification.

“You fool!” he shouted. “They are shooting at us! Get down!” Apocryphally, it is said that after the shooting subsided and Holmes apologized, Lincoln smiled, “When they are shooting, even the President can be called a fool!”

The Message

The story of Noach is a narrative. The Torah can well afford to classify the non-kosher animals in a positive light. After all, for the sake of the story it does not make a difference if the animals are referred to as tamei, or not tahor. The Torah chose the gentler way. However, in this week’s portion, when the Metzora has to warn people from coming in contact with him, or last week when the Torah is exhorting us to avoid eating animals which are not kosher, the Torah does not offer circuitous etiquette, it boldly warns us - “they are traif!” We live in a world that is wrought with many dangers. Sometimes we must say, “no” to our friends, our children, and ourselves, in a very curt and abrupt way. A particular substance, action, behavior, or influence, may be worse than “it is not so holy and pure.” It must be declared as outright dangerous. Saying “no,” “poison,” and even “traif” may lack class, but it may be more effective than saying, “not the proper action.”

There is a time and place for every expression. Most always etiquette must be used, but when they are firing upon you, every one must play the fool and shout, “out”!

Rosh Chodesh Nissan is on Tuesday April 5th, 2011

In honor of Ronald and Sonya Krigsmanshetichyu. Saadia and Sorala Krigsman and family, Chaim and Ann Krigsman and family, Tzvi and Hudi Krigsman and family, Meyer and Sharon Weissman and family

Yeshiva of South Shore | 1170 William Street | Hewlett | NY | 11557

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Tazria
Turtle Doves Do Not Have "Second Marriages" – Appreciation for Loyalty

The beginning of Parshas Tazria deals with the laws of purity and impurity associated with childbirth. At the end of the 40 day period of impurity and purity following the birth of a male and at the end of the 80 day period of impurity and purity following the birth of a female, the mother is required to bring "a sheep within its first year for an olah-offering and a young dove or a turtle dove for a sin-offering" to complete her purification process [Vayikra 12:6].

Even though there are many kinds of kosher birds, the only kinds of birds that may be brought as sacrifices on the Altar are the young dove [ben-yonah] and the turtle dove [tor]. The Baal HaTurim makes the interesting observation that whenever the Torah provides the option of bringing a tor [turtle dove] or a ben-yonah [young dove] as a bird offering, the mention of the tor precedes the mention of the ben-yonah. The only exception is here in the case of the sin-offering following childbirth, where the Torah first mentions the ben-yonah and only afterward mentions the tor.

The Baal HaTurim explains that normally the tor or ben-yonah are brought in pairs. However, in this case, we only bring one. The tor [turtle dove] has a unique quality in that they mate for life. If its partner is taken away from it or killed, it will not seek out another mate, but will seemingly mourn – as it were – for the first mate for the rest of its life. Consequently, rather than cause the break-up of a pair of turtle doves by taking one of a pair for a bird offering, the Torah advises us to that it is preferable to seek out a ben-yonah (whose mate will presumably be able to find another mate if its first mate is offered as a sacrifice).

Rav Simcha Zissel Broide derives two insights from this Baal HaTurim. First, when we see how sensitive the Torah is to the feelings of pigeons and doves, we can imagine how sensitive we must be to the feelings of our fellow human beings. Second, we see that the Torah appreciates loyalty. The Torah in effect is rewarding the tor – urging us to seek the ben-yonah instead for our sacrifice – because it has that wonderful trait of loyalty to its mate.

The Ramban has a similar teaching in Parshas Vayikra. The Ramban writes that the Torah singled out torim as an appropriate species for korbanos, precisely because of their loyalty each other. This unique quality makes them the optimum choice for spiritual elevation sought by the one bringing a bird sacrifice. The Ramban adds that even though bnei-yonah do not share this quality, they have an alternate characteristic which makes them appropriate. The young dove (the only kind of "ben yonah" which may be brought) has the trait that they always return to their nest. Most birds will never return to their nest once a human being touches it. The bnei yonah are an exception. They have such loyalty to their nests that they will return despite the fact that human hands may have tampered with the nest. The Ramban writes "So too Israel will not switch from loyalty to their Creator and His Torah forever." Therefore, according to the Ramban, torim and bnei Yonah are the bird species used in the Bais HaMikdash because they share the quality of loyalty with the Jewish people.

