# TORAH TREATS

*An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories Compiled by Yitzchok Henry*



# תזריע

# לעילוי נשמת



**אבי מורי ר' גדליה דוד ב"ר איסר הענרי ע"ה**

**ר' איסר ב"ר זרח הענרי ע"ה**

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**ר'חיים דוד ב"ר אלכסנדר הכהן ריטשמאן ע"ה**

# ת*נ*צ*ב*ה

# Yitzchok's Collections אוספי יצחק

# תזריע

**Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz**





**וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ** ***'On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.'*** (12:3)

Our Sages say that when a baby cries during his brit milah, it is an auspicious time for prayers to be accepted. Why?

**R' Shlomo Amar** (Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel) explains: We read about Bnei Yisrael who were enslaved in Egypt (Shmot 2:24) **וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶת־נַאֲקָתָם וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֶת־אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יִצְחָק וְאֶת־יַעֲקֹב** -*"G-d heard their moaning, and G-d remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak, and with Yaakov."*

Moaning is an expression of feelings without using words. When one's pain is too great to express in words, he moans. This is why Hashem responded to Bnei Yisrael's moaning; it showed that the pain of their enslavement had become unbearable.

R' Amar continues: There is another reason why Hashem responds to Bnei Yisrael's moans. G-d made angels whose job is to keep out the prayers of unworthy individuals. However, angels cannot read a person's thoughts. Thus, a moan, a wordless prayer which might be accompanied by thoughts of repentance, cannot be kept from reaching G-d's Throne.

This also is why the sound of the shofar is said to confuse the prosecuting angel. The sound of the shofar carries our thoughts to Heaven without words, so the angels whose job is to screen prayers cannot evaluate its worth. When the prosecutor sees that Hashem accepts this "prayer," he becomes flustered and is unable to continue.

Likewise, R' Amar concludes, the wordless cry of a baby at the time he enters the Covenant between Hashem and the Jewish People cannot be prevented from reaching the Throne. With it, it can carry the prayers that those assembled for the brit milah offer at that time. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Mi'yamim Yamimah p.123)



**תָּבִיא כֶּבֶשׂ בֶּן־שְׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה וּבֶן־יוֹנָה אוֹ־תֹר לְחַטָּאת** - "***She shall bring a sheep within its first year for an olah- offering, and a young dove or a turtledove for a sin- offering . . .*" *(12:6)***

**וְאִם־לֹא תִמְצָא יָדָהּ דֵּי שֶׂה וְלָקְחָה שְׁתֵּי־תֹרִים אוֹ שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי יוֹנָה אֶחָד לְעֹלָה וְאֶחָד לְחַטָּאת** - "***But if she cannot afford a sheep, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young doves, one for an olah-offering and one for a sin-offering.***" (12:8)

**R' Yaakov "Ba'al Ha'turim"** (14th century) observes that the Torah ordinarily mentions turtledoves before doves (as in the second verse quoted above). Why is the first verse quoted above an exception?

In most cases (again, as in the second verse) a bird sacrifice consists of two birds. However, when a person brings only one bird (as in the first verse), one should preferably not bring a turtledove because

that species of bird mates for life and mourns for its mate when it dies. Therefore, the turtledove is mentioned last in that verse. (On the other hand, when one brings two and this concern does not exist, one should bring turtledoves because they are bigger than doves.) (Ba'al Ha'turim, as elaborated upon in Shai La'Torah)



**וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ** - ***"On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."*** (12:3)

It is customary at a brit milah / circumcision to express the wish: "Just as the young boy has entered the Covenant, so may he enter Torah study, marriage and good deeds." The following story relates to this custom.

The future **R' Bezalel Hakohen** of Vilna (19th century) was a child prodigy, and long before his bar mitzvah, matchmakers were vying for the privilege of arranging a shidduch for him. By the time he reached his twelfth birthday, he was already engaged.

At the engagement celebration, one of the local scholars said, "I have always wondered why we say, `so may he enter Torah study, marriage and good deeds'? Shouldn't good deeds precede marriage?

Now, I understand. We pray that the child should be so special that long before his bar mitzvah, before his good deeds begin to be counted in the Heavenly accounting books, he should already be pursued by marriage proposals." (Ve'karata La'Shabbat Oneg)



***It would be worthwhile for a soul to descend to Earth and live seventy or eighty years for the sole purpose of doing a favour for another - a spiritual favour, or even a material favour. ~***

***Baal Shem Tov, Reb Yisrael ben Eliezer Chayim zt"l. (1698-1760)***



**וְטָמֵא טָמֵא יִקְרָא** - *"The **metzora is to call out, `Tamei, tamei!'"*** (13:45)




The Gemara (Shabbat 67a) explains that the metzora must bring his suffering to the public's attention so others can pray for him.

This writes **R' Moshe Sternbuch shlita** (rabbi in Johannesburg, South Africa and Yerushalayim and author of several popular works) is the source for the custom that the congregation prays for those who are ill. However, R' Sternbuch adds, it appears from the Gemara that it is not enough for the congregation to know that someone is sick. In order to pray effectively, the congregation must know of the person's suffering.

Why does the Torah teach the idea of praying for other in the context of a metzora?

R' Sternbuch suggests: Tzara'at is a punishment for speaking lashon hara. One who speaks lashon hara is separating himself from society. [As our Sages taught: A metzora's punishment is to sit alone outside the city's walls because his actions were anti- social, destroying marriages and friendships.]

Prayer is most effective when it is done as part of a group. That is why Shemoneh Esrei is worded in the plural. It is fitting that the metzora, who behaved in an anti-social way, should be made to recognize the benefits of being part of society. (Ta'am Va'da'at)

***"The key to happiness is to align our will with Hashem's will." ~ Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler.***

**וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ** - ***"On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."*** (12:3)




**R' Aryeh Levin z"l** (1885-1969; known as the "Tzaddik of Yerushalayim" and as the "Prisoners' Rabbi") and **R' Chaim Shmuelevitz z"l** (1902-1979; rosh yeshiva of the Mir Yeshiva) met at a brit milah. There was a long delay in beginning the brit, so R' Shmuelevitz turned to R' Levin and asked, "I am supposed to be at the yeshiva. What should I do?"

R' Levin replied: "I cannot tell his honor what to do, but I can tell you a story." This is the story he told:

When I [R' Levin] was younger, I met **R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld z"l** (1848-1932; rabbi of the Eidah Ha'chareidit in Yerushalayim) at a brit milah. There was a long delay in beginning the brit, so I turned to R' Sonnenfeld and asked, "I am supposed to be at the yeshiva. [R' Levin was mashgiach ruchani at Yeshivat Etz Chaim.] What should I do?"

R' Sonnenfeld replied: "It is difficult to pass-up an opportunity to meet Eliyahu Ha'navi. It is a rare occasion."

When R' Levin finished his story, R' Shmuelevitz said, "If so, we must wait." (Quoted in Brito L'hodi'am p.92)

***"No matter what challenges you face or mistakes you have made, Hashem's love for you remains constant and unwavering. ~ Rabbi Moshe Feinstein Zt'l.***

**וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ** - "***On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.***" (12:3)

**R' David Cohen z"l** (1887-1972; instructor at Yeshivat Merkaz Ha'Rav; known as the "Nazir") posed the following question at the brit milah of his grandson: Why is Eliyahu Ha'navi such a central figure at a brit milah? After all, this is a mitzvah associated with Avraham Avinu, as demonstrated by the blessing we recite–"To bring [the child] into the brit /covenant of Avraham Avinu"!

R' Cohen explained: The covenant that is made at the brit milah is the joining together of the past, the present and the future of the Jewish people. Avraham Avinu represents our past. Those assembled at the brit represent the present. Finally, Eliyahu Ha'navi, the harbinger of the Redemption, represents the future. (Brito L'hodi'am)

**וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ** - "***On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.***" (12:3)

The Gemara (Menachot 43b) relates that King David was in the bathhouse and felt himself devoid of mitzvot, as one cannot wear tefilin or tzitzit or study Torah while taking a bath. The he remembered that he was circumcised, and he rejoiced. Upon leaving the bathhouse, he exclaimed (Tehilim 119:162) **שָׂשׂ אָנֹכִי עַל־אִמְרָתֶךָ כְּמוֹצֵא שָׁלָל רָב** - "*I rejoice over Your words like one who finds a great treasure.*"

**R' Shalom Rokeach z"l** (1779-1855; the first Belzer Rebbe) asks: Why is finding a great treasure an appropriate metaphor for the mitzah of brit milah? He explains:

Most mitzvot require some form of preparation. Some mitzvot, like Shabbat, require a few days of preparations. Others, such as Pesach, require weeks of preparations. The mitzvah of eating the fruits of a four-year-old tree in

Yerushalayim requires years of preparation. Performing these mitzvot can feel anti-climactic, since one has been anticipating them throughout the period of preparation.

One doesn't prepare for his bris; in fact, he is barely aware that it is being done. Then, one day, he realizes that he is circumcised. This is indeed like suddenly finding a treasure. (Midbar Kodesh)

**אָדָם כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אֽוֹ־סַפַּחַת אֽוֹ בַהֶרֶת וְהָיָה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ לְנֶגַע צָרָעַת וְהוּבָא אֶל־אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אֽוֹ אֶל־אַחַד מִבָּנָיו הַכֹּהֲנִים - *"If Adam / a person will have on the skin of his flesh a swelling, a rash, or spots, and it will become a Tzara'at affliction on the skin of his flesh; he shall be brought to Aharon the Kohen, or to one of his sons the Kohanim." (13:2)***

**R' Mordechai HaKohen z"l** (1523–1598; Tzefat, Eretz Yisrael; later, rabbi of Aleppo, Syria) writes, based on the **Zohar**: The Hebrew language includes a number of different words for "person": Ish, Gever, Enosh, etc. Why did the Torah choose "Adam" here?

He answers: "Adam" represents man at his greatest, as we read (Bereishit 1:26) **נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ** - "*Elokim said, 'Let us make Adam in Our image, in Our likeness.*' So Elokim created Adam in His image, in the image of Elokim He created him."

The Torah is teaching us: Man at his greatest–Adam–was imbued with the ability to defeat his Yetzer Ha'ra. If, instead, man sins and is punished with Tzara'at, the subject of our Parashah, he should be reminded of the lofty level–Adam–from which he fell. (Siftei Kohen)

***"A person accomplishes much more with a bit of patience and tolerance than with all the anger and resentment in the world." ~ Rav Chaim of Volozhin (1749-1821)***

**אָדָם כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אֹו־סַפַּחַת אֹו בַהֶרֶת – *"If a person shall have on the skin of his flesh a s'eit, a sapachat or a baheret…"*** (13:2)

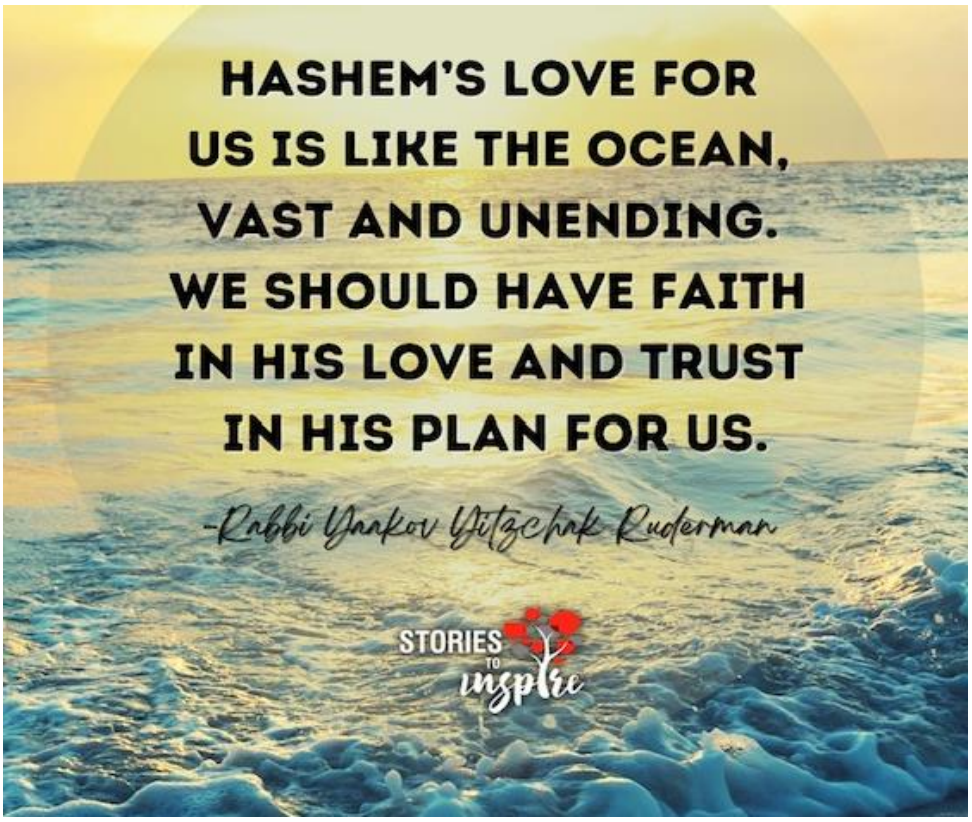
There are three kinds of tzara'at wounds mentioned in this verse: s'eit, sapachat and baheret. **R' Moshe Sternbuch shlita** writes that these allude to three types of people who speak lashon hara (the sin for which tzara'at comes).

S'eit is related to the Hebrew word for "uplift." This refers to people who put down others in order to uplift themselves and increase their own importance.

Sapachat is related to the Hebrew word for "attach." This refers to people who speak lashon hara as a result of keeping bad company.

Finally, baheret is related to the Hebrew word for "clear." This refers to people who think they know everything.

The common denominator among these three types of people is that the Torah calls them tamei / impure. (Ta'am Vada'at)









***How should we understand the sins of the students of Rabbi Akiva that caused so many thousands of them to die?***

There's a certain tradition that in the time of sefirah many talmidim of Rabbi Akiva perished by a plague. And we have a tradition that it was because **שלא נהגו כבוד זה בזה** – they didn't treat each other with respect.

So I'll explain this to you. If you look for chametz, you might find some forgotten piece of bread that is hidden away. If you don't look, you won't find. It doesn't mean you don't have some chametz stacked away. Everybody has some chametz stacked away; a bottle of whiskey here or a biscuit there. If you don't look, you'll have chametz in your possession. - The Jew always looks for chametz, for sins, all year round and therefore he discovers wrong things of which he rids himself.

Now, there was a plague. And so, the disciples of Rabbi Akiva said, "Chatanu! It's our fault. We weren't polite enough to our comrades. We mistreated them." Now, we don't have any bas kol that tells us that this was the reason for the plague. They themselves told us that. They searched in their hearts and couldn't find anything else. If they could find other sins, they would have told us, "For these

sins we're being punished." But they couldn't find anything. So they finally said, "It's probably because you weren't polite enough to each other."

That's a monument, a testimonial, to the greatness of the old generations. They blamed themselves. And therefore today every Sefirah we think about it and we decide we're going to be more and more polite to each other. That's how we should learn.




***Should a husband spend extra money in order to make his house more beautiful if that will make his wife happier?***

If a man's wife wants to have a home that is more elegant and she wants to spend money on that – well, it depends. If he can persuade her not to be extravagant and that it's really nothing, then all right. But if she insists, then a certain amount of leeway he has to give to her. Certainly; after all it's a chessed.

Doing chessed to your wife is a very important function of life. וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ - "You should love your fellowman like you love yourself." And your wife is your best fellowman! Certainly you should deal with your wife respectfully and spend – you should spend money as your wife's desire.

But of course, the wife herself must know that to be extravagant is not a big mitzvah – not at all! There are many very good uses to which that money can be put. And therefore, if the husband can persuade her with words of intelligence and mussar, that certainly would be the best thing. But they're going to have to reach some sort of compromise.



## 30 Years Since the Passing of the Author, Sarah Ziskind, Survivor of the Lodz Ghetto - by Yaakov Rosenfeld, Ganzach Kiddush Hashem

In her book "HaAtara Sheh'Avda" (The Lost Crown), Sarah describes in first person, the distress and suffering, the hunger, and the poverty that she, her family, and friends faced in the Lodz Ghetto. In the book, I read with bated breath about self-sacrifice for values, even in the horrific conditions of the ghetto, and even in the hell of Auschwitz.

The name of the book is derived from the fact that the author's father was a manufacturer of silver "crowns" (adornments) for tallises (prayer shawls), however the book describes in general the crown of the magnificent and magical Polish Jewry, which was lost…

Sarah was born in 5687 (1926-7) in Lodz to her father Rabbi Asher (Anshel) Kalman Felger and her mother Mindaleh née Biderman.

Sara experienced a happy childhood until she was hit with old age, at the age of 12, in the month of Elul 5699 (1939), when the Nazis occupied her hometown and began the campaign of torture and killing.

Her mother, Mindaleh, died that year from hunger and weakness, and Sarah remained with her father; they strengthened each other and tried with all their might to maintain their human dignity.

Her father, Asher Kalman, suffered greatly in the Lodz Ghetto until his passing on the eve of Passover 5703 (1943). After Sarah buried her father with her own hands, she was deported to Auschwitz,

where she received the number 55091, and from there she was sent to other labour camps, which she survival through miracles.

Exactly thirty years ago, on the 13th of Shevat 5754 (1994), Sarah Ziskind, nee Felger, passed away, at the age of 66.

Here is an excerpt from her moving book, from which we will learn about the mitzvahs of honouring one's parents, from a 13-year-old girl whose world was destroyed by the death of her beloved mother, and the words will be a candle in her memory and an ascension for her soul.

*My father was in bed; now he lost the soup ration he used to get at work. I was at a loss. Desperation ate me up. The severe hunger was unbearable. This time, I could only share with my father the half liter of soup I got at the resort (tailors). Weeks and months of despair and helplessness. The pink and shiny clothes I sewed for the German ladies were stained with tears from my eyes.*



**Jews in the Lodz ghetto pushed into line to receive their daily ration of soup**

*These weeks are engraved in my memory; every time I fearfully took my soup, the smell intoxicated me. Before I started eating, I counted how many potato cubes were in it. I had to divide them in two, for my father and for me. Out of fear, I started eating. The soup was delicious, too delicious. I wanted to eat slowly, to delay this pleasure. I didn't have time to enjoy it and already had to stop. I*

*took another half spoon, another drop, and was horrified to see what was left. Master of the World, I almost didn't eat and there was already so little left. What will I bring to my father?…*

*My father never said a word to me. He understood my struggle, he felt it. He would blame himself: because he steals my share from me.*

*Now I remembered Ruchelke in her daily battle with hunger. Again, not her fault for not leaving more bread for her brother (the description of this Ruchelke will be given later). Now I understood her; I was like her. I too sat and cried when I had a little soup left, when I could not control myself and ate another spoonful.*

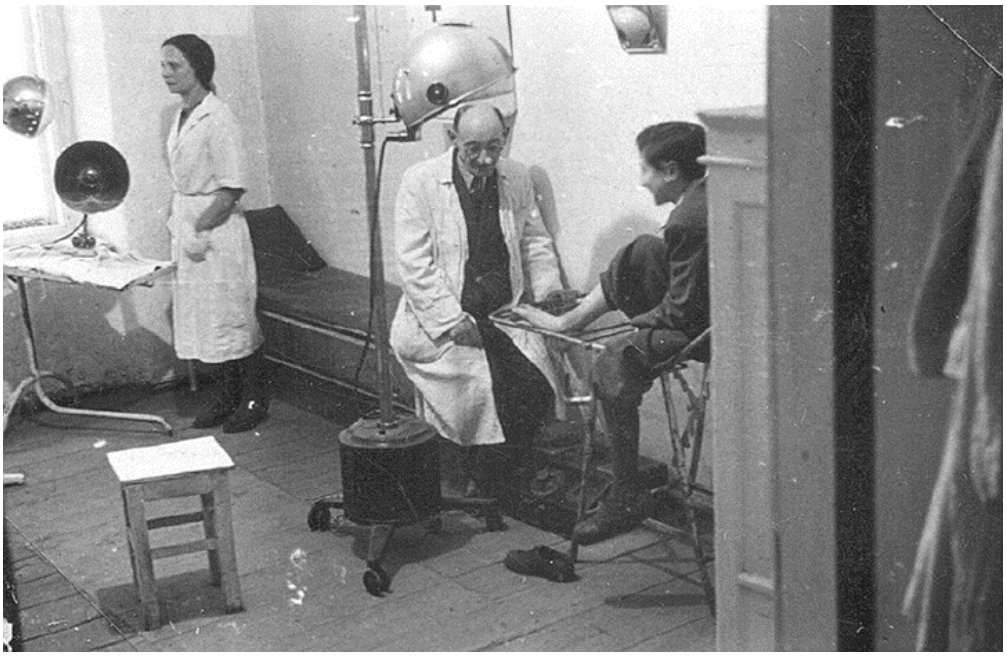
*This struggle, day by day, drove me out of my mind, every day as I vowed to eat only three spoons of soup, maybe four, but no more than that. Sometimes I managed to stick to my decision and then I was happy; sometimes I didn't and then I sat and cried.*




**A Medicine Called Vigantol**

*I called Dr. Kaspiecki again. My father stopped walking completely. "Lack of calcium in the bones," stated the doctor. This disease is also common in the ghetto, it is also caused by hunger, but there is a cure for it, a miracle salve called "Vigantol". It contains vitamins, a lot of vitamins. This medicine has the power to help. He, the doctor, is sure that after my father finishes one bottle, he will start walking again. The problem is, how to get the medicine. It is only distributed in one place. At the police, at the sonder-kommando. The pharmacy in sonder-kommando opens at eight thirty in the morning. But the lines there are very long, and*

*only twenty-five bottles of Vigantol are distributed per day. Doctor Kaspiecki looked at me and sighed:*



**A doctor checks a patient in the clinic in the Lodz Ghetto**

*"I don't believe you will be able to receive the medicine, you are so thin and weak, people have been waiting there since five o'clock in the morning. And maybe even before that."*

*The doctor prescribed my father the wonder drug Vigantol. Again he gave us two slips for two kilograms of peels and went on his way.*

*I looked at my father. Deep despair was in his eyes and he whispered: "The thought that I myself can't go get the medicine is terrible, I'm still young, I don't have any pain, I just can't walk, and there is medicine that can help me and I'm at a loss."*

*"Father," I said, "if you were able to go and bring the medicine you wouldn't need it at all. But don't worry, I'll get the medicine. You'll get it tomorrow." Father looked at me sadly, and spoke to me through the tears in his eyes: "You won't be able to get it, my daughter, you heard what Dr. Kaspiecki said, only twenty-five bottles per day and the lines are very long. It's not for you, you're so small and weak."*

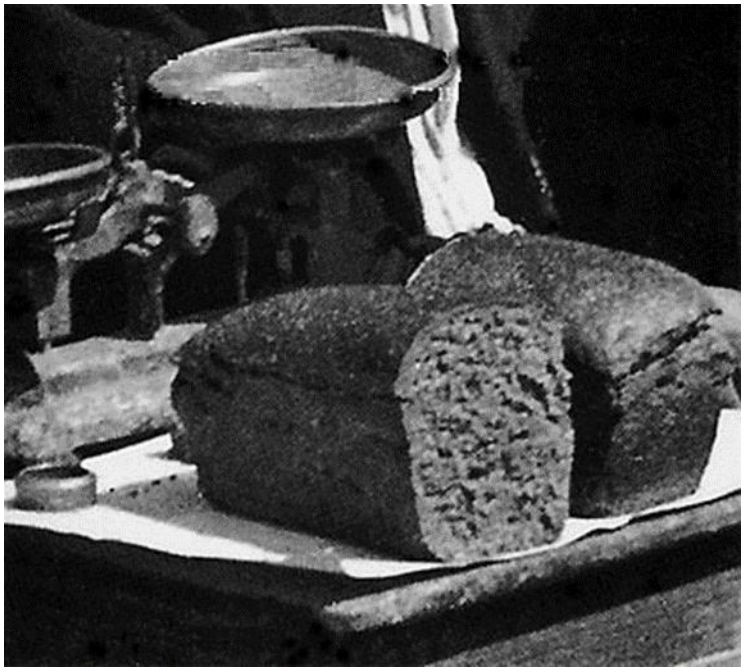
*I didn't answer him anymore, but my decision was to get the medicine no matter what.*

*That night I got up before four o'clock. Father objected and protested: "You won't succeed, it's a waste of your strength, it's still*

*too early, it's dark outside, a snowstorm." "Father, don't disturb me, I said that I have to bring the medicine and I want to be the first."*

*"But you forget that the gate is still closed," Dad reminded me, he meant the gate on Zagirska Street.*

*The houses on Zagirska Street were within the ghetto, but the road was outside it. There were wire fences on both sides of the street. In order to pass from one side of the sidewalk to the other, it was necessary to pass through two gates, which were guarded by Jewish policemen, as well as a road, which was guarded by a German sentry. There was also a bridge that connected the two sidewalks of Zagirska Street, but since the bridge was very far from where I lived, I had to go through the gates. The gates were closed at night and opened only at dawn.*



**Loaves of bread that were distributed to residents of the Lodz Ghetto**

*My father begged me to take a slice of bread with me – his portion or half of his portion. He is not hungry, he will be able to sleep and not feel hungry, while I will be very hungry, because I will have to stand in line for hours. I didn't listen to him. I explained to him that these are hours of sleep and therefore do not feel the hunger, I will not touch his bread, therefore, and if I eat my portion now, I will be hungry all day.*

*I put on my coat and my father's hat, a cap with earmuffs. With this hat on my head, it was impossible to tell that I was a girl. I went out into the street. A fierce snowstorm greeted me, the night was dark,*

*the wind raging, almost pelting. I felt my way through the dark streets and reached the gate. A gas lamp was above it. The gate was still closed. I stood next to it, holding it so that the storm wouldn't knock me down. The policeman and the sentry, seen through the raging snow, looked at me in bewilderment. The policeman told me that I better go to sleep until the gate opens. I answered him that I would wait for it to open. I have to get medicine for my father and I want to get to the pharmacy before a lot of people gather there.*

*The German sentry walking in his high boots, wrapped in his coat, stopped now and then, glancing at me. He did so until he turned to the policeman and asked him what this boy was doing here at night. The policeman told him. The soldier continued to pace back and forth. After some time he turned to the policeman and ordered him to open the gate so that I could pass. The gate was opened, therefore, especially for me.*

*I got to sonder-kommando, and it turned out that I wasn't the first. The pharmacy was on the first floor. Twenty-two steps led up to it. On the stairs, in the darkness of the night, stood curled up figures, shivering with cold. These were people who lived on the other side of the street. They did not need to go through gates. I counted them. There were five in number. I breathed a sigh of relief, I was the sixth. I calmed down, they will distribute twenty-five bottles.*

*It was half past four. The storm outside did not stop. I stood trembling and my teeth clenched. I felt intense stabbings in the fingertips of my hands and feet. I thought about the new shoes. What luck, because I have such shoes, despite the storm, my feet remained dry. The hours crawled lazily. Each time another figure emerged from the darkness, covered in snow and shivering with cold. The figure stood behind me, but there were also those who stood before me.*

*One man claimed that he was already here before I arrived, he claimed that he left and now he is back. The man standing before me*

*confirmed this. He even said that there was another woman here, and she was in line before me. I didn't believe him. When I arrived, he didn't tell me this, but even if I was eighth in line, it wouldn't be too bad. The line behind me grew longer. The woman came and stood before me. I went down two steps back. Two more people arrived, and claimed to have already been here, and were therefore pushed in front of me. I protested and resisted. I said I would not agree. They pushed me and I went down two steps again. I was already the tenth. That's not bad either, I said to myself.*

*The gloom began to fade. The man standing in front of me took out a slice of bread and started eating. I envied him. I was starting to get hungry. It was already six o'clock. In an hour and a half, the distribution of the medicines will begin. My legs froze, my teeth chattered.*

*Immersed in my memories, I didn't feel how people came and pushed me and how I kept going down the stairs. Now I was already in thirteenth place, but I knew that twenty-five vials would be distributed and there was, therefore, no room for concern. I would receive the medicine.*

*The sun had already come up; the line grew longer and longer. People came and stood next to me. Everyone began to push, a double line would form. At eight o'clock two policemen arrived. They have batons in their hands, and they started to "arrange" the line.*

*"What's that? Double line? Triple line? Down the stairs, everyone down. Boy, go down!" they shouted at me.*

*"But, sir, I was standing there, upstairs, I came early. I was the sixth…"*

*There was no one to talk to. Noise and pushing, crowding and commotion. Each time I had to retreat, until I found myself below, on the ground floor. The noise increased, the policemen used their batons.*

*"Don't push!" they shouted*

*The pharmacy door opened. The lucky ones who were first, started to descend, each holding a bottle of Vigantol – the precious liquid. I looked at them with envy.*

*The distribution now went well. We started climbing stairs. Again some people came down with the medicine in their hands. I moved forward and went up and being right next to the door, it suddenly closed in front of me. The policeman standing by the door announced that the distribution for that day was over and it would resume tomorrow. We were ordered to disperse. - I was shaking all over. I was like a wounded animal. I jumped towards the door, slammed into it, kicked in with my new shoes. I screamed and cried.*

*"I won't leave here without the medicine, I was the sixth in line," I shouted, "People pushed in front of me and pushed me down." The people had long since dispersed and I continued to make my hysterical shouts. The policeman struggled with me, he ordered me to go. He advised me to come tomorrow. I held on to the door handle.*

*"I won't come tomorrow, tomorrow the same thing will happen again! I never manage to get anything! This time I won't give up! My father is very sick and has stopped walking. The doctor said that only Vigantol can save him. My father will not allow me to come here a second time, I myself was sick and I just got out of the hospital!"*

*I have never shouted like that in my life, I didn't know I was capable of shouting so much. To this day I don't understand how I could have uttered such screams, but today when I remember all these, I am not ashamed.*

*The pharmacy door opened. Another policeman came out to me. - "Stop screaming already! Get out of here quickly!!"*

*He pushed me, I fell. But in the fall, I managed to put my foot between the door and the doorframe. They couldn't close it. They tried to pull me, I held on to the doorframe. I kept shouting:*

*"It won't help you! I will not return home without the medicine, I will stay here until tomorrow morning!" I added to the story that I was the first to pass the gate, that the German soldier opened the gate for me, that I left the house at four o'clock in the morning and that I was the sixth in line. I added more by shouting that my father is dangerously ill, that he is unable to walk.*

*My voice was hoarse, but I didn't stop screaming. A man in a white coat came out of the pharmacy. He approached me and asked me for the doctor's prescription. He had a small vial in his hand. With trembling hands I handed him the note that Dr. Kaspiecki had given me. I grabbed the bottle from him and hurried back home happily. My father couldn't believe that I indeed managed to get the medicine. I didn't tell him how I got it and what happened to me. I didn't want to hurt him, but it was all worth it. The medicine helped him. It was indeed a miracle cure.*

*Four days later, when I returned from work, my father opened the door for me. He was dressed. All shining and happy, he swept me into his arms.*

*"Look, I'm already walking! I can even run! I have strength! I'm strong!" He laughed and cried alternately. like a happy little boy.*

*My Uncle Avraham, my Aunt Faiga, Salek, Lola, Avramek, and Gucia – they call came to see this wonder. Father demonstrated his walk to them. I was mesmerized.* (HaAtara Sheh'Avda, pg. 107-113)

***"A Jew must have faith that, indeed, he has faith. Even if one feels that his emunah seems clouded in doubt, he should realize that in truth, only its radiance has become obscured." ~ Reb Mordechai of Lechovitz (1742-1810)***

***Like the sun on a cloudy day, we may not see or feel its presence, but it is in fact burning strong and bright.***




**וְהַצָּרוּעַ אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ הַנֶּגַע בְּגָדָיו יִהְיוּ פְרֻמִים וְרֹאשׁוֹ יִהְיֶה פָרוּעַ וְעַל־שָׂפָם יַעְטֶה וְטָמֵא טָמֵא יִקְרָא - 'And the person with tzaraas in whom there is the affliction, his garments shall be rent, the hair of his head shall be unshorn, and he shall cloak himself up to his lips; he is to call out, "Contaminated, contaminated!"'** (13:45)




**The Yalkut Shemoni** explains that the metzora calls out to others: "Tamei, impure! Tamei, impure!" so that his pain will be publicized to others. Thus, they will daven for his cure.

**Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita**, says that having other Jews daven for their friend in need is not simply a laudable practice, but the designated purpose in Creation. A person should never think, "It is all about me." One should live a life of sharing with others, caring about others, doing for others. Life is a partnership, a coalescence of people working with one another for one another. It is all about humility, and learning to share and care with/about others.

This is the underlying motif/intention of **וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ**, "Love your fellow as (you love) yourself."

Rav Zilberstein suggests that this idea is supported by the fact that all of us are not created equal: some are wealthy, some are not; some are brilliant, some are not; some are in good health, some are not. The list of disparities goes on. The purpose is so that we should be aware and reiterate in our minds that our life's focus should not be

directed on ourselves, but on others. We should think of others: What does my fellow need? How can I help? What can I do?

To paraphrase the immortal words of **Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl** (preface to Nefesh HaChaim), "Man is created **רק להועיל לאחרינו**, to assist others."

One of the most satisfying feelings in life is the act of giving. It creates a positive energy that seems to gravitate to others. Giving and helping are so meaningful, so special, especially in the manner that they influence others to follow suit.

I think that we can take this one step further. There are individuals who give, and there are individuals who are giving persons. One who gives does not necessarily give of himself/herself. They give something which usually belongs to them. - A giving person shares himself with the beneficiary.

I recently saw a quote (anonymous attribution), "Life is not (only) about making others happy. Life is about sharing your happiness with others." In other words: I will be happy to give, to contribute, to assist, but what is mine is mine. I enjoy seeing that you are happy, and I am happy that in some measure I have played a role in facilitating your happiness, but my happiness is my happiness. I give – I do not necessarily want to open up my personal celebrations to others.

That is the difference between one who gives and one who is a giving person. When one gives, he still remains distinct, even distant from the beneficiary. When one is a giving person, he bonds and builds a unified relationship with the beneficiary.

***"Bitachon means surrendering control to The One Who truly knows what is best for us." ~ Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe.***

**וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ – '*On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised*.' (12:3)**

While every mitzvah in the Torah is an obligation to observe, mitzvas Milah, the commandment concerning circumcision, seems to be a mainstay – a mitzvah for which Jews throughout the millennia have sacrificed themselves. - What is it about this mitzvah that impacts our lives to such an extent?

The first time that this mitzvah is mentioned in the Torah is when Hashem commanded Avraham Avinu to circumcise himself. In his commentary to Parashas Emor, the Ramban teaches that with the execution of Bris Milah on his body, Avraham was transformed from a ben Noach, Noachide, to a ben Yisrael, Jew.

Despite Avraham's belief in the Creator and his observance of His commandments, Avraham did not achieve this milestone until he was circumcised. Once Avraham committed his body and soul to Hashem, the Almighty changed his name to Avraham, and Judaism was born.

In a way, Hashem was recreating Avraham, since, until then, he had been a ben Noach. There was Adam HaRishon, Primordial/first man, and now there was the first Jew – Avraham Avinu. - This occurred as a result of Bris Milah.

Thousands of times this transformation has taken place: an individual far-removed from Jewish observance is willing to do anything to have a Bris Milah performed on his infant son.

When a Jew rejects Milah, as some of the most alienated Jews have done, they are fighting their spiritual DNA, since Milah and Judaism are inextricably bound up together.

I guess there is a difference between being assimilated, an individual who simply does not know, and being alienated, an individual who refuses to know, who outright rejects the Jewish label, who views his heritage as a primitive aberration. We can only pray that all of his machinations will one day give way to an illumination through

which he will see his utter foolishness. One does not fight Hashem, and, if he does, he certainly does not win.

Eliyahu HaNavi attends every Bris Milah. Actually, Eliyahu attends two Jewish services – Bris Milah and the Pesach Seder. These are both transformational experiences: one, in which a young infant enters into the covenant of Judaism; and the other, which celebrates and relives our entrance into nationhood by way of our being liberated from the Egyptian bondage. - Indeed, these two practices are almost universally maintained by Jews of all stripes.

Eliyahu HaNavi is the harbinger of peace. His presence at these two celebrations indicates the harmony engendered between man and G-d, and between man and his fellow man.

Both of these events represent sacrifice. Eliyahu/Pinchas was prepared to sacrifice his life to preserve Hashem's honor. This is why he is the harbinger of true peace. Peace founded on religious compromise is not peace; it is an incursion against Hashem.

Certainly, no dearth of stories exists which underscore the inexorable bond the Jewish People have with Bris Milah. The following vignette even includes Eliyahu HaNavi:

An assimilated Jewess (I guess her husband was beyond assimilation) called a mohel, ritual circumciser, and asked him to come to her house to perform a circumcision on her son. When he appeared at the house, he seemed obviously surprised that nothing "Jewish" was to be found in the house.

Noticing his incredulity, the woman said, "Please ignore the lack of Jewish symbolism in our home. Neither my husband nor I have any relationship whatsoever with Judaism. We decided to give our son a Bris because we do not want him to feel different when he grows up."

The woman added that she was in a big rush, and, since the Bris is a minor procedure, she was leaving him in the care of her nanny – who

would arrive in approximately half an hour. The two-month-old baby was in the midst of his morning nap, so the mohel would have to wait a little. Meanwhile, the mother left. The nanny had yet to arrive.

A Bris Milah in a solitary house is a bit strange. This was a large city – not a small town with a few Jewish families. Yet, the Bris was performed in the company of the mohel and the baby; no one else showed up. Whoever heard of such a "celebration"? An empty home; parents who apparently did not care, but what can one do? The mother informed the mohel before she left that her infant son's name was Yuval, which the mohel affirmed following the Bris.

The mohel served as sandek, holding the infant, and as mohel; he also held the baby when he gave him his name.

It should have been a happy occasion, but it was not. The mohel had never experienced such a sad Bris. The nanny had thus far not come. The infant was hungry, and he began to cry.

The mohel went into the kitchen and could not find anything edible for an infant. He attempted to soothe the child, to stop him from crying. The baby was very tense. He was hungry; he was in pain; perhaps he sensed that no one seemed to care about him.

The mohel was so heartbroken over the course of events that he joined in with the baby. So, the baby cried, and the mohel cried.

Imagine the scene following the bris: the baby crying out of pain and hunger; the mohel crying because he was sad – for the baby, and sad for the parents, who were clueless about their religion.

"You make a mistake," the Mekubal said. "It was not just you and Yuval who were alone in the house that day. Eliyahu HaNavi attends every Bris. When you and Yuval wept, it impressed Eliyahu so much that he, too, joined in the weeping. The tears of Eliyahu HaNavi supplementing yours and those of the infant, Yuval, made such an impression in Heaven that it was decreed that Yuval would one day become a great Torah scholar!"

In the meantime, the nanny showed up to confront a crying baby and a crying man. She apologized, claiming that she had been stuck in traffic due to an accident on the highway. The mohel thanked her for finally showing up. She fed the child. The mohel bid her good day and left.

Thirteen years later, the mohel had become a preeminent, much sought-after mohel. One day, the phone rang, and a woman introduced herself and asked if her name jogged his memory. At first, he did not remember. Then it came back to him. She was the mother who had left him to perform a bris on her two-month-old son. The mohel said that, yes, he did remember. After all, how could he forget what would go down as his most memorable bris?

He immediately asked, "Did something happen to Yuval?"

"No," she answered, "he is fine."

She would like to consult with him concerning a pressing situation. Could he come to the house? - The mohel agreed to come.

The mohel arrived and was greeted by the mother and her tall, handsome son. After exchanging greetings, the mother could no longer contain herself.

"He wants to throw it all away. He wants to become observant!" she cried.

"How could a boy whose parents are devoid of religion have a child that insists on becoming frum, observant?" she asked.

"He insists on keeping kosher, observing Shabbos, and attend a yeshivah! Have you ever heard of something so outrageous?"

"We have taken him to the top psychologists and psychiatrists. They all agree that he is fine. How could he be fine if this is what he wants to do?" she screamed.

Indeed, she said that the doctors had warned them that if they do not give in, he will otherwise snap (emotionally).

"Rabbi, you are the only observant Jew that we know. What should we do?"

The mohel thought for a few moments and then asked, "By the way, why did you select me as your son's mohel? There were so many others, more experienced than I."

"Well, in the phone book under mohel, you were the first one, since your name begins with aleph, A," she replied.

The mohel agreed to take Yuval under his wing, and, with his help in getting him started in yeshivah, over a short span of time, he quickly grew into a huge talmid chacham, Torah scholar.

The mohel was ambivalent in his joy. On the one hand, Yuval must be an exceptional boy with an extraordinary mind, motivated by a unique thirst and drive for learning. So many others, however, just do not make it, despite caring parents and outstanding rebbeim. What was the secret behind Yuval's success? It certainly was not his parents.

The mohel went to a distinguished Mekubal, holy scholar knowledgeable in mysticism, to ask his question. Perhaps he would receive the correct answer to this pressing question.

The Mekubal asked him to describe what had taken place the day of the Bris Milah. The mohel related the entire story, and concluded, "I wept so much that day. I wept and the infant Yuval wept. The two of us alone wept incessantly."

We never know the far-reaching effect achieved by our sincere prayer accompanied by tears.

***"When we place our trust in Hashem, we can experience a sense of peace and tranquillity even in the midst of chaos and turmoil. ~ Rabbi Chaim Vital.***

**וּבְיוֹם הֵרָאוֹת בּוֹ בָּשָׂר חַי יִטְמָא – '*On the day healthy flesh appears in it, it shall be contaminated*.' (13:14)**

On some specific days, the Kohen does not view a nega, plague. A chassan, bridegroom, who has a suspicious nega is allowed the Shivas yimei hamishtah, Seven days of celebration following his wedding. Likewise, one whose plague appeared at the onset of Yom Tov is permitted for the seven days of the Festival. -Why is this?

**Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl**, offers a practical explanation: The purpose of the metzora's punishment is to knock him down a notch in his arrogance and in the way he treats his fellow man. He has an obnoxious manner of treating people, because he has convinced himself that he is better than they are.

His punishment is commensurate with his actions. He created rifts among people with his malignant tongue; he will be locked up in solitude, so that he will experience a taste of his own medicine. Perhaps the seclusion and ensuing loneliness will spur him to think about the strife that he is causing. The loneliness will teach him what he has caused to happen to others. This might motivate a change in his attitude toward himself and others.

This is why he is not quarantined during his Sheva brachos, a time when joy permeates his life and worry has difficulty creeping in.

A person who is at the apex of joy or engrossed in the celebration of the Festival is not likely to condescend to the Heavenly punishment of tzaraas. He will ignore the lesson because his mind is on something else. Indeed, during the festivities, he may even audaciously laugh off the punishment. Thus, he is given his seven festive days – both nuptial and Festival, so that he can clear his mind, have his fun, and now confront the reality of his sins, their harmful effect on others – and on himself. - With nothing to motivate insolence, he will hopefully confront his issues and repent.

**וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַנֶּגַע בְּעוֹר־הַבָּשָׂר וְשֵׂעָר בַּנֶּגַע הָפַךְ לָבָן וּמַרְאֵה הַנֶּגַע עָמֹק מֵעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ נֶגַע צָרַעַת הוּא וְרָאָהוּ הַכֹּהֵן וְטִמֵּא אֹתוֹ – *'The Kohen shall look at the affliction on the skin… the Kohen shall look at it and declare him contaminated.'*** (13:3)

The Kohen is looking at the same nega, plague, – once; yet the Torah writes that he sees/looks twice. Why is there a redundancy?

**The Meshech Chochmah** offers a powerful insight to explain that, in fact, the Kohen is instructed to have a "double take," look twice: once at the plague; and once at the person who manifests the plague.

In the Talmud Moed Katan 7b, Chazal quote the pasuk, **וּבְיוֹם הֵרָאוֹת בּוֹ** - *'On the day that healthy flesh appears in it.'* (Vayikra 13:14). There are days during which you (Kohen) may view the nega, and there are days when the Kohen should not view the nega."

This teaches that a chassan, bridegroom, upon whom a nega has surfaced, is to be given (allowed to celebrate) the shivas yemei mishtah, seven days of festivity following the wedding. Likewise, if the nega were to appear right before the Regel, one of the three Festivals, the metzora is not deemed impure, so that the individual may celebrate the seven days of the Festival.

The Meshech Chochmah derives from here that the Kohen does much more than look at the plague. He must also take into consideration the time frame when this plague appears. A plague may appear to be tamei, ritually impure, but, until the Kohen declares it to be tamei, it is tahor, still pure.

The Kohen may not declare a chassan tamei if it means that he will have his sheva brachos ruined. If a husband/father must become tamei prior to Yom Tov, it will destroy the joy of the Festival not only for him, but equally for his entire family. Therefore, the Torah writes that the Kohen looks at the plague – but before he declares it to be tamei, he must look again at the circumstances surrounding the plague. - What will be the greater ramifications of his decision?

Thus, the Torah instructs the Kohen to first look at the affliction to see if it has simanei tumah, signs of contamination. Then, after he has determined that indeed the affliction has all the signs of tumah, the Kohen should now look again – at the person: Is he presently up to becoming tamei, or, perhaps, it would be best to wait.

What an inspirational commentary! We live in an age of "egos" in a generation so overwhelmed with insecurity that many of those who are charged with making decisions act out of pressure, rather than employing basic common sense or a dose of compassion.

When we discipline students, do we take into consideration the wider ramifications of our decision? Do we think how it will affect the parents, siblings, the student? Do we even care? - "But if I keep this boy/girl in my school I will look bad; the school's reputation might suffer."

The Kohen had to delay his "call" on the affliction, even though his "take" on it was tamei, but it would deprive the man and his family of the Yom Tov. Why should the kallah, bride, suffer? Let her have her week with her new husband.

I remember a few years ago making a shivah call to the Hellman family, who had just lost the patriarch of the family, **Rav Uri Hellman, zl**, the legendary educator and pioneer of girls' education. There were so many stories about this great man. One episode that impacted me then and has inspired me over the years was related by his secretary:

Apparently, after school started, Rav Hellman would retire to his office, close the door, and do his work. The secretary would bring him a slice of cake and a cup of coffee. At the end of the day, she would retrieve the empty dishes.

That day, Rav Hellman had the misfortune of having to ask a girl to leave the school. The secretary went about her daily ritual in her usual manner. This day, however, when she returned at 4:00 p.m., the

cake and coffee had not yet been touched. She asked Rav Hellman what had happened, why he had not eaten the cake, or at least, drunk the coffee?

Rav Hellman looked up from the sefer he was reading and said, "You know that I must speak today with a certain girl, and you are aware of the ramifications of this necessary decision. When I must ask a girl to leave the school, it is a fast day for me! I cannot eat! How could I eat, knowing that I am sending a Jewish girl out on the street?!"

One last story: My good friend, Rabbi Raphael Gelley, was in the Akron/Canton airport waiting to board a flight to New York. He struck up a conversation with a young soldier returning for a second tour of duty in Iraq.

He asked the fellow, "What motivates you to go back?"

"As long as my Commander-in-Chief (President George W. Bush) says, 'There will be no dessert in the White House until every American soldier returns home,' I will continue to fight."

This is secure and sensitive leadership.



**וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ - "*On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised*."** (12:3)

The mitzvah of Milah, circumcision, leaves an indelible mark on a Jew, one that is with him throughout his life. It is a mitzvah which connects generations, since one's father is obligated to make sure that his son is circumcised. It is a rite of passage for a Jew, a mitzvah for which Jews throughout the millennia have died.

Many stories demonstrate the Jew's commitment to this special mitzvah. The following is a very poignant story, which demonstrates not only Jewish resolve, but Jewish commitment under the most trying circumstances.

**Horav Arye Levin, z.l.**, was accustomed to go to shul early on Erev Shabbos, so that he could recite Shir HaShirim in a relaxed atmosphere and with great joy. Once, he sat next to his rebbe, **Horav Chaim Berlin, z.l.**, the rav of Yerushalayim, and together they recited the Shir HaShirim.



They came to the pasuk, הִנָּךְ יָפָה רַעְיָתִי הִנָּךְ יָפָה עֵינַיִךְ יוֹנִים - "***Behold, you are beautiful My beloved; behold, you are beautiful, your eyes are doves.***" (1:15).

This pasuk extols Klal Yisrael for their deeds and resolve and liken its leadership, the "eyes" of the nation, to doves, who remain faithful to their mates.

Rav Chaim's eyes began to tear.

"Why are you crying?" Rav Arye asked his rebbe. "These pesukim praise Klal Yisrael's faithfulness. It is no reason to cry."

Rav Chaim explained his display of emotion with the following story:

"When I was rav in Moscow, a distinguished gentleman once came over to me and asked to speak to me in private. He related that his wife had just given birth to a boy, and would I honor him by being the Mohel, ritual circumciser.

Since this request was not uncommon, I was somewhat taken aback by his desire for secrecy. He soon explained that his business was in the wholesale vending of crucifixes. It would certainly not serve his business well to acknowledge publicly that he was Jewish. A public celebration was definitely out of the question.

"I agreed to perform the Bris in secret. The man's servants were given the day off and the father and I attended to the ceremony. Afterwards, I asked the father to notify me on the third day as to the child's welfare.

On the third day, the father arrived with the good news that the baby was well. He also brought an envelope of cash to pay for my services. I refused his money, stating that I do not take remuneration for this mitzvah. The father thought I was really waiting for more money, which he immediately gave me. I said, "No – I do not take money for the mitzvah of Milah."

Before the father left, I asked him to explain his behavior to me:

"I visited your home and did not notice even the slightest testament to your Jewish heritage. Why then would you risk everything for the mitzvah of Milah? Why chance exposure after so many years of hiding your true faith?"

He responded, 'Rebbe, I know that I have distanced myself from the faith of my ancestors. I do not know if I personally can ever go back to my roots. One thing I do know for certain: my son will never know his Jewish heritage. I was, at least, raised among Jews. He will have nothing of the sort. If one day in the future, however, when he grows up and meets other Jews who may inspire him to return to his faith, I do not want to be the one that precluded his return. He was born a Jew, and I will raise him as such. I cannot deprive my son of his legacy.'

"Now you know," said Rav Chaim, "why I cry when I recite these pesukim. As the dove remains faithful to its dovecote, never flying farther than its eyes can still see the dovecote, so, too, do our People retain their inner commitment to Hashem, regardless of how far they have strayed."

**וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ** - "***On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised***." (12:3)




One day the **Sefas Emes** asked one of his close chassidim to take his two young sons, (Rav) Avraham Mordechai and (Rav) Moshe Betzalel, to a certain Jew in Warsaw for a brachah, blessing.

The person left the next day in search of this Jew whom he assumed must certainly be a famous tzaddik, righteous man. He arrived in Warsaw and, after some inquiry, he discovered that the individual he sought was actually a simple, common Jew. The man, indeed, had no idea why the famous Rebbe of Gur would send his two sons to him for a blessing. Yet, at the behest of the messenger, he took the two boys and blessed them profusely.

The chassid returned to Gur, thinking that this man must be one of the lamed-vav tzaddikim, thirty-six righteous Jews who live common lives and keep their piety secret.

When he returned to the Sefas Emes, he asked the Rebbe why he had sent his sons to this seemingly simple Jew.

"True," answered the Sefas Emes, "he gives the impression of being a simple Jew which, indeed, he is. However, he once demonstrated such unparalleled devotion to a mitzvah that in Heaven he was granted tzaddik status.

It happened that when his son was born, this Jew did not have penny to his name. He was so destitute that he could not afford to pay for the bare necessities to perform a Bris Milah. What did he do? He sold his bed and slept on the floor, so that he could have enough funds to pay for a Bris. He was left with nothing. Yet, he did not

care. He was able to perform the mitzvah of bringing his son into the covenant of Avraham Avinu.

This action caused such a stir in Heaven that he was granted a unique reward – every blessing that issues forth from his mouth will be fulfilled. In fact, he himself is unaware of his great power.

Do you now understand why I sent my sons to him? We should now have an inkling of the significance of the mitzvah of Bris Milah and the reward for adhering to its precepts.

**נֶגַע צָרַעַת כִּי תִהְיֶה בְּאָדָם וְהוּבָא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן** - "***If a tzaraas affliction will be in a person***." (13:9)

The laws of tzaraas, a spiritual malady which manifests itself in a physical illness which mimics leprosy, is the result of "speech problems." People who do not use their G-d-given tongues appropriately, such that they disparage and slander, are visited with tzaraas.

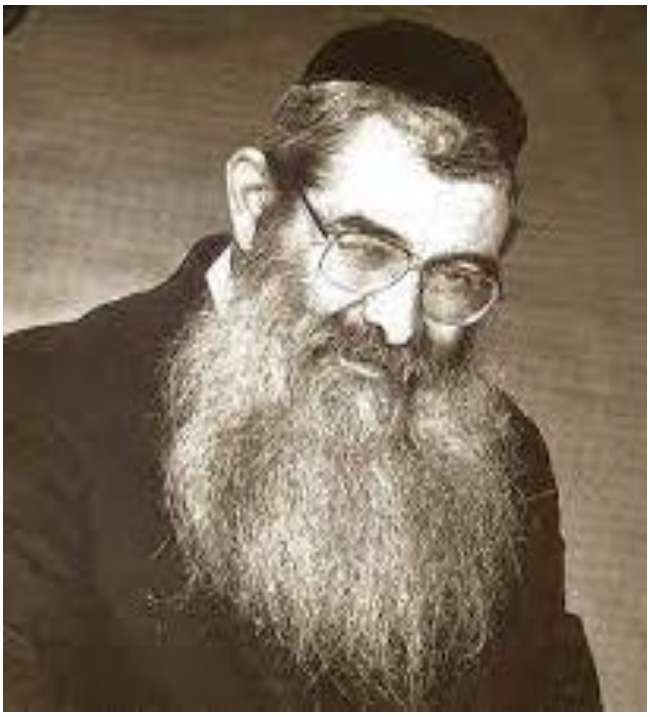
Volumes have been written addressing the sin of lashon hara, evil speech. What about lashon tov, good speech, positive speech, words that heal and soothe?

The power of speech is a special gift that we must learn to appreciate. A good word can lift a spirit and save a life. How often do we regret not saying the right thing? - A kind word at the right moment can make a world of difference in someone's life.

A secular author once wrote, "*The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone*." - What a powerful statement! How often do we regret not saying something nice – to our mate, our child, our friend, our student, our parent?

While it is necessary to focus on the effects and consequences of lashon hara, it is equally important not to ignore the positive effects of lashon tov.

In this country, referring to an individual by his first name is commonplace. The prefix "Mr." and "Reb" have long disappeared from a society where respect, etiquette and refinement are considered archaic. We do not realize that by referring to someone with the prefix "Reb," we are adding a sense of respect and dignity to his name – and, for some people, this is very important.



**Horav Moshe Aharon Stern, z.l.**, the Kamenitzer Mashgiach of Eretz Yisrael, left a legacy of respect for every human being. The paragon of humility, he made every person feel that he was great.

I write this as a personal testimony to the few times that he came to my home. He did not enter as an esteemed Rosh Yeshivah, which he certainly was. He spoke meekly, with refinement and modesty, inquiring about my work. He always made it a point to speak to my wife. He was an individual who embodied everything Chazal teach us about the qualities and attributes of a Torah leader.

During the shivah, seven-day mourning period, after his sudden passing, the common man, the "regular Jew," came forth to articulate his praise.

One such individual who came emphasized Rav Stern's ability to use the right word at the right time. He said, "You think that he was only your father. Well, he was also my father. The only one in my entire life who called me "Reb" Yaakov was your father. No one ever addressed me with the respectable title of "Reb" except him. He would listen to my chiddushim, novellae, and then tell me, Ihr zogt gut, "You are saying a good thought."

Indeed, one Shabbos someone came over to me and said, "Rav Moshe Aharon told me a chiddush in your name." This is the definition of real humility: accepting all people, listening to all people and speaking respectfully to all people.

The one simple title of "Reb," added to this person's name, changed his life! It gave him stature, knowing that a gadol, Torah giant, appreciated him.

It is incredible how easy it is to help another person and equally shocking how few of us act upon it. In the Talmud Bava Basra 9:2, Chazal teach us that one who gives a pruta, penny, to a poor man receives six blessings, while one who cheers him up receives eleven blessings. Rav Moshe Aharon derived from here that encouraging another person is greater than giving him money.

A beggar will regrettably not become wealthy from the few pennies he receives, but a few well-chosen words of encouragement have the power to elevate him from a life of poverty and dejection.

Very often I hear the excuse, "But I do not know what to say." Knowing the right words to say to the sick, bereaved, the downtrodden, is difficult. Even seasoned professionals, at times, are at a loss for the right words. In truth, I think it is just being there, a smile, a reassurance, an offer of assistance is all that is needed. People who are ill want to know that they are not alone. People who are bereaved need reassurance. People that are broken need to be encouraged. Long visits do more for the visitor than the visited. It is just being there that counts.

I recently read about **Horav Yitzchak Yeruchem Diskin, z.l.**, the avi yesomim, father of orphans, who founded the famous Diskin Orphanage in Yerushalayim. He had a special way of dealing with his unfortunate charges.

It is related that just before he moved into the orphanage's new building, he began to weep uncontrollably. He explained, "A

shoemaker tends to be careless with shoes, and a bookbinder frequently is careless with holy books. Who knows if I, too, will treat orphans with less feeling if I have to deal with them all day long?"

Once, a couple of young orphan girls were staying with him, since the orphanage was filled to capacity. His wife personally cared for the young girls. One time, Rav Yitzchak Yeruchem noticed that one of the girls began to sob after his wife bathed her. Concerned, he asked his wife, "Perhaps you were careless and allowed some soap to get into her eyes?"

His wife looked at him with shock, "I am so careful to make sure this would never happen."

Finally, he went over to the little girl and asked, "Why do you cry after your bath? Is my wife not taking proper care of you?"

"No, no Rebbe!' the child cried. "The Rebbetzin is so kind and gentle. My mother, alehah ha'shalom, may she rest in peace, did not watch over me with such care as the Rebbetzin. It is just that my mother used to kiss my head after my bath, and each time I remember this, I begin to cry."

All the child needed was a kiss – not a speech, a pat on the shoulder – not a lecture, a smile – not a harangue.

Lashon hara can destroy a life. Yet, words, if used correctly, can also create happiness and sustain life. We have only to look around, extend ourselves to those around us, and we will see the difference a good word can make.

**בֵּינִי וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אוֹת הִוא לְעֹלָם**

***"Shabbos is our sign in the window declaring our real business and identity – Where we live, and what we live for." ~ Rabbi Avraham Chaim Tanzer Zt'l.***

**וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ** - "***On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised***." (12:3)

The mitzvah of Bris Milah, ritual circumcision, is unique in that it has been accepted throughout the generations with joy. Our people have responded to the call of Bris Milah with mesiras nefesh - self sacrifice.

The imprint of the Bris Milah is a permanent imprimatur on the child, identifying him as a partner in the Covenant and a member of the Jewish Nation. It is a sign that stays with the child throughout his entire life.

The circumcision is an event marked with pride and joy - regardless of the circumstances surrounding the event. It is one mitzvah that all Jews, even those who have otherwise become alienated from Jewish observance, have continued to embrace.

Many stories relate the overwhelming mesiras nefesh our People have demonstrated for Bris Milah. There is one very poignant narrative that took place during the Holocaust that was told over many times by the **Bluzhover Rebbe,zl**.



**The Bluzhever Rebbe and Mike Tress**

**Rabbi Yisrael Spira,zl**, the Bluzhover Rebbe, was sawing wood as a member of a slave-labour contingent in the notorious Janowska Road camp. One morning, on Hoshanah Rabah, the forest was filled with terrible, heartrending cries. It soon became known that a children's "aktion", selection, was occuring. The Nazi beasts

were grabbing little children away from their mothers to be slaughtered like cattle in a nearby field.

One can imagine the heartbroken mothers as their children were torn from them. The mothers knew it would only be a little while before they, too, would follow the tragic path of their children.

As the procession of weeping, distraught mothers and children came closer to the Bluzhover's labor group, one mother broke ranks. Clutching her infant in her arms, she cried out, "Yidden! Have mercy, give me a knife!"

Assuming the woman sought to commit suicide, the Rebbe attempted to dissuade her. A Nazi officer, infamous for his sadistic behavior, approached the woman and handed her his penknife, hoping to enjoy the last moments of this hapless woman's life.

They did not know the Jewish spirit. Clutching the knife in her hand, the woman carefully placed her child on the ground and circumcised her baby son. In a clear, loud, emotion-filled voice she recited the Bircas Ha'milah, to the loud response of Amen by all those assembled.

This is the way one Jewish mother inducted her son into the covenant of our People.

We should learn from the mesiras nefesh of our forebears to perform this most precious mitzvah according to Jewish law - not to our convenience.

***"A person must realize that sometimes, he will overcome the yetzer horah and sometimes the yetzer horah will overpower him. But as long as a person fights with all his of might, Hashem will help him, and eventually he will become victorious." ~ The Chofetz Chaim.***

# The Weekly Vort

● **והיה בעור בשרו לנגע צרעת – *and I will become a tzaraas affliction on the skin of his flesh*** (13:2).

**The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh** explains that the impurity engendered by these physical symptoms is only skin deep. It is an affliction on the skin of the flesh but doesn't penetrate further.

When we say in Shacharis "the soul which You blew into me, it is pure" reflects this. The soul of a Jew may be temporarily besmirched by sin, but it is only superficial.

Shlomo HaMelech says, "I am slumbering yet my heart is awake" (Shir HaShirim 5:2). Even as we slumber, we are, at our core, awake and spiritually sensitive. Hashem brings afflictions upon us to shake us out of our spiritual slumber and apathy. (The Torah Treasury)

● **שאת... בהרת – *s'eis... baheres*** (13:2).

The *pasuk* speaks of two forms of *tzara'as* that are different shades of white. Each one comes as punishment for conduct on a personal level, and each indicates a slightly different attitude toward faulty behavior.

*A baheres* is a clear, glistening white, indicating that the victim regards his behavior as so pure and beyond reproach that his conscience is completely clear.

*A s'eis* is not quite as white and clear. Such a person is not as complacent and smug as the one suffering from a *baheres*. Nevertheless, the affliction came because he regards himself as better than his fellows. This affliction symbolizes his arrogance and selfishness. [R' Dovid Feinstein] (Kol Dodi on the Torah)

# Fascinating INSIGHTS

## Amicable Acquaintance



Once when **R' Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz** was giving a shiur (where each person needed to bring their own chairs). Two boys entered each bringing their own chair.

