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Yom Ha'atzmaut 75: A call for Jewish unity

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

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As we celebrate 75 glorious years of the state of Israel, let us draw some inspiration from Psalm 75. The Psalm commences, "Lamenatseach, al tashcheit." It's dedicated to the musician, and the opening message is, "Al tashcheit," – "Do not destroy."

This, according to our commentators, is a plea by the Jewish people to our enemies: Do not seek to annihilate us. We respect the divine soul which exists in every human being. We want to get on well with everybody. We want to live in harmony and peace with our neighbours. Why do you seek to destroy us?

The State of Israel was created only three years after an attempt to annihilate the entire Jewish people, when six million innocent Jewish women, men and children were brutally murdered and throughout the 75 years of Medinat Yisrael, we have continued to cry out,

"Al tashcheit," – "Do not destroy," – because we recognise that there are those with malevolent intent who seek the destruction of the state.

Now, fascinatingly, there is another psalm, Psalm 57, which starts with exactly the same words: Lemenatseach, al tashcheit – for the musician, do not destroy. The Alshich explains the context over there to be very different.

David, he explains, was on the run from King Saul, who sought to kill him. David and his warriors were able to corner Saul, and the warriors asked for the green light to go in for the kill. But David called out to them and he said, "Al tashcheit." – "Don't destroy."

Yes, there are deep and bitter divisions between us, but we have a responsibility to guarantee Jewish unity.

During the past 75 miraculous years, thanks to the daily intervention of Hashem, He has preserved Medinat Yisrael against all odds. And it's also thanks to Jewish unity – both within Israel and between Israel and the diaspora – which has empowered Israel to succeed as it has.

As we now celebrate this very special day, we pray to Hashem that he will bless and protect us from our enemies without, and, through our efforts to preserve Jewish unity, may we thereby ensure that we will be blessed to have many many happy returns of this glorious and festive day.

I wish you all chag sameach.

Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

Drasha Parshas Metzora :: Strange Altar-Fellows

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Metzora deals with the purification process of the person afflicted with tzora'as. After the disease healed, the formerly afflicted person is instructed to bring a sacrifice

that includes two very diametrical items. "And he shall take two birds, cedar wood, crimson thread and hyssop (Leviticus 14:4)." The Torah details the offering and all of its intricacies, leaving the commentaries to ponder the symbolism of the wood of the tallest of trees bound together with the lowly moss of the hyssop.

Rashi explains that, "the hyssop symbolizes the humility that the metzora should have," and the cedar," he explains, "is a symbolic reminder that he who holds himself as high as the cedar tree should learn to lower himself like the hyssop."

However, wouldn't hyssop alone teach us this characteristic or at least symbolize humility? What point is there in bringing cedar? And, in fact, if bringing moss represents the need for humility couldn't the offering of cedar represent the need for pride? Perhaps there is another explanation for the two attributes to be joined.

A few years after Rabbi Shneur Kotler succeeded his late father Reb Ahron as the Rosh Yeshiva of the Lakewood Yeshiva, the Yeshiva's enrollment began to expand. No longer was Reb Shneur able to sit and study in the large Yeshiva all day. He was suddenly forced to raise funds day in and day out often leaving early in the morning and returning home way past midnight.

A brief respite was the annual convention of Agudath Israel at which nearly 1000 laymen and rabbinical leaders would gather for a long weekend to discuss the state of Torah affairs.

My grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, the oldest member of the Council of Torah Sages would often highlight the keynote session on Saturday night. As the eldest of the world's Torah sages, Reb Yaakov would find a way to sneak up to the dais, usually through a back door, to avoid having the entire crowd arise upon seeing his presence as is required by Jewish Law. Yet this year things were different. Reb Yaakov engaged the much younger, Reb Shneur in conversation outside the large ballroom and waited until everyone took his or her seats. Then he took Reb Shneur by the hand and said, "I think it is time we took our seats." He proudly held Reb Shneur by the arm and escorted him to the dais as the throng of people rose in awe.

Reb Shneur, stunned by Reb Yaakov's departure from his trademark humility asked him why he did not go through the back as was his usual custom.

"Reb Shneur," he explained, "your Rebbitzin (rabbi's wife) is sitting in the auditorium. The entire year she sees you in a much-dishonored light. You run from donor to donor in order to keep the Yeshiva open, you have hardly any time to prepare your lectures, and all she sees are people knocking on your door with their problems. Yet she stands beside you faithful and unwavering. It is time that she sees that you get a little kavod (honor).

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir of Gur (1799-1866) explains that sometimes people become so humbled to the point of forgetting that they can actually achieve wonderful accomplishments. Often, humility breeds self-effacement that may lead to despair. Of course Rashi is correct in explaining that those who are haughty as the cedar must humble themselves as grass, but one must also bear in mind an equally important fact – that at times after one has been humiliated as low as the hyssop he must rise in his own eyes to the height of a cedar and proudly exclaim that he can and will accomplish the lofty and far reaching goal to which he or she aspires. And those are goals that only the cedar's limbs can touch.

So, perhaps the lowly hyssop must be bound with a seemingly mismatched and more supercilious counterpart, the cedar. Because when they are offered hand-in-hand, they may have a lot to learn from each other.

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*In memory of Joseph Fertig by Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Fertig
Good Shabbos!*

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Tazria

A Joyful Time Should Be Had by All

At the beginning of Parshas Tazria, the Torah says that after a woman gives birth to a male son, she is ritually impure for seven days. Then, following immersion in a mikva (a ritual bath), she returns to a state of ritual purity. On the eighth day, male sons are circumcised. The Talmud in Niddah (31b) provides a very interesting reason for performing the bris milah on the eighth day.

During the seven days of ritual impurity following the birth of a son, the mother is a niddah. In early generations, prior to subsequent rabbinic prohibitions which exist today, the husband and wife were finally allowed to fully be together by the eighth day.

The Gemara explains that the reason why we wait until the eighth day for the bris milah and the accompanying celebration is that prior to this time, the happiness of the husband and wife are limited by the prohibition against intimately sharing their joy together. The lack of ability by husband and wife to celebrate fully might even dampen the spirits and restrict the enjoyment of the other guests. Therefore, the Torah established that milah be 'delayed' until the eighth day, so that everyone will be able to fully participate in the joyous occasion.

Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein zt"l (the Slobodka Rosh Yeshiva) points out that the Torah is expressing

tremendous sensitivity for people's feelings. This passage essentially says that milah should really be performed sooner. The Torah has us wait until the eighth day to make sure that everyone who is present at the bris will be able to fully enjoy themselves.

The concept of sharing happy occasions and maximizing everyone's simcha is so basic to Torah ethics that it justifies 'postponing' milah until the eighth day.

Rav Moshe Mordechai pointed out a parallel to a minhag during the Yizkor prayer in memory of the dead, which we say four times a year—on Yom Kippur, and at the end of the three major holidays (Pesach, Shavuot, and Shemini Atzeres following Sukkos). There is a virtually universal custom that when Yizkor is said, people whose parents are both still living leave the sanctuary during the recital. What is the reason for this custom?

Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein wrote that the reason for this custom is the very concept mentioned earlier. Yizkor is usually recited on Yom Tov. If reciting Yizkor is not exactly a joyous experience for the people whose parents are deceased, it can at least be a comforting experience to remember their loved ones on Yom Tov. But if the other people witness this and watch friends and relatives perhaps shedding tears for departed parents, that would affect and contradict their enjoyment of the Yom Tov. We are trying to avoid this. We try to provide the appropriate form of Simchas Yom Tov (happiness on the holiday) for everyone.

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Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Loneliness versus Societal Life – Tazri'a-Metzora

Parashat Tazri'a Metzora - 5783

The portions of Tazri'a-Metzora, which we will read this week, deal with a variety of impurities, the halachic implications stemming from a state of impurity – such as distancing oneself from the Temple – and the ways to purify oneself from these states. At the center of these is the "metzora" – a person who suffered from a skin disease that is unlike other diseases that are treated in conventional medical ways. "Tzara'at" – which is not Hansen's Disease – is viewed by the Torah as punishment for misconduct. The result of this is that the treatment is not done by a doctor but by a kohen (priest), and the methods of treatment do not include conventional remedies as in any other disease but include special sacrifices that the "metzora" brings to the Temple.

The Sages interpreted "tzara'at" as punishment for the sin of "lashon hara" (slander). A person who takes advantage of his social connections to say negative things about others is punished with this disease. The removal of the "metzora" from human society until the disease disappears

is interpreted as part of the punishment intended to restore the correct relationship between the individual and society, and to understand the negativity of slander.

Each person faces two inherent contradictory tendencies: individualism versus collective affiliation, singularity versus sociality. On the one hand, man is a social being, he wants to be part of a community, and loneliness is a harsh punishment for him. On the other hand, a person feels a deep need to preserve his uniqueness, his personality, and the feelings and insights that exist only in him. No one has an exact replica of himself, nor is there anyone who can know and understand man accurately — except himself.

Sometimes, the collective blurs the individual. A person is surrounded by society from the day he is born. This may lead him to lose his personal identity, not listen to himself, not recognize his hidden personal desires, and in fact, miss the deepest and richest experience of his life. Sometimes the opposite occurs when a person feels that society threatens his personal identity, so he seeks to quit society and isolate himself to discover a rich personal world even at the steep price of loneliness.

Is there a way to balance the uniqueness of each person with life in society? There is, and it is with what is he called ‘ayin tova’ – a positive outlook. A person who looks at others and society with appreciation, recognizes the value of human beings and seeks to learn from them and improve – does not dismiss the conventions of society, but acquires from it the advantages it provides. When one does so while maintaining one’s own voice, one gains the benefits of individuality as well as the advantages of collective affiliation.