Now, we may wonder, where does it ever say in the Torah that being loyal is a good thing? Where do any of the 613 mitzvos instruct us to "Be Loyal"? We are used to thinking about qualities that the Torah appreciates: Chesed [kindness]; Emes [truthfulness]; Shalom [peacefulness]. Where is loyalty in that list?

There are many values, character traits, and attitudes that the Torah does explicitly mention. However, the Torah has one catchall commandment: "V'asisa haYashar v'haTov..." [And you shall do that which is correct and good in the Eyes of Hashem.] [Devorim 6:18].

How do you know you are not supposed to cut someone off in traffic? Where is that written? We understand that if a person is easily recognizable as a religious Jew then such behavior is forbidden under the category of "Chilul Hashem" [desecration of the Name of G-d]. But what if someone is not easily recognizable as a religious Jew? Why is it still forbidden according to Torah law for him to cut someone off in traffic?

There are so many things like this. Where is it written that one must mow his lawn? Where does the Torah forbid us from having our property become an eye sore? The Ramban says it is all forbidden because of the pasuk "V'asisa haYashar v'haTov b'Einei Hashem..." which, liberally translated, means "be a mentsch".

The Ramban writes, "Even those things that are not explicit, pay attention and try to deduce from the Torah that which is correct and good in His Eyes for He likes that which is correct and good. This is a great matter because it is impossible to record in the Torah all the proper interactions of man with his friends and neighbors." The Torah listed many specific actions (do not take revenge, do not bear grudges, do not speak slander, etc.) and then the Torah gave one catchall mitzvah to include all the other things that were too numerous to list: V'asisa haYashar v'haTov.

It is our mission to discern the qualities that the Almighty likes. This Baal HaTurim and this Ramban are saying that the Torah appreciates loyalty. The message may be very subtle. We may have to delve into the reasons behind the commandments and figure out why specifically doves and turtledoves are required for the Divine Service (or why turtledoves are usually mentioned first and why by childbirth the ben-yonah is mentioned first). Our job is to read between the lines, pick up all the qualities that the Master of the World appreciates, and emulate those qualities in our lives.

There is one other example that the Ramban provides of reading between the lines to determine appropriate human behavior based on explicit Biblical law: Virtually all forbidden sexual relationships are relationships which are forbidden forever. For example, one's mother-in-law is an ervah [forbidden relation] to him. She remains an ervah even if his wife dies and her mother is no longer his mother-in-law. The prohibition of marrying a woman and her sister however is unique in that it only applies during the lifetime of the sister that he married first.

The Ramban explains that the reason for this prohibition is to promote harmony among the sisters. Normal sibling rivalry being what it is, if two sisters were married to the same person, it would create intolerable family strife. The two sisters would wind up hating each other. The Torah does not want sisters to hate each other. The Torah wants sisters to love each other. Therefore, says the Ramban, that commandment does not apply if one of the sisters has died. So where do we find in the Torah that siblings should love each other? It may be subtle, but we find it right here in the prohibition of marrying two sisters.

Reading between the lines of Torah law gives us greater insight into Torah and greater insight into what the Almighty considers "Correct and good" [yashar v'tov].

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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A Thought for the Week with Rabbi Jay Kelman Parshat Tazria - The Potential of Children

"There is no event more awe-inspiring than the birth of a baby. It is the closest we can come to acting like G-d, creating something from nothing. It is no coincidence that, soon after the Torah tells the story of creation, man is given the command Pru Urvu , to be fruitful and multiply, joining with G-d in the process of creation.

One might expect that, after experiencing the birth of a baby, new parents would be required to bring a thanksgiving offering to G-d. Yet, strangely enough, at the beginning of Tazria, the Torah mandates that the mother of a newborn must bring a sin offering. What has the mother done wrong that puts her in the same category of one who eats accidentally on Yom Kippur , or inadvertently violates the Shabbat ?

The Kli Yakar , echoing the Talmud (Niddah 31b), explains as follows: since pregnancy and childbirth are painful experiences, the expectant mother may have wished, at one time or another, that she had never become pregnant. She may have wondered: What am I doing? If she experienced a difficult childbirth, she may have resolved not to repeat this "mistake". While such regret is soon forgotten, even momentarily questioning the gift of children deserves rebuke and requires repentance. Interestingly the Meshech Chochma posits that it is due to this pain that women are technically exempt from the mitzvah of having children.