R' Shraga Feivel said to the boys, "Both of you came to the shiur and needed chairs. Why didn't you each bring a chair for each other? Then you would each be performing a chessed."

A question we should ask ourselves each day is, "What did you do for someone today?"

The act of giving is eternal while taking is momentary. There is a saying, "After 120 years, you take what you give, not what you have."

**The Kli Yakar** tells us that when Moshe took the bones of Yosef it says **עצמות יוסף עמו** - Moshe took this with him, eternally as that was a Mitzvah. This is in contrast to the rest of the Jews who were busy with the spoils from Mitzrayim, that which is temporary.

One day, Dovid, a ten-year-old boy from Lakewood rode his bike to learn in Beis Midrash Gavoah. Due to the scorching heat, he was very thirsty, and with his only dollar on him, he decided that he would buy a cold soda. When he arrived at the yeshiva, he met a collector from Eretz Yisrael. Dovid thought, "I can satisfy my thirst with a cup of water. Let me give him the dollar." He then happily handed the collector the dollar!

Well-known psychologist Dr. Martin Seligman suggests integrating acts of kindness into your routine to observe the impact on your mood. As an illustration, he recounts a situation at the post office with lengthy lines due to a one-cent increase in postage. Dr. Seligman purchased strips of penny stamps and generously distributed them to individuals waiting behind him to buy a supply of penny stamps.

Dr. Seligman reports that the several dollars he spent on stamps that day provided him with one of the most satisfying experiences of his life.




The story is told of a woman who was buying clothes for her son for Yom Tov. As she was about to leave the store, she noticed a young boy looking longingly at her. She recognized him and knew he came from a poor family. She invited him in and helped him pick out a suit, shirt and shoes for Yom Tov.

As she was standing by the cash register, the boy asked her. "Are you Hashem?" She chuckled and said, "No, I am just one of his children." The little boy replied, "I knew you were related."

Realize that when we give, we are demonstrating that we are related to Hashem.

Mendel Teitelbaum, a Gerrer Chassid, once asked his father, R' Yitzchak Dovid Teitelbaum, if a story he heard about him during the Holocaust was true. The story was that when his father received his bread ration in Auschwitz, he would cut it in half, keeping half for himself and giving the other half bit by bit to those who were starving.

His father confirmed the veracity of the story and then told his son where he got this trait from.

Since there were no fridges or freezers, one could only prepare enough food for that day. On one cold snowy night, in his little town of Sheps, Poland, when his mother made soup for dinner, she served her husband, herself, and her nine children.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door. It was an indigent beggar covered in snow asking for food. His mother told the pauper to go into a certain room in the house to clean himself off from all the snow. While the poor man was doing that, Mrs. Teitelbaum took an empty bowl and removed a spoonful of soup from the bowl of each of the nine children, her husband's and her own. That became the bowl of soup for the pauper.

This is where R' Yitzchak Dovid Teitelbaum learned this special trait from.




## Kibud Av v'Em

**Reb Chaim Palagi** (Nefesh Kol Chai, Kibud) writes, "His father and mother are better than a kameia to protect him."

People wear kameias, good mazal amulets, for protection, but a far better protection for health, success, and longevity is practicing kibud av v'em.

**The Chazon Ish zt'l** would tell the yeshiva bachurim, "Just as one must study the halachos of a yom tov thirty days before the yom tov, so too must one review hilchos kibud av v'em thirty days before returning home."

And when a bachur lives at home with his parents, he certainly must constantly review the halachos of kibud av v'em. - The Chazon Ish compares this to hilchos chag b'chag, the obligation to study the

halachos of yom tov on yom tov itself. On Pesach, one should learn hilchos Pesach, and on Succos, one should study hilchos Succos. So, when a child lives at home, the halachos are always applicable, and thus should always review these halachos.

## The Greatness of the Mitzvah

It states in the Aseres HaDibros (*Shemos* 20:12) **כַּבֵּד אֶת־אָבִיךָ וְאֶת־אִמֶּךָ** , "Honor your father and your mother."

The Midrash (*Devarim Rabba* 6) calls this mitzvah **חמורה שבחמורות**, the most stringent of stringent mitzvos."

The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 30b) writes, "Honoring parents is equivalent to honoring Hashem." The Gemara adds, "When one honors his father and mother, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says I consider it like I dwelled among them, and it is like they honored Me."

The Yerushalmi (*Peah*) states, "Honoring parents is a great mitzvah. Hakadosh Baruch Hu prefers it more than when He is honored."

**Tana d'Bei Eliyahu** (27) says, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't ask for anything other than that one should honor his father and mother."

**Reb Shmuel Wosner zt'l** says that Shlomo HaMelech became king because he honored his father immensely (*Malachim* 1, ch.2).

**The Meshech Chachmah** writes that the Beis HaMikdosh was built on Binyamin's portion because Binyamin was the only brother that didn't partake in the selling of Yosef, so he was the only brother that didn't cause his father distress. - Therefore, he merited that the Beis HaMikdash was built on his portion.

***"Nature is bound by limitations, but prayer changes nature." ~ Rebbe Nachman of Breslov.***



**Pele Yoetz** (*Kibud Av v'Em*) writes, "Precious Jewish children, be cautious to give honor to Hashem by honoring your father and your mother. Do everything they request from you without turning to the right or the left.

I have already mentioned that there are mitzvos that have mazal. How much money people spend to have the honor of *pesichah*, to open the aron kodesh, or to be a sandek, and the like, although these are neither mitzvos *d'oraysa* nor d'Rabanan. They are *chibuv* mitzvah, an expression of love to the mitzvos. *Ashreihem Yisrael*! - However, every time they obey their father or mother, they are doing a great mitzvah *d'oraysa*!"

*Kibud av v'em* is from the greatest mitzvos, yet people don't appreciate it. I've heard parents complain that after their children got married, they don't visit anymore. They become busy with life, and they hardly see their parents.

But this isn't an excuse because we have the telephone in our generation. You can be far away, on the other side of the world, and you can speak to your parents. So why shouldn't a son or daughter set a time each day to call their parents? You can tell them what is happening to you and your family. - With this simple deed, you perform a mitzvah from the Torah of kibud av v'em, which is from the greatest mitzvos.

***"Emunah is the courage to embrace the unknown, knowing that Hashem is with us every step of the way." ~ Rebbe Nachman.***

**Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l*** wrote to his son, Reb Avraham Shmuel Binyamin *z'l*, "My dear son, why isn't *yiras shamayim* upon you? When you write a letter to me (with *chiddushei Torah*), send regards to your mother, and thereby you will perform the mitzvah of *kibud em*. From now on, send a greeting to your mother…"

A father called up a *rosh yeshiva* to complain that although his son is learning well in yeshiva and is growing in *yiras Shamayim*, at home, he doesn't honor his parents. "Perhaps you can speak to him and set things straight."

The next day, the *rosh yeshiva* asked the *bachur* to learn with him every Friday morning.

"That would be a great honor," the *bachur* replied. "What does the *rosh yeshiva* want to learn?"

"*Hilchos kibud av va'em*."

"*Hilchos kibud av ve'em*?" the *bachur* asked. "Why? I think we should study something that is l'maaseh, something that is relevant to day-to-day life."

He didn't realize just how l'maaseh and essential hilchos kibud av v'em is.

A bachur studying in the Belzer yeshiva in Yerushalayim wanted to be with the **Belzer Rav** for the *yamim nora'im*- Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The father of this bachur had a beis medresh in Tel Aviv, and as it was a small minyan, he requested that his son daven with him in his shul in Tel Aviv.

The son explained to his father that he wanted to remain in Yerushalayim with the Belzer Rav. "I can't even consider giving that up."

During *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, the father's brother came to the Belzer Rav to get a brachah for the new year. During their

conversation, he mentioned that his brother has a beis medresh in Tel Aviv. The Belzer Rav asked to hear it again, "Your brother has a beis medresh in Tel Aviv?"

"Yes, he does."

The Belzer Rav immediately asked his meshamesh to call that bachur. The Belzer Rav said, "Your father has a beis medresh in Tel Aviv, and you were here for Rosh Hashanah? How could you do that? - On the holy day (Yom Kippur), make sure to be with your father."

The day after Yom Kippur, the bachur came to the Belzer Rav, who asked him, "Were you with your father for Yom Kippur?" The bachur answered affirmatively, and the Belzer Rav was very pleased.

"You acted correctly. For one thing, you did *kibud av v'em*, and secondly, it is always good to give chizuk to a Yid (*Beiso Naavah Kodesh*).

Many people know that they must honor their father and mother, but they think that other mitzvos come first.

Once, **Reb Shlomo Zalman** saw an elderly man shlepping heavy benches on Shabbos for a kiddush while his children were standing outside, talking with their taleisim on their shoulders.

Reb Shlomo Zalman asked the children why they weren't helping their aging father. They replied that they are machmir not to carry on Shabbos, as they don't rely on the eiruv.

Reb Shlomo Zalman couldn't believe what he heard, and it upset him immensely. For the next few days, he said to whoever came to him, "How could it be that for a chumrah, these children allow their father to work so hard?"

Some people are very stringent with Pesach; they have hundreds of chumros but are lax with *kibud av v'em*.

It can be compared to a father that tells his children that he is thirsty and asks for a cup of water. The children say to one another, "It isn't every day that we have a mitzvah like this. We are so fortunate to do this mitzvah. We should conduct an auction to determine which brother will do it. I offer ten gold coins for the right to bring water to our father."

The second brother said, "I offer twenty gold coins," and they were auctioning off the zechus as if it were an aliyah.

A third brother said, "Why are you lenient with this great mitzvah? I offer fifty gold coins. Fifty gold coins going once, going twice, three times, sold. And now that I earned the merit, I want to offer the merit to our father, that he should pour himself a cup of water…!"

This is how foolish it is when one seeks other mitzvos, instead of the ultimate mitzvah of doing *kibud av v'em*.



The first Rashi in *Chumash* states, **אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק לֹא הָיָה צָרִיךְ לְהַתְחִיל אֶת הַתּוֹרָה אֶלָּא מֵהַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם, שֶׁהִיא מִצְוָה רִאשׁוֹנָה שֶׁנִּצְטַוּוּ בָּהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּמַה טַּעַם פָּתַח בִּבְרֵאשִׁית?** - "***Reb Yitzchak asked: The Torah didn't have to begin with Bereishis, rather with "הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם"***

**The Taz** (*Divrei Dovid*) writes that he saw in a very old sefer that this question that Rashi writes in the name of Reb Yitzchak isn't found in any Midrash or any other Chazal. Rather, Rashi wanted to begin his commentary by honoring his father, Reb Yitzchak.

His father wasn't a scholar, so he asked his father to ask him a question and his father asked, "Why does the Torah begin with

*Bereishis*?"; and Rashi put the question at the beginning of his commentary.

The Taz maintains that Rashi's father was a scholar because Rashi writes towards the end of *Avodah Zarah*, a commentary that he heard from his father.

Nevertheless, we see from this story that the introduction to Torah is honoring parents.

**The Damesek Eliezer of Viznitz zt'l** was being *maavir sidra*. He was almost finished when his father, the Ahavas Yisrael of Viznitz, asked him a question. The Damesek Eliezer answered the question and then went back to the beginning of the parashah to be *maavir sedra* again because his custom was that he didn't speak while being *maavir sedra*.

The chasidim asked him, "You could have shown your father that you have just a couple of pesukim to finish."

The Damasek replied, "The mitzvah of *kibud av v'em* is from the Torah, and it is from the most stringent mitzvos. Therefore, I preferred to be maavir sedra again than to have my father wait."

**Reb Shlomo Zalman zt'l** was one of the rabbanim of Pressburg. For years, his dream and hope was to travel to Eretz Yisrael, even for a short visit, but he couldn't afford the long trip.

One year, on Purim, a wealthy person gave him a ticket to travel to Eretz Yisrael. His dream had come true. He immediately began preparations, and when the day of his departure came closer, he traveled to his parents (who lived in another city) to say goodbye.

His mother told him, "In two and a half months, when you reach Eretz Yisrael, send me a telegram so I will know that you arrived safe and sound, and then I can sleep calmly and peacefully."

Reb Shlomo Zalman understood that his mother was worried about the trip and that she won't sleep well, so he immediately changed his mind.

"I'm not going to Eretz Yisrael," he told them. "I will stay here."

His mother tried to convince him that he should go. "Just contact me when you arrive," but he had made his decision. He wouldn't go to Eretz Yisrael if this caused his mother distress until he arrived.

**Reb Chaim Kanievsky zt'l** taught his children that they should never say **שבע**. Even when they were referring to seven o'clock, or as a number, they shouldn't say **שבע** because the name of their righteous mother was **בת שבע**. (He didn't say this as a halachah, rather as an added caution in hilchos *kibud av v'em*.

**The Beis Aharon zt'l** said that he reached all his levels in the merit of *kibud av v'em*.

**The Chazon Ish zt'l** said, "Know that every madreigah that I attained, and any good middah that is in me, it is all in the merit of *kibud av v'em*" (*Maaseh Ish* vol.4 p.198).

Reb Moshe Turk davened every morning with the ***Chazon Ish zt'l***, and considered it a *zechus* to receive the Chazon Ish's daily "good morning."

After *shacharis*, Reb Moshe Turk would go off to a cheder in Tel Aviv, where he taught. Once, he brought his class to Bnei Brak, so they could also daven *shacharis* with the Chazon Ish.

After *shacharis*, one of the students wanted to ask a question from his rebbe, Reb Moshe Turk, but Reb Moshe stopped him. He said, "In the presence of the Chazon Ish, it is *derech eretz* to remain silent."

The class filed by the Chazon Ish and received his *brachos*. When the child who had a question passed the Chazon Ish, the Chazon Ish asked him to tell him what he wanted to ask.

The child looked up at Reb Moshe Turk, wondering whether it was *derech eretz* to speak, and Reb Moshe Turk replied, "If the Chazon Ish asks, you may reply."

The student asked a question that only a child could ask. He said, "How did the Chazhon Ish become the Chazon Ish?"

The Chazon Ish replied, "It was because I never wasted a moment of my time, and I was always cautious with the mitzvah of *kibud av ve'em*" (*Maaseh Ish* vol.4, p.198).

## Longevity

The pasuk states that as a reward for honoring parents, one will live a long life ( **למען יאריכון ימיך** ). The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 39:) says that this refers to Olam HaBa and that he will live long in Olam HaBa.

Nevertheless, he will surely benefit from many rewards in this world, as well, because honoring parents is from the mitzvos that **אדם אוכל פירותיהן בעולם הזה והקרן הקיימת לו לעולם הבא**, whose primary reward is in Olam HaBa, but the fruits of the mitzvah are already enjoyed in this world (Mishna, beginning of *Pei'ah*).

Once, the **Chofetz Chaim zt'l** came to Vilna, and many people came to see him and to receive his brachos. Reb Eliyahu Klor z'l, who learned in Reb Shlomo Heiman's zt'l yeshiva in Vilna, wanted to go with his friends from yeshiva to greet the Chofetz Chaim, but his father told him not to go.

The father explained, "You're weak, and many people will be there. Perhaps there will be some pushing and shoving, and I'm afraid you will get hurt."

Eighty bachurim from the yeshiva went to the Chofetz Chaim, and they returned so happy because they received a brachah for long life. - Reb Eliyahu Dov was upset that he lost out on this opportunity.

At that time, he wrote down the names of all the bachurim of the yeshiva who went to the Chofetz Chaim. When Reb Eliyahu Dov was ninety-five years old, he said to his grandson, "Today, the last person from my yeshiva who went to the Chofetz Chaim to receive a brachah for long life was niftar. Only I remained, and I'm still healthy. I walk without a walker, and I don't need eyeglasses. - This is the reward I received from the Torah, that blesses those who honor their parents with a long life."

The Torah obligates us to honor a kohen. For example, for birkas hamazon, it is a mitzvah to honor the kohen to lead the benching.

Someone asked **Reb Chaim Kanievsky zt'l**, if both a kohen and his father are present at the meal, who should be honored with birkas hamazon?

Reb Chaim replied that the son should honor his father.

The person asked that since both the son and the father are obligated to honor the kohen, the kohen should have precedence (discussed in *Yevamos* 6.).

Reb Chaim replied that honoring a parent is a matter of pikuach nefesh because the Torah says that for this mitzvah, one will live long.

***"Our job is to work; Not necessarily to accomplish. All accomplishments come from Hashem. Hashem looks for the effort and avodah that you put in." ~ Rabbi Avraham Chaim Tanzer.***

**The Chasam Sofer zt'l** (*Drashos*, vol.2 p.362:) writes that, at times, children think they shouldn't honor their parents because it takes away from their time to study Torah, which is the greatest mitzvah. Therefore, the Torah promises, **למען יאריכון ימיך**, that you will live long. - If you honor your parents now, Hashem will grant you a long life, and you will have even more time to study Torah, daven, etc.

**The Tur Ha'aruch** writes on the words **יאריכון ימיך**, that the way it is written indicates that your parents will *cause* you to live long. This is because if you honor your parents, they will daven that you live long, so you can continue to honor them and to help them, and their tefillos will cause you to live long.

**The Lev Simchah (Gur) zt'l** said that each person comes to the world with a quota of time that he will live, and the time that one spends with *kibud av v'em* isn't part of the *cheshbon*. - Whatever time he spends honoring his parents will be returned to him.

**The Pele Yoetz** writes that in the merit of performing *kibud av v'em*], a person will merit good children, and if it were only for that reward, it would be worth striving with all his strength to perform this mitzvah.

It states (*Bereishis* 27:31), **ויבא לאביו**, and these words can be read forward and backwards, which hints that when one does *kibud av v'em*, it will come back to him because his children will honor him as well.

**Rabbeinu b'Chayei** (*Kad HaKemech*) writes, "It is clear that people are rewarded in this world for doing *kibud av v'em*, or that they experience tranquility and success with everything they do."

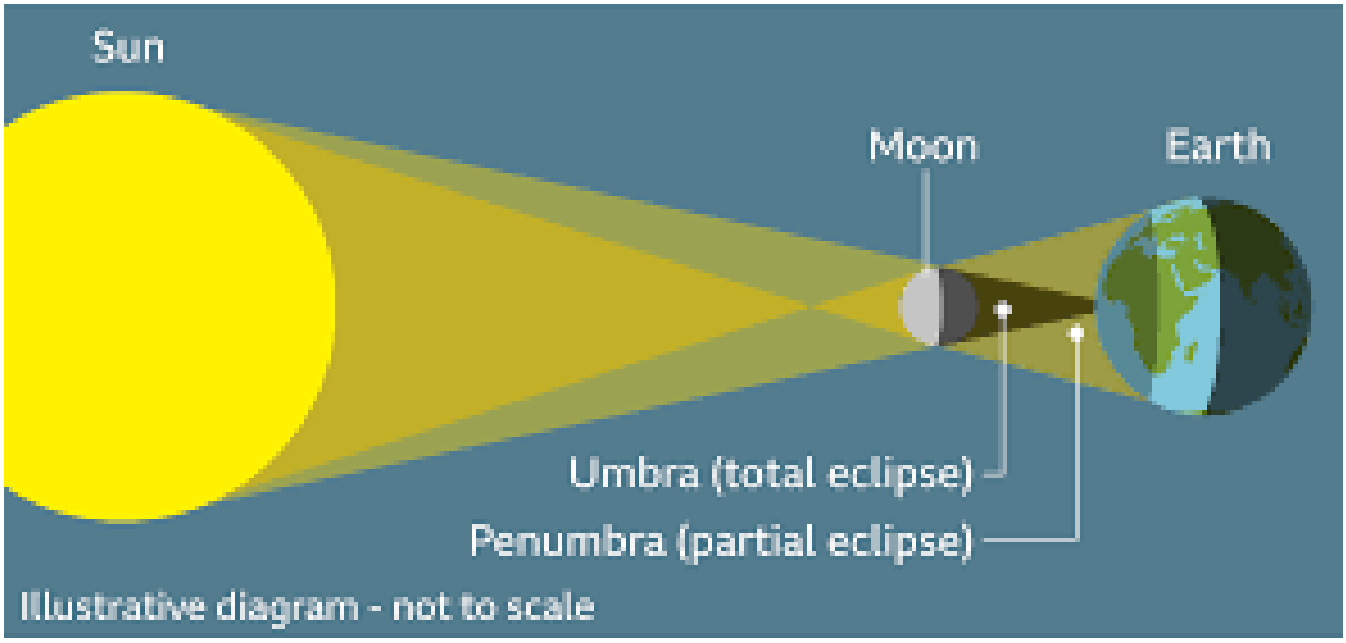
The sefer *Meah She'arim* (Shar 16) writes, "Whoever keeps this mitzvah, nothing bad will happen to him. - The One Who rewards is trusted that He will send malachim before him to protect him."

## The Solar Eclipse 8/04/24

Monday's total solar eclipse will cross North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. The total solar eclipse will begin over the South Pacific Ocean.

As you're already likely aware, it is extremely dangerous to look directly at the sun ever, but especially during a solar eclipse. Doing so can cause immediate, irreversible damage to your eyes. Make sure to wear solar eclipse glasses with the proper safety rating.

## Solar Eclipses in Judaism by R. Gil Student




**What does the Torah have to say about solar eclipses?**

### I. Blessing on Eclipse

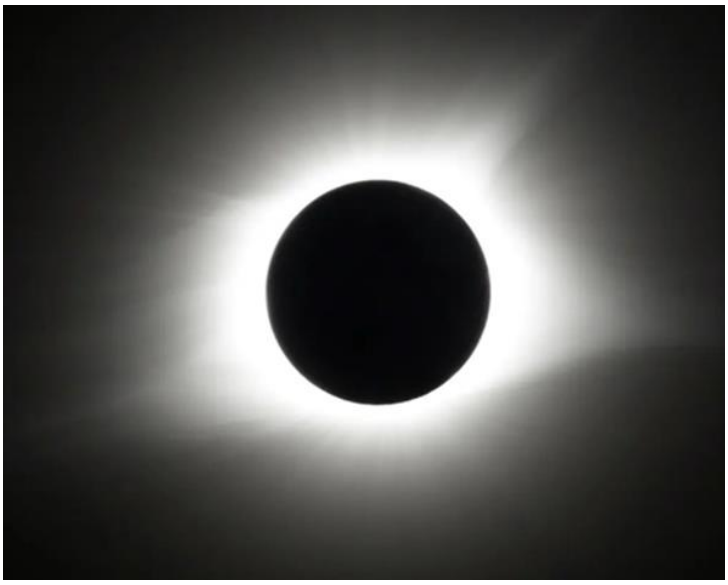
The Mishnah (*Berakhos* 54a) lists phenomena on which someone who sees them recites a blessing. Among these are incredible sights such as mountains, seas and lightning. There is no mention of a solar eclipse. Should someone who sees a solar eclipse recite a blessing such as "*Oseh ma'aseh bereishis*, Who performs acts of Creation"?

**Rav Menachem Schneerson**, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, said that you should not recite a blessing on a solar eclipse (*Iggeros Kodesh* vol. 15 p. 260). He offers two reasons. First, the Talmud does not mention a blessing on a solar eclipse, and we must follow that

precedent. Second, which is really an explanation of the Talmudic omission, is that a solar eclipse is a bad omen, as we will discuss shortly. We should pray for the bad omen to be annulled rather than bless the occurrence.

**Rav Chaim David Ha-Levi** (*Responsa Aseh Lecha Rav*, 150) ruled similarly based on the first reason. While he cannot approve a new blessing, he suggests saying the verses of "Va-yevarech David" (1 Chron. 29:10) and adding to the end "Who performs acts of Creation."

**Rav David Lau**, current Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel, suggests reciting Tehillim 19 and 104 on seeing a solar eclipse (*She'al Es Ha-Rav*, 7 Nissan 5766).



## II. Allegorical Meanings of Eclipse

The Gemara (*Sukkah* 29a) says two things about solar eclipses. The first is that solar eclipses are a bad omen for whole world. Another opinion is that they are a bad omen for gentiles while lunar eclipses are a bad omen for Jews (the Jewish calendar is lunar while the Gentile calendar is solar).

**Rav Chaim Elazar Shapiro** (*Divrei Torah* 6:93) offered an allegorical interpretation. He compares the moon's receipt of light from the sun to the Jewish people's receipt of Divine attention or overflow. When that is blocked in any way, it signifies a distance from G-d.

Significantly, **Rema** explains that a solar eclipse can be a bad omen even though it is a natural phenomenon. The basic premise of astrology is that there are times of the year that are good for certain things and bad for other things, which can be understood by

examining the stars. While great rabbis debated the legitimacy of astrology (e.g. Rambam was against, Ibn Ezra was in favor), Rema explains that a solar eclipse is no different. It is a natural phenomenon like the movement of the stars, which those who accept astrology recognize as meaningful to people. Centuries later, the *Aruch La-Ner (Sukkah 29a)* and *Ben Yehoyada (Sukkah 29a)* explained the bad omen similarly, as a time when bad things happen naturally.

**III. Other Explanations**

**Maharal** (*Be'er Ha-Golah, ch. 6, p. 106*) explains that the Gemara is offering reasons why G-d established nature in such a way that there would be solar eclipses. If people did not sin, we would merit eternal light. However, because G-d knew people would sin, He created the world in such a way that solar eclipses would happen. The Gemara is not offering the reason for a solar eclipse (which is nature) but the reason behind the reason (why nature is that way).

Some authorities believe that the Gemara is not talking about solar eclipses. **Rav Yonasan Eybeschutz** (*Ye'aros Devash* 2:10) suggests that the Gemara is referring to sunspots. While solar eclipses can be predicted, sunspots cannot and are caused by sin.

**Rav Yehosef Schwartz** (*Divrei Yosef 1:9*) suggests that the Gemara is discussing unexpected atmospheric phenomena. He says that on 28 Iyar 1838 in Jerusalem at 4pm, the sun turned dark red for about an hour. Everyone was amazed by the sight. Over the next three months, there was a terrible plague with many deaths. Rav Schwartz says that this was an example of the Talmudic phenomenon.

Lubavitcher Rebbe explained that the Gemara refers to weather patterns. He quotes Rav David Pardo (*Chasdei David, Sukkah 2:6*) who claims that while eclipses are natural in general, they can occur supernaturally, as well. Those eclipses are caused by sin.

# TIMELY – Fascinating Article About The Chofetz Chaim & The Solar Eclipse



**The following is a translation of an article found in the Journal "Bais Yaakov"[1], written by Rabbi Shmuel Pliskin[2], about the solar eclipse[3] which the Chofetz Chaim viewed.**

(Translation and footnotes by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Biron)

It was a typical summer evening, a warm Tuesday, and the elderly Chofetz Chaim had just finished *Aleinu*. After placing his siddur down on the table, the Chofetz Chaim looked around, scanning the crowd which had packed the narrow room for *maariv*.[4] Finally, the Chofetz Chaim gave a *klop* on the edge of the table and began.

"Hashem has implanted in his creation the phenomenon of a solar eclipse, as a means of refuting those misguided souls, who believe in other immortal powers. The time comes when the sun is eclipsed, so that we all know and internalize; the sun is a creation and not a creator! And us mankind…we're no different."

Once again the Chofetz Chaim tapped on the table and with an expression of triumph he smiled and added "let them all come and see!"

He continued, "It's a mitzvah for us all to come and see…to see with our own eyes…it's only a mortal chunk of creation." The Chofetz Chaim tapped softly once again and smiled quietly.

The crowd slowly filtered out of the narrow room, deeply inhaling the cooler outdoor air, while chattering about the upcoming event, the rare solar eclipse early the next morning.

As lightning, the word spread throughout the entire village, in every house the news was relayed "the Chofetz Chaim has announced it's a mitzvah to go and see the next morning's sensation."

The search began for broken shards of glass, usually a valueless commodity strewn about under ones feet, yet now a sought after material in light of the upcoming event. They set out industriously preparing their sophisticated equipment, blackening their glass shards with soot from a burning candle.

Morning came, seemingly another casual day, yet a sense of something different was in the air. The streets of Radin had never been as teeming at such an early hour[6]; men, women and children were all up and about.

And the sun…paraded along on its usual course, with confident strides, ascending with all its prowess, a blazing sun beating down, on the masses who had gathered, on the marketplace and on the green treetops swaying in the distance.

The small narrow room was also flooded with sunlight, spreading a golden glow, as a carpet to the feet of the Chofetz Chaim, who sat in his slippers at his table, arm wrapped in the straps of his Tefillin…the straps which tied his arm to his heart…and the heart to the mind. His fist waves in the air as his voice roars " **יוצר אור ובורא חושך**…".

The shadows, which roll around at the feet of the elderly sage, seem to be so peculiar now.

The sun's brilliance, the blinding glow, has now been replaced by brilliant red, the redness now overpowering, as if its heart had been deeply plunged and wounded. The huge solar sphere… in midst of its youthful bloom has suddenly been cleaved. Fresh youthful life slowly being chiseled away. Not the groaning sound of a dying old man, it was the powerful gush of blood…draining from the wound inflicted by a cannon shell. Darkness…the animals in the field frightened, while the eyes of the townsfolk sparkled from content and satisfaction.

Here and there groups formed, on the porches and on the bridges, peering through their blackened glass at the waning sun, now half darkened. Near the Yeshiva building as well, stood groups of *bochurim* gazing upward. In the corner near the blossoming cherry tree[7], whose white flowers were turning a reddish hue, stood Reb Naftali the Rosh Hayeshiva of Radin[8], intensely peering through his glass shard, with eyes deeply sunk in their sockets. With a waved fist he explained to those around him, "*M'darf nit kuken, m'darf zen!*" (One should not simply look, one should see.)[9]

The Mashgiach[10] was also seen coming out from the Yeshiva building with rushed strides, quickly taking hold of a glass extended to him by one of the bochurim.

Off in the distance a large group formed around the aged Chofetz Chaim. He had davened earlier than usual on that day, and the members of his Minyan huddled around him anxiously anticipating…maybe they would be the one to merit having their glass used by the Chofetz Chaim. It was the black bearded Reb Yitzchok, energetic and calculated, the one who had left his parents as a young child,(leaving being his father who had been a Rov in Russia) and escaped the Soviet authorities, he was the one who was ready with

a specially prepared perfectly shaped glass shard for the holy tzaddik to use.

The Chofetz Chaim gazed with awesome respect, the same way he quietly stared at his Chanukah candles, not turning his gaze as long as the light still flickered.

The courtyard of Yeshiva had turned into a veritable observatory; there was no peering through telescopes, but there was intense gazing through primitive blackened glass.

Darkness descended on the entire sphere, as if a huge inkwell had blotched out the entire sun. It was an eerie darkness, not the darkness of dusk nor the darkness of midnight. A black screen stretched across the entire sun… and then the marveling spectacle…the sun is born once again, just as it happened during the six days of creation. Not suddenly, rather a slow growth, as a child slowly developing, first a thin red sliver, slowly widening, the bright red color slowly overpowering the darkness. Once again red spills across the entire sphere, the redness of life, blood once again gushing through the arteries.

The cherry tree once again goes back to its light colored blossoms, in the fields morning is once again promising. The birds beat their wings in flight with greater assurance, though still tinged with a bit of doubt. And mankind…small creatures, blink their eyes, filled with satisfaction and contentment. The sun, once again in its full radiance, reclaims its prowess.