A person who speaks slanderously about others adopts a negative view of them, and therefore of society; perhaps out of fear that a positive view of society will suppress his own independent and unique personality. This perspective and the resulting behavior poison societal life. This person not only loses the ability to enjoy a proper societal life, but also harms his environment.

How is “tzara’at” related to this? In some places in the Torah, we find “tzara’at” to be an expression of death, of decay. A person who rejects societal life and strives for extreme individualism loses an important dimension of life. In describing the creation of the world in the book of Genesis, we find G-d’s judgment of creation. Again and again the sentence is repeated, “And G-d saw that it was good.” All of creation is good, except for one thing: “It is not good for man to be alone.” Loneliness is not the way for the individual to develop. On the contrary, it is precisely through social interaction that the person is called upon to develop his independent personality.

A person who speaks slanderously creates social decay. There is no choice but to temporarily banish this person from society in order to enable him to appreciate life in society. The loneliness that the “metzora” is commanded to

experience is the cure for his illness that harms society as a whole.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

Rav Kook Torah

Rav Kook on Tazria: Shiloh and the Birth-Offerings

Rabbi Chanan Morrison

The Torah portion of Tazria begins with the offerings of women who recently gave birth. Astonishingly, it was due to these birth-offerings that a distinguished lineage of priests was permanently disqualified from serving in the Temple. Even more tragically, this incident led to the destruction of the Shiloh Tabernacle, the forerunner to the Temple in Jerusalem, after serving nearly for four centuries as the spiritual hub of the Jewish people (Yoma 9a).

The Sin of Eli’s Sons

The book of Samuel paints a disturbing picture of the Temple service in Shiloh. The sons of Eli were insensitive priests who would take their portions by force, treating the Temple offerings with contempt (I Sam. II:17). Their most egregious offense, according to the reports reaching the ears of their father, was that “they slept with the women who streamed to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting” (I Sam. II:22).

The Talmud cautions against taking this verse literally: “Anyone who says the sons of Eli sinned is mistaken” (Shabbat 55b). If so, what does it mean that “they slept with the women”?

According to the Sages, they failed to promptly offer the birth-offerings, thus preventing the women from returning home. Not trusting the priests to bring the offerings, the women remained in Shiloh until they saw with their own eyes that their offering was completed. Eli’s sons’ inattentive service caused the women to be unnecessarily separated from their husbands; the verse refers to their irresponsible behavior as if they had slept with them.

Is this some form of Talmudic obfuscation, with the rabbis downplaying the abuse perpetrated by Eli’s sons? Why should this offense be the cause for the destruction of the Tabernacle?

The Purpose of the Temple Service

If we wish to understand what brought about the fall of the Tabernacle in Shiloh, we should not assign too much weight to passing incidents, grave though they may be. Rather we should look for signs of moral decay that undermined the foundations of the Temple service and its purpose.

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

Life also includes times of trouble and distress. What will restore its natural happiness and joy? What will rejuvenate it and grant it nobility and grace? This can only be

accomplished by uncovering the holiness found in all aspects of life.

The Birth-Offering

The birth of a child is a wonderful occasion, bringing new life and joy to the family. But the birthing experience itself is a challenging one, involving great pain and suffering. The complex experiences of the woman giving birth can generate stress and tension, and are only overcome with the passage of time, as life returns to its usual joy and happiness.

What can cleanse the difficult impressions and feelings that result from this suffering, rooted in the failings of Adam and Eve in the beginnings of humanity? Their remedy requires an act of drawing near to God. The new mother elevates her birthing experience with her chatat and olah offerings, rectifying the shortcomings caused by the rebellious tendencies of the human heart. This act of devotion opens her heart will love for her Creator, filling her with a profound appreciation for the greatness of the One who gives life to all creatures.

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

The Service in Shiloh

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

The priests should have seen the birth-offering as a vehicle to elevate life. How could they delay these offerings, thus impairing their primary purpose: shalom bayit - harmony and peace in family life?

Eli's sons mistakenly viewed their priesthood as an entitlement. Instead of a service based on purity and holiness, their service reeked of high-handed arrogance. They were functionaries, focusing solely on the technical aspects of the Temple service.

It was this corruption that caused the Tabernacle's destruction - something that no specific sinful act could bring about. Had Eli's sons truly sinned as written, such a state would not have continued for long without correction. The service in Shiloh did not suffer from any particular evil incident, but from a moral decay at its core, necessitating its destruction in order to be corrected.

(Adapted from *Ein Eyah* vol. IV, pp. 49-50)

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Tazria-Metzora

פרשת תזריע-מצורע תשפ"ג

Parashas Tazria

וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו

On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. (12:3)

The custom among Jews is to wish the father of the newly-circumcised infant, *K'sheim she'nichnas l'bris, kein yikanes l'Torah, u'lechuppah, u'lmaasim tovim*, "As the infant enters into the covenant of *Bris Milah*, so, too, should he enter into Torah, *chuppah*/marriage and the performance of good deeds." Many commentators have offered interpretations of this statement by *Chazal* (*Shabbos* 137b) – each one intimating an important lesson. I will share but a few. *Tochachas Chaim* explains the concept behind *k'sheim she'nichnas*, "As the (infant) enters into the *Bris*": When a father brings his newborn son into the covenant of Avraham *Avinu*, it is a momentous occasion – one for which he spares no expense. He seeks the finest, most experienced *mohel*, ritual circumcisor, and prepares a decent to lavish *seudah*, festive meal, following the *bris*. Even one who is not swimming in money does what he can to celebrate this auspicious event. When the child begins to grow up and it is time to arrange for his education, however, the father's deep pockets are suddenly empty. He is prepared to get by with a mediocre *rebbe*/tutor whose going rate is less than the sought after, experienced *rebbe*. When it is time to marry off his son, he is suddenly on an austerity program, in which every penny counts. The father must remember that, while *Bris Milah* is important and life-altering, so, too, is Torah study and marriage. They go hand-in-hand.

Alternatively, when an infant enters the covenant, he has no vested interests, no ego, no anxiety concerning what he personally benefits from this experience. Likewise, his approach to studying Torah and the performance of good deeds should not be oriented towards personal gain, recognition, an opportunity to aggrandize himself and his activities. He should study Torah *lishmah*, for its sake, and carry out acts of lovingkindness simply because it is Hashem's command.

The *mitzvah* of *Bris Milah* transforms the infant forever. It is an indelible sign on his body that remains with him from cradle to grave. Likewise, one should never divest himself of his marriage obligations and his commitment to Torah study. Sadly, we find excuses to rationalize our lack of interest/commitment. We somehow find time for everything but... As *Bris Milah* is a game-changer in one's commitment, marriage and regular Torah study should likewise be an intrinsic part of our lives.

Why do we wish this blessing exclusively for the *mitzvah* of *Bris Milah*? Why do we not extend this blessing

to every *mitzvah*? When one puts on *Tefillin*, eats *matzah*, sits in the *Succah*, makes *kiddush*, we do not say, “As you performed this *mitzvah*, so, too, shall you merit to perform other *mitzvos*.” What is unique about *Bris Milah*? The *milah* experience transforms the child into a Jew. It transforms his entire body. As such, he (via the *mitzvah*) becomes a *cheftza d’mitzvah*, article of the *mitzvah*, much like *Tefillin*, *matzah*, *Succah*. Concerning other *mitzvos*, however, there is a *gavra*, man/person, who performs the *mitzvah* and a *cheftza*, the article/subject upon which the *mitzvah* is performed. We bless the child that, just as you became a *cheftza d’mitzvah* through *milah*, so, too, shall your relationship with Torah, marriage and good deeds not be an extraneous, externalized experience. It must become a part of him. This can only happen when he becomes a part of it.

I have always wondered why the word *chuppah*, which refers to the marriage canopy, is used to connote marriage. Why not simply say “marriage”? Perhaps the word *chuppah* is designed to give us a window into understanding the proper approach to Torah and *maasim tovim*. *Chazal* (*Gittin* 57a) relate that there used to be a tradition in Yerushalayim that, at the birth of a girl, the parents planted a cypress tree. At the birth of a boy, they planted a cedar tree. When the children grew up and were ready to marry, they cut the branches down and used them as the four poles of their *chuppah*. [Probably each parent held one pole.] Why was the wood used to fashion poles? Would it not have made more sense to use the wood to build a house for the young couple? I think the lesson to be derived herein is that parents raise their children and escort them to the *chuppah*. They prepare them for life. The actual building of their home is up to the young couple – who (if they had a good upbringing) incorporate the lessons (which their parents) infused in them into setting the standard for the moral, ethical and spiritual compass of their jointly-built home.

Having said this, the lesson of *chuppah* is: Children live their own lives based upon their education, both formal education and the modeling that they received from their parents. We pray for the *rach ha’nimol*, young circumcised child, that, just as his parents brought him to his *Bris Milah*, he should be worthy of having parents whose life lessons concerning marriage, Torah study and performance of good deeds will be worth incorporating and building upon.

Last, *Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl*, was writing a *mazel tov* note to one of his *talmidim*, students, whose wife had recently given birth to a boy. The *Rosh Yeshivah* wrote, “I would like to share an entire litany of blessings with you. However, what can I add to *Chazal* who coined the perfect blessing that you should merit to raise him *l’Torah, u’lchuppah, u’lmaasim tovim*? Clearly, every blessing that I could give is included in these three blessings.”