Nechama Leibowitz (who, unfortunately, was never blessed with children of her own) explains that the miracle of childbirth necessitates the bringing of a sin offering. Realizing that new life has been created should make us stop and reflect upon the meaning of life. We realize that we do not live up

to our potential. A baby is soft, pure and innocent, but as adults we all become hardened, corrupted and guilty of many transgressions. A newborn child reminds us that we must make the most of the opportunities we have in life: opportunities that, too often, we squander.

Upon the birth of a child, we begin to realize how precious life really is. Our carefree, no-fear-of-risk approach becomes one of caution and concern. The decisions we make no longer focus on ourselves, but rather on what is best for the child. Sacrificing personal freedom for our baby becomes natural. We finally realize how much our parents actually worried about us. We hope (against all hope) that our children will not put us through what we put our parents through. No wonder we bring a sin offering! It is only as parents that we truly feel the joy and pain of others. Our concern for our baby flows naturally. Hopefully the baby will inspire us to reach a level at which deep concern for the needs of all others will also be natural. For this reason, the Rabbis rule that only a person who has children should be the chazzan for the yamim noraim . A chazzan is a shliach tzibbur ; an emissary for his people, one who must feel their pain, needs and hurt. Only a person who has children of his own, the Rabbis suggest, can reach such a level. To the chazzan the entire congregation of Israel are as his children.

Parshat Tazria is most often read in the week leading up to Yom Ha'atzmaut. In many ways, the birth of a nation is similar to a birth of a child. The process is often painful and we may even wonder if it really is all worth it. But then we sit back and marvel at the tremendous accomplishments of our baby. Sixty-one years ago, we, the Jewish people, gave birth to our "child". The labour pains are still ongoing, but the miraculous accomplishments of the first few short years are unparalleled in human history. The world recognizes this, as evidenced by the unbelievable amount of attention that is constantly focused on Israel . A parent never ceases offering criticism (constructive, we hope), but also never ceases to love a child no matter how the child behaves. This is also true of our relationship with our beloved State. It may infuriate us and we may even think its decisions are wrong, but we still love and support it (offering our advice all the while). We must nurture our "child" so that it matures into the model civilization for all of mankind, fulfilling its mission of being an or lagoyim , a light unto the nations.

Rabbi Kelman, in addition to his founder and leadership roles in Torah in Motion, teaches Ethics, Talmud and Rabbinics at the Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto.

Rav Kook List Rav Kook on the Torah Portion God's Tefillin

One of the more astounding statements to be found in the Talmud is the assertion that "The Holy One wears tefillin" (Berachot 6a). For a strictly monotheistic religion that rejects all forms of Divine corporeality, this is a highly peculiar statement. God of course has no head and arm on which to tie tefillin. What did the Sages mean by this statement?

Higher Purpose

To understand the meaning of tefillin for God, we must first understand the meaning of tefillin for us.

We utilize our intelligence and talents to attain our material needs. We plan and calculate, struggle and toil, in order to acquire food, clothing, shelter, and so on. This is the natural use of our powers of intellect and will.

However, life is more than just meeting physical needs. Our lives should be dedicated to moral and spiritual growth. And we should utilize our higher functions – our powers of intellect and resolve, imagination and emotions - for this elevated goal. This is the foundation of our service of God.

In order to impress upon us this higher use for our intellect and will, we secure the tefillin shel rosh over the mind, and bind the tefillin shel yad on the arm, opposite the heart.

These two levels, the natural and the elevated, also exist in the world at large. At the basic level, the laws of nature ensure that the universe

functions and that living things grow. The world's order and equilibrium are governed by the laws of physics, biology and chemistry.

Yet there is a second aspect to the world. The universe has an inner drive that seeks to uplift humanity and all of creation to a lofty moral state. The universe's spiritual yearnings are beautifully represented by the imagery of 'God wearing tefillin.' This metaphor portrays a created universe guided by an inner drive for holiness and spiritual growth.

Inside God's Tefillin

If God wears tefillin, then one may ask: what is written in these tefillin? Our own tefillin contain verses describing God's unity and providence. What is written inside God's tefillin?

The Sages taught that inside God's tefillin are verses that speak of the Jewish people and their special mission. "Who is like Your people Israel, a unique nation in the world?" (II Sam. 7:23)

Given the explanation above, this makes perfect sense. God made a special covenant with the Jewish people and gave them the Torah so that they would act as a catalyst for the world's moral ascent. God's 'tefillin,' which represent the world's inner drive for spiritual advance, should refer to the vehicle for that ascent: the people of Israel.