The elderly Chofetz Chaim sits and rests a bit on the chair which had been brought out for him near the door of his house, enveloped in silence. Slowly, step by step, the Chofetz Chaim makes his way back inside followed by his son-in-law Reb Mendel[11] and the black bearded Reb Yitzchok, who's carrying the chair back in. The pure and holy saint stops at the simple wooden table in the middle of the room and with an expression of victory emits a joyous call, "…just a mortal creation".

[1]Vol. 40 published Elul 5722 (1962). I came across the article after seeing it referenced in the introduction to the Sefer *Chidushei Grn"t.*

[2] Rabbi Shmuel Pliskin was a Talmid of the Radin yeshiva from the year 1925 until 1937. He later was a Rov in Baltimore and was niftar in 1978. His son, Rabbi Zelig Pliskin Shlita, is a well-known author and educator.

[3] The article does not mention the date of the eclipse being related. After some research, it seems the eclipse referred to is the total solar eclipse on June 29, 1927. The article mentions it was during the later years of the Chofetz Chaim (who was niftar in the year 1933), yet Reb Naftali Trop (who was niftar in the year 1928) was the Rosh Hayeshiva at the time. This would imply that the eclipse took place in the mid-late 1920's. The only eclipse during that time period which would fit the description would be the eclipse of June 29, 1927. This would also coincide with that which the article mentions that the eclipse occurred during the early morning hours on a Wednesday. However, the drawback with this assumption is that the article connotes that a total eclipse was visible in Radin. The eclipse of June 1927, although indeed being a total eclipse, totality was only viewable from regions further north than Radin, such as Norway, Finland, and far-north parts of the United Kingdom. Radin (54.04N, 24.99E – these are the coordinates of the town of Radin) would have only seen a 75% blockage of the sun.

[4] During his later years the Chofetz Chaim rarely left his house, and minyanim were held there.

[5] Koheles 7:2. The Chofetz Chaim seems to understand *Beis Ha'mishteh* to be referring to the celebration of the birth of a child.

[6] Sunrise on that day was 4:45 in the morning, the eclipse began at 6:23.

[7] In March 2017, I had the opportunity to visit Radin and see the Yeshiva building which still stands today. I made a point to try and locate the cherry tree mentioned, but was not successful. (The tour was led by an amazing tour guide Reb Yehuda Geberer, who also provided some important comments for this article.)

[8] Reb Naftali Trop (1871-1928), served as the Rosh Hayeshiva in Radin from 1904 until his passing in 1928 at the young age of 57. Although the Chofetz Chaim, who was much older than Reb Naftali and recognized as the Gadol Hador, was actively involved in the establishment of the Yeshiva as well as in all the important decisions,he was not officially the Rosh Hayeshiva.

[9] Apparently what Reb Naftali meant was to not simply look, but to internalize the lesson.

[10] Seemingly this would refer to Reb Leizer Kaplan (son-in-law of Reb Hersh Levinson, who was actively involved in the Yeshiva along with **his** father-in-law the Chofetz Chaim, and brother of Reb Yisroel Chaim Kaplan) who served as the mashgiach at that time.

(The famed Mashgiach Reb Yerucham Levovitz also served as the mashgiach in Radin for a short period before becoming the mashgiach in Mir, but clearly he is not the one mentioned here, since he had already left long before this time period.)

[11] Reb Mendel Zaks (1898–1974) was the youngest son-in-law of the Chofetz Chaim and helped him in his old age.

(*YWN World Headquarters – NYC*)

***"One who has Bitachon has the best insurance policy possible. They are always calm and relaxed, knowing that Hashem will take care of them." ~ Rabbi Moshe Malka.***




## Bitachon and Parnassah

The Midrash (Shocher Tov, Tehillim 92) says that a student of Reb Shimon Bar Yochai went to *chutz l'aretz* to do business, and he returned with a lot of money. The other students were jealous. They also wanted to go to *chutz l'aretz* to do business.

Reb Shimon took his students outside and said **בקעה בקעה** , "Valley! Valley! Fill up with money." The entire valley became filled with precious coins. He told his students, "Everyone can take his portion, as much as he wants. But know that whatever you take will be deducted from your reward in the next world."

They all replied (Tehillim 92:5) **כִּי שִׂמַּחְתַּנִי ה' בְּפָעֳלֶךָ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ אֲרַנֵּן** - "***You have made me happy, Hashem, with Your work; with the work of Your hands I shall exult***." -They said they are happy with Torah and mitzvos more than all the money in the world.

Why did Reb Shimon take his students outdoors to perform this miracle? He could have performed a miracle indoors, as well!

Reb Shimon was teaching them the means with which to earn parnassah. - **בק-עה** which means valley, represents two numbers: **ב״ק** whose *gematria* is 102, the same as **אמונה**. And **ע״ה** is gematriya 75, the same as **בטחון**. So, **בקעה** stands for **אמונה בטחון**.

Reb Shimon told his students that if they have emunah and bitachon, they will also have a lot of money.

***"Aim not for perfection, but for a life of consistent spiritual growth." ~ Rabbi Noach Weinberg (1930-2009)***

## Bitachon for Everyone

Emunah is available for everyone. Learning Torah is dependent on one's level; some people know more than others. But when it comes to emunah, a simple person can have emunah sheleimah at the same level as the greatest tzaddikim.

**The Tchortkover zt'l** explains that this is the reason there were various boundaries put at Matan Torah. Moshe stood closer than others, Aharon was closer than the rest, and so on (see Rashi Shemos 19:24).

This is because people have different levels of Torah knowledge, and not everyone is equal. But at kriyas Yam Suf, a maidservant saw the same prophecy as Yechezkel ben Buzi (see Rashi Shemos 15:2). - This is because when it comes to emunah, the smallest person can have emunah like the greatest people of the nation.

The same applies to bitachon. A simple person can have bitachon equal to the greatest tzaddikim.

**Reb Sholom Tzvi Shapiro z'l** came to **Reb Chaztkel Levinstein zt'l** and told him that he needed five thousand pounds for the upcoming chasunah of his oldest son. Reb Chatzkel was pensive for a few minutes, and then he said, "Hashem knows that you need five thousand pounds." He implied, "Hashem knows what you need. Trust in Him. He will help you."

Years later, Reb Sholom Tzvi told his youngest son, "When I told Reb Chatzkel that I need £5000, I hoped he would give me money. He didn't give me money, but he gave me something far more valuable. - He taught me to trust in Hashem. If he would have given me five thousand pounds, it would have helped me for that chasunah, but it wouldn't have helped me for all the other chasunos I made.

Reb Chatzkel taught me to have bitachon, and that counsel helped me pay for all the chasunos!"

## Parnassah is from Hashem

We must remember that it isn't our hands or feet that bring us parnassah; everything is from Hashem.

We shouldn't think, "Because I went here or there, I earned money." Rather, Hashem destined for him to go there to receive the money coming to him. Hashem could have given you money here, too. There is no reason to praise your legs for getting you to the "right" place.

Avraham Avinu would offer water to travelers to wash their feet because they worshiped the dust on their feet (see Rashi Bereishis 18:4).

**The Shinover Rav zt'l** asks that we never heard before of an avodah zarah to worship the dust of the feet.

The Shinover Rav zt'l explains that these merchants would credit their feet for getting them to the right place so they could earn money. They thanked their feet, not Hashem, Who advised them where to go and what to do to earn their parnassah.

**The Kobriner zt'l** said that when one goes to the market to do business, he must believe that every detail of the business transaction is by Hashem's hashgachah. This includes the items he decides to buy and the price that was agreed upon.

When one lives with these thoughts, says Rebbe Moshe Kobriner, "I guarantee him that he will succeed."

***"The nations of the world are unable to extinguish the love the Jewish people have for Hashem. In fact, their opposition only fans the flames of our love." ~ Lubavitcher Rebbe, Reb Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994).***

## Everything is from Hashem

**Maglei Tzedek zt'l**, the son of the **Mareh Yechezkel zt'l**, writes, "I once saw an amazing thing. My father once hurt his hand while preparing for Shabbos, yet he remained happy!

He explained that he was happy to do Hashem's will, and it was Hashem's will that he hurt his finger, as Chazal say, 'When a person hurts his finger, it was decreed in heaven that this should occur.' So, this was Hashem's will and a person should be happy to perform Hashem's will."

We live a calm and peaceful life when we believe everything is from Hashem. We aren't angry at anyone or any situation. We believe everything is always for the best because it is from Hashem. And this emunah turns everything around that it should become good.

A grandson of the **Birkas Avraham of Slonim zt'l** once krechtzed and said "Oy!"

The Birkas Avraham told him, "When you krechtz and say **אוי**, add the word **דו**, du, afterward, which means "You." - Recognize that everything is from Hashem,even the hardships.

Together, **דו – אוי**, it will sound like **אודה**, praise. You will praise Hashem because you know that it is for the good."

**אוי״י** is gematriya 17, the same as **טוב**. - Be aware that even the bad, over which you moan, is also ultimately good. And when you believe that it will become good.

One of the halachos of tzaraas is that if the tzaraas covers one's entire body, he becomes tahor.

**The Imrei Emes zt'l** says that this means that when everything appears dark and stormy, that is a sign that soon things will turn around and become good again. It seems dark, but it is a sign that good times are approaching.

***The Chofetz Chaim zt'l writes that in our times, the mark of tzaraas is poverty r'l. In this respect tzaraas exists in our times.***



**The Beis HaLevi *zt'l*** would often open his *tabak pushkah* (snuffbox) and immediately close it. One of his students was curious about this custom, so when he had the opportunity, he opened the snuff box, and he found the letters **שפ"ו שמ"נ** written inside.

He asked the Beis HaLevi for the meaning of these letters.

The Beis HaLevi replied that they are *roshei teivos* for **שומר פיו ולשונו שומר מצרות נפשו** - "***Someone who guards his tongue is protecting himself from troubles***."

The Beis HaLevi would open his snuffbox, read the message, and remember to be careful with his speech.

With this clever method, he reminded himself to be cautious about speaking lashon hara.

**Rebbe Uri of Strelisk *zy'a*** said, "When one desires to say something forbidden and holds back, it's as though he fasted eighty-four days.

**Rebbe Ahron of Belz *zy'a*** added, "And I say, *nach un nach, un nach*," which means that it's like fasting eighty-four days, and much much more than that.

***"Coincidence is hashem's way of remaining anonymous." ~ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.***



It states (Koheles 9:17) דִּבְרֵי חֲכָמִים בְּנַחַת נִשְׁמָעִים - "***The gentle words of the wise are heard***."

**נחת** is roshei teivos **נר חמור תרנגול** (candle, donkey, rooster).

Wise people speak like Reb Akiva and say that everything is for the good, and then it becomes so.

**Reb Shmuel Wosner zt'l** asked: If one earns wealth from the tzaraas, why is it called nega, a plague?

Rav Wosner zt'l replied that when there is tzaraas in the walls of the home, one must break them. - Breaking the walls of a Jewish home is always a tragedy, even if it leads to immense financial gain.

***"Emunah is the lifeline that sustains us through the trials and tribulations of life, providing hope and strength to overcome challenges." ~ Sefer Chayei Olam.***




## Think Twice…And Then Think Again!

**Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l** (1849 - 1932) was the Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community of Yerushalayim. He was very involved in communal activities, such as the founding of schools and an orphanage. He was also the rav of shul.

A man named Nachman was the chazan in Rabbi Sonnenfeld's shul for Musaf on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. One year, a few weeks before Rosh Hashana, Nachman passed away. After shiva, some of the elders of the shul asked Rabbi Sonnenfeld whom to get to replace Nachman. Rabbi Sonnenfeld told them not to worry. He would find someone.

A few days before Rosh Hashana, the elders approached Rabbi Sonnenfeld again, since the replacement chazan had not yet been announced. Again, Rabbi Sonnenfeld told them not to worry.

The day of Rosh Hashana came. Shacharis was over. It was time for Musaf. No one in the shul knew who the chazan would be. Suddenly, Rabbi Sonnenfeld rose from his seat and walked over to Nachman's adult son. Rabbi Sonnenfeld told him, "You will be the chazan. Go daven Musaf just as your late father did."

The young man was speechless. He hadn't even prepared. Rabbi Sonnenfeld told him, "You have heard your late father daven for many years. You are familiar with his manner of davening. You will be fine."

The young man got up and led Musaf. After Musaf was over, a group of people went to Rabbi Sonnenfeld to ask why he had permitted a mourner to lead the Tefillah, as it was customary not to have a mourner lead the Tefillah on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Sonnenfeld's answer should be a lesson for us all. He told them that Nachman's widow was in shul. "Imagine the grief and sorrow that she is feeling, especially on the day that her husband would have been the one to lead us in Musaf. Imagine the pain she would have felt if someone else would have led the Tefillah."

Rabbi Sonnenfeld did not want to cause pain to a widow, so he chose the best possible replacement for her late husband, namely her own son. He felt that under the circumstances there was no one else who could have led the Tefillah. That is why he let a mourner lead it. (Around the Maggid's Table by Rabbi Paysach Krohn)

Rabbi Sonnenfeld's actions displayed thoughtfulness and sensitivity for another person.

After giving birth, a woman purifies herself by bringing korbanos, sacrifices. She brings both a lamb and either a young dove or a turtledove. The commentaries point out that in other instances where young doves and turtledoves were brought as korbanos, the Torah mentions turtledoves first, before it mentions young doves. Why does the Torah change the order in this instance?

The Sifra says that this teaches us that both birds are equivalent. One is just as good as the other.

In a similar vein, the Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 1:15) says that throughout the Torah, Moshe is mentioned before Aharon. Yet, in one place the Torah says: "It is Aharon and Moshe" (Exodus 6:26). This teaches that both are equal in importance to one another.

Similarly, Yehoshua is usually mentioned before Calev. Twice the Torah mentions Calev first. "Except for Calev, son of Yefuneh, the Kenizi and Yehoshua, son of Nun" (Bamidbar 14:30, Bamidbar 32:12). This teaches that both are equal in importance to one another.

The Midrash continues that throughout the Torah, turtledoves are mentioned before young doves. In one place it says: "And a young

dove or a turtledove as a sin offering" (Vayikra 12:6). This tells you that both are equal in importance to one another.

Ba'al HaTurim gives a different answer. Throughout the Torah, young doves are mentioned first because the doves were sacrificed in pairs. The korban brought by the woman who just gave birth is the only instance in which only one bird is sacrificed. Thus, the Torah is recommending that we first try to get a young dove for this korban since the remaining young dove will be able to find another mate. The turtledove, however, is loyal to its mate and will never mate with another. It will forever grieve the loss of its mate.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Rabbi Frand on the Parsha 3) quotes R' Simcha Zissel Ziv Brodie zt"l, the Alter of Kelm, who learns a beautiful lesson from this Ba'al HaTurim.

We see the Torah's sensitivity towards the turtledove. The Torah is concerned about the grief of a bird. Certainly, Hashem is even more concerned about the feelings of a person!

We can learn a lesson from Hashem. We, too, must be sensitive to the feelings of others!

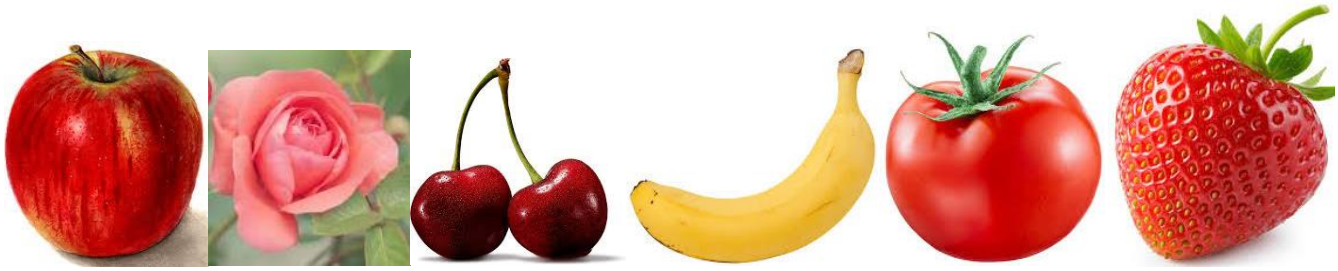



## Parshah Thoughts – Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

The Bris of a baby boy is performed on the eighth day (12:3). **The Ohr HaChaim** explains that this time frame is given to enable the baby to develop the strength to undergo this procedure. However, the Ohr HaChaim is not referring to physical strength, but rather to spiritual strength. After the baby has experienced eight days in

this world, including a Shabbos, he has developed the strength to undergo this procedure. Experiencing a Shabbos can have such a powerful impact on us.

## Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages



**Rav Avigdor Miller, zt"l**, once explained why the world is so colorful, and he gave two reasons for this.

One explanation is to cause us to have pleasure. He said, "If everything was green — apples, roses, cherries, bananas, tomatoes, strawberries, the watermelon inside, then a lot of the fun of life would be missing. Color is one of the things of happiness in life. But there is also another reason, and that is because HaKadosh Baruch Hu doesn't want you to waste your life. He wants you to notice things.

So in case you don't notice the wonders of red roses, when you pass by a different garden and you see pink roses, what you didn't notice the first time, you might notice the second time. Color causes variety, and variety stirs your mind to think about things that you might ignore otherwise!"

## The Siddur Speaks

**Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein** related a story. In the city of Dvinsk, there is a river that flows through it that sometimes freezes in the extreme cold winter temperatures.

One year, a terrible thing happened — the ice upstream melted, but the part of the river that had frozen within the city didn't melt yet. The ice created a blockage that prevented the water from flowing,

and this threatened to flood the entire city. The authorities tried everything they could to remove the frozen obstruction, including dynamite, but nothing worked.

As thousands of townspeople watched the waters rise above the riverbanks, the gentile mayor suddenly had an idea. "Call the Rabbi! He's a holy man, and maybe his Prayers can work a miracle!"



The Rav was **Rav Meir Simcha HaKohein of Dvinsk, the Ohr Samei'ach**, **(1843-1926)** and he came out to the frozen river wrapped in his Tallis and Tefillin. When he arrived, a hush fell over the large gathering. The townspeople, most of whom were non-Jews, watched in silence as the Rabbi began to pray.

A few seconds went by, and the tension mounted, as thousands of eyes moved between the holy Rav and the frozen river, waiting to see whether the town would be saved. Then an incredible thing happened. There was a gigantic cracking, tearing sound, and very slowly, the block of thick ice that had resisted even explosives, began to break up. With a trickle sound, and then a rush, the river began to flow normally again, and the city was saved.

Rav Zilberstein said, "And that is the power of Tefilah from a Torah giant!"

***"Hashem's love is not based on your achievements or perfection, but on the essence of who you are. – Embrace His love and let it empower you." ~ Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik.***

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## A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN תורת הצבי על הפטרות



In the uncommonly read *Haftorah* of *Parshas Tazria*, a Jewish maidservant of the Aramite general, Naaman, suggested that he seek help from *Elisha HaNavi* to cure his *tzaraas* ailment. Naaman eventually came before Elisha who instructed him to bathe seven times in the Jordan river after which his flesh will be restored.

Naaman was thankful and wished to pay Elisha, but he refused by stating, "*As Hashem lives, whom I serve, I will not accept anything.*"

*Chazal (Medrash Raba Bamidbar 10:5)* tell us that Elisha did not accept any payment from Naaman since "*it isn't the ways of the prophets to take payment for their divine prophecies.*" However, we do find in other places, in particular when *Shaul HaMelech* went looking for his father's lost donkeys, payment was indeed rendered for a prophet's divine message. So, why did Elisha tell Naaman that he can't accept payment?

**R' Zev Volf Einhorn *zt"l* (Pirush Maharzu)** explains that a *Navi* wouldn't accept payment for himself but it was common for him to take payment and then redistribute it to the poor or his *talmidim*.

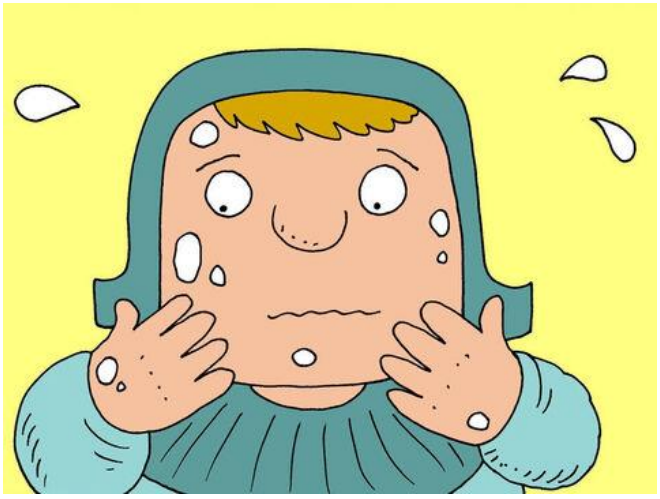
But here, Elisha had a different issue. Naaman was a general of a very powerful foreign paganistic nation, and he was afraid that Naaman would give him something that he would be unable to accept and therefore be unable to redistribute.

Thus, at first Elisha simply refused Naaman's gift, but when the latter persisted, he then told him that it wasn't proper to pay a prophet for his services and Naaman accepted - not wanting to offend Elisha.

## From the Haftarah (Ma'yanah shel Torah)

### ● If One is Haughty Like a Cedar

יָבֹא־נָא אֵלַי וְיֵדַע כִּי יֵשׁ נָבִיא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל ***-"Let him come to me and he will know that there is a Navi in Yisrael"*** (II Kings 5:8).



Our sages have said that Tzara'as comes on a person as a result of conceit ('If one is haughty like a cedar, let him become lowly like a hyssop'). That is why Elisha, who could easily have cured Na'aman wherever he was, sent him instructions to appear before him. Na'aman, he figured, considered himself an important figure, and there was nothing more humiliating than having to appear before a Jewish prophet. So, Elisha ordered him to swallow his pride and to do just that.

What's more, even when Na'aman arrived, he did not bother to greet him personally, and belittled him further by sending a servant to the door with instructions. Only then, when Na'aman's esteem was broken, would he be cured from his Tzara'as (Maskil le'Eisan).

## ● The Three Pesukim

***הָלוֹךְ וְרָחַצְתָּ שֶׁבַע־פְּעָמִים בַּיַּרְדֵּן וְיָשֹׁב בְּשָׂרְךָ לְךָ וּטְהָר - "Go and bathe seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will revert to its former state"*** (5:10).



Why, of all things, did the Navi pick on this cure? Why specifically the River Jordan?

He learned it, says the **Rokei'ach**, from the Syrian general's name 'Na'aman', which begins and ends with a 'Nun'. Now, there are three Pesukim in the Torah that begin with a 'Nun' and end with one ...

1. **נֶגַע צָרַעַת... וְהוּבָא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן** (Tazria 13:9).

2. **נָבִיא מִקִּרְבְּךָ מֵאַחֶיךָ כָּמֹנִי... אֵלָיו תִּשְׁמָעוּן** (Devarim 18:15).

3. **נַחְנוּ נַעֲבָר חֲלוּצִים... מֵעֵבֶר לַיַּרְדֵּן** (Bamidbar 32:32).

'You have been stricken with Tzara'as' (like the first Pasuk), Elisha told Na'aman. 'I am a Navi' (like the second Pasuk); 'and I am now instructing you to go and bathe in the River Yardein' (like the third Pasuk).

***"We must never be discouraged from continuing to daven, despite our initial tefillos not having yet being answered. For even if the effects of our prayers are not yet revealed to us, our tefillos certainly have an effect Above, drawing our salvation down from world to world, closer and closer." ~ Rabbi Menachum Nachum of Chernobyl.***

## Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

***וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ - On the eighth day, his foreskin shall be circumcised***. (12:3)



The following bris story was related by **Horav Asher Weiss, shlita**. The story concerns a soldier fighting in Gaza whose son was due to have his bris milah on Shabbos. The soldier was well aware that his position on the front line precluded his leaving to attend the bris. The question that he presented was: Could he take off just for Shabbos, so that he could attend the bris?

The Rav was very straightforward: He had no heter, dispensation, to allow him to travel on Shabbos to attend the bris. This halachah was in force regardless of the family relationships that would suffer as a result. If the soldier felt that taking a furlough would grant him renewed strength and vigor, however, he was permitted to leave before Shabbos and simultaneously attend the bris. Rav Weiss spoke with the soldier and, after the conversation, was convinced that this young man was not in need of a furlough in order to continue fighting.

The Rav said, "I was moved to tears. It would have been so easy for the soldier to say that he needed the rest, so that he could fight better. He did not." The soldier said, "I hope that when my son grows up and hears why I did not attend his bris, he will grow in yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven." Rav Weiss concluded, "How easy it is to see the beauty and the charm of our soldiers."




## The New Rosh Yeshiva



The **Chofetz Chaim** *zt"l* sent his son-in-law, Reb Hershel Levinson *zt"l*, to **Reb Chaim Brisker** *zt"l*, to request whom he should appoint as the Rosh Yeshiva in Radin. Reb Chaim Brisker advised that they appoint **Reb Moshe Ladinsky** *zt"l*, because he was a massive *talmud chacham*.

Reb Moshe Ladinsky served as their Rosh Yeshiva for about twenty years, and the students loved him. However, the spirit of the day changed, and the popular style of learning became what is known as "the Brisker *derech*." This new and ingenious approach was sweeping the yeshiva world, it was the talk of the time, and the students of the Radin Yeshiva didn't want to be left out.

The Chofetz Chaim therefore invited Reb Naftali Trop to join the yeshiva and serve as the Rosh Yeshiva. Reb Naftali was an expert in this new approach to study, and inevitably, he became the primary Rosh Yeshiva. As a result, Reb Moshe Ladinsky lost his prestige.

The Chofetz Chaim spoke to Reb Moshe Ladinsky and explained that he had no choice. The bachurim wanted the Brisker *derech*, and if he didn't hire Reb Naftali, the *bachurim* would leave the yeshiva.

Reb Moshe Ladinsky replied, "If it is better for the students, then by all means, you did the right thing!"

The Chofetz Chaim was overwhelmed by Reb Moshe's answer. After so many years of devotion to the yeshiva, he didn't take it as an insult that someone took his place.

The Chofetz Chaim told him, "The merit of your *vitur,* understanding that Hashem runs a perfect world, will protect you. You will outlive us."

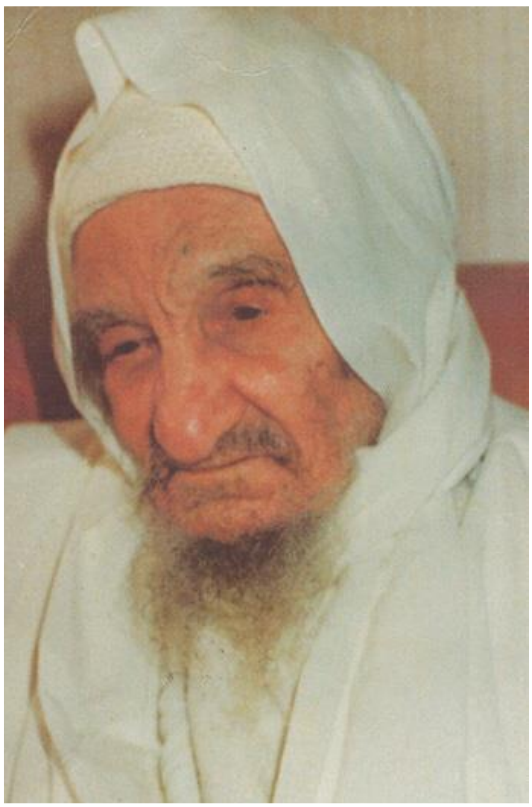
Indeed, Reb Naftali Trop was *niftar* in 1919, where the Chofetz Chaim lived till 1923. But R' Moshe lived till 1929. The merit of his *vatranus* granted him a long life. (*Torah Wellsprings*)

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

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## Reversing The Decree - Now That's a Story by Rabbi Yechiel Spero



Reb Yosef Deutsch, a noted askan in Eretz Yisrael, was close to the **Baba Sali, Rav Yisrael Abuchatzera**. He related a story about the Baba Sali on the topic of gratitude and appreciation.

One day, Reb Yosef walked into the Baba Sali with a request. Rav Frankfurter, the av beis din in Paris, had called. His wife had suddenly been struck by illness and had fallen into a coma. The doctors had all but given up hope. They couldn't identify what was wrong, so they had no way of treating her, and time was of the essence.

While the family davened and asked others to daven, Reb Yosef entered the home of the Baba Sali to request a berachah. As soon as the Baba Sali heard Rebbetzin Frankfurter's full Hebrew name, he refrained from giving his blessing.

It was clear to Reb Yosef that the Baba Sali was aware of a gezeirah from Shamayim regarding this woman, a decree that no man had the power to change. Reb Yosef was devastated. He knew that the Frankfurters were waiting to hear from him and now he didn't know what to tell them. Yet nothing he said to the Baba Sali could elicit a berachah.

Then, as Reb Yosef was about to leave his presence, the Baba Sali inquired, "What is the woman's maiden name? Who was her father?"

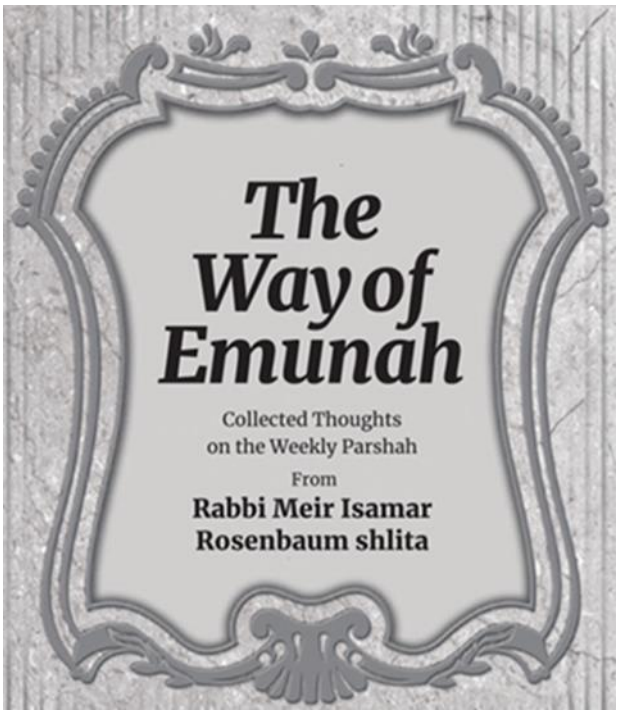
Reb Yosef responded, "Miletzky. Her father was Dr. Miletzky."

Suddenly, the expression on the Baba Sali's face changed entirely. "Dr. Miletzky was the doctor who treated my eyes and healed me. If that's the case, I am obligated to express my gratitude. So how can I possibly repay him? Well, obviously, I can pray that his daughter be zocheh to a refuah sheleimah. That's a chiyuv min hadin. And if that's the halachah, then my berachah can take effect. HaKadosh Baruch Hu yaazor! Don't worry. You have nothing to worry about!"

Moments earlier, the Baba Sali had made it clear that he had no power to change the Heavenly decree. But his chiyuv hakaras hatov changed the picture. It gave him the strength, the ability, to bring about a refuah sheleimah.

As soon as Reb Yosef walked out of the room, he checked his watch. It was 10:15 in the morning. - That night, Rav Frankfurter called with an update. His wife had opened her eyes…at 10:15 in the morning Israel time!