Parashas Metzora

ואם דל הוא ואין ידו משגת

If he is poor and his means are not sufficient. (14:21)

The Torah goes out of its way to be sensitive to the needs of one who is impoverished. I refer to one who simply has no means of providing for his family. Poverty is, for the most part, something either we hear about – but do not actually experience – or towards which we conveniently close our eyes because it makes us feel uncomfortable and guilty. This does not mean that it does not exist. Serious pockets of poverty exist all over, especially in families who have made Torah their life’s endeavor. Since, *baruch Hashem*, most of us remain spectators, the feelings of hunger and hopelessness that some people experience are beyond our ability to understand.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates the story of one of *Klal Yisrael’s* greatest Torah giants who, at the beginning of his rise to distinction, was living in abject poverty. Once he was invited to attend the *Pesach Seder* of a prominent family. The family had *davened Tefillas Maariv* earlier in order to usher in the *Yom Tov*. As a result, the family returned home while it was still daylight. This *gadol* asked to make *kiddush* immediately. The host family was surprised. “On the *Seder* night, it is appropriate to make *kiddush* after *tzeis ha’kochavim* (nightfall; the time when three stars are visible in the sky). His rejoinder is a comment we should all take to heart: “*Chazal* teach that one who is need of the support of others, who looks to them for his sustenance, his world is dark and bleak. My world is also dark – so dark that, even if the sun is still shining outside, for me, it is dark enough to recite *kiddush*.” Having said this, *Rav Zilberstein* observes that such words coming from the mouth of a *gadol b’Yisrael* should engender within us feelings of empathy for those who have less than we do. I think that empathy is not sufficient. We must do something about it.

להורות ביום השמא וביום הטהור זאת תורת הצרעת

To rule on which day it is contaminated and on which day it is purified; this is the law of tzaraas. (14:57)

The one who speaks *lashon hora*, who slanders with impunity, has a jaundiced view of people. In order to speak negatively about someone, it is natural (and probably necessary) to knock down his personal opinion of the subject of his *lashon hora* a few notches. He, therefore, has no qualms about humiliating him, because, after all, what is he? While this attitude may not course through the mind of every *baal lashon hora*, the mere fact that he is callous and unfeeling concerning the feelings of his fellow Jew is an indication that he has a low opinion of him. In order to achieve atonement properly, he himself must feel the pain of being the subject of condescendence, feeling belittled, treated like a dishrag – used and thrown away.

In his *Haamek Davar* commentary to the *parshah*, the *Netziv, zl*, cites the *Raavad* in his commentary to *Toras*

Kohanim, who explains the word *l'horos* as to teach others to recognize the signs of an impure plague. Indeed, he is encouraged to call other *Kohanim* to explain and teach them, so that they will know what to do when they are asked to rule regarding the impurity of a plague. The *Netziv* explains that this is what is meant by *Zos Toras hatzaraas*, for it is only concerning *tzaraas* that we have an enjoinder to teach. Veritably, why should the *metzora* be subject to the scrutiny of an entire class of *Kohanim*? Why should he suffer the indignation of having a group of novice *Kohanim* studying his skin, looking at his body as if it were a piece of meat? Anyone who has been a patient in a teaching hospital has been subject to such scrutiny when his attending physician enters his room with a class of interns, poking and prodding. The *Netziv* explains that the *metzora* is treated to his own medicine. He had no problem shaming his fellow and putting him in an awkward position. So, too, in the course of expiating his sin, he will be treated in a similar manner.

It all boils down to how we view others. If our opinion is low, our treatment of them will reflect it. We have to find redeeming merit in every person, to elevate him in our eyes. After all, Hashem considers him worthy enough to be here, alive and well. Why should we not act likewise? The *Koznitzer Maggid, zl*, had a *chassid* who was a well-respected *Rav* in Cracow. He was a *halachic* decisor of note, loved and admired by all of Cracow. Everything seemed to be going well, except for one dark cloud in his life which plagued him. He and his wife had yet to be blessed with a child.

The *Rav* made numerous trips to petition the *Maggid's* blessing for a child. Sadly, the *Maggid* averted his request. Finally, the *Rav* broke down and asked, "Why can the *Rav* not bless me? Am I different from all the others who have been blessed, and who are today embracing their child?"

When the *Rebbe* heard this, he looked deeply into his *chassid's* eyes and said, "My dear friend, I would do anything in my power to help you. Alas, all of the gates in Heaven are sealed to your blessing. I have tried and tried, but I have been unsuccessful in opening them."

When the *Rav* heard this, he was visibly shaken. "Does this mean that there is no hope for me to have a child?" he asked dejectedly. "No, there is one person whose access to Heavenly favor is great. His name is Yosef Drukick. Go to him and petition his blessing."

When the *Rav* heard the name Yossele Drukick, he was bowled over. Who did not know the elusive Yossele? Rather, nobody knew him because he refused to interact with people. He was the most feared person in the community. He was introverted and wanted nothing to do with anyone. Children ran from him in terror. How could such a person be his only option for a blessing? But when the *Koznitzer* spoke, it was not to be questioned. He would make it to Yossele's broken-down shack on the outskirts of

town and petition his blessing. No one had ever seen the inside of the shack that Yossele shared with his wife and children. It was where Yossele remained enclosed in his own world, isolated from everyone. During the week, however, he would go out and travel from village to village repairing pots and pans.

The *Rav* figured that he would just show up at Yossele's door *Erev Shabbos* and say that he had nowhere to spend *Shabbos*. Could he be their guest? The following Friday he implemented his plan, arriving at Yossele's house just before *Shabbos*. He knocked on the door and was met by a woman who asked what he wanted. He related his tale of woe and pleaded with her to allow him to stay for *Shabbos*. Her response was an emphatic, "No." "My husband does not allow people into the house." After tearful begging, she said, "You can stay in the back with the horses, but the house is strictly off limits." He went to the back and made himself comfortable with the two old horses that would pull Yossele's wagon. This was not his idea of *Shabbos*, but he must listen to his *Rebbe*.

Just before sunset, as he was about to usher in *Shabbos Kodesh*, he heard a loud knock at the door. He opened it to come face to face with the dread Yossele. "What are you doing here?" he asked. The *Rav* began to stammer out his story. "You can remain here, but under no circumstances may you come to the house," Yossele warned.

That *Shabbos* was one to remember. The *Rav* had some *challah* that he brought with him. It was to be his meals, which he ate in solitude together with the horses. On Friday night, he was fitful, as sleep was hard to come by between the odor of the horses and the cold that seeped through the old broken walls. *Shabbos* morning was no better. Indeed, he was counting the minutes until he could escape from this misery.

All day, he was disconcerted by the thoughts coursing through his mind. Why was he here? To get a *brachah* from a man whom he had (like so many others) shunned and reviled. He had erected a wall between himself and the Yosseles of this world – and now he needed him. It was the Yossele whom he had avoided that held the keys to his becoming a father. He introspected on this: "I have erected a wall between me and 'them'. They have neither been accepted nor welcomed, because they were different." The *Rav* said to himself, "I am really not deserving or worthy of Yossele's blessing. I have shunned him, and now I ask for his favor? This is hypocrisy!" When he realized his shortcomings vis-à-vis those who did not fit in his "circle," he broke down in bitter weeping.

It was at that moment that he felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned around to behold a man with a silver-white beard that seemed to glow. His eyes shone brightly and (he felt) bore through him to the core of his soul. The image was metaphysical. "Come into my home," the man smiled. "Let us wash for *shalosh seudos*."

He walked into the house as if in a trance. There was a table covered with a clean, white tablecloth. There was challah, wine and gefilte fish, but above all, it was a welcoming, although other-worldly, scene. The *Rav* just sat there and listened to the beautiful melodies emanating from Yossele's mouth. Suddenly, Yossele stopped singing and moaned, "Oy, *Srultche Koznitzer ken mir shoin oichet*, "Oy, the *Koznitzer Maggid* also knows about me." (Apparently, Yossele was one of the *lamed vav*, thirty-six, holy *tzaddikim*, that grace each generation. They seek neither recognition nor acclaim. They devote their lives to unblemished devotion to Hashem.)

Yossele asked the *Rav*, "How can I help you?" "I request a *brachah* for a child." "You will be blessed with a child" was Yossele's immediate response. "There is one condition. You must name him Yossele."

The lesson is quite clear: If we bond with others, we will not speak negatively. Hashem will then listen to our prayers.

Sponsored in loving memory of our mother

ברורה רחל בת ר' אברהם מרדכי ע"ה - נפ' ג' אייר - תנצ"ה

Dr. Morris and Marcie Kinast

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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

Ohr Somayach Insights into Halacha

For the week ending 22 April 2023 / 1 Iyar 5783

Facts and Formulae For the Forgetful

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Here we are, post Pesach, and an interesting issue of repetition has come up again (no pun intended). Over the course of the last Yom Tov filled month, and right up to, and including this Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Iyar, a simple question might elicit a very different rabbinic response. The subject? What does one do if the halachically mandated 'Ya'aleh V'Yavo' in Birkas Hamazon[1] was forgotten? Does Bentching need to be repeated or not? And why would there be different answers to a seemingly straightforward sheilah?

Repeating Rationales

This quite common clique of queries is not new; it is actually addressed several hundred years ago in the very first printed halachic responsum of the renowned Rav Akiva Eiger zt"l.[2] Someone wrote to Rav Eiger explaining that some members of his household forgot to say 'Ya'aleh V'Yavo' in Bentching, and his local Rabbi told them to repeat Birkas Hamazon. Yet, the questioner seemed to recall a different time when faced with the same dilemma his rabbi ruled not to repeat Bentching. So, this perplexed person, as opposed to doing what most would do in his situation – request an explanation and halachic rationale from said rabbi, instead decided to write to the Gadol Hador seeking an elucidation.