Also on His Arm

The Sages taught that these verses praising the people of Israel are written in both components of God's tefillin - in the tefillin worn on the arm, as well as the tefillin worn on the head. What does this mean?

The tefillin shel rosh, worn above the eyes, indicate the final goal, the future vision. The world will attain its future lofty state due to the influence of Israel and Torah over the generations. Thus the verses inside God's tefillin shel rosh speak of the Jewish people and their special mission.

The tefillin shel yad, bound to the arm, represent the here-and- now, the practical aspect of repairing the world. The Sages wanted to stress that even now, during the world's current state, God watches over Israel, protecting the righteous and punishing the wicked. God's providence over Israel is an integral part of the process that will lead to the world's future lofty state. Thus even God's tefillin shel yad refers to the special portion of the Jewish people.

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol I, Berachot I:52)

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Do I One or Two?

--What Determines Whether One Observes a Second Day of Yom Tov?

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Zev is studying in Yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel and has decided that he wants to settle there, although his parents, who support him, live in Flatbush. How many days of Yom Tov should he observe?

Question #2: Avi and Rutie, who are native Israelis, have accepted teaching positions in chutz la'aretz for two years, but certainly intend to return to Eretz Yisroel afterwards. Must they observe both days of Yom Tov while they are in chutz la'aretz?

Question #3: Meira, studying in seminary in Israel, is baffled. "Some of my friends who have decided to stay in Eretz Yisroel were told to keep two days Yom Tov, others were told to keep one, and still others were told not to do melacha on the second day, but otherwise to treat it as a weekday. I have been unable to figure out any pattern to the answers they receive. Can you possibly clarify this for me?"

Indeed, Meira's confusion is not unusual since poskim differ greatly concerning what guidelines determine whether one observes one day of Yom Tov or two. Before analyzing this dispute, we need some background information on how the calendar was established in the era of the Sanhedrin:

THE HALACHIC MONTH

All months in the Jewish calendar are either 29 or 30 days long, reflecting the amount of time that it takes for the moon to revolve around the earth,

which is somewhat more than 29½ days. Therefore, Rosh Chodesh, the first day of the new month, is always either the 30th or the 31st day following the previous Rosh Chodesh.

What determines whether a month is 29 days or 30?

The Torah commands the main Beis Din of the Jewish people, or a Beis Din specially appointed by them, to declare Rosh Chodesh upon accepting the testimony of witnesses who observed the new moon (Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 1:1, 7; 5:1). The purpose of having eyewitnesses was not to notify the Beis Din of its occurrence; the Beis Din, which had extensive knowledge of astronomy, already knew exactly when and where the new moon would appear and what size and shape it would be (Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 2:4; Ritva on the Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 18a). Rather, the Torah required the Beis Din to wait for witnesses in order to declare the 30th day as Rosh Chodesh. (Our essay is following the opinion of Rambam. Rav Saadya Gaon and Rabbeinu Chananel [cited by Rabbeinu Bachyah to Shemos 12:1] contend that the astronomical calculation was always the primary factor and that the acceptance of witnesses to testify on the new moon was done because of temporary short-term concerns. As of yet, I have not written an essay on this dispute, but I hope to one day. For those interested in researching this matter, see Torah Sheleimah of Rav M. M. Kasher, Volume 13, pages 40-66.) If no witnesses to the new moon arrived on the 30th day, then the 31st day becomes Rosh Chodesh, regardless of the astronomic calculations (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 24a).

DETERMINING YOM TOV

The date of all Yomim Tovim is determined by Rosh Chodesh, or, more specifically, by either Rosh Chodesh Tishrei or Rosh Chodesh Nissan (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 21b). (Shavuos, which occurs on the fiftieth day after Pesach, is therefore also dependent on Rosh Chodesh Nisan [Yerushalmi, Rosh Hashanah 1:4].) Therefore in earlier days, even someone fully versed with all the astronomical information would be unable to predict which day was actually Rosh Chodesh, since Rosh Chodesh was not based exclusively on calculation, but on observation and the decision of the Beis Din (Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 5:1-2). Since the calendar printers could not go to press until the Beis Din had declared Rosh Chodesh, calendar manufacture in those times would have been a difficult business in which to turn a profit. Perhaps this is why people mailed out so few fundraising calendars in the days of Chazal!