What a powerful lesson about the importance of gratitude and the potency of prayer.




## One Who Has Bitachon Cannot be Harmed

**The Baal Shem Tov zy"a** (quoted in Keser Shem Tov) said that if someone has genuine bitachon in Hashem, even if numerous harsh decrees are made against him, it is impossible for the middas hadin to harm him.

He added that this is tried and tested and found to be 100% true.

## Emunah Even When One Falls

The pasuk states (Mishlei 24:16): **כִּי שֶׁבַע יִפֹּול צַדִּיק וָקָם** - "**A tzadik falls seven times and gets up.**" - **The Yesod Ha'avodah of Slonim zy"a** asks how it could be said that a tzadik "falls"?

He answers that the pasuk is actually speaking about a simple person who places his trust fully in Hashem, which makes him a tzadik, as the pasuk in Chavakuk says: "A tzadik lives with his emunah." Such a person may fall seven times, but he will always remain strong in his emunah, so he will always get up.

***On erev Shabbos it is a mitzvah to taste the dishes that are prepared for Shabbos (Magen Avraham 260:101). We say in musaf shemona esrei of Shabbos, "Those who save it will merit long life." - This refers to people who taste the Shabbos dishes on erev Shabbos; they will live to a ripe old age (Machzor Vitry 191). He who tastes the Shabbos meals on erev Shabbos will merit a happy and virtuous life. ~ Shaar Harav.***

## Is That Woman Your Grandmother? - Rabbi Yechiel Spero



Every Shabbat, the young men from the yeshivah in Pressburg would eat their meals at the homes of members of the community. After praying, they would emerge from the bet midrash en masse and walk through the town to their respective hosts' homes.

Every week, one of the young men would wander off by himself for a while, and then catch up with the group a few blocks away. This young man, Chaim, was well respected among his peers as a caring, generous individual, always ready to help a friend in need.

Chaim's "disappearing act" intrigued his friends, and they decided to follow him one week to see where he went.

The next Shabbat morning, the boys followed Chaim into a particularly poor part of town. Chaim walked to a basement apartment and knocked gently on the door. An old woman answered and Chaim wished her a warm Shabbat Shalom.

Seeing the smile on her face, they assumed that this was his grandmother. They managed to get away before he could see them, but when he rejoined the group, they confessed that they had followed him. "So," they asked, "who is that woman? Your grandmother?"

A bit embarrassed that he had been caught in the act, Chaim shyly responded that the woman was not even related to him.

That piqued their curiosity even more. "Then, Chaim, why do you go wish her a Shabbat Shalom every week?"

By this time a bigger crowd had gathered, with everyone eager to hear Chaim's story.

"The truth is that this woman is a widow, and she had very little family around. So, I figured I would go to wish her a Shabbat Shalom. She seems so happy when I come and it is such an easy thing to do - How could I not?"

The stunned friends hung their heads in humility. Amazed that their young friend had the sensitivity to look after an old widow, they knew then that this boy would become something special.

Rav Yitzchak Shloime Blau remembered this story fondly because he was a little boy at the time and the old woman was his grandmother. "And although I was only six or seven years old, I remember waiting outside for him every Shabbat and then running inside to tell my grandmother, "The bachur is coming! The bachur is coming!"

Chaim's friends were correct in predicting that this young man was destined for greatness. Young Chaim grew up to become the great **Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld**, Rav of Yerushalayim!

## *L' Maaseh*

An American bochur was learning in yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel and due to various difficult personal matters, suddenly developed a speech impediment and stuttered severely. It got so bad that most of his chavrusaos dropped him, and he devoted a tremendous amount of his day to learning Sefer Kehilos Yaakov (by the **Steipler**).

There was one piece that he had extreme difficulty with and wanted to go to Bnei Brak and ask the Steipler's son, **R' Chaim**, if he could shed some light on it. Knowing he wouldn't be able to communicate the question on his own, he took along the one remaining chavrusa he had and tried to explain the question to him on the way. However, when they arrived, his friend still didn't understand it and when they entered R' Chaim's room, he simply said: "my friend here has a question on a piece of Steipler that he would like to ask".

The stuttering bochur stuttered and was silent. R' Chaim told him to come sit down next to him and start again but he couldn't get any words out of his mouth.

R' Chaim took the boy's hand and rubbed it for a full forty minutes until the bochur could articulate what was bothering him. R' Chaim heard the question and replied, "you are correct, perhaps there is a mistake here in this piece of Kehilos Yaakov".

Today this bochur is a magid shiur who teaches Torah to others, and much of the credit goes to the patience and warmth of R' Chaim .

## Parsha Potpourri by Rav Ozer Alport

**אָדָם כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אֽוֹ־סַפַּחַת אֽוֹ בַהֶרֶת** - Parshas Tazria discusses the laws governing an **אדם** (person) who has tzara'as on his skin. **The Zohar HaKadosh** teaches that of the many Hebrew words that refer to a person, the word **אדם** is used to connote a respected individual. Why is a person who has sinned and brought tzara'as upon himself referred to using an expression that signifies importance?

**Rav Nissan Alpert** explains that a person is not measured by his mistakes. All people are human and are prone to err from time to time. Rather, a person's worth is determined by whether he learns from his mistakes. A Torah scholar who is content with the spiritual level that he has attained and has no ambitions to continue improving himself can hardly be considered a great person.

On the other hand, a regular Jew who constantly works to improve himself so that he does not repeat his sins is certainly to be admired. In our case, although the person was stricken with tzara'as, if he comes to a Kohen to understand what he did wrong and to learn how to correct his ways, the Torah teaches us that nobody could be more important and deserving of our respect.

# TORAHANYTIMES NEWSLETTER

## Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein zt"l - The Silent Hero

I once heard the following story, which was confirmed to be entirely true. The man, in fact, who relayed it knew the individuals involved.

Before the Holocaust, the vast majority of families were very poor. There was the occasional exception, but by and large, the Jews were peasants with close to no money. One known family in Poland was a bit more well off than others. Though not rich, the father decided to purchase a pair of boots for his son to make it through the cold winter months. In those days, under such otherwise impoverished conditions, a pair of boots was a gift above and beyond. The father knew that his son would gain a lot of good use from them, and wear them through until they were worn out on every stitch.

And so he did. The father bought the pair of boots for his son, and off he went to school. Two days later, the son returned from school wearing his shoes. His boots were not on his feet nor in his knapsack. "Meir, where are your new boots?" "Well, there is a boy in my class and his father died, and they have no money and no food. His shoes have big holes in them, and my shoes don't, so I gave him my boots." Hearing this, the father didn't know what to do. Should he tell his son to ask for his boots back? That wouldn't be a great lesson in *chinuch* (educating his son). But to allow his son to so easily forego a new pair of boots was not a simple matter. Money was short and hard to come by, and the decision to buy his son these boots had made sense because his son could really use them. What was he to do?

After thinking it over for some time, he decided that he'd say nothing. On his own, his son would come to weigh the value of his own actions and see their merit. Every time it would be cold and his feet would be freezing and wet, he'd remember the *chesed* he did by giving up his shoes. That action would mean something to him,

whether positive or negative, and the father awaited what lesson it would be for his son.

The following year, the father bought a new coat for his son. The winter months had rolled around once again, and a nice, warm coat would do the job of staving off the bitter cold. A few days later, though, the son returned with no coat. "Where's your coat, Meir?" asked his father. "Remember the boy I gave my boots to? He's freezing, and I have a coat from last year, so I gave him my new one." At this point, the father began growing curious. It was one thing for his son to give away his boots, but now his coat? But what was he to do? He knew he didn't have the money to buy another coat.

But that was that. Just like he had done with the pair of boots, he'd do with the coat. He'd let his son be. And he was. His son layered himself up with several sweaters and walked around that way.

One day, the son returned home and told his father the following. "The boy I gave my boots and coat to just lost his mother and he doesn't have a place to sleep. He has no parents. Could he stay with us?" Immediately, the father thought of all the implications and ramifications of opening his home to this orphaned boy. There was minimal space in their house and, moreover, they didn't have enough money to support another child. "That I can't do, Meir. Maybe you can find someone else in the class who can do so? We don't have any room."

Later that night, the son was nowhere to be found. He had left the house earlier in the afternoon, but he never returned. The father, as the minutes ticked by, turned more and more nervous. It was Poland and it was dark outside! "Where could he be?" wondered the father over and over. Had his son been kidnapped? It wasn't a far-off possibility, however dreadful the thought was. Perhaps something had happened at school and it had bothered him, so much so that he wanted to be alone. With these thoughts swirling in his

mind, the father along with a small group of other neighborhood families began looking for him.

Until the father found him. The boy had been in the *Ezras Nashim* (women's section) of the *shul*, sleeping on a bench together with the other boy whose mother had died. He didn't want the boy to sleep alone.

Fast forward to years following the Holocaust …

Both boys survived, with the boy who had given the boots and jacket away moving to Israel, and the other boy whose mother died immigrating to America. The latter boy in America wound up becoming very wealthy, whereas the former boy ended up studying for several years in *yeshiva* and becoming well-learned. He also was blessed with a large family. That being said, he lived in a relatively small apartment in Israel.

One day, in walked a wealthy American to the *yeshiva* where the other now grown man was learning. Remembering what had happened many years before, the American inquired if his old childhood friend was around? He indeed was. Being pointed in the direction of where he was studying, the American approached the man. Introducing himself, the American reminded the Israeli man who he was. "Remember, many years ago… we used to attend at the same school? You bought me a pair of boots and a jacket. You remember that one time when you kept me company at night, and your father found us…?" "I can't believe it!" exclaimed the Israeli man. "I've thought many times about you. I didn't know if you'd make it out of the war, and here you are now!" "Come outside," then said the American. "I want to talk to you."

"I knew that you were alive and living here. And I came here to tell you something. But I must preface my words by letting you know that I am not taking no for an answer. You have nine children, and I am going to pay for their nine weddings. Not only that, but all of the clothing for these weddings is on me. You gave me your boots and

you gave me your coat. In addition, I will buy every one of your children an apartment when they get married because of that night you came to join me in the *shul* and you didn't let me sleep alone. I am never going to let you be alone."

This man did exactly as he said he would. For nine weddings, everything was covered, including the wedding attire and apartment.

Now, you hear this and think, "Wow, what an amazing story!" But I want to tell you something that hit me when I thought about this. What is incredible about this story is not what you might think it is. What's incredible comes back down to the father of the boy who gave away the boots and coat. Had the father made his son retrieve the boots, all that happened never would have. The father understood what education to a child means. Even though he just bought him a pair of boots and he gave it away, if he would have told him to take them back and not to share, what would have been gained? The few dollars that he spent.

Now how much does a pair of boots cost? Let's just say ten dollars. And what about a coat? Fifty dollars. So this father lost sixty dollars in total. He feels bad that he bought boots and a coat for his child when money is limited, and he lost it all because his son gave it to a friend. It would certainly be a lot of money in those days. But what did Hashem give him back? Hundreds of thousands of dollars, perhaps even millions.

Think about it. You give away sixty dollars and get over a million in return. Now that's a very different picture when you think of it this way. Why did the father do this? Because he understood that *chinuch* (educating a child) comes before personal wants and needs. The immediate, natural reaction might be, "Don't give away the boots I especially got for you!" But this father took an entirely different route. He lived for something bigger than himself. He had Hashem and the Torah in his life, and that led the way to educating his son in a way that perhaps was less conventional.

But less conventional sometimes means more impactful.

The boy did an incredible act of kindness. But as it goes for the father, he would often be overlooked in this story. But when you really think about it, he is the true, quiet, silent hero.

Silent literally and silent figuratively, but loud and clear in the Heavens Above.

## Rabbi Yossi Bensoussan - Daughter of Dignity

I coined what I like to call the "Bubby System." My grandmother was living years ago in a nursing home in Brooklyn, and one Friday afternoon, my sister went to visit her. As she walked into her room, surprisingly, she noticed my father was already there. My father, a Torah scholar in his own right, was seated near my grandmother, who in her later years had trouble seeing and would often have tremors in her hands. But he wasn't there to just say hello or catch up with her and tell her how the family was doing. He was there putting on her makeup for Shabbos.

My sister, seeing this, was taken aback. If you knew who our father was to us, the last thing we'd expect was to catch him putting makeup on someone. "Abba, what are you doing?" asked my sister. "This is a dignified woman. She's not meeting the Shabbos Queen looking like this," he said. He then continued applying her makeup.

My grandmother was a woman who lived and breathed dignity. She wasn't someone who wanted to put makeup on for Shabbos because she needed to look dazzling for others. Real dignity isn't about external appearances and impressions at all. It's when you do something that is perhaps uncomfortable, difficult or you are bound to be made fun of, yet you still do it because it needs to be done. The Beit Yosef, cited at the outset of the Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 1:1), writes that there are times when exhibiting boldness is necessary, and those times are when you are being mocked in the

performance of mitzvot, of G-d's commandments. Dignity leverages you above those petty comments, it raises you a notch above what people think about you to do what you know needs to be done.

My other grandmother too was an exemplary model of dignity. I met her in Israel when she was older, and not once would you find her—even when she was sick in the hospital—not looking her best. Her headscarf was always situated just right. She understood what it means to be a dignified woman; what it means to be special.

Every time Rav Shlomo Freifeld *zt"l* would talk to his rebbe, even on the phone, he would talk standing up and be wearing his jacket. He knew that it meant to act with *kavod*, honor, toward others. What about the fact that his rebbe wasn't around to see him standing up for him? How is it showing respect if his rebbe couldn't see the respect being afforded him?

Dignity of oneself and respect of others is far bigger than acting a certain way around and toward other people. It's about ourselves. It's not about being dignified in front of others. Rabbi Yitzchak Berkovits has said more than once that you can discover the spirit of human dignity from the fact that even a person who is alone in his home still closes the door when he uses the restroom. No one may be around, but that doesn't matter. It's about dignity, and dignity needs no other people to shine.

We stand a certain way, we carry ourselves as we do, and yet we don't need the world to know who we are. We don't need the world to know who we are from the way we dress. We affect the world who we are through the way we dress. And there's a very big difference. Dignity is about oneself; no one else.

Whether you are away from home or in the privacy of your room, dignity comes down to yourself. It's a personal decision, and one which hallmarks the Jewish soul and spirit.

OHR HAMERCAZ

Divrei Torah on the Daf, Parsha and more from members of R' Stefansky's Daf Yomi Shiur given in Mercaz Daf Yomi

## Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick

When someone has צָרָעַת, the פָּסוּק says, וְהוּבָא אֶל הַכֹּהֵן – '***And he should be brought to the Kohein***.'

**The Chomas Anach** points out that the word וְהוּבָא has the same letters as the word – וְאוֹהֵב and he is loved. This teaches us that when a metzorah comes to the Kohein and does teshuvah, he is loved by Hashem. [ספר עלינו לשבח]



**Horav Boruch Ber Leibowitz זצ"ל** came to America to collect money for his yeshiva. Unfortunately, at that time, some people felt they had no choice but to keep their stores opened on Shabbos, in order to not lose any business. Rav Boruch Ber tried to convince them to close their stores for Shabbos.

One week, some barbers decided to listen to Rav Boruch Ber. - When Rav Boruch Ber heard about this, he said, "In a place where ba'alei teshuva stand, not even the greatest person can stand!"

Rav Boruch Ber then went to give the barbers a kiss and asked them for a beracha.

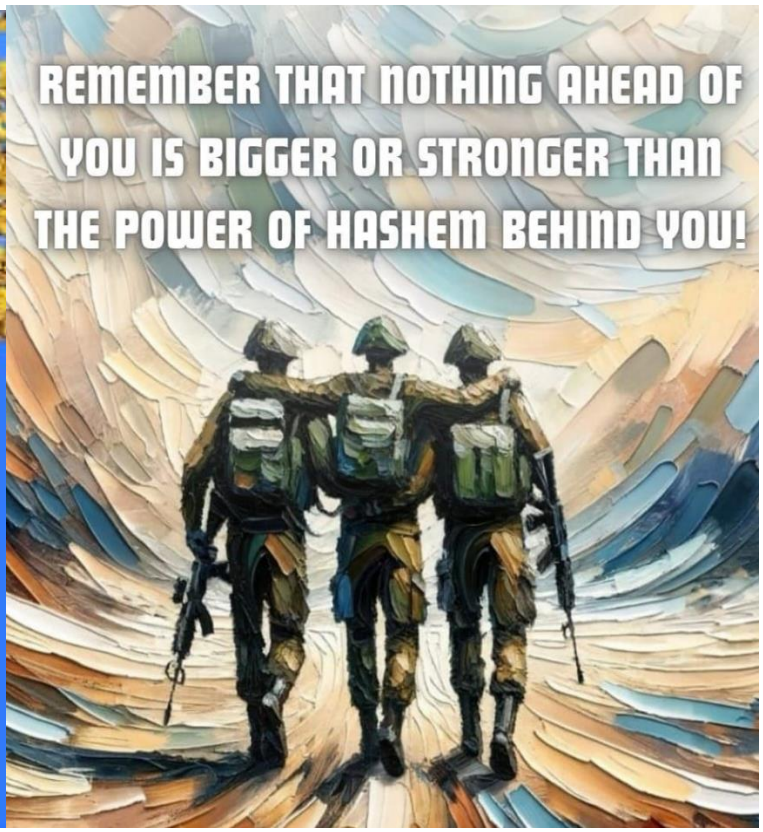
# Chizuk - Inspiration

**The Steipler Gaon** recounted the story of an individual whose general dedication to Torah observance had waned slightly after he had left the Yeshiva. However, there was one area of his observance that remained as strong as ever. He had become a businessman and remained exceptionally honest in all of his business dealings.

When asked why he remained rigorously observant in matters of honesty he replied, "Years ago, while in Yeshiva, I had a Rebbe that would sternly warn his students, 'Please make sure that you learn diligently and not waste time! Your parents are paying me to teach and study with you. If you do not learn diligently, I can be considered a thief for getting paid and not doing my job. I do not wish to be a thief and take money that does not belong to me.'

My Rebbe's example of honesty stands before me in every business deal that I do and is something that I aspire to."



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## From our Sages

***וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ – 'On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.'*** *(12:3)*

Isaac and Ishmael were engaged in a controversy. Said Ishmael to Isaac: "I am more beloved to G-d than you, since I was circumcised at the age of thirteen, but you were circumcised as a baby and could not refuse."

Isaac retorted: "All that you gave up to G-d was three drops of blood. But lo, I am now thirty-seven years old, yet if G-d desired of me that I be slaughtered, I would not refuse." (**Midrash Rabbah**)

****

Jewishness is not a matter of historical consciousness, outlook, ethics, or even behavior; it is a state of being. This is the deeper significance of the debate between Ishmael and Isaac. When the Jew is circumcised on the eighth day of life, he is completely unaware of the significance of what has occurred.

But this "non-experience" is precisely what circumcision means. With circumcision the Jew says: I define my relationship with G-d not by what I think, feel or do, but by the 'fact' of my Jewishness—a fact which applies equally to an infant of eight days and a sage of eighty years. (**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**)

The number seven represents the natural, and the number eight represents the holy. This is why circumcision on the eighth day takes precedence over Shabbat, the seventh day. (**Keli Yakar**)

**וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ** – *'On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.' (12:3)*

A Jew is in essence "circumcised" even if, for whatever reason, his physical foreskin has not yet been removed. Thus the verse says, "On the eighth day *the flesh* of his foreskin shall be circumcised"—the flesh need to be circumcised, but spiritually the Jew is always "circumcised." (**Alshich**)

**אָדָם כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ... וְהָיָה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ לְנֶגַע צָרָעַת** - *'A person to whom shall occur in the skin of his flesh ...the plague of* **tzaraat**.' *(13:2)*

The plague of *tzaraat* comes only as punishment for *lashon hara* (evil talk). (**Midrash Rabbah; Talmud; Rashi**)

Evil talk is like an arrow. A person who unsheathes a sword can regret his intention and return it to its sheath. But the arrow cannot be retrieved. (**Midrash Tehillim**)

A man once came to see Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch and proceeded to portray himself as a villain of the worst sort. After describing at length his moral and spiritual deficiencies, he begged the rebbe to help him overcome his evil character.

"Surely," said the rebbe, "you know how grave is the sin of *lashon hara*, speaking evilly of a human being. Nowhere, to my knowledge, does it say that it is permissible to speak *lashon hara* about oneself." (**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**)

Evil talk kills three people: the speaker, the listener, and the one who is spoken of. (**Talmud, Erachin 15a**)

To what may the tongue be compared? To a dog tied with an iron chain and locked in a room within a room within a room, yet when he barks the entire populace is terrified of him. Imagine if he were loose outside!

So the tongue: it is secured behind the teeth and behind the lips, yet it does no end of damage. Imagine if it were outside! (**Yalkut Shimoni**)




## ◣ Nobody Is Immune - Izbitzer Rebbe

**אָדָם כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אוֹ־סַפַּחַת אוֹ בַהֶרֶת וְהָיָה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ לְנֶגַע צָרָעַת** וְהוּבָא אֶל־אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אוֹ אֶל־אַחַד מִבָּנָיו הַכֹּהֲנִים - "***If a person [adam] will have on the skin a s'eis, or a sapachas, or a baheres (swelling, rising, bright spot), he shall be brought to Aharon the kohen, or to one of his sons, the kohanim.***" (13:2)

In Hebrew the human being is called by four names: ish, gever, enosh, and adam. According to the **Zohar**, the term adam is the highest level. Since the disease is a punishment for speaking evil, it appears that speaking evil is prevalent even among the highest level of human being.

***"Treasure your uniqueness. The light you are meant to shine unto this world is yours alone." ~ The Arizal, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria.***

## ◣ Eye Of The Beholder - Ben Ish Chai

**וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַנֶּגַע בְּעוֹר־הַבָּשָׂר** - "...***and the kohen shall examine the affliction on the skin of the body***..." (13:3)

The difference between the words **נגע** - affliction and **ענג** -pleasure, is the location of the "**ע**". This is what is meant by the pasuk: "Chacham einav b'rosho - a wise man has his eyes (his 'ayin') in his front." Meaning, he places the "**ע** "in front, thus changing **נגע** into **ענג**.

Thus, when the kohen comes to check on a man's affliction and sees that the affliction has not changed its colour, he sees, "lo hafach eino," that the "ayin" has remained at the end of the word and the person has not cured his habits, then he will declare it impure.

## ◣ Consider Their Circumstances - Reb Meir Simcha Of Dvinsk

**וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַנֶּגַע בְּעוֹר־הַבָּשָׂר וְשֵׂעָר בַּנֶּגַע הָפַךְ לָבָן וּמַרְאֵה הַנֶּגַע עָמֹק מֵעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ נֶגַע צָרַעַת הִוא וְרָאָהוּ הַכֹּהֵן וְטִמֵּא אֹתוֹ** - "...***and the kohen shall examine the affliction on the skin of the body... the Kohen shall look at it and make him impure***." (13:3)

If the affliction which was considered impure occurred on a holiday, the person was set free. The reason is that the afflicted should participate in a joyous occasion. - Therefore, the words "the Kohen will look" is mentioned twice. First, the Kohen should look at the affliction, and then he should consider the situation in which the person finds himself.

This teaches us that there should be concern for the person with the affliction, as well as the circumstances at the time.

***'Never lose hope, for even in the darkest moments, there is a flicker of light. Hold onto faith and trust that Hashem is guiding you towards a brighter tomorrow.' ~ R' Yoseph Ber Soloveitchik.***

## ◣ Precious Prayers - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

וְטָמֵא טָמֵא יִקְרָא - "…***and he is to call out, 'Tamei, Tamei'***." (13:45)

The Gemara (Shabbos 60a) teaches that the purpose of this is so that the Metzora's pain is known to others, and they would pray for his recovery.

The Gemara says that we see from this that when one's tree is not producing fruit, he should put a mark on the tree so that other people see it and know to pray for it to be revived.

**HaRav Yechezkel Levenstein zt'l** explained: The Gemara isn't suggesting that we declare an intense "day of prayer" on behalf of the tree. Rather, as someone walks by, they will see the barren tree and utter a quick prayer as they pass by. - This is because even the smallest request to Hashem is treasured by him. - You should never say, "I don't have time for a long prayer, I might as well not pray." - Every prayer to Hashem is precious.

## Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

Naming a baby boy at a bris is not just an honour, privilege and responsibility of the father who whispers the name to the Rov or Mohel during the Brochos that are said after the Bris, he also gets *Siyato Dishmayo* to say the name that a *Bas Kol* from *Shomayim* has already proclaimed 40 days before the birth of the child. But what happens when the father is not present at the Bris: who has that *Siyato Dishmayo*?

There is a single young woman who gave birth to a baby boy at a North London hospital. The father is also Jewish, but he is no longer around, and she felt unable to raise the child on her own. So, she decided to give the baby up for adoption.

There is a lady in Stamford Hill who finds religious homes for Jewish children. While the search for a suitable family was going on, the

lady spoke with the mother and gently persuaded her that her son needs to have a bris. She suggested Dr Spitzer, who is a mohel, and the mother agreed.

Dr Spitzer arrived at the appointed day and time, and asked the mother what Hebrew name she would like to give the baby. She did not know, so he proposed an idea.

"I had a friend, a Holocaust survivor, who unfortunately passed away without leaving any children. He was a wonderful man. His name was Yaakov. Perhaps we could name the child Yaakov as a merit for his soul?"

"I would also like to add another name," he continued, "As this friend was *nifter* a few days before Yom Kippur, I would like to add the name Yonah."

The mother liked the suggestions and agreed.

Following the bris, Dr Spitzer presented the baby with a Chumash in which he inscribed the date of the bris, the baby's name, Yaakov Yonah, and that he had been the mohel. It was to serve as a certificate of sorts to the family that would adopt him.

It did not take long before such a family was found. After the checks and meetings had been concluded and both sides were happy to proceed, the day arrived for Yaakov Yonah to join his new family.

That morning, the mother of the child called Dr Spitzer and asked whether he would agree to accompany her, both as support and to answer any questions the adoptive parents might have.

When they sat down to talk, the new father turned to Dr Spitzer and said: "We saw the Chumash with the details of the bris, and that the name Yaakov Yonah had been given. How did you arrive at that name?"

Dr Spitzer explained about his friend, and that he had added Yonah as his Yahrzeit was close to Yom Kippur.

The man looked at his wife. She began to cry.

"Not long after my wife and I married," the husband explained, "we both lost our fathers within a short space of time. We hoped that we would have sons to name after them, but the years passed and we were not blessed with children. But today, our wish has finally been fulfilled. You see, my father was named Yaakov, and my wife's father was named Yonah."

For a few moments the mother and Dr Spitzer could not speak. The Divine providence was just startling, the exactitude, timing and beauty of the Almighty's unquestionable guidance evident in the tiniest detail.

The moral of the story? Everything is orchestrated from Above. Everything has a purpose, and its time. Nothing is ever random. Nothing.

Good Shabbos

## Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

"Why did an Israeli Bus Driver cross the Road?"

"Is this some sort of Purim Joke or riddle?" you want to know.

"No, No, Not at all. This is a genuine question. So – Why did an Israeli Bus Driver cross the Road?"

The story of the bus driver who crossed the road that is circulating in Israel, has restored some people's faith in the kindness and patience of bus drivers.

The protagonist of the story is Moshe Biton, a bus driver for the 65 Egged bus line, which travels from Pisat Ze'ev to Givat Shaul in Jerusalem.

One morning, as the bus was making its usual journey, an elderly blind women got on the bus, and as she showed her pass to the driver, she

tearfully told the driver that the day before she had had to wait for a long time for someone to help her cross the street, but no one paid any attention to her.

Moshe the driver remained silent, but when he reached the woman's bus stop, he parked up the bus, came out of the driver's cab and patiently escorted the woman off the bus and across the street. Then he returned to the bus to resume the journey.

The passengers, many of whom would normally be rushing to do what they normally do at that time of the day, had the patience of mind, to join together to applaud the driver for his thoughtfulness and kindness.

In situations like this, we can either remain passive or commend the hero for his kindness and good deed.

So why did the bus driver cross the road? To help a blind passenger get safely to the other side!

**מי כעמך ישראל**

Good Shabbos

# Parsha Knowledge

STORIES & INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

## An Eagle Amongst Chickens

This week's Parsha is the very first time the Torah speaks about someone contracting Tzaraas , which is a lesion on the skin that appears due to different types of sins. The Torah refers to the person as Adam. The pasuk says Adam ki yieyeh… A person who contracts tzaraas should be brought to Aharon the kohen, or one of his sons, the kohanim. There's a question here: The Gemara says that the term Adam is an honorific. It's a very preeminent title. So when

a person has in his flesh or his skin Tzaraas , why does the Torah address the person as Adam? He sinned! Why are we honoring him?

I heard from my father, Rav Yitzchok Fingerer shlita that the **Alshich** explains that Tzaraas is not a reflection of a person's loneliness or unworthiness. Rather, it is an indication of the person's loftiness and stature. We get Tzarras because we are Adam, because we are great. More is expected from us. That's why we are stricken with punishment and get Tzaraas. Our struggles and sins don't come because we are inferior. They come because we are great. We have inordinate potential!



There is a beautiful story about a farmer who was tending to his crops when he noticed a large egg on the ground. Thinking that it was from the hen he picked it up and brought it to the coop placing it next to the other eggs – the chicken eggs. A few days later, the eggs hatched, and adorable chicks came out. However, a funny-looking chicken came out of the strange egg. It turns out it wasn't a chicken at all – it was an eagle. The other chickens didn't know that, and they thought even though he looked different he was still one of them. The eagle began to do all the things the chicks did. He dug for worms in the dirt and flapped his wings around. He skipped around the coop making clucking sounds. However, he did not dare to fly. After all, none of the chickens were flying so why should he?

A short while later, the eagle saw a bird flying high in the sky. The eagle asked the chicken what type of bird it was. The chicken said, "That bird is an eagle. He is the king of the sky, and he soars to the

greatest of heights. We however can't do that because we are chickens and chickens don't fly."

One day, the majestic-looking eagle landed near the chicken coop. With his eagle eye, he recognized one of his own – a young eagle roaming and playing around. He made his way to the eagle and asked him, "Why are you down here? You're an eagle. You should be soaring up in the sky!" The young eagle asked, "What do you mean? I'm just a chicken and chickens can't fly. The adult eagle told the little eagle to jump on his back and they flew high in the sky. The little eagle was amazed. It was so incredible to be so high up. The adult eagle then landed on a mountain and said, "Now it's your turn to fly." That is precisely what the little eagle did. He spread his wings and soared high.

The lesson to us can be that like the eagle who didn't realize his true identity we also fail to realize who we really are. We must realize that we are holy and that we have the ability to soar higher and higher. Because we are so great, we must be careful with what we say and do. That's why we are stricken with punishment. That's why we get Tzaraas. Our struggles and sins come because we are great! We have so much potential!

## 102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar

### Truth Is It

Rav Aharon Leib Steinman's great-grandson shares: As a child, I often frequented Zeidy's house, spending several hours a day there. As is well known, Zeidy subsisted on very simple foods and drank only water, or seltzer on rare occasions. Nowhere near my grandfather's madreigah, I appreciated the finer things in life, and I often came equipped with a bottle of Coke.