Rav Eiger responded that Birkas Hamazon must be repeated when someone forgets 'Ya'aleh V'Yavo' on Yom

Tov. However, if it was forgotten on Rosh Chodesh then one does not repeat Bentching. The distinction is fascinating! It lies in the different halachic requirements for a festive bread meal ('Seudah'). Yom Tov, just like Shabbos, has an actual requirement of 'Seudah,' therefore if one does not mention the Yom Tov day in Birkas Hamazon as part of 'Ya'aleh V'Yavo,' or likewise, Retzei on Shabbos, he must repeat the whole Bentching.[3]

On the other hand, Rosh Chodesh is different. Although there is a Mitzvah to have a 'Seudah' on it, it is not actually halachically required,[4] and therefore Bentching is not repeated if 'Ya'aleh V'Yavo' was forgotten.[5] [6] Accordingly, on this (or any) Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, if one would forget 'Ya'aleh V'Yavo' in Bentching, he would not repeat his Bentching;[7] whereas if it was Retzei that was forgotten, he would.

Women's Rights

Yet, Rav Akiva Eiger added a caveat. He states that if the letter writer was referring to a woman forgetting 'Ya'aleh V'Yavo,' then even on Yom Tov she should not repeat Birkas Hamazon. He explains that a women's requirement to have a bread 'Seudah' on Yom Tov is due to the Mitzvah of Oneg / Simchas Yom Tov and falls under the category of a 'Mitzvas Asei Shehazman Gerama,' a time-bound positive commandment, from which women are technically generally exempt.[8] Therefore, he rules, if a woman forgot 'Ya'aleh V'Yavo,' she should not repeat Bentching, as she was not halachically mandated to have bread at the 'Seudah.'

The sole exceptions to this rule are on Shabbos, due to the joint obligations of positive and negative commandments (Zachor V'Shamor)[9] that men and women are equally obligated in following, and on the first night of Pesach regarding eating Matzah, which likewise has a joint obligation of positive and negative commandments (not eating chometz and eating Matzah).[10] Exclusively on these specific times, Rav Eiger maintains, would a women indeed need to repeat Bentching.

Requiring Repeating

However, opposition to Rav Akiva Eiger's novel ruling regarding women was not long in coming, most notably by Rav Shlomo Cohen zt"l, eminent Dayan in Vilna and author of several authoritative sefarim, including the Cheshek Shlomo, and Shu"t Binyan Shlomo.[11]

These decisors noted that the Shulchan Aruch, when he codified this halacha, did not seem to make any distinction between which Yom Tov it was, nor between men's and women's obligations, when he ruled that one must repeat Bentching if 'Ya'aleh V'Yavo' was mistakenly forgotten. Additionally, according to the understanding of many great authorities, including the Pri Megadim, Sha'agas Aryeh, Shoel' U'Meishiv, and Shulchan Aruch Harav, women are obligated in the same level of Mitzvah of Simchas Yom Tov that men are, including the Mitzvah to have a bread 'Seudah.' [12] According to this understanding, women

would also need to repeat Bentching for forgetting ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo,’ on any Yom Tov.

The Defense Rests (and Does Not Repeat)

However, Rav Eiger did not take this lying down. In the hashmatos (appendix) to his original teshuva, Rav Akiva Eiger later defended his ruling, addressing these valid points raised. He maintained that although women obviously are included in the Mitzvah of Simchas Yom Tov, he makes a distinction that their requirement is referring to wearing new clothing and celebrating Yom Tov with Bassar V’Yayin (meat and wine); yet, without an actual obligation to partake in a bread ‘Seudah.’

Rav Eiger cites proof to this assessment, that we find regarding the halacha of repeating Bentching, the Shulchan Aruch rules that Chol Hamoed has similar status to Rosh Chodesh, and one does not repeat Birkas Hamazon if he forgot ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo.’[13] Yet, Chol HaMoed being part and parcel of Yom Tov, still retains the obligation for Simchas Yom Tov. Therefore, concludes Rav Eiger, it stands to reason that the Mitzvah of Simchas Yom Tov alone does not sufficiently mandate an actual bread ‘Seudah.’

Bottom Line

So, how do contemporary authorities rule, having to choose a path between such luminaries of generations past? While several poskim rule stringently that a woman should repeat Birkas Hamazon if she forgot ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo’ on Yom Tov, reportedly including Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l,[14] and others seem undecided,[15] it seems that most contemporary authorities, including the Sdei Chemed, and the Maharsham, and more recently, the Debreciner Rav and the Shevet Halevi,[16] rule that a woman should not repeat Bentching for forgetting ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo’ on Yom Tov, except on the first night of Pesach. This is also the conclusion of several contemporary sefarim that exclusively deal with halachos pertaining to women.[17]

As an aside, these authorities add that this psak surely holds true and repetition unnecessary in the eventuality of a case where she is merely uncertain if she said ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo’ (and even on the first night of Pesach).[18] They assert that aside from following Rav Akiva Eiger’s trailblazing ruling, there is additional justification to allow leniency for women regarding repetition of Bentching due to lapse of ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo,’ based on several minority opinions.[19] Indeed, mv”r Rav Yaakov Blau zt”l (Chaver Badatz Eida Chareidis in Yerushalayim and author of Pischei Choshen et al.), shortly before he was niftar,[20] as well as Rav Asher Weiss, the renowned Minchas Asher,[21] recently told this author that the ikar l’halacha follows Rav Akiva Eiger, and women should not repeat Bentching on Yom Tov for forgetting ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo,’ aside from the first night of Pesach (and of course, on Shabbos if she forgot ‘Retzei’).

In conclusion, if you just finished Bentching and realized (too late) that ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo’ was not recited, before

panicking, just remember the sine qua non: Were you truly obligated to eat the ‘Seudah’ that you just finished? If so, then your Bentching was incomplete, and needs repetition. If not, repetition is not required as you already were yotzei ‘V’achalta v’savata u’vayrachta,’[22] and are now worthy of receiving Hashem’s personal favor![23] B’tayavon!

Postscript: Sefardic Supplement

It is important to note that most of this article follows the Ashkenazic rule. For Sefardim the psak may actually be somewhat different. The Kaf Hachaim, based on Tosafos’ shittah that one is obligated to have bread exclusively on the first night of Sukkos and Pesach, rules that these are the only times that even a man must repeat Bentching on Yom Tov; otherwise, the well known rule of ‘safek brachos lehakel’ is followed.[24] Actually, and even though the Shulchan Aruch does not rule this way, many contemporary Sefardic Poskim, including the Ben Ish Chai, maintain a similar position to the Kaf Hachaim, that exclusively on the first nights of Pesach and Sukkos would a man have to repeat Bentching for forgetting ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo.’ Otherwise, even on Yom Tov, he would not repeat Birkas Hamazon.[25]

The Kaf Hachaim continues that if a man has to repeat Bentching only on these two exclusive times, then certainly, a woman, whose chiyuv to Bentch in the first place is maximum a safek Mitzvah Deoraysa or Derabbanan should not have to repeat Bentching for missing ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo’ at any time. Following this would mean that a woman should never have to repeat Bentching for forgetting ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo.’ Rav Eziel Hildesheimer zt”l, famed founder and Rosh Yeshiva of the Rabbinical Seminary of Berlin, ruled similarly to the Kaf Hachaim, that women never need to repeat Bentching for forgetting ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo.’[26]

Although many dispute the Kaf Hachaim’s reasoning regarding women, including Rav Ovadiah Yosef zt”l, Rav Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt”l, Rav Yaakov Hillel, and the Birur Halacha, and in the words of Rav Ovadiah, “ain b’sfaiko shel Rabbi Eziel l’dchos haVaday shel HaGaon R’ Akiva Eiger,” meaning that they follow Rav Akiva Eiger’s ruling of mandated repeating for forgetting ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo’ at least regarding Shabbos and the first night of Pesach,[27] nevertheless, several authorities do indeed use the Kaf Hachaim’s rationales as snifei lehakel for the rest of the Yomim Tovim, allowing women not to repeat Bentching for forgetting ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo.’[28] As with any case in halacha, if this happens, one should ascertain a proper ruling for themselves from their own competent halachic authority.

The author wishes to thank mv”r Rav Yosef Yitzchak Lerner, as much of this article is based on his excellent comprehensive sefer Shgiyos Mi Yavin (vol. 1, Ch. 25).

For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomos / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu.

[1] See Tur and Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 188: 5).

[2]Shu”t Rabbi Akiva Eiger (vol. 1: 1); also cited b’kitzur in his glosses to Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 188: 6).

[3]This entire discussion is referring to when one forgot to say ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo’ at all during Bentching. If one remembered during the actual Birkas Hamazon, depending at which point he remembered, there is a specific bracha to say (dependant on the holiday) and may not need to repeat his Bentching. See Shulchan Aruch and main commentaries (Orach Chaim 188: 5 – 7).

[4]See Tur and Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 419), Pri Chodosh (ad loc. 1), Pri Megadim (Mishbetzos Zahav ad loc. 1) and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 2). The Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 2) concludes that a ‘Yarei Shamayim’ would make sure to wash and have a ‘Seudah’ on Rosh Chodesh in order to honor the day properly, as one who honors the Mitzvos is rewarded many times over.

[5]Gemara Brachos (49a-b), Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 188: 6 -7), Shulchan Aruch HaRav (ad loc. 10), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (44: 12 - 14), Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 188: 15), Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 26; Biur Halacha s.v. l’rosh).