KEEP INFORMED

A major concern of Chazal was how to alert the Jewish communities, both inside and outside Eretz Yisroel, when to observe Rosh Chodesh and Yom Tov. How indeed did the Beis Din do this?

THE MOUNTAINTOP ALERT

No, this is not the name of a rural West Virginia newspaper. Rather, this refers to the system Beis Din used to disseminate the day they had declared Rosh Chodesh. A representative of Beis Din would climb a mountain peak on the night after the declaration of Rosh Chodesh and wave a long torch in a prearranged pattern. When a second agent posted on a far off summit saw the light of the burning torch, he in turn waved a long torch from his peak. This heralded the news to a crest on his horizon, where a third agent began waving his torch. Although this ancient system was less effective than telephone or e-mail, it worked so efficiently that Jewish communities as distant as Bavel knew that very night that the 30th day had been declared Rosh Chodesh, and were able to observe the Yomim Tovim on the correct day (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 22b; Ritva on the Mishnah 18a).

A TORCH-LESS NIGHT

The torch system was used only if Rosh Chodesh was declared on day 30. If no witnesses arrived in Beis Din on the 30th, making Rosh Chodesh on the 31st day, no mountaintop torches were ignited. Thus, the distant communities knew: Torches the night after the 30th meant that the previous day had been Rosh Chodesh; no torch that night meant that the next day was Rosh Chodesh. To paraphrase Paul Revere: "One if by day, none if tomorrow."

This signalling system functioned excellently until the Cusim, an anti-Semitic people who settled in Eretz Yisroel, disrupted it by deliberately kindling torches on the night after the 30th day even when Beis Din had not declared the previous day Rosh Chodesh. The Cusim's goal was to cause Jews to observe Yom Tov a day early and thereby desecrate the true Yom Tov (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 22b. Note that some authorities have a variant text which identifies the nefarious disruptive party as the Baytusim, a heretical group who desired that Pesach fall on Shabbos [see Tosafos Yom Tov]). Now the Beis Din needed to resort to a different approach, appointing human runners to notify people of the proper day of Yom Tov. Obviously, these runners could not cover vast distances as quickly as the previous torch system, and it took considerably longer to notify people of the day of Rosh Chodesh – what previously took hours, now took weeks.

Although the human express successfully informed Jewish communities as distant as Syria of the correct dates of the upcoming Yomim Tovim, the runners did not always reach the more distant Babylonian communities in time for Yom Tov (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 18a). These communities were now unsure whether the Roshei Chadashim of Nissan and Tishrei had been on the 30th day or the 31st, and were therefore uncertain which day was Yom Tov. Out of doubt, they observed Yom Tov on both days -- this was the origin of observing two days of Yom Tov in the Diaspora, Yom Tov Sheini shel Galuyos (Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 3:11).

(By the way, after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, the main Beis Din was not located in Yerushalayim, but wherever the Nasi of the Jewish people resided. This included several other communities at various times of Jewish history, including Teverya, Yavneh, and Shafraam [Rosh Hashanah 31b].)

WHICH COMMUNITIES KEPT TWO DAYS?

Whether a town observed one or two days of Yom Tov depended on whether the runners could arrive there in time. Since the runners did not travel on Shabbos or Yom Tov, any place further than ten travel days from the main Beis Din was forced to observe two days of Sukkos. On the other hand, the runners announcing Rosh Chodesh Nissan had two extra travel days before the onset of Pesach.

OBSERVING TWO DAYS OF SUKKOS AND ONE OF PESACH?

Theoretically, one could have numerous different communal practices depending on the community's distance from the main Beis Din. For example, a town located more than ten days journey from the Beis Din but less than twelve, would be informed of the correct day of Rosh Chodesh before Pesach, but not before Sukkos. Theoretically, this town would observe two days of Sukkos and one day of Pesach. Even more commonly, many communities would observe two days at the beginning of Yom Tov, but only one at the end, after being notified of the correct date of Rosh Chodesh.