The door to Zeidy's simple apartment was always open, and visitors streamed in and out at will. There were the VIPs and the simple folk, American tourists coming for brachos, even kids. The house welcomed everyone, and people acted as if they owned the place. They'd come, open the cabinets or fridge, and help themselves to drinks and refreshments. My soda often vanished before I had a chance to open it, and I quickly learned that if I didn't label my stuff, it would disappear.




After the third time that I went in search of my bottle and found it empty in the garbage can, I had an idea. I went to the store, bought another bottle of Coke, and attached a sticker with the words "Private- Gezel" written in block letters. Apparently, my warning didn't impress anyone, because when I visited Zeidy's house the next day, I found my bottle in the fridge, almost empty.

Aggravated, I bought another Coke, and this time, taped a sticky note to it that said "Do Not Touch! Private Property!"-but even this had no effect. I considered labeling the bottle "Reserved for the Rav," but I knew that was useless, because it was no secret that Zeidy drank only water.

After wracking my brain, I got it!

I took the bottle and wrote, with a thick red marker: "Caution! Danger! Mouse poison!" I was pretty sure that anyone who saw the label would guess it wasn't true, but on the slight chance that it was, they would probably still avoid drinking from the bottle.

When Zeidy, who was very aware of everything going on in and around the house, saw the warning, he immediately guessed it had been my doing, although he didn't say anything.

It wasn't until ten years later, when I was staying the night shift in Zeidy's house, that he finally mentioned the incident. He awoke, approached me, and asked, "Which masechta are you learning now?" "Yevamos," I replied.

"Which daf are you up to?"

"Kuf-tes-vav, amud beis."

"You know, there's an interesting Rashi on that daf," Zeidy remarked. "Rashi says that if a person finds a vessel marked with the letter kuf, it means it's a korban. The letter taf means terumah. The letter mem is ma'aser. Rashi expounds that it's possible that it is really not terumah or ma'aser, but that the person just wrote the letters so no one would touch it.

"It's a little strange," Zeidy continued. "What do you think? Because wouldn't that be a chashash of sheker? The person is desensitizing himself to the terrible quality of sin, training himself to be lax in his words... Here's a more contemporary example: Suppose a person has a bottle of drink in the fridge, and he doesn't want others to touch it, so he writes on it: 'Caution! Mouse poison!' Doing such a thing teaches a person to lie."

Most people react immediately when they are upset or witness something that warrants improvement, yet gedolei hador will wait a decade or more so as to find the opportune moment to give mussar.

***"Every word that we speak in prayer is a priceless seed entrusted in the hands of Hashem for safekeeping. The day will come when it will bring forth the most generous harvest." ~ Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (1944-2001).***

# Toras Avigdor Snippets

*A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets*



## ● Silence is Golden

We're talking here about a frum Jew. He could be a father, a husband, a loyal servant of Hashem who puts on tefillin and davens three times a day with a minyan. His home is a kosher home, and his children are all frum boys and girls. He's one of us! And yet, one morning he wakes up with tzara'as; and now he must take leave of his family and friends and make his way beyond the walls of the city to live alone.

This friend of ours, a fellow Jew, is now tamei; he's closed off from the rest of mankind. So our fellow Jew is now sitting alone outside of the walls of his city, and there he will remain until the tzara'as heals. He'll miss the Shabbos seudos with his family. He might even have to spend the Seder night all alone!

And it's no accident of fate here. The Rambam says that tzara'as is not a natural form of leprosy; it's a miraculous phenomenon. "Tzara'as is one of the miracles that Hashem provides to His nation" (Moreh Nevuchim 3:47) and that's why a goy can't become tamei with tzara'as (Nega'im 3:1). Hashem miraculously sends tzara'as upon a Jew, and now he has to be shunned. And it's not because of contagion, or merely because he can be metamei others — it's because Hashem

wants him to be "closed off" from other people. Hashem wants him to leave the machaneh, so he should be separated from society and dwell alone.

And that's because this man is actually a dangerous man; he may appear to be very frum, but the Gemara (Eirechin 15b) says: **כָּל הַמְסַפֵּר לָשׁוֹן הָרָע, נִגְעִים בָּאִים עָלָיו** - One who speaks wrong words, who uses his mouth in the wrong way, is stricken by leprosy."

And so we understand that this man misused the gift of people's company; when he was healthy, he sat around with his friends and wagged his tongue. And that doesn't mean only that he ridiculed and belittled other people; even just talking devarim beteilim is misusing the tongue. And so, in the great days of nevuah, the nega of tzara'as declared to this man the Word of Hashem: "He shall be tamei, and he should be closed off from people and avoided." He will dwell alone where he won't have anyone with whom to speak, and now he will study how a person is to use his tongue, and he will understand that the proper way to use a tongue is primarily by not using it.

The Rambam gives us an insight into this - **לְעוֹלָם יַרְבֶּה אָדָם בִּשְׁתִיקָה** : "A person should always produce a great deal of silence" (Rambam, Hilchos Dei'os 2:4). You hear that? You have to produce silence as much as you can.

Imagine you're producing goods for a certain purpose. Let's say you're manufacturing toothbrushes, or you're a tailor and you're sewing suits. Whatever it is, you're producing. So you have to keep cheshbon: "How many goods did I produce today?" "Did I do better today than yesterday?" "What could I do differently in the factory tomorrow to produce more toothbrushes?"

So it's the same with silence. A man should always be producing silence in this world. You have to think about that! "How much silence did I produce today?" And it's considered a service of Hashem: **לְךָ דְּמִיָּה תְהִלָּה אֱלֹקִים** - "To you Hashem, silence is praise" (Tehillim 65:2). That's an interesting idea, because we always thought that

the Hallelukahs and the brachos are praise. Ashrei, Hodu, and Modim — that's how we praise Hashem. And now we're being told that keeping quiet is the real way to praise Hashem; to produce silence is actually a career of praising Hashem.




## Tzoraas by Rabbi Moshe Krieger

In this week's Parsha, the Torah describes in great detail the various punishments that a person receives for speaking ill about others and the requisite penance for that same evil speech. The retribution that the Torah offers for Lashon Harah is that a person's body becomes afflicted by a spiritual type of disease called Tzoraas. However, the Torah explains that not only does a person's body become affected with this disease, but even their clothing and their home can contract Tzoraas.

The Meforshim explain that the first thing afflicted is a person's clothes. After that his house. And finally, his body contracts this illness. What is the reason for this strange order of progression in the way that Tzoraas develops?

**The Seforno** offers a very interesting explanation. He begins by explaining that the purpose for all afflictions that befall a person are to cause him to realize the error of his ways and to repent. Specifically because Hashem loves us, and does not want us to suffer in the next world, He invents methods to wake a person up before it is too late.

With this explanation, we can now easily understand the behavior of the Tzoraas disease. It firstly attacks one's clothing which are the most removed from a person. If the person does not get the

message, it travels to his house. And finally, if the person hasn't repented, the Tzoraas afflicts one's body directly. The Seforno explains that this is Hashem's unique Chessed to upset us in a way which will be clear what the reason is for the ailment so that we may rectify the situation.

Parenthetically, he proves that this is true by virtue of the fact that we find that non-Jews were not affected by Tzoraas and if it were merely a physical disease, there would be no reason for this. Additionally, we find that today, we seem to have lost this disease of Tzoraas, apparently because we are not on the level to receive such a direct message from Hashem.

**R' Yechezkel Levenstein**, the renowned Mashgiach of the Ponevitch Yeshiva explains that although we don't have Tzoraas today, Hashem still sends us little messages to wake us up before it is too late. These messages come in the form of the daily discomforts that many of us suffer from, some being more severe than others.

R' Chazkal explains that these discomforts are in order to send us the message that we must look into our actions and see where we are falling short in our service of G-d. Often, these messages start off small and distant from us. But if we don't get the point, we find these messages coming closer and closer to home.

R' Chazkal advises that one should pay heed to these messages when they are in their earlier state so that he does not ever need to receive a harsher warning.

May we merit to properly understand the messages that Hashem sends to us in every form!

***"Hashem's love is like the ocean; it is vast and deep, and no one can fathom its depths." ~ Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1167).***

## Living It Up In This World

In Tazria-Metzora, we learn the laws of *negaim* (roughly translated as a spiritual form of leprosy), which Chazal teach are caused by lashon hara (Erchin 15b). The Medrash (Vayikra Rabba 16:2) relates a story about the great importance of refraining from lashon hara:

A traveling salesman would pass through towns calling out: "Who wants life? Who wants life?"

Rav Yannai approached the salesman. "I want life," he said.

"You don't need my advice," the salesman replied, but Rav Yannai insisted that he tell him. The salesman quoted a well-known verse:

"Who is the man who desires life, length of days to see good? Withhold your tongue from evil!" (Tehillim 34:13-14).

"Until I heard this explanation, I never understood this verse," said Rav Yannai.

Rav Yannai never understood this verse? The words state openly that one who desires life should avoid evil speech! What was so hard for him to understand?

In *Kochavei Ohr*, **Rav Itzele Blazer** explains that the words "desire life" can have other connotations. Perhaps the verse asks: "Who desires *eternal* life," meaning only in the next world, and says nothing about how avoiding evil speech helps a Jew in this world. Or perhaps the verse merely means "who desires life — as opposed to death." This salesman taught that David Hamelech was offering us a way to live life to the fullest *in this world*. For Rav Yannai, this was a *chiddush*.

How does refraining from evil speech gain us good life in this world?

First of all, simply controlling one's mouth saves a Jew from needless quarrels, thus saving him headaches, stress, perhaps ulcers as well. Moreover, evil speech stems from bad middos, such as jealousy and selfishness. The more one controls these tendencies, the greater a

chance he has to develop the proper way of relating to his fellowman. **The Chofetz Chaim** (Shemiras Halashon, Zechira 1) notes that by diligently keeping the mitzvos pertaining to speech, a person will be protected from committing any sin or wrongdoing to his fellowman. The very thought of harming him will be foreign to him. Instead, he will feel a deep sense of concern and brotherhood for his fellowmen. All this enhances a Jew's quality of life (see also ibid. Tevuna 5).

Hashem wants us always to be working on perfecting our relationship with our fellowman. This is the mitzvah of "love your neighbor as yourself" (Vayikra 18:19). **The Ramban** (ibid.) explains that this mitzvah means more than just caring for your fellowman and wanting his welfare. You must feel happy about his success — even if he is more successful than you. This applies not only if a fellowman excels in a certain area, but you surpass him in other areas. It means to feel happiness over a fellowman's success even if he is more successful than you in every single aspect of life.

Of course, one doesn't reach this very high level simply by refraining from evil speech. This is a life-long process of developing a sense of love and togetherness with our fellowmen. What the Ramban is describing is the goal we should always be working towards.

This idea can explain a remarkable *chiddush* of the **Chovas Halevavos**, says **Rav Dessler**: In Shaar Hakenia (7), it states that when a person speaks lashon hara, the sins of his victim are transferred to him, and his mitzvos are transferred to his victim.

Why should saying lashon hara incur for the speaker punishment for sins of his victim that have nothing to do with lashon hara? asks Rav Dessler. If his victim comes late for davening, davens without kavana or fails to give tzedaka, should the one who speaks against him be punished for this? What logical connection is there? Perhaps more difficult: why should the victim of lashon hara be awarded with the speaker's mitzvos? Did he actually do them that he deserves their reward? How can they simply be transferred over to him?

Rather, all Jews are supposed to care for each other to the extent of loving their fellowman as themselves. If the speaker of lashon hara does not do that, he is punished in a way that teaches him that he *must* help his fellowman. His punishment is therefore that, like it or not, you *will* help the one you speak against. If he has sins, you will help him by relieving him of them (i.e. taking them upon yourself!). Not only that, but you will also even give him your mitzvos. A Jew *must* be a source of good for his fellowman.

A study was once done to determine the common characteristics of highly successful businessmen. Among their findings was that in addition to their business pursuits, they were busy fighting their competition. Almost all of those interviewed had waged or were waging legal battles against competitors. In interviews, they all spoke sharply against them, clearly viewing competitors as enemies.

Except for one businessman, who was no less driven than the others in his endeavors, but nevertheless had warm relations with all of his competitors.

When asked why this was so, he explained: "Years ago, our company took a tour of the countries we export to. We wanted to see firsthand what their needs were and how to serve them better. One of those countries was Israel, and the tour guide took us to a place called the Mir Yeshiva. I'll never forget it. It was like a college campus teeming with students, classes, lectures, lots of noisy learning, but what I really remember is two things: A lot of people were able to learn together in a small space, but there was no sign that the crowded conditions bothered them. Everyone was getting along just fine. Also, I kept looking to see — where are the managers? I figured that such an institution needed at least one manager per building, but the tour guide said that except for a cook, the only staff were teachers. Finally I told him, 'look, somebody has to be running this school,' and he took me to the dean's office, where I met **Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel**.

"I was taken aback. This man was suffering from illness, and yet he was able to manage this whole school. After the tour guide introduced me, I complimented him on his institution, and then I asked: How do you do it? How can one person run such a giant enterprise? And how did you get everyone to cooperate so nicely in such cramped conditions?

"The rabbi told me: 'Our student body grew up with the idea that this is the correct way to behave—to think about the needs of the other person, and to be ready even to give up one's own comfort for him. These are the abc's of any normal society.'

"The rabbi's words made a great impression on me. I realized that success in business did not have to mean trampling on my competitors. The more years go by, the more I see that he was right."

May we grow in love for our fellowman!



## Rabbi Jeremy Golker – Connection between Parshas Shemini and Parshas Tazria

Sefer **לתתך עליון (עמוד קמח)** says **הגאון רבי ישראל סלנטר זצ"ל** used to say, "What is the juxtaposition between Parshas Shemini [which primarily talks about **עניני מאכלות אסורות**] and Parshas Tazria [**שרוב עניני נגעים ומצורעים מבוארים בה**]?

It is well known that **הנגעים באים על עון לשון הרע** – When it comes to eating food, we're all extremely careful to ensure that the hechsher is fitting and any fruit or vegetables have been checked multiple times for insects or infestation.

But, we're not always as careful with not what enters our mouths, but what comes out of our mouths – Sometimes we can say things that can cause tremendous hurt and harm to others. Therefore, the Torah juxtaposes these two parshiyos together, **כשם שאתם נזהרים**

**במאכלות אסורות, כך תזהרו בלשון אסורה** – Just as we should be very careful with forbidden foods, so we must be careful with what comes out of our mouth – with our language and speech.

But, more than that, the purification process for someone that spoke **לשון הרע** is much more severe than the purification process for the person that ate forbidden foods. This teaches us the severity of wrong speech and the importance of being very careful not to speak wrongly.




The great **Manchester Rosh Yeshivah Zt'l** was well known to be extremely careful with what he said. He popularised the **Chofetz Chaim's** works on **לשון הרע** - He was always looking for ways to strengthen himself regarding proper speech.

He had a wristwatch that had on the dial – 'Watch your words!' So every time he would look at his watch, it would be a constant reminder of this important thing.

One time, the Rosh Yeshiva had to sit shiva. A talmid came to visit him and noticed that there was a large picture of the Chofetz Chaim on the table. He asked the Rosh Yeshiva about it, so the Rosh Yeshiva said that he was worried about all the myriads of people coming to visit, and all the conversations that would take place. Would all the conversations be appropriate?

So, he decided to put up a picture of the Chofetz Chaim as a deterrent and constant reminder not to talk anything improper.

## Linen and Wool

וְהַבֶּגֶד כִּי יִהְיֶה בּוֹ נֶגַע צָרָעַת בְּבֶגֶד צֶמֶר אוֹ בְּבֶגֶד פִּשְׁתִּים אוֹ בִשְׁתִי אוֹ בְעֵרֶב ... אוֹ בְעוֹר **לַפִּשְׁתִּים וְלַצָּמֶר** - *[And as for] the garment that has the lesion of tzara'ath upon it, on a woolen garment, or on a linen garment, or on [threads prepared for the] warp or the woof of linen or of wool, or on leather or on anything made from leather.* 13:47,48

Whenever the Torah puts together these two materials, it is always in the order **צֶמֶר וּפִשְׁתִּים** – wool and linen. There is one exception to this, and that is here at the end of this pasuk. Why does the Torah reverse the order on this one occasion?

**Rav Chaim Kanievsky** says in **טעמא דקרא** that the gemara in Shabbos **כ"ז: says:** In regard to **פִּשְׁתִּים** (flax), even the raw fibres can become impure immediately if touched **[מטמאין בנגעים מיד]**. But when it comes to **צֶמֶר** - woolen items, **דוקא משיטוו** – They only become impure once they have been spun into thread.

Because flax can become impure in its raw state, it's likely that it will become tamei before the wool. So to emphasize the halacha that it would become tamei immediately when touched, the Torah reverses the order.

## Rabbi Jeremy Golker – A Miscarriage of Justice!

Tzara'as is a spiritual malady brought about for one of seven aveiros, (Arachin 16a) the most famous of which is Loshon Horah.

Picture the scene – a person has a suspected negah (blemish), and he has to go outside the camp for a week, after which the kohen will come and inspect if it was indeed tzara'as or not. Imagine if the kohen said, "No, it's not tzara'as – you're good to go home."

How would that person feel? His whole life has been upended for the last week. He had to leave his wife, his family, his community and sit outside the camp. There would also have been a financial loss of

earnings. – It's embarrassing for him. People know why he's there, and it was all for nothing. In today's litigious world, he would sue - It's a miscarriage of justice!

Says the **Imrei Emes**, "No! This false alarm was not a miscarriage of justice. Perhaps it was a punishment – Not for the words of Lashon Hora that were spoken, but for the words of Lashon Hatov that should have been spoken.

Sometime ago, my wife and I went to a shiva house, and we heard lots of wonderful things about the person who had passed away. As we left the shiva house, my wife said to me, "I wonder if any of those things were ever said to him during his lifetime?"

Sometimes, we have the opportunity of saying lashon hatov – Saying good things, thanking people, complimenting people, praising people. But sometimes we might feel awkward doing so. But as the Imrei Emes says, It's not just good enough to refrain from saying lashon hora, but we have to actively engage in lashon hatov."



This week's *parshah* describes laws of various plagues that can attack the person's body, his home or his belongings. There are some people who in lieu of calling the *parshah* by the name "*Metzora*" — which connotes plagues, impurity and contamination — call it by the name "*Taharah*" instead, which accentuates cleanliness and purity. Instead of dwelling on the negative, they prefer to approach things from a positive vantage point, always emphasizing the good.

When one sees a plague on the walls of his home, the Torah says, **וּבָא אֲשֶׁר־לֹו הַבַּיִת וְהִגִּיד לַכֹּהֵן לֵאמֹר כְּנֶגַע נִרְאָה לִי בַּבָּיִת** -"The owner of the house shall come and declare to the *Kohen*, saying *kenega* — something *like* a plague — has appeared to me in my house" (14:35).

How strange! He notices something very unusual on his walls, yet he must say to the *Kohen*, "*kenega*" — "something *like* a plague." Why doesn't he say outright "I have a *nega* in my house"?

When one sees a blemish in his house, he should not jump to the conclusion that it is bad, but he should be patient and say, "**It appears** that there *may* be a problem" and seek a solution.

The word *nega* (נגע) — plague — contains three letters. These three letters can be arranged to spell *oneg* (ענג) — delight. With the proper approach and understanding when dealing with something that may appear unpleasant, ultimately with Emunah and Bitachon a person will experience *oneg* — much delight and happiness throughout all the days of his life.

## SPLENDID QUOTE OF THE WEEK BY RABBI MENACHEM LOMNER

***"Train yourself to say, 'I don't know'."***

Most people enjoy being the one who knows everything or at least the one who knows most. Therefore, we all tend to give answers even though we might not be sure about them, and even if we know they're not true. If there was someone in the past millennia who knew everything it would be **Rashi**, and yet, in explaining a certain detail about tza'aras, he is not afraid to say, "I don't know". **Rabbi Akiva Eiger**, ZT"L, makes a list of all the places that Rashi says that he doesn't know. This might actually be why he knew almost everything – simply because he was willing to admit that he didn't know.

***If we truly understood another person's struggles, we would never judge them; we would simply embrace them. ~ Based on the teachings of Reb Zusha of Anipoli (1718-1800)***




## Let Your Enemy Escape by Michael Winner

This week's parsha discusses the all-so-fun topic of purities and impurities. When do people and things become impure, how to become pure, etc. Some of these impurities, such as the famous "tzaraas," are physical in nature, but have spiritual roots.

One of the signs that a person has this is when the hair around the area of the tzaraas will turn white. And when he is considered impure, he has many rules and regulations put upon him, which separates him from the rest of society, until he can purify himself.

Fine. Yet, we learn in a pasuk (13:13), that when a person is completely covered in this tzaraas, compared to localized places on his body, instead of being considered impure, he is actually labeled pure! For those paying attention to the parsha, you should be wondering why this is so.

**Rav Shimshon Pinkus** offers a wonderful explanation.

The Rambam writes (Hilchos Malachim 6: 7), that in war, when you surround your enemies, you should not surround them from all four sides, rather, you should leave one side open for them to escape.

This seems to go against standard military logic. However, when you think about it, it makes sense. When people are completely surrounded, they have no choice but to fight with all their strength and abilities. However, when they are given a way out, they are more likely to either take the opportunity to escape, or fight until they feel that they have no chance of winning and will then retreat. Clearly, those that are completely surrounded, who are more dangerous, since they have nothing to lose.

One of the main reasons that the Russians fought with such ferocity against Germany, besides the fact that they were Russian, was because Hitler earlier on gave orders to execute Russian prisoners, rather than keep them alive. Once news of this reached the Russian lines, they knew that for them, it was all or nothing.

Similarly, in the current situation. In previous wars between Israel and their Arab neighbors, the Arabs were fighting to rid Israel of Jews or reconquer their land. But, above that, they still wanted to personally live. And that is why, in each war, the Arabs had no problem surrendering. However, today the Palestinians have a "We Love Death more than You Love Life" mentality. They welcome death and therefore will be more than happy to throw away all rules of war, making them far more dangerous.

But there is also a spiritual reason for this.

There is a general rule in the Torah: Hashem gives mercy for those being chased. The Midrash writes, "even if the chaser is a tzaddik and the person being chased is evil," Hashem will always show mercy to those being sought after.

So, if the enemy is in their city with no way out, even if they are our enemies, they will receive an extra measure of mercy from above.

So too this person covered in tzaraas. He doesn't have a little, he doesn't have a lot, he is completely covered in it. Whatever sin he did to bring this on himself, it doesn't seem that he has even done teshuvah for it. Yet, at that particular point in time, Hashem has mercy on him and gives him the status of pure.

***"Quite often, Hashem's greatest gifts come wrapped in the challenges we face." ~ Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (Berachos 5a)***




## A Frightening Idea by the Chovos Ha'Levovos Et Al

There is a very difficult Medrash on this week's parsha that I have spoken about in previous years. Tonight I would like to offer an interpretation of this Medrash that I heard in a shiur from **Rav Isaac Bernstein, ob"m**. Rav Bernstein, in turn, was quoting an insight he saw in a *sefer* entitled Kosnos Ohr, authored by a grandson of the Panim Meiros.

The Medrash tells the story of a peddler who went from town to town in the vicinity of the city of Tzippori, selling his wares. He used to call out, "Who wants to buy the elixir of life?" Rav Yannai, the Talmudic sage, was sitting there, and he heard the peddler's sales-pitch. Rav Yannai said, "Sell me the elixir!" The peddler said, "You, and people like you, do not need what I am selling." Rav Yannai persisted and said, "But, nu – tell me. What are you selling?"

The Medrash continues that the peddler took out a volume of Tehillim and showed Rav Yannai the *pasuk* "Who is the man who wants life…? Guard your tounge from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good…" [Tehillim 34:13-15]. These famous *pesukim* from Psalms pose the question – what is best way to guarantee life? The pasuk suggests the answer: Watch your tongue!

The Medrash concludes that Rav Yannai proclaimed, "My entire life I have been reading these *pesukim* and did not understand what they were teaching, until this peddler came along and informed me as to their meaning."

The question is obvious: What did the peddler tell Rav Yannai that he did not previously understand? Certainly, Rav Yannai knew how to translate a *pasuk* in *Tanach*. The interpretation of these words is

straightforward: "Who is the man who desires life? Guard your tongue from (speaking) evil." Rav Yannai claims that he never understood what the *pesukim* meant until now. How is that possible? What novel interpretation did the peddler provide?




The Kosnos Ohr references a very frightening passage in the *sefer* ***Chovos Ha'Levovos*** ("Duties of the Heart" by Bachye ibn Pakuda). The truth of the matter is that this idea is not only in the Chovos Ha'Levovos, but it also appears in the Maggid Meisharim (which relates conversations between a *Malach* and the Beis Yosef – Divine Revelations, as it were, communicated to Rav Yosef Karo by an Angel). The same idea appears a third time in the *sefer* Marpeh Lashon by Rav Raphael Hamburger. It is a very frightening thought.

The Chovos Ha'Levovos writes in the "Gates of Acquisition" (Chapter 7) that when Reuven speaks *Lashon Ha'Rah* about Shimon, Reuven's (prior) *mitzvos* are transferred to Shimon and Shimon's (prior) sins are transferred to Revuen! Slanderers will find on the Day of Judgement that they will not be receiving reward for good deeds that they did do and will—on the contrary—receive punishment for bad deeds which they did not do!

A person who had been a *Shomer Shabbos* his entire life will ascend to the World of Truth and he will suddenly discover that he is not receiving any credit for his Sabbath observance! On the other hand, he will be punished for sins that he never committed. When he will express astonishment at this apparent injustice, it will be explained to him that his spiritual rewards and punishments have been switched with those of so-and-so, against whom he spoke *Lashon Ha'Rah.*

The Chovos Ha'Levovos cites an incident involving someone about whom *Lashon Ha'Rah* was spoken. Shimon heard that Reuven spoke *Lashon Ha'Rah* about him. Shimon then sent Reuven a fruit basket as a present. Shimon told him: "You did me such a favor, so I feel that I need to repay it!" Reuven asked "What did I do for you?" Shimon responded, "You spoke *Lashon Ha'Rah* about me. Therefore, I received all of your merits. This is a tremendous present! It is only right that I should send you a present in return."

Like all great people in Jewish history who did something revolutionary, **Rav Yosef Karo** was attacked by people for his revolutionary accomplishment—the writing of the Shulchan Aruch. People spoke Lashon Ha'Rah against him. The *Malach* told the Beis Yosef (and this is recorded in the Maggid Meisharim) that he should not worry about the *Lashon Ha'Rah* because he would get the *zechusim* (merits) of the people who slandered him, and all of his *Aveiros* (sins) would be transferred to those other people!

Rav Raphael Hamburger, in his Sefer Marpeh Lashon, writes that many people will come to the World of Truth and find many positive *mitzvos* in "their ledger" that they never did. They will tell the "Gate Keepers," we never did these *mitzvos,* and they will be told, "they were done by people who slandered you!"

The Kosnos Ohr says that this idea is the novelty that Rav Yannai did not understand. When Rav Yannai learned the *pasuk* in Tehillim "Who is the man who desires life…" he thought that this was speaking about (life in) this world. The epiphany that he had because of the peddler's insight was that the *pasuk* is teaching, "If you want life in the next world, the best way to achieve that is by guarding your tongue from speaking evil. If you work your whole life—you meticulously do *mitzvos*, keep Shabbos, are a *baal chessed*, and (after 120 years) you want to reap the rewards for all your efforts, the only way to guarantee that the reward of this "good life" will be preserved for you is to guard your tongue from speaking evil.

Otherwise—according to the Chovos Ha'Levovos et al—a person can lose his *mitzvos* and lose his reward. He can, Heaven forbid, wind up with *aveiros* that he did not do and with *mitzvos* that were lost!

This is the "chiddush" that Rav Yannai now learned.

Rav Bernstein writes that the Chofetz Chaim brings this idea in the Sefer Shmiras Ha'Lashon Chapter 3. He writes that there is a footnote by the Chofetz Chaim (which I could not find; I assume he had a different edition). Many people at the end of Shemoneh Esrei recite a Biblical *pasuk* that begins with the first letter of their name and ends with the last letter of their name. Many Siddurim have a list of suggested *pesukim* for many different names.

**The Shaloh ha'Kadosh** writes that the reason we say such a *pasuk* is that on the Day of Judgement everyone will be asked his or her name. If someone forgets his name (as a result of the trauma of the death experience), at least he will remember the *pasuk* which he has recited so many thousands of times in his life.

This is a curious Shaloh. Am I going to forget my name? I forget many things these days, but I still remember my name. So, what does this mean?

Rav Bernstein explains: When someone goes to Heaven and suddenly, he is credited with a whole range of *mitzvos* that he well knows he never performed in his lifetime, he will recognize that this is Chaim ben Yosef's *mitzvos* and these are Shmuel ben Shalom's *mitzvos* and these are Dovid ben Tzvi's *mitzvos*. He will have credited to his account hundreds—maybe thousands—of *mitzvos* from different people. They will call him Dovid ben Tzvi; they will call him Shmuel ben Shalom; they will call him Chaim ben Yosef. He will become so confused! "Who am I really?"

The Shaloh therefore says that if he has a *pasuk* containing the first and last letter of his name firmly engraved in his self-conscious, that is how he will remember his real name.

This is all based on the above-mentioned Chovos Ha'Levovos.

My point with all this is to impress on the audience—and on myself—the severity of the transgression of speaking *Lashon Ha'Rah* . If this Chovos Ha'Levovos and Maggid Meisharim and Marpeh Lashon do not put the fear of G-d into you, nothing will. The spectre of going up to the World of Truth and suddenly discovering that you have lost your hard-earned reward for doing *mitzvos* is frightening.

The problem is, in my humble opinion, that this idea is **too** frightening. How can it be that a person works to accumulate Torah and *mitzvos* his whole life, and then they not be there for him in the World of Truth? It is too frightening.

Rav Dessler has a long essay (which I do not have time to go into now) explaining that this is not really what the Chovos Ha'Levovos means. He certainly does not take it at face value.

I would like to point out that we also see an inference (*diyuk*) in the *sefer* Marpeh Lashon from Rav Raphael Hamburger that might also limit this concept. He formulates this concept by adding two very important words. He says "we see that one who **is immersed**, Heaven forbid, in this evil practice…" This means we are talking about a person for whom this is his nature. He is what is called in *halacha* a ***Ba'al*** *Lashon Ha'Rah* (literally, a "**master** of slander").

In my humble opinion, this Chovos Ha'Levovos, et al, only applies to a person who is a ***Ba'al*** *Lashon Ha'Rah*—a person who is constantly speaking slander. I am not here to minimize the prohibition. However, if a person stumbles (as we all do from time to time in this most difficult area of observance), I do not know if the Chovovos Ha'Levovos really means to in fact say, "Well, you have lost all your *mitzvos* and you get all of his *aveiros*."

They certainly meant this teaching to be a motivator for improvement in this area, but I believe it is too scary to accept it totally on its face value. In my humble opinion, the words

of Rav Raphael Hamburger, who brings this fundamental idea should be analyzed carefully for their nuance: It applies only to one who is "*mutbah*" (immersed), *Chas V'Shalom* in this evil character trait—a person who is constantly speaking bad about others with delight and enthusiasm, without having the slightest pangs of guilt or remorse. It is – I feel – only this "**Master** of Slander" (***Ba'al*** *Lashon Ha'Rah* ) about which this very dramatic theology of transfer of *mitzvos* and *aveiros* might apply.