[6]This rule of not repeating Bentching includes Chol Hamoed as well (Shulchan Aruch ad loc.). However, regarding Rosh Hashana, it is not so simple. Several poskim maintain that there is no actual obligation to eat davka bread on Rosh Hashana [and although not the normative halacha, there are shittos in the Gaonim that one may actually fast on Rosh Hashana - see Mordechai (Rosh Hashana Ch. 1: 708 at length, and Yoma Ch.1: 723), Rosh (at the very end of Maseches Rosh Hashana), Terumas HaDeshen (Shu”t 278), and Beis Yosef (Orach Chaim 597) and Mishnah Berurah ad loc. 1]], and therefore rule that if one forgot ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo’ on Rosh Hashana, Bentching is not repeated. These include the Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 188: 7), Pri Megadim (ad loc. Eishel Avraham 7), Shulchan Aruch Harav (Orach Chaim 188: 10), Derech Hachaim (Hilchos Birkas Hamazon 7), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (44: end 14), Kaf Hachaim (Orach Chaim 188: 25), Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin zt”l (Shu”t Gevuros Eliyahu, vol. 1 – Orach Chaim 155: end 9), the Ba’er Moshe (Shu”t vol. 3: 38, 13; however he does admit that this ruling is not so clear, therefore it is preferable to ask someone else to be motzi him m’safek), and Rav Moshe Sternbuch (Moadim U’Zmanim vol. 1: 4 haghah and vol. 8, Lekutei Ha’aros on vol. 1: 4; Shu”t Teshuvos V’Hanhagos vol. 2: 269). However, others, including the Elyah Rabba (Orach Chaim 188: 8), Matteh Efraim (583: 4), Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 21; who maintains that this the pashut pshat in the Rambam and Shulchan Aruch), Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt”l (Halichos Shlomo, Moadim vol. 1, Rosh Hashana Ch. 1, footnote 87) and the Shemiras Shabbos K’Hilchasa (vol. 2, Ch. 57: 7 and footnote 23) rule that one must indeed repeat Bentching. The Shulchan Aruch Harav (Siddur, Piskei Birkas Hamazon) maintains that at the Seudah on Leil Rosh Hashana, Bentching is repeated for forgetting ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo,’ but not at the daytime Seudah. See also Yeshuos Yaakov (Orach Chaim 188: 3) and Elef Hamagen on the Matteh Efraim (ibid. 29). Interestingly, the Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 19) brings down both sides of this machlokes but does not rule conclusively. See also Shgiyos Mi Yavin (vol. 1, Ch. 25: 21 - pg. 343).

[7]See Beis Yosef and Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 188:7), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (44:15), Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 18), and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 28). See also Shu”t Yad Dodi (vol. 1, Hilchos Birkas Hamazon 21).

[8]See, for example, Gemara Brachos (20b).

[9]We know that ‘Shamor V’Zachor B’Dibbur Echad’, as mentioned in Rav Shlomo Alkabetz’s timeless ‘Lecha Dodi’, and hence, it is precisely this nuance that teaches us the joint obligations of positive and negative commandments (Zachor V’Shamor) on Shabbos, which obligates women the same as men. Rav Eiger explains that as making Kiddush is for ‘Zachor,’ and the halacha is that Kiddush needs to be ‘b’makon seudah’ (Pesachim 101a; and duly codified by the Rif (Pesachim 20a), Rosh (ad loc. Ch. 10: 5), Tosafos (ad loc. 100b s.v. yedei Kiddush), Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos, Ch. 29: 8 and 10), and Tur and Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 273: 1). [This obligation was discussed at length in a previous article titled ‘More Common Kiddush Questions: Kiddush

B’Makom Seudah.’] Therefore, he concludes, a woman is required to have a bread ‘Seudah’ on Shabbos.

[10]Gemara Pesachim (43b). See Shulchan Aruch Harav (Orach Chaim 472: 25).

[11]Shu”t Binyan Shlomo (vol. 2, Orach Chaim 47); also cited in the Sdei Chemed (vol. 9, Asifas Dinim, Ma’areches Yom Tov, 2: 6). He asserts that even according to Rav Akiva Eiger, on Shavuos (d’ba’inan nami lachem - see Gemara Pesachim 68b) women should repeat Bentching if ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo’ wasn’t said.

[12]Pri Megadim (Orach Chaim 328, Eishel Avraham 10; regarding women’s obligation to have a bread ‘Seudah’), Shu”t Sha’agas Aryeh (66, regarding women’s obligations for Simchas Yom Tov), Shu”t Shoel U’Meishiv (Tinyana vol. 2: 55; regarding women’s obligations for Kiddush and Seudah on Yom Tov), and Shulchan Aruch Harav (Orach Chaim 271: 5, regarding women’s obligations for Kiddush on Yom Tov). The Maharsham (Shu”t vol. 3: 226) and Rav Moshe Feinstein (Shu”t Igros Moshe Orach Chaim vol. 4: 100) also wrote responsae explaining that women are obligated in Kiddush on Yom Tov as well. [However, although the Sefer Hachinuch (end Mitzva 31) rules explicitly this way relating to Women’s obligation of Kiddush on Shabbos, the Minchas Chinuch (ad loc. 18) is mesupak with this regarding Yom Tov, as the Sefer Hachinuch does not mention it.] The Rambam (Hilchos Avoda Zara Ch. 12: 3) also seemingly rules this way, calling Simchas Yom Tov a ‘Mitzvas Asei Shehazman Gerama’ that women are obligated in. The Beis Hillel (Yoreh Deah 273) implies this way as well, opining that women even have a chiyuv to be metaher themselves for Yom Tov as men do. The Mishnah Berurah (Biur Halacha 188, s.v. seudah) also cites that there is no Simchas Yom Tov without bread. Many of these shittos are based on the Tosafos HaRosh (Brachos 49b s.v. Shabason u’Yamim Tovim) who concludes that “l’olam” there is a chiyuv to eat lechem due to Simchas Yom Tov. [Interestingly, Tosafos (ad loc. s.v. eey baui) asks the same question but concludes differently.] See also Sdei Chemed (ibid.) at length.

[13]Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 188:7).

[14]Including the Pischei Teshuva of the Mahari”a M’Vilna (Orach Chaim 188: 6 and 529: 2), Shu”t Sheilas Shmuel (11), Orchos Chaim (188: 3 and 529: 7), Shu”t Yad Eliyahu (17: 2), Shu”t Sheilas Yaakov (97 and 125), Shu”t Mishkan Betzael (vol. 1: 137), Shu”t Even Yaakov (30), and Shu”t Lechem She’arim (9), all cited in Shgiyos Mi Yavin (vol. 1, Ch. 2,5 footnote 92). This author has been informed b’sheim Rav Chaim Ganzweig, mashgiach at Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim (MTJ) that Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l, as well as his son Rav David Feinstein zt”l, both ruled that since today women have accepted the Mitzva of Simchas Yom Tov as an absolute obligation, they therefore have to repeat Birkas Hamazon for forgetting ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo’ on Yom Tov. See Rabbi Yitzchok Dovid Frankel’s Shu”t Yad Dodi (vol. 1, Hilchos Birkas Hamazon 20, and footnote 18; pg. 69).

[15]Many sefarim cite both sides of the debate with no clear-cut ruling, including the Sha’arim Metzuyanim B’Halacha (44: 6), Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasa (vol. 2: Ch. 57, footnote 18), and Shgiyos Mi Yavin (vol. 1, Ch. 25: 34).

[16]Including the Sdei Chemed (vol. 5, Ma’areches Brachos 4, 2), Maharsham (Daas Torah, Orach Chaim vol. 2: 188, 6), Shu”t Ba’er Moshe (vol. 3: 38, 9), Shu”t Shevet HaLevi (vol. 4: 18, 1 and vol. 6: 61), Birur Halacha (Orach Chaim vol. 2: 188; pg. 135 - 136), Shu”t Zeicher Simcha (27; who maintains that since there is no clear-cut ruling, ‘shev v’al ta’aseh adif’ and she should not repeat Bentching) and Yalkut Yosef (vol. 3, Brachos pg. 355). See also Shu”t Yabea Omer (vol. 6, Orach Chaim 28: 4 and 5) and Shu”t Ohr L’Tzion (vol. 2: 46, 27) who rule like Rav Akiva Eiger, that on Shabbos and first night of Pesach she must repeat Bentching if she forgot ‘Ya’aleh V’Yavo,’ implying that on other Yomim Tovim she should not.

[17]Halichos Baysah (Ch. 12: 13 and footnote 26 at length), Koh Somar L’Bais Yaakov (pg. 81; footnotes 33 and 34), Halichos Bas Yisrael (Ch. 3: 13 and footnote 32; Ch. 17, 14), Yalkut Yosef (Otzar Dinim L’Isha U’Vas Ch. 11: 16), and the ArtScroll Ohel Leah Women’s Siddur (pg. 163).

[18] *Shu"t Ba'er Moshe* (vol. 3: 38, 13 s.v. *nashim*), *Shu"t Yigal Yaakov* (*Orach Chaim* 22), and *Halichos Baysah* (Ch. 12: 14), not like the *Yad Yitzchak* (*Shu"t* vol. 2: 54) who opines that she should repeat Bentching even if she is unsure if she said 'Ya'aleh V'Yavo.' *Shgiyos Mi Yavin* (vol. 1: Ch. 25 footnote 94) adds an additional compelling reason why she should not repeat Bentching if she is merely uncertain if she recited 'Ya'aleh V'Yavo': The *Mishnah Berurah* (186: 3 and *Biur Halacha* s.v. *ella*) cites a *machlokes haposkim* regarding a woman who is *mesupak* if she Bentched at all, whether she needs to repeat Bentching; therefore, it stands to reason that if she is certain that she Bentched and is merely unsure if she recited 'Ya'aleh V'Yavo,' that it can't be any more obligating.

[19] Including the fact that the *Gemara* (*Brachos* 20b) does not rule if *Birkas Hamazon* for women is a *chiyuv Deoraysa* or *Derabbanan* [and this *safek* is codified in *halacha* - see *Rambam* (*Hilchos Brachos* Ch. 5: 1), *Rosh* (*Brachos* Ch. 3: 13), and *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 186: 1)]; that is why a woman should not be *motzi* a man in his Bentching obligation.