However, since Chazal did not want a variety of different practices, they instituted that any place that could not reliably expect the messengers before Sukkos should observe two days Yom Tov on all Yomim Tovim even for those when they certainly knew which was the correct day of Yom Tov (Rosh Hashanah 21a). Thus, although everyone knew which day to observe Shavuos, as it always falls fifty days after Pesach, every community that kept two days of Sukkos was required to observe two days of Shavuos. (Because of the danger involved in people fasting for two consecutive days, Chazal ruled that people needed to observe only one day of Yom Kippur and could assume that Elul was only 29 days long [see Rosh Hashanah 21a].)

INCREASED PERSECUTION

During the later times of the Gemara, Roman persecution made it impossible to continue declaring Rosh Chodesh based on testimony, and Hillel II instituted a calendar based purely on calculation without observation (Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 5:2-3). Now a knowledgeable Diaspora Jew could make the same calculation as the Jews in Israel and the original rationale for observing two days of Yom Tov no longer existed. Nevertheless, Chazal required the Diaspora communities to continue observing two days of Yom Tov.

WHY KEEP TWO DAYS?

Why did Chazal require these communities to observe two days of Yom Tov if the original reason for this practice had ceased to exist?

Chazal were concerned that at some time in the future, persecution might render it impossible for Jews to be aware which day was Yom Tov (Beitzah 4b). Observing two days of Yom Tov reduces the possibility that they might violate Yom Tov or eat chometz on Pesach as a result of an error in calculation. Although this concern also existed in Eretz Yisroel, Chazal did not require the communities there to observe two days Yom Tov since the practice was never instituted there. However, since the Diaspora communities were already observing two days of Yom Tov, Chazal continued this practice, albeit for a new reason. As a result, the Jewish communities of Israel observe one day of Yom Tov and those of the Diaspora observe two.

WHO KEEPS TWO DAYS OF YOM TOV?

Although whether a community observed one day of Yom Tov or two should depend on whether it was within ten travel days of the main Beis Din, certain villages near the Beis Din were off the messengers' route and consequently did not find out in time. As a result, these communities observed two days of Yom Tov even though they were within Eretz Yisroel (Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 5:9). Some Rishonim contend that even today many communities in Eretz Yisroel must observe two days of Yom Tov (Rambam, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh 5:9). The accepted practice is that all Eretz Yisroel observes only one day of Yom Tov since that was the practice of most places in Eretz Yisroel when the calendar was dependent on observation (Ritva, Rosh Hashanah 18a; Minchas Shelomoh 2:44).

Thus far, we have discussed the rules governing whether a community observes two days of Yom Tov or not. However, all the questions mentioned at the beginning of this article deal with how many days of Yom Tov an individual must observe.

A FISH OUT OF WATER -- VISITING CHUTZ LA'ARETZ

What is the halacha if an Eretz Yisroel resident finds himself in chutz la'aretz for Yom Tov? Must he observe two days of Yom Tov because of local custom, or may he follow his hometown practice of observing one day?

The Shulchan Aruch (496:3) rules as follows: "People who live in Eretz Yisroel who are in chutz la'aretz are forbidden to perform melacha (forbidden work) on the second day of Yom Tov even if they intend to return to Eretz Yisroel."

No one should know that they are not observing Yom Tov, and for this reason, they must wear Yom Tov clothes (Shu"t Radbaz #1145; Magen Avraham). According to most opinions, they may not perform work even in private (Shu"t Radbaz #1145; Magen Avraham; Chayei Odom 103:3; Gra"z; Mishnah Berurah; Aruch HaShulchan, all based on Tosafos to Pesachim 52a s.v. BiYishuv. However, Shu"t Mabit 3:149 and Taz [496:2] are lenient.)

However, since it is technically not Yom Tov for them, they pray according to the practice of Eretz Yisroel on this day, even donning tefillin, although they must do so in private (Shu"t Radbaz #1145; Shu"t Avkas Rocheil #26).

A CHUTZNIK IN THE KING'S PALACE -- VISITING ERETZ YISROEL

Does a chutz la'aretz resident visiting Eretz Yisroel observe one day Yom Tov or two?

According to most opinions, a chutz la'aretz resident visiting Eretz Yisroel must continue to observe two days Yom Tov until he or she assumes residence in Eretz Yisroel (Shu"t Avkas Rocheil #26; Shaarei Teshuvah 496:2; She'eilas Yaavetz #168; Birkei Yosef 496:7).