Still, the take home message from all this is: "Don't speak *Lashon Ha'Rah* ."

## Guarding Against Feeling Too Good About Oneself

The end of parshas Tazria deals with Tza'ra'as [the spiritual blemish often (mis)translated as leprosy] that appears on clothing. The pasuk [verse] says, "The kohen will see the garment after it was washed, [vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno] and he sees that the nega [blemish] has not changed, the garment is unclean, you should burn it in fire."

The pasuk uses interesting language: "vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno," which means that the appearance of the nega has not changed. This is actually an idiomatic expression. The word "ayno" literally means "eye," and the expression literally means "the blemish has not changed its eye."

I saw a beautiful insight, quoted in the name of the **Chidushai HaRim**. The Gemara in Meseches Ayrachin tells us that there are a number of avayros [sins] which can cause tza'aras. The most commonly known avayrah is loshon horah [evil tongue; slander]. However, the Talmud in Meseches Ayrachin also says that the punishment of tza'aras comes "al tzoras ho'ayin." Tzoras ho'ayin [literally – narrowness of eye] does not only mean a person who is tight-fisted or cheap. A tzar ayin is a person who never sees the good side of

anything and always sees evil. It is the opposite of a generosity of spirit. It is a stinginess, not only regarding money, but regarding viewing life, in general. A tzar ayin is a person who does not like to see other people's success. The only success that he is interested in is his own success.

If that is the sin that causes tza'ra'as, then the tikun [correction] that causes the tza'ra'as to go away, is the person doing teshuva [repenting] and switching from being a tzar ayin to a tov ayin. That means that one who is like a student of Bilom HaRoshoh, who Chazal tell us had this trait of tzoras ho'ayin, of stinginess of spirit, must change to become from the students of Avrohom Avinu – to become a tov ayin [one with a good eye]. If the tza'ra'as stays the same and does not get better, the garment is unclean and the person does not have a tikun for his avayrah.

The Chidushai HaRim says that when the pasuk says, "vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno" – "and behold, the tza'ra'as did not change its appearance," there is a double meaning. "Lo hofach hanega es *ayno*" – His ayin [eye] did not change. In order to do teshuva, this person's ayin must change. He must change from being a tzar ayin to being a tov ayin. The pasuk is hinting to us, "Vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno." His ayin did not change. He has the same stinginess, the same unwillingness to share and be generous.

"Ayno," here, does not merely mean that the appearance did not change, but the ayin did not change. The tzoras ayin, the avayrah that brought on this terrible punishment is still in place.

The Chidushai HaRim continues with a classic chasidishe vort: The word "nega" is really the same word as the word "oneg." What is the entire difference between the word "oneg" – pleasure and the word nega [in the Hebrew lettering]?

The only difference is the placement of the [letter] "ayin." The "nun" and the "gimel" are in the same place. The only difference is whether the "ayin" is at the beginning or at the end. What is the difference

between "nega" and "oneg?" What is the difference between a person having tza'ra'as and a person having pleasure? It all depends on the placement of the "ayin." That is this person's problem. The problem is with the "ayin." His problem is with his perspective and his approach to life. His problem is with his ayin, so his tikun must be "hofach hanega es ayno." He must change his "ayin." He must take the "ayin" from the word "nega" and make it into "oneg."

However, if someone is so stingy of spirit that he can not be gracious, he can not see the good side of life, then he remains a metzorah and "henay lo hofach hanega es ayno" – the nega remains and he must burn the garment because he is incapable of changing his "ayin." He is incapable of changing his perspective.

## Only You Are Called "Adam"

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

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

I saw an interesting observation from **Rav Shlomo Ganzfried**. In his commentary on Chumash (Aperion), Rav Ganzfried wonders why the Torah chose the term "Adam" to describe a person at the start of the laws of Tzara'ath (rather than the more common "Ish"). Rav Ganzfried suggests that Adam is a connotation for a human that has no plural form. (The plural of "ish" is "anashim", but the plural of "adam" is not "adamim"!)

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

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

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

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

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

I read an incident dating back to the Beilus blood libel. In 1912, in Russia, Mendel Beilus was accused of killing a Christian child and using his blood to bake Matzahs. This slander or variations of it were

unfortunately prevalent in Europe for many, many years. They were known as blood libels. Beilus' lawyer was afraid that to buttress their case, the accusers would make the argument that Jews considered non-Jews less than human. He was in fact afraid that they would cite the above-quoted Talmudic reference to prove this very point.

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

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

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

***"When the path seems steep, it means the summit is near. Keep pushing forward." ~ Rabbi Aharon Kotler (1892-1962)***

## *Tzaraas* Teaches a Major Life Lesson About *Negiyus*

The process of *Negaim* involves the Kohen viewing the blemish on the skin of the person and then ruling whether or not that blemish is *Tzaraas*. The Mishna says [Negaim 2:5] "A person can view (and rule on) all blemishes except his own." - The simple and correct interpretation of this Mishna is that even though a Kohen can *pasken* on anyone else's blemish, but if the Kohen has a blemish of his own, he may not view it and *pasken* on its status.

Beyond the simple and correct interpretation of this Mishna, there is also a life's lesson to be learned from the Mishna's formulation of this *halacha*. The life's lesson is that "All blemishes a person can see" – meaning I can look at other people and notice their faults. "This person has a temper, this person is haughty, this person is envious" and so forth. I see every fault under the sun in other people! But "except for his own blemishes" – We do not see our own faults. They can be staring us in the face, but we do not see them.

This is one of the great challenges of life. We all have personal biases that do not allow us to see our own shortcomings. We are not even aware of these biases. This is the life-lesson of the Mishna's formulation "All blemishes a person may see except his own blemishes."

I want to relate an incident that vividly illustrate this phenomenon.

**The Shach** (Rav Shabsi Kohen, famous Shulchan Aruch commentary (1621-1662)) once had a Din Torah with another Jew. However, nobody in the Shach's city wanted to adjudicate the case because they did not want to take a case where they might have to rule against the *Gadol Hador*. The Shach and his disputant decided they would travel to another city where nobody knew the Shach and they would have the case heard there.

In the seventeenth century, people did not know what the Shach looked like. There were no Jewish newspapers and there were no

photographs. People did not see the Shach burning his chometz or lighting his Chanukah candles or making Birkas Ilanos – so people did not know what he looked like!

They went to a Rav in another city. The Shach gave his side of the story and his disputant gave his side of the story and the Rav ruled against the Shach. The Shach said "Ok. You are the Rav. You have *paskened*, I need to accept it. But tell me, why did you *pasken* like that?" To which the Rav said, "I *paskened* that way based on the opinion of the Shach in Choshen Mishpat (the section of Shulchan Aruch dealing with monetary matters) and he quoted the exact chapter and paragraph where the Shach's ruling was recorded.

At this point the Shach was startled. "It is an explicit Shach! It is me!" But even though the Shach ruled clearly in an abstract case, he was still not able to apply it to himself. He was blinded by his personal involvement in the matter! It was because "all blemishes a person may rule on, except on his own blemishes."

We see everyone else's faults except our own. This is the scary part about *negiyus*.

## Turtle Doves Do Not Have "Second Marriages" – Appreciation for Loyalty

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 dov [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 karbanos, 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: Chessed [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: " **וְעָשִׂיתָ הַיָּשָׁר וְהַטּוֹב**..." [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 **וְעָשִׂיתָ הַיָּשָׁר וְהַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֵי ה'** 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: **וְעָשִׂיתָ הַיָּשָׁר וְהַטּוֹב**.

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.

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].

## Elisha Told Na'aman to Immerse in the Yarden Based on the Letter Nun

The Haftorah of Parshas Tazria is the story of Na'aman, the Gentile general of the King of Aram. He had *Tzaraas* and could not find a cure for his condition. He came to the Prophet Elisha seeking help. Elisha told him, "Go immerse in the Jordan River." Na'aman dipped himself in the Yarden. Lo and behold, his *Tzaraas* was cured. This is the story of Chapter 5 in Melachim II.

**The Rokeach**, an early Biblical commentary asks: Where did Elisha get the idea that the way for Na'aman to cure himself from *Tzaraas* would be to immerse in the Yarden?

I would never ask such a question because a *Navi* is a *Navi,* and if a *Navi* says to go dip in the Yarden, you do that. If the *Navi* says to stand on your head, you do that. You assume the *Navi* is telling you the word of G-d. But the Rokeach is a *Rishon,* and he asks this question and gives an incredible answer that only a *Rishon* could give.

The Rokeach says that there are three—and only three—*pesukim* in the entire Torah that both begin with the letter *Nun* and end with

the letter *Nun*. The first *pasuk* is נֶגַע צָרַעַת כִּי תִהְיֶה בְּאָדָם וְהוּבָא אֶל־ הַכֹּהֵן -"***N***ega *Tzaraas*, when it will be found in man, he shall be brought to the Kohe**n**." [Vayikra 13:9]. The second *pasuk* is נָבִיא מִקִּרְבְּךָ מֵאַחֶיךָ כָּמֹנִי יָקִים לְךָ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ אֵלָיו תִּשְׁמָעוּן - "***N***avi from your midst amongst your brethren like myself shall the L-rd your G-d raise up, to him you shall liste**n**" [Devorim 18:15]. The third pasuk is נַחְנוּ נַעֲבָר חֲלוּצִים לִפְנֵי ה' אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְאִתָּנוּ אֲחֻזַּת נַחֲלָתֵנוּ מֵעֵבֶר לַיַּרְדֵּן - "***N***achnu (we) shall cross over armed, before *Hashem*, to the land of Canaan, and ours shall be the heritage of our inheritance across the Jorda**n**." [Bamidbar 32:32].

Those are the only three *pesukim* in all of *Chumash* that both begin and end with the letter *Nun*. One is about *Tzaraas;* one is about a *prophet;* and one is about the Yarden.

The Rokeach says this was Elisha's insight: The three *pesukim* reference a *Metzorah* (Na'aman), a prophet (Elisha), and the Yarden. The clear message is that the prophet should tell the *Metzorah* to immerse in the Yarden.

## Torah Tavlin

**In Sefer HaChinuch** it writes: וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ 12:3

What does the mitzvah of bris milah come to emphasize?

Bris milah draws attention to the fact that Hashem did not create a man in a perfect state from the womb. Just as perfection of man's physical form is accomplished by man's own hand, through the cutting of the orlah, so is it within his means and power to complete his spiritual form by the worthiness of his actions.

We learn from this mitzvah that through our actions we have the opportunity to perfect ourselves and the entire world both physically and spiritually."

## Rabbi Pesach Krohn - Project Mesorah



In this weeks parsha, it tells us that you should carry out a Bris Milah on the eighth day. **וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ** 12:3.

**The Orach Hachaim** asks the question, why do we do the Bris on the eighth day? He brings a very interesting Medrash Rabba in Devorim Perek 6:1 that tells us that the reason why Hashem told us to do the Bris on the eighth day is so that the child should have a certain *koach*.

**וְלָמָּה הַתִּינוֹק נִמּוֹל לִשְׁמוֹנָה יָמִים, שֶׁנָּתַן הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא רַחֲמִים עָלָיו לְהַמְתִּין לוֹ עַד שֶׁיִּהֵא בּוֹ כֹּחוֹ**

The Orach Hachaim says that this is a spiritual *koach* – the koach of Shabbos. If every baby has his Bris on the eighth day, then he will surely have gone through a Shabbos.

We all get an infusion of elevated strength from the *kedusha* of Shabbos. How do we get this? We dress differently, we eat differently, we *daven* differently. We give *kavod* to Shabbos. In return we get this special infusion from Shabbos.

***"People often think that when they face challenges, they need to strengthen their Emunah. But actually, Hashem sends these challenges to help us grow in Emunah. Building stronger Emunah isn't just how we handle tough times it's the reason we face them." ~ Reb Gad'l Eizner.***

## Fascinating Insights by Rabbi Yehoshua Alt -The First Haircut



The custom among many is to give a child his first haircut at the age of 3. Many go to Meron to the grave of **R' Shimon Bar Yochai** to do this. In fact, **the Arizal** took his young son with his family to the grave of R' Shimon Bar Yochai and gave him a haircut (Upshrein) there on Lag Baomer, followed by a celebration. This is called a **חאלאקע**(Chalaka)- from the term **איש חלק**; smooth-skinned man, since when one has an Upsherin, he now has a smooth head.

We have a principle known as a **ערלה**; the first 3 years of a newly planted tree or its grafted shoots, is forbidden for use. Since man is compared to the tree of the field- **כי האדם עץ השדה**- we therefore don't touch his hair for the first 3 years. In the fourth year all its fruit is **קדש הלולים לה'**; sanctified to laud Hashem. So too, on the beginning of the 4th year of a child, he is dedicated to Hashem as we introduce him to the Torah. Indeed, this is why we have a celebration by an Upsherin.

In this week's Parsha we find an allusion to this custom in the word **והתגלח**, which is written with a peculiarly large **ג**.This alludes to that at age 3 (as **ג** has a Gematria of 3), we do **והתגלח**- give a haircut.

***"Emunah means being prepared to go forward in life, not knowing what the future holds, knowing only one thing for sure – That Hashem is always at my side." ~ Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik.***

# Too High For This World




In this week's Parsha we have Bris Mila- **וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו** – ***circumcise on the 8th day***.

What level can one attain from this Mitzva? To answer this let us discuss the episode of Avraham with the Malchaim after getting a Bris.

The **מאור ושמש** is bothered by many questions in that story:

1) If the main intention of Hashem was not to bother Avraham with guests because he was sick from the third day of Mila, Hashem should have healed him so he can host guests?

2) The sun was taken from its sheath to make it very hot. So why did Avraham sit at the entrance where it is much hotter?

3) We don't find prior to this that Avraham went out to seek guests rather they came to him. So what happened now that he went to look for guests?

4) Why did Hashem send Malachim in the form of men? Why didn't Hashem send men and put in their mind to go although it was very hot?

5) The Midrash relates that Avraham said before he was circumcised, a passer-by would come to him as opposed to once he was circumcised…. How are we to understand this as why would people not come to him after he was circumcised?

6) The Midrash there informs us that one Malach appeared in the guise of a bread vendor, another as a ship captain and the other as a desert nomad. Why did they need to be so physical like this?

When one reaches tremendous **דביקות**; attachment to Hashem and he connects himself to the upper worlds to the extent he nearly dies as he is unable to remain in this world, he needs to make himself more physical- by staring at a physical object to get pleasure or gaze at a person or the like. Through this he descends from the level of attachment enabling him to stay alive!

After Avraham had his Bris he came to such yearning, attachment and tremendous passion for Hashem to the extent that he was unable to tolerate the physicality of this world.

This idea is alluded to in **מִי יַעֲלֶה לָנוּ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה**; who can ascend to heaven, where its initials spell **מילה** and the end letters **י- ה- ו- ה**, as one can have such connection to Hashem through Mila as we see with Avraham that he nearly departed from this world ascending to heaven. Avraham also couldn't bear those without a Bris for them to come into his house since he was so spiritually pure that they would nearly die from being in his presence.

So what did Avraham do? He sat at the entrance of his tent and looked at something physical to descend a little from his attachment so that he would remain in this world. This is hinted to in **והוא ישב פתח האהל כחום היום**– because of Avraham's passion and fire ( **כחום היום**) that he was connected to the higher spiritual lights, he sat at the entrance of the tent to gaze at some passer-by.

Hashem though knew that Avraham was unable to become more physical through looking at uncircumcised gentiles since if he looked at them, they would become a pile of dirt. Similarly with R' Shimon Bar Yochai where when he and his son emerged from the cave, everywhere they would cast their look, the object of their vision would be incinerated immediately. Likewise, they wouldn't be able to approach Avraham since they would be unable to bear his holiness.

What did Hashem do? He sent Malachim in the form of men who were in essence holy and pure that he could tolerate. However, they were physical to the extent that they appeared as a bread vendor, ship captain and desert nomad so that they could be in a physical world. This explains why once Avraham was circumcised, people wouldn't come to him since they couldn't tolerate his holiness.

## Proper Speech



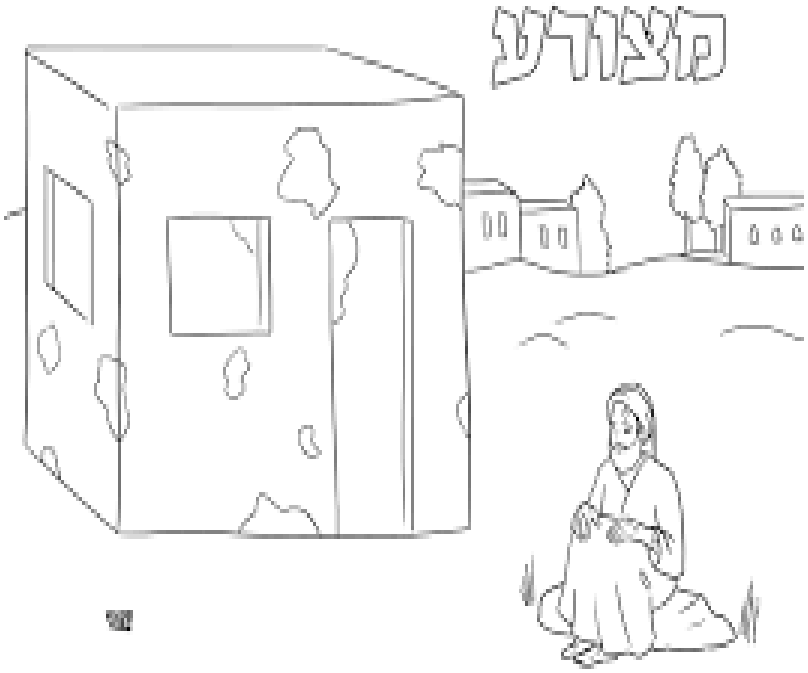

The Gemara teaches us the remedy for a Talmid Chochom who speaks Lashon Hara is to be involved in Torah. This is the deeper meaning in **ורחץ במים**; immerse in water- that he should immerse in the waters of Torah as **אין מים אלא תורה**. However, we are left to wonder- why is that the remedy? What is the connection between the two?

The Gemara tells us a Metzora is considered like a **מת**. Is it any wonder that the Parshios of a Metzora is **תזריע מצורע**- initials **מת**. On the other hand, Torah is life- the opposite of death as it says **כי הוא חייכם**; it is your life. In the words of Dovid Hamelech: **תורת ה' תמימה משיבת נפש**; the Torah of Hashem is perfect, restoring the soul. Hence, it is called **תורת חיים**. In a similar vein, when the Torah is taken out from the Aron we say the Pasuk **ואתם הדבקים בה'...חיים**; you who cling to Hashem are alive today. Now we can comprehend why the remedy for one who speaks Lashon Hara is Torah.

The dog represents **לשון הרע** as the Gemara states that it is fitting to throw one who speaks or accepts Lashon Hara to dogs. This is hinted to in **לה נבח נבח** means to bark which alludes to dogs and **לה**

is an acronym of **לַשון הָרע**. In light of this **the Gra** illuminates our eyes in the enigmatic phrase we find in the Gemara- there is no one poorer than a dog and no one richer than a pig. Everyone knows that a **חזיר**; pig is forbidden to eat but a dog (representing **לשון הרע**) we overlook. **R' Yisrael Salanter** says just as we watch what goes into their mouth so too, we should watch everything that goes out of our mouth (*words*).

## Feeling Our Pain




Hashem feels our pain as it says **עמו אנכי בצרה**; I am with him in distress, and **בכל צרתם לו צר**; in all their troubles He was troubled. Although the Metzora is sent out of all three camps it is still hard for Hashem since He loves him and as it says **אמר ה' אהבתי אתכם** ; I loved you. **צרעת** consists of the same letters as **עצרת**and by **שמיני עצרת** Hashem says **קשה עלי פרידתכם**; your departing is difficult for me. Likewise, by a Metzora it is hard for Hashem ( **קשה עלי**) since he is separated from the camps ( **פרידתכם**).

The term **מצורע** is a contraction of **מוציא רע** since he spread **רע**. One purpose of sending him away from the camps is for Teshuva. With this we can grasp another meaning in **מוציא רע**- send him from the camps to get rid of the **רע** in him. We should always realize that Hashem is with us in all our pain and all that He does is for our benefit.

## A Humane Human




In this special time of Sefira we are given the opportunity to transform and elevate ourselves from our low animalistic side to becoming a true human. This is how the Beis Avraham explains the difference in Karbonas at this time of year. The **קרבן עומר** which is brought on Pesach is from barely—animal food. The **קרבן שתי הלחם** which is offered on Shavuos is from wheat—human food. This is the purpose of Sefira—to cleanse and transform ourselves from animal to human.

**R' Yaakov Abuchatzera** says that **וְהֵבֵאתֶם אֶת עֹמֶר רֵאשִׁית קְצִירְכֶם אֶל הַכֹּהֵן (ויקרא כ"ג)** - you shall bring an **עומר** from your first harvest, is called so because we cut off (**קציר**) the **קליפות**, shells of impurity, during these days of Sefira. It is of course no coincidence that the Parshiyos that come out during Sefira contain **טהרה**, purity: Shemini speaks about forbidden foods which can cause blockage to Kedusha, Tazria and Metzora are filled with **טהרה**, Acharei Mos speaks of Yom Kippur, the day of purity, Kedoshim deals with Kedusha and so on.

We know **מואב** is from the union of **לוט** and his daughters. It therefore is no surprise that it yields a Gematria of 49 (levels of impurity) signifying how steeped in impurity they were.

Dovid Hamelech descends from this union. When is his Yartzheit? On Shavuos. This is because he rose from those 49 gates of impurity to the high level we were on Shavuos, the 50th.

**Chacham Yehuda Adess zt"l recalls an amazing story.**



During the 1948 War of Independence, which the State of Israel fought against her enemies, an artillery shell was launched from an Arab position into one of the small enclaves in Meah Shearim. The shell hit a gas line and a fire erupted. It is a small neighbourhood with close houses, and the potential for a catastrophic event could have burned down the whole neighbourhood. However, a short while later, another shell hit the same area, this time it landed directly on a water line, which exploded sending up streams of water and dousing the gas line before it could spread.

It was a truly unbelievable miracle. Many people wondered about this. "Obviously," they put forth, "Hashem did not want the neighbourhood to burn down, or people should get hurt, because if that was meant to be, He wouldn't have sent the second missile. In that case, why did Hashem send the artillery shell to hit the gas line in the first place? Why bring missile number one to cause the fire and then missile number two to put out the fire?"

The answer, given by Rabbi David Sutton shlit'a (Daily Emuna), is that maybe the local residents needed a little fear of the first fire to cause them to pray and rely on Hashem to bring the second shell and the water to put out the flames.

The Medrash tells us that the kohen makes a loud pronouncement that the man afflicted with tzaraas is impure. This is done so other people should hear and pray for his recovery from the affliction. The person, too, must sit in isolation and contemplate what he did

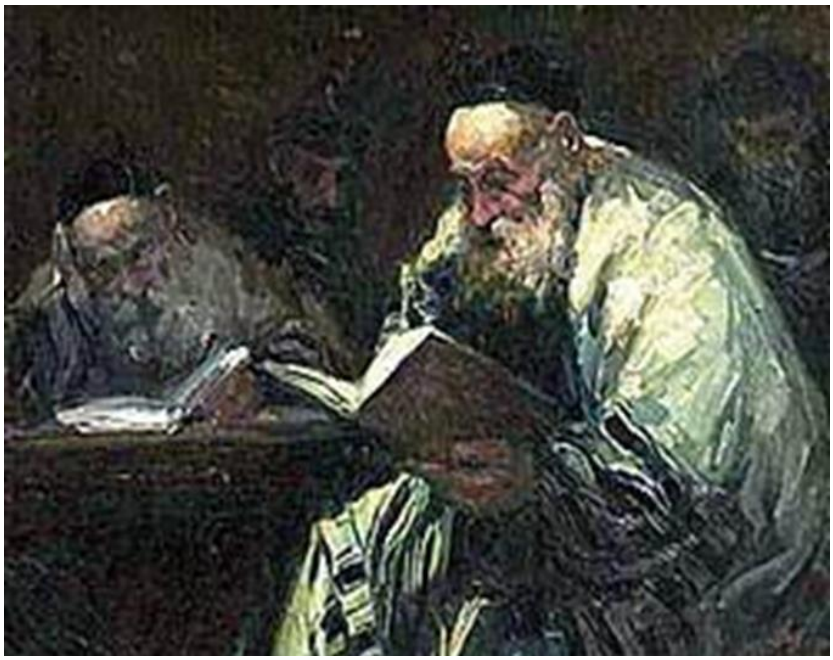
wrong to deserve the affliction and daven to Hashem to be forgiven. Everything in life has a cause and effect. With regard to the leper, his sin of Lashon Hara caused him to be afflicted. He can effect great change by having people - and himself - daven for his relief.

## Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

**בדד ישב מחוץ למחנה מושבו 13:46**

The Torah requires a metzora to dwell in isolation outside of the Jewish camp. The Gemora (Ara-chin 16b) explains that although other tamei (ritually impure) individuals do not have to separate themselves from the community, the metzora is uniquely divided from his family and neighbours because his lashon hara split spouses and friends apart.

This teaches us that social isolation is considered a harsh punishment and that being part of a larger group is far preferable, a concept to which we can all relate in these trying times. However, other than denying the human desire for social interactions, on a spiritual level, what is the nature of the punishment of living alone and unable to join with others?



**Rav Mordechai Druk** recounts that before the fall of the Iron Curtain, there were Jews in Russia who secretly assembled in clandestine basements to study together and strengthen one another in their commitment to religious observance. One such gathering grew so large that their underground meeting room could

no longer contain them all. One week, several new interested participants arrived during the shiur, but there was simply no room for them. In the room, there was one long-time member whose religious background was so weak that he was unable to follow what the teacher was talking about. Some of the other attendees began murmuring that perhaps he should leave to create space for somebody else to enter who could better understand the shiur.

The man discerned what was being said about him and asked for permission to address the room. After everyone quieted down, he stood up and rolled up his sleeve, revealing that his arm was full of scars. He then proceeded to tell them the origin of his injuries.

He was once sitting in a café in Moscow where, unbeknownst to him, a group of revolutionaries were meeting to plot future activities. Suddenly, the KGB entered and began beating everyone in sight. The man held up his arms in self-defence and explained that he was innocently eating lunch and was not part of the insurgent gathering. Rejecting his defence, the KGB policeman told him, "If you're sitting with the group, then you're part of the group," and began striking him on his arms, causing the scars that he still carried.

Returning his focus to the overcrowded Jews around him, the man told them that even if he couldn't grasp the religious concepts that they were learning about, the KGB had taught him that simply sitting together with them made him part of their group, and just as being linked to the revolutionaries caused him permanent scarring and pain, so too he was confident that sitting with the Jewish "revolutionaries" would earn him eternal blessing and reward.

Although his comrades had assembled that night to hear a lecture from their spiritual leader, the primary message they took home was the unscheduled one delivered by an unlearned attendee, who was warmly welcomed to future gatherings and never again asked to leave to make room for more "worthy" participants.

## Parsha Points to Ponder

Part of the process of purifying a metzora involves cedar wood, crimson thread, and hyssop (14:4). Rashi explains that because one of the causes of tzara'as is a haughty spirit, the Torah is hinting that the cure for a person who has made himself arrogant like the mighty cedar is to lower himself and become humble.

Why are cedar wood, crimson thread, and hyssop used when purifying a house that was stricken with tzara'as (14:49) when it is impossible for a house to be arrogant or humble? (Biurei Maharai quoted in Sifsei Chochomim)



The **Terumas HaDeshen** quotes Rashi (Vayikra 14:34), who writes that the previous Canaanite inhabitants hid their treasures in the walls of their homes. When a house was afflicted with tzara'as, the process of scraping the house would reveal these valuable items. Because wealth can make a person arrogant, Hashem required the use of cedar wood, crimson thread, and hyssop to warn the person in advance of the need to remain humble.

***Some mistakenly categorize Jews as religious and non-religious. According to our Torah, there is no Jew who is not religious. Sometimes the soul is covered; not lost — and always ready to awaken. ~ Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l.***

# Jewish Education Program Queens - Sticks and Stones May Break Your Bones but Words are More Harmful!



אָדָם כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר־ בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אֽוֹ־סַפַּחַת אֽוֹ בַהֶרֶת וְהָיָה בְעוֹר־ בְּשָׂרוֹ לְנֶגַע צָרָעַת "If ***a person will have on the skin of his body a s'ais, or a sapachas, and it will become a tzaraas affliction on the skin of his body…" (13:2)***

The weather was freezing and there was not enough firewood to keep the boys in yeshiva warm. The Rabbi of the yeshiva went to the home of a wealthy donor to ask for a donation to be able to buy more firewood for the boys. When the Rabbi knocked on the door, the wealthy man opened the door, dressed in light clothing, and gestured to the Rabbi to come inside. The Rabbi ignored the gesture and started a social conversation with the wealthy man. The wealthy man started feeling cold and again asked the Rabbi to come inside. The Rabbi ignored him and kept on talking. When the Rabbi saw that the wealthy man was shivering from the cold, he accepted his invitation and went inside. At that point, the Rabbi pleaded his case, explaining the need for firewood to keep the boys warm. The wealthy man gave a sizeable donation.

Afterwards, he asked the Rabbi why he had not entered his house sooner. The Rabbi answered that he had wanted the wealthy donor to feel the discomfort of the cold. Then he would be more sensitive to the bitter cold that the yeshiva boys had to endure and would donate more generously. ***A person becomes more sensitive to the***

***needs of others when he personally experiences their circumstances.***

Over the past few weeks, an increasing number of states have ordered people to quarantine or stay at home (except for essential activities), in order to slow the spread of the coronavirus. The Pesach seder is usually a time to share with family or friends. This year, many people spent their Pesach seder alone, in solitude.

A person who speaks *loshon hara*, negatively about others, is afflicted with a spiritual disease called *tzoraas*. First the disease strikes the walls of his house. Then it strikes his clothes. If he did not understand that Hashem was sending him a message, and he continued to speak *loshon hara*, then the *tzorras* afflicted his body. Once it was checked by a kohain and confirmed to be *tzorras*, he was sent to live outside the camp. He remained quarantined from the Jewish camp for a length of time. Sitting in solitude provided him with time to think. He was able to think about his actions that resulted in him being in solitude. He may have just said a few words, but those few words may have caused hatred, quarrels, or pain to others. He caused a separation between people, so he too is separated from people.

The pasuk says, "*If a person will have on the skin of his body a s'ais, or a sapachas…*". **Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried**, the author of the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, says that the Torah usually describes a person as "*ish*". He asks, why the Torah uses the term "*adam*" in this pasuk which talks about *tzorras*. He gives a beautiful answer. Chazal say that only the Jewish people are referred to as "*adam*". It describes us as a nation united, a nation where each person cares about the welfare of the other.

The Torah wants a person stricken with *tzorras* to realize why he was punished. He should have realized that the Jewish people is considered one "*adam*", one entity. The person stricken with *tzorras* caused divisiveness by slandering. Therefore, he was

stricken with *tzorras*, which separated him from the rest of the Jewish nation.

We are often quick to say whatever comes to mind, without thinking through what we are about to say. We do not always stop to think if the words we say will be hurtful or harmful to another person. We may want to say a funny joke without thinking if it may hurt another person. The famous adage, "Sticks or stones may break my bones, but names can never harm me", is not true! A misplaced or nasty word **can be more** hurtful **more** harmful and **more lasting** than a physical blow.