[20] See *Yated Ne'eman* (21 Shevat 5773 | February 1, 2013 pg. 68).

[21] See also the recent *Minchas Asher on Zemiroh L'Shabbos* (*Seudos Shabbos* 5, pg. 168 - 169), that although there are many questions on his *shittah*, nevertheless, the *ikar halacha* still follows *Rav Akiva Eiger* on this.

[22] *Devarim*, *Parshas Eikev* (Ch. 8: verse 10).

[23] See *Gemara Brachos* (20b) and *Midrash Rabbah Bamidbar* (*Parashas Nasso* 11: 7).

[24] *Kaf Hachaim* (*Orach Chaim* 188: 24) based on *Tosafos' shittah* (*Sukka* 27b s.v. *ee baui achil*; see also *Tosafos* on *Brachos* 49b s.v. *ee baui*).

[25] See, for example, *Ben Ish Chai* (*Year 1*, *Parshas Chukas* 21), *Shu"t Yechaveh Daas* (vol. 5: 36), *Rav Mordechai Eliyahu's Darchei Halacha* glosses to the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (44: 17), *Yalkut Yosef* (*Brachos* pg. 349) and *Rav Yaakov Hillel's Luach Ahavat Shalom* (5778; *Nissan*, *First Day of Pesach*, *Seudah*, note 743). On the other hand, *Rav Shalom Messas* (*Mashash*) *zi"l* (*Shu"t Shemesh U'Magein* vol. 1: 13) argues that *Sefardim* must follow the *psak* of the *Shulchan Aruch* and men must repeat Bentching for forgetting 'Ya'aleh V'Yavo' on any *Yom Tov*.

[26] *Shu"t Rabbi Ezriel* (*Orach Chaim* 185: 6).

[27] See *Shu"t Yabea Omer* (vol. 6, *Orach Chaim* 28: 4 and 5), *Shu"t Ohr L'Tzion* (vol. 2: 46, 27), *Luach Ahavat Shalom* (5778; *Nissan*, *First Day of Pesach*, *Seudah*, note 744), and *Birur Halacha* (*Orach Chaim* vol. 2: 188, pg. 135 - 136).

[28] See *Shgiyos Mi Yavin* (vol. 1, Ch. 25 footnotes 44 and 91), *Shemiras Shabbos K'Hilchasa* (*ibid.*), *Shu"t Ba'er Moshe* (*ibid.*), *Halichos Baysah* (*ibid.*), *Koh Somar L'Bais Yaakov* (*ibid.* footnote 34), *Shu"t Rivevos Efraim* (vol. 8, 78), and *Halichos Bas Yisrael* (*ibid.*).

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

L'iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda. Rabbi Yehuda Spitz, author of M'Shulchan Yehuda on Inyanei Halacha, serves as the Sho'el U'Meishiv and Rosh Chabura of the Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel at Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim.

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Weekly Parsha TAZRIA – METZORAH

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The laws regarding ritual purity and the metaphysical disease of *tzorah*, which by the way is not the medically recognized disease of leprosy, affect three categories of human life and society – the human body, clothing and houses. These three areas of human societal existence are the basic building blocks of civilization and society generally. They are the most vital and at the same time the

most vulnerable areas of our existence. And it is apparent that the Torah wishes us to be aware of this fact.

Health of body is a necessary precedent to most cases of human accomplishment. Not many of us are able to rise over illness, pain and/or chronic discomfort on a regular and permanent basis. Medical science recognizes that our mood and our mind affect our physical state of wellbeing. The Torah injects into this insight that our soul also has such an effect as well.

The rabbis specifically found that the distress caused to one's soul by evil speech, slander and defamation reflects itself physically in the disease of *tzorah*. In biblical times, hurting other human beings by the intemperate use of one's tongue, had clear physical consequences that served as a warning of the displeasure of one's soul at such behavior. The human body is our mainstay. It is also the most fragile and vulnerable to decay and discomfort. It is only logical that it is in this area of our existence that the possibility of *tzorah* lurks and lingers.

Clothing represents our outer representation of ourselves to the society around us. Originally, as described in the Torah itself, clothing was meant to shelter us from the elements and to provide us with a sense of privacy and modesty in covering our nakedness. As humanity evolved and developed, clothing became a statement of personality and even of the mental and spiritual nature of the person.

Clothing also became an instrument of hubris, competitiveness and even of lewdness. It also became vulnerable to the distress of the soul over its use for essentially negative purposes. And in biblical times, the angst of the soul translated itself into *tzorah* that affected clothing directly.

And finally, *tzorah* was able to invade the physical structure of one's dwelling place. One is entitled to live in a comfortable and attractive home. All of the amenities of modern life are permitted to us. But the Psalmist warned us that we should be careful not to make our homes our "graves." Homes, by their very nature, are temporary and transient places.

Our father Avraham described himself as a wandering itinerant on this earth. Again, as in all areas of human life, the Torah demands of us perspective and common sense when dealing with our homes. We gawk with wonder when visiting palaces and mansions of the rich and famous yet our inner self tells us that this really is not the way that we wish to live. The vulnerability of homes and houses to *tzorah* is obvious to all.

In Jewish life, less is more.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

TAZRIA, METZORA The Plague of Evil Speech

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

The Rabbis moralised the condition of *tzara'at* – often translated as leprosy – the subject that dominates both

Tazria and Metzora. It was, they said, a punishment rather than a medical condition. Their interpretation was based on the internal evidence of the Mosaic books themselves. Moses' hand became leprous when he expressed doubt about the willingness of the people to believe in his mission (Ex. 4:6-7). Miriam was struck by leprosy when she spoke against Moses (Num. 12:1-15). The metzora (leper) was a motzi shem ra: a person who spoke slighly about others.

Evil speech, lashon hara, was considered by the Sages to be one of the worst sins of all. Here is how Maimonides summarises it:

The Sages said: there are three transgressions for which a person is punished in this world and has no share in the world come – idolatry, illicit sex, and bloodshed – and evil speech is as bad as all three combined. They also said: whoever speaks with an evil tongue is as if he denied God .

. . . Evil speech kills three people – the one who says it, the one who accepts it, and the one about whom it is said.

Hilchot Deot 7:3

Is it so? Consider just two of many examples. In the early 13th century, a bitter dispute broke out between devotees and critics of Maimonides. For the former, he was one of the greatest Jewish minds of all time. For the latter, he was a dangerous thinker whose works contained heresy and whose influence led people to abandon the commandments. There were ferocious exchanges. Each side issued condemnations and excommunications against the other. There were pamphlets and counter-pamphlets, sermons and counter-sermons, and for while French and Spanish Jewry were convulsed by the controversy. Then, in 1232, Maimonides' books were burned by the Dominicans. The shock brought a brief respite; then extremists desecrated Maimonides' tomb in Tiberius. In the early 1240s, following the Disputation of Paris, Christians burned all the copies of the Talmud they could find. It was one of the great tragedies of the Middle Ages.

What was the connection between the internal Jewish struggle and the Christian burning of Jewish books? Did the Dominicans take advantage of Jewish accusations of heresy against Maimonides, to level their own charges? Was it simply that they were able to take advantage of the internal split within Jewry, to proceed with their own persecutions without fear of concerted Jewish reprisals? One way or another, throughout the Middle Ages, many of the worst Christian persecutions of Jews were either incited by converted Jews, or exploited internal weaknesses of the Jewish community.

Moving to the modern age, one of the most brilliant exponents of Orthodoxy was R. Meir Loeb ben Yechiel Michal Malbim (1809-1879), Chief Rabbi of Rumania. An outstanding scholar, whose commentary to Tanach is one of the glories of the nineteenth century, he was at first welcomed by all groups in the Jewish community as a man of learning and religious integrity. Soon, however, the

more 'enlightened' Jews discovered to their dismay that he was a vigorous traditionalist, and they began to incite the civil authorities against him. In posters and pamphlets they portrayed him as a benighted relic of the Middle Ages, a man opposed to progress and the spirit of the age.

One Purim, they sent him a gift of a parcel of food which included pork and crabs, with an accompanying message: 'We, the local progressives, are honoured to present these delicacies and tasty dishes from our table as a gift to our luminary.' Eventually, in response to the campaign, the government withdrew its official recognition of the Jewish community, and of Malbim as its Chief Rabbi, and banned him from delivering sermons in the Great Synagogue. On Friday, 18 March 1864, policemen surrounded his house early in the morning, arrested and imprisoned him. After the Sabbath, he was placed on a ship and taken to the Bulgarian border, where he was released on condition that he never return to Rumania. This is how the Encyclopaedia Judaica describes the campaign:

M. Rosen has published various documents which disclose the false accusations and calumnies Malbim's Jewish-assimilationist enemies wrote against him to the Rumanian government. They accused him of disloyalty and of impeding social assimilation between Jews and non-Jews by insisting on adherence to the dietary laws, and said, 'This Rabbi by his conduct and prohibitions wishes to impede our progress.' As a result of this, the Prime Minister of Rumania issued a proclamation against the 'ignorant and insolent' Rabbi... In consequence the minister refused to grant rights to the Jews of Bucharest, on the grounds that the Rabbi of the community was 'the sworn enemy of progress'.

Similar stories could be told about several other outstanding scholars – among them, R. Zvi Hirsch Chajes, R. Azriel Hildesheimer, R. Yitzhak Reines, and even the late Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik of blessed memory, who was brought to court in Boston in 1941 to face trumped-up charges by the local Jewish community. Even these shameful episodes were only a continuation of the vicious war waged against the Hassidic movement by their opponents, the mitnagdim, which saw many Hassidic leaders (among them the first Rebbe of Habad, R. Shneur Zalman of Ladi) imprisoned on false testimony given to the local authorities by other Jews.