One prominent posek contends that a chutz la'aretz resident visiting Eretz Yisroel does not observe the second day of Yom Tov. His reasoning is that observing two days of Yom Tov is a carryover from when people in chutz la'aretz were unable to determine which day was definitely Yom Tov. In

that era, if someone from chutz la'aretz visited Eretz Yisroel, why would he observe two days of Yom Tov if he knew that the second day was not Yom Tov (Shu"t Chacham Tzvi #167)? (The Chacham Zvi himself forbids observing the second day of Yom Tov in Eretz Yisroel because of concerns about bal tosf, adding to the mitzvah, a topic we will leave for a different time.)

Although the Chacham Tzvi's argument seems logical, almost all other halachic authorities reject his conclusion. It should be noted that even the Chacham Zvi's son, Rav Yaakov Emden followed the majority opinion unlike his father (She'eilas Yaavetz #168. However, note that the Gra"z 496:11 cites the Chacham Tzvi's approach as the primary opinion.)

May people from chutz la'aretz organize a second-day Yom Tov minyan? This is an old dispute that continues to this day. Although many poskim object to the practice, contending that one should not act publicly differently from local practice, the custom to have second-day Yom Tov minyanim in Eretz Yisroel is mentioned favorably by Rav Yosef Karo, the author of the Shulchan Aruch, as a well-established practice (Shu"t Avkas Rocheil #26). In most communities today it is the norm for chutz la'aretz visitors to conduct second day Yom Tov minyanim, and even to advertise them.

A TEMPORARY RESIDENT

At the beginning of this article I mentioned several common situations where it is not obvious whether one should comport himself as a resident of Eretz Yisroel or of chutz la'aretz. What determines whether one should observe two days of Yom Tov? Whether one observes two days of Yom Tov depends on whether one is considered a Diaspora resident or not, concerning which we find a wide range of halachic opinion. Here is a sampling of the opinions:

ONE YEAR

Some contend that one who plans to stay for a year should consider himself a resident of his new domicile even if he intends to return eventually (Aruch HaShulchan 496:5; Shu"t Avnei Nezer, OC 424:27). These authorities compare this law to the following Mishnah (Bava Basra 7b):

“You can force someone to contribute to the construction of the walls and reinforcements of a city... How long must he be in the city to consider him a resident? Twelve months. And if he purchased a residence he is considered a resident immediately.” The Gemara (Bava Basra 8a) compares this law to similar responsibilities for tzedakah and some other mitzvos.

According to this approach, Avi and Rutie, who will be teaching in chutz la'aretz for two years, certainly follow all the practices of chutz la'aretz for Yom Tov (see also Shu"t Yechaveh Daas 3:35).

LONG TERM INTENT

On the other hand, a different early authority ruled that time is not the factor in deciding whether one is considered a resident of Eretz Yisroel or of chutz la'aretz, but one's long term intent. If one's plans are to return to Eretz Yisroel, one should daven according to Eretz Yisroel practice, even if one is in chutz la'aretz for several years. Someone in Eretz Yisroel who intends to return to chutz la'aretz should observe two days Yom Tov. However, this halachic authority included one main exception to his rule: If one travels with one's family and establishes a livelihood in his new locale, he should consider himself a resident of where he is now, since people tend to remain in a place where their livelihood is secure (Pri Chodosh, Orach Chayim 468 s.v. vira'isi).

However, many authorities judge contemporary circumstances differently from those of earlier generations. Since today people travel and even relocate relatively easily, the fact that one's family and livelihood is currently in one location does not automatically make one a permanent resident of that place for the purposes of determining whether one observes one day of Yom Tov or two. Because of this consideration, Rav Moshe Feinstein ruled that someone studying in kollel in Eretz Yisroel should keep two days Yom Tov unless both he and his wife have decided to remain in Eretz Yisroel (Shu"t Igros Moshe, OC 3:74). Rav Moshe has

several other published teshuvos on the subject, each person's case being someone different, and in each case Rav Moshe determines whether the person should be considered a resident of Eretz Yisroel or one of chutz la'aretz.

ALWAYS YOM TOV IN ERETZ YISROEL

Rav Shlomoh Zalman Auerbach (Minchas Shelomoh 1:19:7) issued the following ruling: He contends that someone who owns a residence in Eretz Yisroel that he uses for every Yom Tov need keep only one day of Yom Tov while in Eretz Yisroel, even though he lives in chutz la'aretz the rest of the year. Rav Shlomoh Zalman's logic is that this individual no longer has the custom of keeping two days of Yom Tov since he is always in Eretz Yisroel for Yom Tov.

A YESHIVA BACHUR WHO INTENDS TO REMAIN IN ERETZ YISROEL

What is the halachic status of a yeshiva bachur studying in Eretz Yisroel whose family lives in chutz la'aretz, but who intends to remain in Eretz Yisroel long-term? Can he establish a different custom from his family?

In answering a different question, the Magen Avraham (468:12) contends that a yeshiva bachur who is in one place for two or three years does not take on the customs of his yeshiva town. On the other hand, other sources quote that accepted practice is that a yeshiva bachur from chutz la'aretz attending a yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel observes only one day of Yom Tov (Shaarei Teshuvah 496:2). Are these two sources in dispute? Rav Moshe Feinstein contends that they are not, explaining that a student who is financially dependent on parents who have not accepted his decision to remain in Eretz Yisroel should follow their practice, whereas if he is financially on his own, or they agree to support him in Eretz Yisroel, he observes only one day of Yom Tov (Shu"t Igros Moshe, OC 2:101).

Others disagree, contending that if he might remain in Eretz Yisroel, he need observe only one day of Yom Tov. According to this approach, the Magen Avraham considered him a resident of his parents' town only if he is certain that he is returning there after his Yeshiva years (Shu"t Yabia Omer 6:oc:40; Shu"t Yechaveh Daas 1:26).

“A DAY AND A HALF”

A colloquial expression has developed referring to someone as observing Yom Tov for “a day and a half.” This term does not mean that the person observes Yom Tov for 36 hours. It means that the rav applied here the halachic ruling that one is obligated to observe the stringent practices of both places, where he originates and where he currently is, until the sojourner has decided to take up permanent residence. Therefore, the rav ruled that one may not perform melacha, but one should daven according to the practice of Eretz Yisrael. Alternatively, the rav felt uncertain whether this individual should be observing one day Yom Tov or two, and therefore ruled that he/she should not perform any melacha on the second day of Yom Tov, but should daven and observe it otherwise as a weekday.

We can now begin to comprehend Meira's question:

“Some of my friends have been told to keep two days of Yom Tov, others were told to keep one, and still others were told not to work on the second day but otherwise to treat it as a weekday. I have been unable to figure out any pattern to the answers they receive.”

Truthfully, there is a very wide range of opinion what determines whether one observes one day of Yom Tov or two. Thus, Meira's confusion is very understandable. Each friend's rabbi may be applying completely different criteria to determine how many days of Yom Tov to observe, and that is why Meira cannot figure out any pattern. Obviously, someone should ask his or her rav what to do and follow his instructions.

The Torah refers to the Yomim Tovim as Moed. Just as the Ohel Moed is a meeting place between Hashem and the Jewish people, so too a moed is a meeting time for Hashem and His people (Hirsch, Vayikra 23:3 and Horeb). Perhaps being more distant from Hashem in chutz la'aretz necessitates an extra day to celebrate our unique relationship with Him!

For the week ending 2 April 2011 / 26 Adar II 5771

Menachot 23 - 29 by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

The Fiery Coin - Menachot 29a

In regard to three things Moshe found difficulty in visualizing and needed Heavenly assistance. He had to be shown how the menorah for the Mishkan Sanctuary should look, how much of the new moon must be visible in order to determine when to declare Rosh Chodesh, and which of the creeping creatures are the forbidden ones.

This statement by the Sages of Rabbi Yishmael's Yeshiva seems to overlook one other instance when Moshe had to actually be shown something. When G-d commanded that Jews had to contribute a machatzit hashekel coin for the construction of the Mishkan Sanctuary, Moshe found difficulty in visualizing and had to be shown a coin of fire, the size of which should be contributed in silver.

One of the resolutions offered by the commentaries is that Moshe's difficulty was not in regard to the nature of the coin itself but rather in regard to its purpose. Since the construction of the Mishkan was in atonement for the sin of the Red Heifer, it was inconceivable to Moshe that so small a contribution as half-shekel should achieve atonement for each individual.

The answer he received from Heaven was a coin of fire whose message was that what would achieve atonement was not merely the value of the coin but the fiery spirit of repentance and devotion with which it was given.

What the Sages Say

"Just as the four species on Succot must all be taken together, so too do Jews find favor only when they are united together."

Beraita - Menachot 27a

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