For a people of history, we can be bewilderingly obtuse to the lessons of history. Time and again, unable to resolve their own conflicts civilly and graciously, Jews slandered their opponents to the civil authorities, with results that were disastrous to the Jewish community as a whole. Despite the fact that the whole of rabbinic Judaism is a culture of argument; despite the fact that the Talmud explicitly says that the school of Hillel had its views accepted because they were 'gentle, modest, taught the views of their opponents as well as their own, and taught their opponents' views before their own' (Eruvin 13b) –

despite this, Jews have continued to excoriate, denounce, even excommunicate those whose views they did not understand, even when the objects of their scorn (Maimonides, Malbim, and the rest) were among the greatest-ever defenders of Orthodoxy against the intellectual challenges of their age.

Of what were the accusers guilty? Only evil speech. And what, after all, is evil speech? Mere words. Yet words have consequences. Diminishing their opponents, the self-proclaimed defenders of the faith diminished themselves and their faith. They managed to convey the impression that Judaism is simple-minded, narrow, incapable of handling complexity, helpless in the face of challenge, a religion of anathemas instead of arguments, excommunication instead of reasoned debate. Maimonides and Malbim took their fate philosophically. Yet one weeps to see a great tradition brought so low.

What an astonishing insight it was to see leprosy – that disfiguring disease – as a symbol and symptom of evil speech. For we truly are disfigured when we use words to condemn, not communicate; to close rather than open minds; when we use language as a weapon and wield it brutally. The message of Metzora remains. Linguistic violence is no less savage than physical violence, and those who afflict others are themselves afflicted. Words wound. Insults injure. Evil speech destroys communities. Language is God’s greatest gift to humankind and it must be guarded if it is to heal, not harm.

Don't Only Look at the Disease; See the Person

The Origin of Holistic Medicine

Rabbi YY Jacobson

The Redundancy

The Torah portion of Tazria, Leviticus chapter 13, discusses the laws of tzaraas, an unusual illness, identified by a white patch appearing on the skin of a person with the hair inside of it turning white. This was symptomatic of an internal moral and spiritual blemish, and it deemed the person as temporarily "impure." He or she was required to separate from the community and undergo an intense program of introspection and healing.[1]

The Torah describes the procedures for determining the tzaraas/leprosy condition:

סִפְחַת אוּ בְהֶרֶת, וְהִיָּה -בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אוּ-יְהִיָּה בְעוֹר-תּוֹרִיעַ יג, ב: אָדָם, כִּי אֶחָד מִבְּנֵי-אֱהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן, אוּ אֶל-וְהוּבֵא אֵל--בְּשָׂרוֹ, לִגְנֹעַ צָרַעַת-בְּעוֹר גִּנֵּעַ הַפֶּד לָבָן, הַבָּשָׂר וְשֵׁעַר בִּגְנֵעַ בְּעוֹר-הַכֹּהֵן. ג וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת גִּנֵּעַ צָרַעַת, הוּא; וְרָאָהוּ הַכֹּהֵן, וְטָמֵא אֹתוֹ--וּמְרָאָה הַגִּנֵּעַ עִמָּךְ מְעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ

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 tzaraas affliction; the Kohen shall look at him and make him impure.

The Torah is stating that only a Kohen (a priest), a descendent of Aaron the High Priest, was authorized to diagnose a tzaraas-leprosy and pronounce the malady as

such. Even in a case where all the symptoms of the illness are clearly present and a multitude of scholars recognize it as tzaraas, the person cannot be diagnosed as possessing this malady unless a Kohen states so explicitly.[2]

But there is a blatant strange redundancy in the above verse. Can you see it?

The verse states: “The Kohen shall look at the affliction on the skin of his flesh... the Kohen shall look at it and make him impure.” Why is the same phrase repeated? The Torah should have said: “The Kohen shall look at the affliction on the skin of his flesh... and make him impure.” Why does it say again, “the Kohen shall look at it?”[3]

One of the great rabbis of the last generation offered a magnificent explanation. As it turns out, the origins of what we call today “holistic medicine” and the “integrated approach” are in the Torah.

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk (1843–1926), author of the Torah commentary Meshech Chochma, was one of the prominent sages and leaders in Eastern Europe in the early 20th century. He himself was a Kohen, and hence this insight is even more personal.[4]

The Two Steps

The Meshech Chochmah suggests that the Torah is teaching us a profound law and lesson.[5]

There are two distinct evaluations that need to be made. Note that the first time around the Torah states: “The Kohen shall look at the affliction on the skin of his flesh...” The second time around the Torah states: “The Kohen shall look at him and make him impure.”

These, suggests Reb Meir Simcha, are two separate evaluations. One is on the disease; the other is on the person. First, the Kohen must look at the affliction (“V’raah haKohen es haNega”) and see if it is one that technically meets the definition of a tzaraas-leprosy description. He must examine the symptoms and determine the proper diagnosis based on the nature of this disease. What he is looking at is the affliction.

But that is not enough. He must now look at something else. He must look at the person (“v’raahhu haKohen”), “and the Kohen shall look at HIM,” and see if it is appropriate to declare this person impure. The symptoms may be present, but the person may not be in a state where you can declare him or her impure.

The Torah instructs the Kohen to evaluate two independent factors: (a) whether the blemish is indeed a tzaraas; and (b) whether at this time it is appropriate to turn the person into a metzora. Unless both factors are present, the Kohen should not declare the person impure.

The Practical Difference

As an example of this, Reb Meir Simcha quotes the following Talmudic law:[6]

"If the leper is a newlywed groom, he is given the Seven Days of Feasting (before declaring him impure), and the same applies on a Festival." [7] Meaning, if a fresh groom or bride develops the symptoms of leprosy, the Kohen will

not examine them and declare them impure, even if all the symptoms are blatantly present, until after a full week passes since the wedding. The same is true for the seven days of the holidays, Passover and Sukkos. In order to avoid spoiling one's wedding celebration or the joy of the festival (Yom Tov), the Kohen has the license to delay proclaiming the person a metzora (a leper) even though he knows full well that the skin condition qualifies as leprosy.[8]

How can the Rabbis come up with such a novel law? If the Torah says that someone is a leper and needs a certain treatment, delaying it is wrong. It is like delaying medical treatment for a patient in the middle of the holidays, so as not to aggravate him! You are not doing him a favor. How then could the Rabbis come up with this novel law that we may delay the entire process of examination and diagnosis? The Sages derived this law from the following verse: "And on the day that it will be seen." Why is the day mentioned here? The verse could have said, "and when it will be seen." The words "and on the day" come to teach us that there are days when the Kohen will not look at the leprosy. The Kohen must look if it is the right time to declare him impure, or we must wait for another time. From this, the Talmud deduced that certain times are off-limits for examining the symptoms of the leprosy. And they reasoned which days would be considered off-limits.

This is as far as times are concerned. The Meshech Chochmah brilliantly argues that the meaning behind the redundancy in the above verse teaches us something even more powerful: Sometimes the person is not ready for this verdict. The Torah instructs the Kohen not only to look at the symptoms, not only to look at the time but also to look at the person. Not only to examine the malady but also to peer into the human being. The person may have the disease, but if the person is not ready to become impure, he should not deem him impure.

This is a novel idea of the Meshech Chochmah. The Kohen has the right to ignore the symptoms for any reason that makes the Kohen feel that it is wrong to declare him impure. For example, if this person with the symptoms must be in the company of people; to quarantine him outside of the Jewish camp would be dangerous and counter-productive, then this person is not in a state where he or she can be seen and diagnosed as being impure.

A New Medicine

Fascinatingly, this approach, articulated millennia ago in the Torah, is reflected in contemporary medicine.

There are two approaches to medicine. The decision as to which model to use for diagnosis and treatment of the patient revolves around the following question: does the physician treat with the goal of ameliorating his patient's symptoms, or does he treat with the goal of putting the entire patient in balance, treating the person, not only the disease? With the goal of stopping pain or discomfort, and eliminate symptoms, the physician needs to consider the

fastest, least complicated, least expensive, and most efficacious therapy, and the approach with the fewest side effects. Should his goal be to promote overall balance and wellbeing, the physician needs to choose a treatment protocol that best addresses the patient's patterns and differential diagnosis, constitution, and history, including imbalances in the patient's biochemistry, biomechanics, and bioelectricity, as well as non-physical considerations: his emotional, mental, psychological, and spiritual state.

The Torah is intimating to us that a healer's approach should be not only to focus and get rid of the symptoms but rather to look at and treat the "whole person," for if not, the whole person will not get well. Either there will be some other new condition, or the condition originally treated will return. The Torah advocates a "holistic approach," appreciating all facets of a person's life, and seeing how all aspects of our lives are integrated, rather than just suppress local symptoms.

How to Diagnose People

The message to all of us is how we judge ourselves and others.

Before I can pronounce a person as impure, I need to see the person, not only the problem. Do I know how to recognize the difference between evil and trauma? Between selfishness and fear? Between being bad and being wounded?

A teacher of mine once told me: do not answer the question; answer the person. A person may come and ask you: why did my mother die young? You may be a wise guy and say because she had a weak heart. Maybe you answered the question, but you did not answer the person. He was not asking a medical question; he was asking an emotional question. He is in pain. He misses his mother.

The Mishna in Ethics of the Fathers tells us[9] to "give every person the benefit of the doubt." But a more precise translation is that "one should judge the whole person as meritorious." ("Heve dan es kol haAdam l'kaf zechus.") Before you judge someone, you need to look at all the factors making up the person. You need to look at "kal haAdam," at the entire human being, before you give a diagnosis. Never judge somebody without knowing the whole story and the whole person. You may think you understand, but you don't.

A Tale of Two Therapists

There are also two types of therapists. Those who fit each patient into a pre-existing mode; and those who will tune in to the unique persona and struggles of the patient.

They do not fit him into their boxes, but rather employ their models, and will borrow from diverse models, to help accommodate the person they are treating.

When Your Child Rejects You

Your child, or your student, may be behaving disrespectfully. He may be saying hurtful things. At such a moment you are tempted to look at him and say: You are tameh! You are impure. Get out of my home.

Technically, you may be correct. He has all the symptoms. His behaviors are ill-conceived and obnoxious. But the Torah says: Wait! "Varahu HaKohen," you must not only look at the actual behavior, at the actual words coming out of his or her mouth but also at the entire human being. Evaluate his entire story.

In life, don't try to suppress the symptoms; but rather try to understand the person.

Will calling this child "impure," "contaminated," "tarnished," really help him or her? Is this what he or she needs? Will this really serve his or her interests? Will it help him rehabilitate himself? Is it possible that there is a deep pain in this child's heart which he is incapable of addressing and is causing him deep anguish and anger? Maybe this is a time he needs more of his father, not less of his father? He needs more empathy, not less. It is precisely at this moment that he needs you much more than he can even articulate!

I See Your Heart

Rabbi Aryeh Levin, known as the Tzaddik of Jerusalem, was once walking on the street, when he saw a former student of his, who had abandoned the Jewish way of life, walking toward him. When the student noticed that he was walking directly toward his former master, he crossed the street to avoid him.

Reb Aryeh went after him and said with a smile: "I'm so happy to see you! Why did you avoid me?"

The student replied: "I will be perfectly honest. I am embarrassed to see you because I don't have a kipa on my head..."

Reb Aryeh looked at him and said: "My dear student, don't you realize that I am a short man! I can only see up to your heart."

There are two types of educators and teachers. Some just see the rules and the deviations of the rules, but others can just peer into the heart and see a soul.

Do Not Win Arguments

In 1963, Professor Velvl Greene was a rising star at the University of Minnesota. Greene was a pioneer in the field of bacteriology, having been invited by NASA to study the effects of space travel on human life. The young scientist was visiting and lecturing at dozens of universities across America each year.

1963 was also the year that Professor Greene first met Rabbi Moshe Feller, the Lubavitcher Rebbe's emissary in Minneapolis. Up to that point, the Greens, like many American Jews of their generation, gave little credence to their Jewish heritage; observances like Shabbat, kashrut, and tefillin struck them as old-fashioned, if not primitive. But in the young Chassidic couple, Professor Green saw a vibrant and fulfilling outlook and lifestyle, one which could fill the deep void in his successful yet rootless life.

At Rabbi Feller's suggestion, Professor Greene wrote to the Rebbe about this "void" and his interest in Judaism; the Rebbe's warm and engaging reply was not long in coming.

The two developed a steady correspondence, and the young scientist was soon taken by the Rebbe's phenomenal mind and passionate devotion. With each letter, Greene found himself further encouraged along his spiritual journey and his commitment to Torah. Soon the Greens had made their kitchen kosher and begun to observe Shabbat.

One day Professor Greene came across a letter the Rebbe wrote to a scientist concerning the Torah's account of the creation of the universe and the rejection of the theory of evolution. Dr. Greene penned a no-holds-barred critique. "Because I greatly respected the Rebbe," Professor Greene recalls, "I dropped the forgiving tone that scientists often use with laymen, addressing the Rebbe as if he were a colleague whose ideas I rejected. I bluntly stated that he was wrong, specifying what I saw as faulty and unscientific. I concluded my letter by saying that the Rebbe had best stick to his field of expertise, Torah, and leave science to scientists."

But the Rebbe's next letter resumed their correspondence where it had originally begun - in Greene's spiritual quest and his Jewish identity. Of the evolution issue - not a word. The Professor assumed that the Rebbe was conceding that in matters of empirical fact, Torah must defer to scientific reason. With this, he considered the matter closed.

Professor Greene's progress towards a Torah-true life continued, and over the next year and a half, he reported to the Rebbe each Jewish milestone along his journey: full Shabbat observance, observance of family purity, etc. The Rebbe responded with words of encouragement and blessing, and, on one occasion, a gift of a pair of tefillin which Green began to wrap regularly.

Then came the letter in which the Greens told the Rebbe that they had decided to place their children in a Yeshivah to receive the fullest possible Jewish education. The Rebbe's reply was especially warm and encouraging, as befitting the turning point in their lives that such a move indicated. Then, at the end of his letter, the Rebbe added, "By the way, concerning what you wrote me regarding the Torah's account of creation..." and proceeded to refute, point by point, Professor Greene's objections to the Rebbe's "unscientific" treatment of the subject.

"You are probably wondering," concluded the Rebbe, "why I waited this long to respond to your remarks on the matter. But my job in life is not to win arguments. My job is to bring Jews closer to the Torah and its mitzvot."

Don't try to win arguments; try to help people.

[1] See Talmud Erkin 15b. Midrash Rabah Tazria. Klei Yakar to Tazria and many of the commentators on the portion.

[2] The ramifications of this biblical law are far-reaching. For example, even if the only Kohen present is a child so that he is unable to examine the person in question, a trustworthy scholar needs to report his findings to the Kohen, and it is only the Kohen who may pronounce the white-patched person as impure. Even if the only Kohen

around is an imbecile, lacking the knowledge and understanding required to give a diagnosis, it is only he who is entitled to make the verbal pronouncement under the instruction and guidance of an adult scholar. (Toras Kohanim. Mishnah Negaim chapter 3. Maimonides laws of Tumas Tzaraas 9:2. Cf. Likkutei Sichos vol. 27 Tazria).

[3] The question is raised in Toras Kohanim, where a halachic answer is given.

[4] Reb Meir Simcha served as the Rabbi of the Latvian city of Dvinsk (now known as Daugavpils). He served in that position for 39 years until his death and authored a famous work on the Rambam's Mishnah Torah, Ohr Somayach. He also wrote a classic work on the Torah, Meshech Chochmah. (In Dvinsk, he was the Rabbi of the Ashkenazim, while his counterpart was the Chasidic Rabbi Yosef Rosen, known as the Rogatchover Gaon or by his work Tzofnath Paneach. The two had great respect for each other).

In Dvinsk, he received visitors from the whole region and was frequently consulted on issues affecting the community at large, including Poland and Lithuania. He died in 1926 in a hotel in Riga while seeking medical treatment. He had one daughter, who predeceased him. (She got married, but both she and her husband died young without children.)

His name is carried and lives on by his two works: Ohr Somayach, which is a derivative of his name Meir Simcha, meaning joyous light. And his work Meshech Chochmah: Meshech is an acronym of his name, Meir Simcha Kohen.

[5] וְהָכָה וְהָאָרוּ לֹכַח עֲגָנָה תָא וְהָכָה הָאָרוּ: עִירֹזת פ' הַמְכַח דְשִׁמּוּ [5]. הַכְפִּילוֹת מְבוֹאֵר. וְעֵינֵי תוֹ"כ. וַיִּתְּכֵן ע"ד רז"ל שֶׁהַכּוֹנֵה שִׁירָאָה אֶת הַנֶּגַע אִם הִיא רְאוּיָה לְטִמְאַנָּה, הוּא שִׁישׁ בֵּה סִימָן טוֹמְאָה שֶׁעַר לְבָן, וְרָאָהּ הִכְהֵן הוּא שִׁירָאָה הִכְהֵן עַל הָאִישׁ אִם רְאוּי לְטִמְאוֹתוֹ, הוּא אִם חָתָן נוֹתֵנִין מִשְׁתָּה, וְכֵן בְּרִגְלֵי נוֹתֵנִין לוֹ כָּל יָמֹת הַרְגֵל, שְׁלֵא לְעַרְבֵב לוֹ כָּל ז' יָמֵי הַשְּׁמִחָתוֹ, וְדַרְכֵיהֶם דְרַכֵי גוּעִים, וְלִכְּן וְרָאָהּ אִיךָ הוּא בְּאִיכוֹתוֹ אִם הוּא רְאוּי לְפִי הַזְמָן לְטִמְאוֹתוֹ, וְזֶה שְׁאֵמֵר וּבִיּוֹם הָרְאוּת יֵשׁ יוֹם שְׁאֵי אֶתְהָ רֹאָה הוּא עֲנִין מִצַּד הַזְמָן, לֹא שְׁאֵם לְפִי תְכוּנָתוֹ צְרִיךְ הַתְּחַבְּרוֹת עִם אַנְשִׁים וְכִי"ב שְׁהוּא עֲנִין מִצַּד הַזְמָן. בִּינָה זֶה. אֵינְךָ רֹאָה בּוֹ, רַק כִּי

מֵי שִׁי (דִּי, גִּי עִירֹזת) וּבִּתְוֹאֵרָה מֵוִיבּוֹ אֵינְתָהּ: ב, ז, וְטַק דְעוֹמ [6]. שְׁאֵתְהָ רֹאָה בּוֹ וְיֵשׁ יוֹם שְׁאֵי אֶתְהָ רֹאָה בּוֹ. מִכָּאֵן אִמְרוּ חָתָן שְׁנוֹלֵד בּוֹ נִגַע נוֹתֵנִין לוֹ ז' יָמֵי הַמִּשְׁתָּה לוֹ וּלְבֵיתוֹ וּלְכִסּוֹתוֹ, וְכֵן בְּרִגְלֵי נוֹתֵנִין לוֹ שִׁבְעַת יָמֵי הַרְגֵל.

[7] Moed Katan 7b

[8] For a detailed explanation, see Likkutei Sichos vol. 37 Tazria.

[9] Avos 1:6

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה
אנא מלכה בת ישראל ע"ה