Nowadays, with the touch of a button on our computer or smartphone, we can reach millions of people. Do we want to use that power to spread slander about someone? ***Once the harmful word is said and sent, it can never be retrieved! The harm caused can never be undone!***

In a small town in Eastern Europe there lived a man who talked too much about other people. Whenever he heard a story about someone, he felt compelled to tell it to his friends. He loved the attention he got and was thrilled when they laughed at the way he told his stories, which he sometimes embellished to make them funnier. One day an unhappy businessman ran to the Rabbi of the town. Someone had spread a story about him. The businessman cried that he was ruined because nobody would deal with him now. His good name and his reputation were tarnished.

The Rabbi summoned the man who loved to tell stories. If he was not the one who started them, he might at least know who had. When the Rabbi told him how devastated the businessman was, he felt truly sorry. He had not considered it such a big deal to tell this story, especially since it was true. The Rabbi explained that even if it was true it was still considered *lashon hara*.

The man who had started the rumour felt very bad. He asked what he could do to undo the damage. The Rabbi asked him to go home and

bring a feather pillow. When the man returned the Rabbi opened the window, handed him a knife, and told him to cut open the pillow. As he did so, feathers blew all over. Many of them even flew out of the window and blew all over town. The Rabbi waited for ten minutes. Then he told the man to collect **all** the feathers, and stuff them back into the pillow.

The man told the Rabbi that is was an impossible task. There was no way he could possibly gather all the feathers, especially the ones that blew outside. The Rabbi agreed that the task was impossible. He said that the feathers are just like a rumour. Once a mean comment, a rumour or a gossipy story leaves a person's mouth, it **can** spread all over and cause irreparable harm!

***A person becomes more sensitive to the needs of others when he personally experiences their circumstances. One who speaks loshon hara causes a separation between people. When he too is separated from people, he becomes more aware of the severity of his actions. He realizes that once a mean comment, a rumour or a gossipy story leaves one's mouth, it can spread all over and cause irreparable harm.***

## The Shpoler Zeida, R' Aryeh Leib zt"l would say:

"When I was three years old, I had the merit to see the holy **Baal Shem Tov zt"l**. He placed his hand over my heart and blessed me, and ever since that time, I've been warm.

From the posuk in Parshas Tazria: 'The kohen will see him, he will pronounce him unclean,' we learn that the gaze of a righteous person (the kohen), the sound of his voice, or in fact any gesture he makes, has far-reaching influence and effect on the future purity of an individual."

# The Colourful Garment




If a garment made of wool, linen, or leather develops a green or red affliction, it must be shown to a Kohen. The Kohen quarantines the garment for seven days, after which he examines it to see if the affliction has spread during this period. If it has spread, the garment must be burned, but if it has not, the garment is washed and locked up for a second seven-day period.

If at the end of this period the affliction has dimmed, it is ripped out of the garment, the remainder of which may then be used. However, the Torah decrees that if the Kohen sees that during this second seven-day period the colour of the garment remains the same, the entire garment must be burned in fire and destroyed.

**The Chiddushei HaRim** explains that during the time that the garment is quarantined, its owner should be focused on repenting his mistake which caused it to be afflicted in the first place. The Talmud (Arachin 16a) lists seven transgressions which can cause tzara'as, one of which is "tzarut ayin"- viewing others with a narrow and stingy eye. If a person is stricken with an affliction on one of his garments as a result of this, it is incumbent upon him to work on

relating to others with a more generous spirit in order to rectify his character and prevent his garment from being destroyed.

In light of this, the expression **לֹא־הָפַךְ הַנֶּגַע אֶת־עֵינוֹ** - "*the affliction did not change its colour*" (13:55) - can also be understood as an allusion to the reason that such a garment must be burned. Instead of utilizing the seven-day period to change his outlook toward others and to develop within himself a positive and giving attitude, **לֹא־הָפַךְ הַנֶּגַע אֶת־עֵינוֹ** - "the stingy eye with which he viewed others didn't change," and he still possesses the same miserly worldview which brought about the initial affliction. As a result, the Torah gives no choice but to burn his garment and remove it from the world.

**Rabbi Leib Lopian** points out that the letters in the words "nega"- affliction - and "oneg"- pleasure - are identical. The only difference between them is the location of the letter ayin. King Solomon writes that **הֶחָכָם עֵינָיו בְּרֹאשׁוֹ** - "a wise person places his eyes in front" (Koheles 2:14). This can be homiletically interpreted as teaching that by training one's eyes to focus on the strengths and talents of others, which correspond to the front, a person can place the letter ayin at the beginning of the word, and he will become a happy person whose life will be joyful oneg. However, if he puts the letter ayin at the end of the word by allowing himself to always seek out other people's shortcomings and weaknesses, he will become a bitter and stingy person whose life will be transformed into a nega, one full of afflictions and suffering.

***R' Boruch of Kossov ZT"L would say: "Just as one enjoying a sumptuous meal is not being paid to eat; he does it for pleasure and this is his reward. So too, should this be the way we view serving Hashem; not as a chore deserving of reward, but as an enjoyment which is an end unto itself."***

## Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

## Be a Thinking Person -Don't Repeat Your Mistakes!

***"And Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon saying, 'When a man has, in the skin of his flesh, a rising or a scab or a bright spot and it becomes in the skin of his flesh the plague of tzoraas…'." (Vayikrah 13:1-2)***



*I was driving when I saw the flash of a traffic camera. I figured that my picture had been taken for speeding, even though I knew I wasn't. Just to be sure, I went around the block and passed the same spot, driving even more slowly. Again, the camera flashed. Thinking this was funny, I drove past even slower, three more times. I was laughing as the camera snapped away each time while I drove by it at a snail's pace. Two weeks later, I got five tickets in the mail for driving without a seat belt.*

You ate a food and broke out in hives on half of your body. A week later, you ate the same food and broke out in hives on two thirds of your body. Would you eat the same food a third time?

**The Rambam writes** that tzoraas was not a physical disease. Rather, it was a supernatural disease to punish a person speaking lashon hara (talebearing; speaking badly about others).

If a person spoke loshon hora once, this supernatural disease would attach itself to a person's house. If he continued speaking loshon hara a second time, his clothes would contract tzoraas. If he continued speaking loshon hara a third time, his body would be afflicted with tzoraas.



If you saw your friend's punishment for loshon hara coming closer -first his house and then his clothes, what would you think about him if he speaks it a third time? Won't you think that he is being foolish? That his actions are not logical?

Now look in the mirror and see yourself. **You are the one** who is speaking loshon hara, again and again. How can you? Don't you see the punishment becoming more severe? Don't you know that the more you repeat the sin, the more you begin to feel that your actions are permissible (Shaare Teshuvah 1:5)? Don't you know that speaking badly about others causes a lack of peace and unity? Causing disunity delays the Third and final Beis HaMikdash from being built. - When the Beis HaMikdash will be built there will be peace and tranquillity in the world.

**We must constantly be thinking people.** We must think about our actions or words **before** we do something or say something. Are we doing or saying something beneficial? Are we promoting peace and unity? Are we harming others (and thereby ourselves, too)?

***Thinking people become respectful people. We should be thinking people who bring peace and unity and will help bring the rebuilding of our Beis HaMikdash.***

***Harav Pinchos Mikoretz זצוק'ל said that learning mishnayos is also a segula for parnassa, for someone who learns misnayos every day. The word משנה is gematria פרנסה - 395 ! !***

וְאִישׁ אוֹ אִשָּׁה כִּי־יִהְיֶה בּוֹ נֶגַע בְּרֹאשׁ אוֹ בְזָקָן 13:29




It is well known that when people go to **R' Chaim Kanievsky shlit'a** to receive a beracha or ask a shaila, in many cases he will tell them to either cut their hair short or grow their beard. He also tells people to keep their payos out, not behind their ears.

He was once asked by his son-in-law, R' Mordechai Tzivyon shlit'a, why he told a person with facial issues to grow his beard and R' Chaim responded, "A beard is a person's Hadras Panim (glory of the face). If one grows his beard, he has a real Hadras Panim. His issues which affect his Hadras Panim will be healed when he grows a beard."

On another occasion, a religious infertility doctor was treating a non-religious couple. They had been married for quite some time and did not have children and were becoming quite depressed. On one of their visits, the doctor said to them, "I am afraid our treatments are not helping. I do not know what else to do medically, but if you are interested, there is a great Tzaddik who lives in Bnei Brak, and perhaps if you went to him for a beracha, he can help you in a miraculous way."

The husband was doubtful about this. He had never been to a Rabbi before and he didn't believe in this stuff. "Look, you can go see him but the way I look - do you think he'd even agree to see me?" The doctor assured him that R' Chaim saw all types of people and if he was interested, he would take the husband into to see the Rav himself. Reassured, the man agreed.

The doctor accompanied the irreligious man to Bnei Brak a few days later and managed to get in to see R' Chaim. As they walked into the

room, the doctor spoke to R' Chaim and told him that this man was married for a number of years and was not blessed with children. He was here today to receive a blessing from the Rav. R' Chaim lifted up his holy eyes and looked at the non-religious man. The first thing he noticed, was that the man had a huge hairdo and a ponytail hanging down the back of his neck.

R' Chaim said to the doctor, **שתי נשים..זה לא הולך!** (literally, "Two Females? This cannot work.") R' Chaim is a man of few words but when he speaks, every word counts. What he was saying was that this man had hair akin to a female, and if so, how can two females give birth to a child?

"What should he do?" asked the doctor, unsure if R' Chaim was joking with his words or serious. "Cut your hair," R' Chaim said to the man in Hebrew, "and you will see benefit."

The doctor heard his words and replied, "But Rebbi, it is now Sefiras Haomer. Should he cut his hair now?" R' Chaim told him to wait until Lag Baomer and then cut his hair. The man was so taken aback by the Rav and his powerful words that on the morning of Lag Baomer, he took a haircut and cut off his ponytail, as well as trimmed his hair. Not coincidentally, his situation improved and within a short time, he came to report the good news that his wife was expecting.

In the sefer Lachazos B'Noam Hashem, the author tells an interesting story about an Arab cleric who thought very highly of himself. Every Friday, he would deliver a fiery sermon in his mosque and in the course of his words, he would whip his followers up into a frenzy against the Jews of the city. He would concoct ridiculous visions that he saw in his prophecies, all telling him to warn his fellow Muslims against the Jews and to do them harm.

When Friday prayers finished, the Jews would barricade themselves in their homes and shops, to avoid any confrontations with the frenzied mob from this Sheik's mosque.

One Friday, a Jewish man dressed up as a Muslim and decided to take matters into his own hands. He waited until the cleric had delivered his sermon and as he was leaving his mosque, he walked up to him and said, "Oh honoured Sheik. I had a vision that the prophet came to me and told me that you are the most honoured Sheik in the whole world. He also told me that if I could just get one hair from your beard, it will protect me all my life and I will surely enter the portals of Paradise." The Sheik was flattered by these words and plucked a hair from his beard. The Jew kissed his hand and thanked him. - When all his followers saw what he did, they too demanded a hair from his beard. The Sheik plucked one, then another, then another, from his face - but the already frenzied mob could not wait, and they pounced on the suddenly hapless cleric. They pulled and plucked and ripped every last hair from the man's face. He was left mutilated and beardless for the rest of his life!



**The first letters of Tazria Metzora form the term מת** (death), and the last letters (ayin ayin) have the same numerical value as the term **קם** (to arise). The Torah warns us that one who speaks ill of others is punished by **צרעת** (leprosy), for he has caused his death. However, if he guards himself from speaking Lashon Hara and only speaks good of others, then **קם**, he will arise, for he has overcome his inclination to spread rumours about others. Woe to those who speak ill of others and will have no way to arise! That is why it is extremely important to be vigilant in regard to the sin of Lashon Hara. ***(Pachad David)***

**R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l (quoted in Sefer Mizmor L'Todah) would say:**



**וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ**: 12:3 Chazal tell us: 'Just as Milah which needs healing is done on the eighth day, therefore they (Chazal) instituted **רפאינו** as the eighth beracha (in Shemona Esrai).' Why is this blessing seemingly geared only for Milah - what about all the other illnesses that need healing? Since when Moshiach comes, there will be no more sickness, thus the only thing that will require healing will be Bris Milah. This blessing alludes to that glorious day, may it come soon."

**The Rebbe, R' Nachman M'Breslov ZT"L writes:** "*The level of Hisbodedus (isolation) is higher and greater than everything. In Hisbodedus, a person sets aside an hour or so each day to be by himself in a room or in a field, to speak out everything that is on his heart between himself and his Maker. He should put forth all sorts of logical arguments and excuses using graceful, charming, and appeasing words. And he should ask and beg Hashem that He should bring him close to Him to serve Him in truth. And this prayer and conversation should be in one's everyday language.*"

The key to prayer is sincerity. This means that the supplicant believes that only Hashem can help him. Therefore, he turns his heart to Him, understanding that any other avenue is only part of his hishtadlus, his effort.

This was a required action by the Metzora as a means for him to do Teshuvah and it is something which we should do each and every day, although it is equally important to never forget that any and all results can only be affected by Hashem.



A wonderful example of the power of prayer may be discerned from the following incident that took place not long ago. One day a young kollel Yungerman, a budding scholar who studied in one of the distinguished Kollelim in Bnei Brak, presented himself, together with his seven-year-old-son, at the home of **R' Chaim Kanievsky Shlit'a**.

People had a hard time not staring at the little boy as it was apparent he was going through a difficult trial. The man waited until the crowd had cleared out and then he took his place before the Rav.

"Rebbe," the young man said, "I would like to relate to his honour a moving, incredible story that occurred concerning my young son here. As one can see, my son was diagnosed a short while ago with the dreaded disease. As part of his treatment, the doctors agreed that he would have to undergo several rounds of heavy chemotherapy. Among the many side effects that he would suffer, they told us, losing all of his body hair was a certainty. Well, my wife and I were beside ourselves, but our young son accepted Hashem's decree of strict justice with great love, far beyond a child of such young years. He gives us all great chizuk. Yet, despite his incredible emunah, faith, and bitachon (trust) in the Almighty that whatever is decreed for him is all for the good, he became hysterical when he heard that he would lose his hair.

He told us, 'I do not care about the hair on my head, even if it will look strange and the other children might look at me in a ridiculing

manner. I cannot, however, tolerate losing my payos. My payos maintain my appearance as a Yiddishe boy. How can I live without my payos?"

The father continued to relate how his son cried and cried and prayed and prayed. Each day, he would seclude himself in his room and open his young heart to the Almighty. He supplicated Hashem with the following words: "Av Harachaman, Merciful Father in Heaven, I know that everything that You do to me is for the good. No one has greater compassion than You. This is what my parents have taught me, and I accept it without question and with the utmost love. I accept everything that is connected with this disease, everything that I am stricken with, because I know that You will not forsake me. I am even willing to lose my hair, even though I will be greatly embarrassed by it."

R' Chaim looked at the young boy tenderly, as the father continued to speak. "But then, suddenly, my son burst out into bitter weeping. As he sobbed, he cried out, 'Hashem, I will give it all up - just not my payos! How can I be without payos? I cannot overlook my payos. They are what makes me look like a Jew. Please, Hashem - leave my payos!'

"I watched," said the father, "as my son davened like this for over an hour, repeating his entreaty amid bitter wailings. It was truly heart-breaking to listen. But Rebbe - lo and behold - Hashem must have heard his cries! Look at my son. The chemo and medications have ravaged his body. His face is pale and every hair is gone. But his payos have not been touched! They are as full and as long as any other children! Hashem listened to my son's pure prayers!"

R' Chaim was so taken aback by this incident that he immediately summoned all the members of his family who were in the house to come to see the power of innocence, the power of sincerity, the power of prayer from a pure heart.

## Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

## The Power of One Word!



אָדָם כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אֹו־סַפַּחַת אֹו בַהֶרֶת וְהָיָה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ לְנֶגַע צָרָעַת ***"If a person has on his skin certain unnatural types of whiteness, he is brought to a kohain who may determine that he has the plague of leprosy." (Vayikrah 13:2)***

*Mr. Cohen was looking to hire a bookkeeper. Yosef Levine responded to the ad in the paper. Yosef was so impressive at the interview that Mr. Cohen was ready to hire him on the spot. However, he said that as a formality, he would wait two days before calling him.*

*Yosef was desperate for the job and was anticipating a positive phone call from Mr. Cohen. Meanwhile Mr. Cohen had casually mentioned to his sister that he was about to hire a new bookkeeper. "What is his name?" she asked. When she heard who it was, she said, "You don't want to hire him. He has a reputation for not being too intelligent".*

*Mr. Cohen couldn't believe he made such an error in judgement. He called Yosef & said that he no longer needed him for the job. Yosef was unable to get a job because the word got around that Mr. Cohen didn't want to hire Yosef. People assumed that Mr. Cohen must have had a good reason for refusing Yosef a job.*

*As a result of the words of Mr. Cohen's sister, Yosef could not get a job. Her remarks were baseless gossip and it cost a good and honest man a job.*




**The Rambam explains** that the disease of leprosy was supernatural. It was sent as a warning to stop speaking loshon hara (gossip; hurtful speech). There were three levels of this disease. The first attacked a person's house. If he repented and stopped gossiping, the disease would stop spreading. If he continued spreading gossip, his clothes would get leprosy. If he repented and stopped, the disease would stop spreading. If he continued, the disease would spread to his body.

**The Dubno Magid said** that many people speak gossip because they aren't aware of the impact a word can make. People tend to rationalize and say, "I didn't do anything to him, I only said a few words." To teach this person a lesson about the power of one single word, he becomes impure and is isolated from the rest of the Jewish people through one single word of the kohain- **טמא** (impure)!

**Rav Yisroel Salanter used to say,** "If a person says that a rabbi can't sing, or a cantor isn't a Torah scholar, he is guilty of speaking *loshon hora*. But if someone says that a rabbi is not a scholar and a cantor can't sing, it is like murder (because the subject of his loshon hora is liable to lose his livelihood because of his words)."

***Words can destroy a reputation and a friendship. They can destroy a successful business and a person's happiness. We must be as careful with words as we would be if we were holding a bomb!***

***Rav Moshe Feinstein זצוק"ל would learn Mishnayos by heart during the time that he was removing his Tefillin and wrapping them and putting them away.***

## From the Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo



Speech is one of our most powerful tools. It can be the greatest balm, and it can be the deadliest weapon. If we would realize the awesome ramifications of our words, we would probably be afraid to open our mouths.

The Zohar in Parshas Tazria (46,2) teaches us that just as a Jew is punished for speaking Lashon Hara, so too is one punished if he has an opportunity to say something nice to someone and he doesn't! Because his speech really matters! The generation of the flood was destroyed because of its sins. The complete corruption and breakdown of moral society was due to their inappropriate speech!

The **גזל** and **חמס** that caused their downfall was a result of the way they spoke to one another. Hashem commanded Noach to build a **תיבה**- which translates as WORD. Noach spent 120 years building this **תיבה** as a message to all people that one's life - his 120 years on this world - must be an exercise in building up speech to a level of greatness. Hashem told Noach: **צהר תעשה לתיבה**- MAKE YOUR WORDS SHINE! The words that come out of our mouth should illuminate the world by spreading wisdom and kindness to others!

If your words are not sharing wisdom or kindness, says **R' Avigdor Miller zt"l**, then just don't say them! The way to build the world, as well as our own individual worlds, is through words. One good powerful WORD can save the world from complete destruction and one good powerful WORD can save someone's life! A compliment or a simple word of encouragement can illuminate a person's self-perception. The word LASHON which means speech is comprised of

a ל which is 30, a ש (300) and a נ (50). These were the exact measurements of the **תיבה**! 30x300x50!

What a lesson this is from Hashem! We must exert ourselves extensively, all our 120 years in this world to make sure every **תיבה** – every WORD – we say is truly pleasing in the eyes of Hashem.

## Drush V'Chiddush

**וְנַעֲמָן שַׂר־צְבָא מֶלֶךְ־אֲרָם הָיָה אִישׁ גָּדוֹל....וְהָאִישׁ הָיָה גִּבּוֹר חַיִל מְצֹרָע**
**Melachim II – 5:1**

In this week's Haftorah, we read the story of Naaman, general of the army of Aram. He was afflicted with tzaraas and needed a cure. He was told about Elisha the prophet, who had the power to affect a cure. He travelled to the prophet's house with a grand entourage of chariots and horses. Elisha was told of his arrival and sent a message that he should immerse in the Jordan river seven times and he would be cured.



On hearing this he declared, "I thought he would come to me, that he would stand and call out in the Name of Hashem...and the afflicted would be healed. Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? Can I not immerse in them and be healed?" He left in a rage.

The Manchester R"Y, **R' Yehudah Zev Segal zt"l** says that at first one may have thought that Naaman was angry because he felt that

this was a ridiculous cure, that there are bigger rivers than the Jordan. Yet on closer examination, it is his opening remarks that give him away: "I thought he would come to me."

The Metzudos explains that Naaman was saying, "I thought that because of my importance he would come to me and stand erect in the manner that people give esteemed officers." Here we have a man for whom there is no cure through medication and who is dependent on the prophet. He then stormed home because he felt he was not given the honour that was due him, despite the fact that he would have to continue to live with the disease. **The Mesillas Yesharim** says: "One who is bound up in the chains of his evil inclination cannot see or perceive the truth because he is blinded, literally." When one is tied up in pursuing his honour, even an affliction of tzaraas will seem trivial to him. He would rather keep the tzaraas and not forgo the honour.

## R' Yisroel Salanter (Ohr Yisroel) would say:

**אָדָם כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אֽוֹ־סַפַּחַת אֽוֹ בַהֶרֶת וְהָיָה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ לְנֶגַע צָרָעַת** - Why is the Parsha of Negaim listed right after Parshas Shemini?



Because the previous parsha dealt with kosher and non-kosher foods, while Negaim are a result of people who speak evil against another person. In our world, people think that words do not matter and if someone speaks lashon hara, it is not so terrible - certainly not as bad as eating non-kosher food. Thus, the Torah comes to teach us that in fact, Negaim are much worse than Treif food, because talking bad about another person is like killing another person."

# R' Shayele of Kerestir




One of the rather famous yahrtzeits that are keenly observed during the days of Sefirah is the third day of Iyar - for the tzaddik, **R' Shayele of Kerestir (R' Yeshaya Steiner zt"l).**

It is interesting to note that the affectionate name "Shayele" was not a title appended to him by his many followers and adoring Chassidim; he himself would humbly call himself Shayele, and as a result, the name stuck.

He lived in the hamlet of Kerestir, Hungary, around the turn of the 20th century, and aside from being pious, righteous and scholarly, he was also known as a miracle worker. Many of his "miracles" took place in and around the Motzei Shabbos seudah. R' Shayele's greatest pleasure was to host an elaborate Melave Malka, the meal that follows Shabbos. He would sing, talk words of Torah and regale his Chassidim with amazing stories.

In Kerestir, there was an old wagon driver, a simple, unlearned Jew. The wagon driver had a son he had sent to the local cheder until the age of bar mitzvah; after that, the boy was enlisted to help his father. Life as a wagon driver's assistant didn't do much for the boy's spiritual development, and when he eventually married and settled in Budapest, the young man's Yiddishkeit fell away. The cosmopolitan feel of the big city and liberal influences affected him.

He wandered far from the path of his father raising his own two sons in a secular "cultured" home with neither Shabbos nor kashrus. One summer, the two boys travelled to Kerestir to visit their grandfather. Being unacquainted with Chassidic life, they found the Rebbe's court a charming throwback to a different time, and they went to observe the Melaveh Malka of the world-renown rabbi, R' Shayele of Kerestir.

They sat in the corner, enjoying the hum of activity, the many guests, and the interesting foods. Although they intended to mind their own business, they were shocked when R' Shayele summoned them to come over to him as he was doling out shirayim. He handed each of the boys a piece of kugel and told them to enjoy it. The two brothers took their kugel with them but only one brother ate his piece; the other mocked and jeered and said he had no intention of eating some rabbi's leftovers!

On the way back to Budapest, they both laughed at the strange, archaic practices they had seen in their grandfather's hometown. When they arrived back home in Budapest, their parents wanted to hear about their experiences, and they all sat down to an elaborate welcoming meal. The food was delicious, and one brother ate heartily. For some reason, the other brother had no appetite. He couldn't look at the food. The next day, his appetite had not yet returned, and he ate a bit of fruit but nothing more.

His parents worried that he might be ill and watched with increasing anxiety as several days passed without him eating anything other than fruits and vegetables. They took him to doctors but they too, could find nothing wrong with the young man, and finally, the second brother who was not ill speculated that he knew what was causing his brother's strange condition. He recalled how the Rebbe had given them both kugel, but only his brother had eaten it. "Since then, he hasn't been able to eat other foods. Perhaps," he suggested, "my brother suffered some kind of food poisoning."

The worried parents wasted no time in setting off for Kerestir, their ailing son in tow. They headed straight for the Rebbe's home and didn't mince words. "You harmed our son! Since eating your kugel, he is too sick to eat anything else!"

R' Shayele listened and turned to the gabbai. "Bring a good dinner. We will see whether our guest can eat or not!' The gabbai returned with a delicious spread of food which the hungry young man ate with obvious appetite. "Why do you say he can't eat?" R' Shayele asked the parents. "He can eat perfectly well. It's treif, impure food, that he cannot eat!"

Following R' Shayele's advice, the concerned parents agreed to eat only kosher food at home. Upon their return to Budapest, they asked a local Rav to kasher their kitchen utensils in accordance with halacha, and they ordered meat from the kosher butcher. Seeing their son restored to good health as he ate kosher food had an effect on the rest of the family It was the beginning of their journey back to the ways of their ancestors and a full Torah life.

***Rav Hutner zt'l, points out that the Hebrew word for thanks – 'toda', also means to 'confess'. He explains that whenever we express gratitude we are also making a confession. - We would all like to be self sufficient but everyone needs help at some stage. When we thank those who assist us, we are also admitting that we could not have managed on our own.***

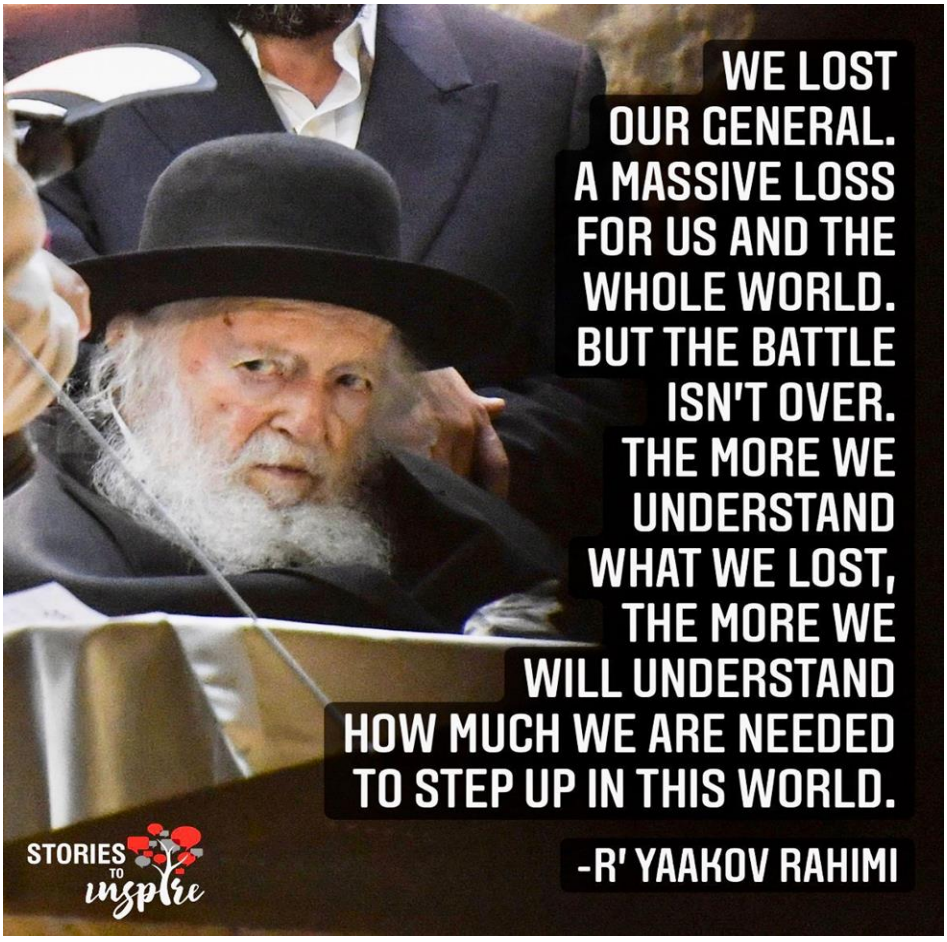
***The same principle applies when we thank Hashem. It is human nature to consider our accomplishments as the result of our own hard work. We think we are in control. But when we sincerely express gratitude to Hashem we are admitting that it is He who runs the show. We are not really in control at all.***

**R' Eliyahu Lopian zt"l (quoted in P'ninim M'Shulchan Govoha) writes: נגע צרעת כי תהיה באדם**




In the word עונג (pleasure), the letter Ayin is the first letter and Ayin (עין) means eye. החכם עיניו בראשו- a wise man has his eyes ahead of him. He studies the ramifications of his actions before he does anything, and gains satisfaction from his carefully thought-out deeds.

In the word נגע (plague) the letter Ayin is last. A fool first acts and only then does he see with his own eyes the damage that his impulsiveness wrought. When he finally gets hit in the face with reality and opens up his eyes, he will then see a Nega."



## From the Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וְהִנֵּה לְאֹהֶלַי הַנֶּגַע אֶת־עֵינוֹ 13:55

Isn't it interesting that two words that are complete polar opposites of each other, can be switched around with the flick of an "Ayin"? The word **נגע** means affliction, while **ענג** means pleasure. **R' Yitzchok Meir Alter ZT"L** (Chiddushei Harim) explains that anything in life can be switched around in the blink of an eye. "Ayin" is a letter but "Ayin" also means an eye! In other words, life can either be a pleasure or an affliction - depending on how you see it with your "Ayin" - your eyes!



During Sefiras Haomer, there is a special stress on spiritual growth. This is when we are provided with extra siyata d'shmaya to work on our middos. Okay, so where do we begin? How do we truly raise ourselves up to become worthy of receiving the Torah on Shavuous? The answer is .... UNITY. Like one man with one heart, the Jewish people at Har Sinai reached the ultimate height of holiness and sanctification. They loved and respected one another then - and we must too!

**R' Chaim Pinchos Scheinberg ZT"L** used to say that the difference between UNITED and UNTIED is where you put the "I". The same is true about where you put the "Ayin" - the "Eye." Do you only see YOURSELF, or can you actually put yourself aside and see your spouse, your child, your friend ... even your mother-in-law? Can you see past your own needs and make someone else's your first priority?

Spiritual growth is not just something that happens; it is a result of what we choose to SEE.

The students of Rabbi Akiva died because they did not show one another sufficient respect. This is the opposite of what we are striving for during Sefirah, and that is why we mourn these precious neshamos at this time. RESPECT is all about where you put the "Eye." To truly respect someone means that when they do something that you don't like, you stop and look at them again with a different eye, with a POSITIVE EYE. Seeing the good in others is how you turn a "Nega" into an "Oneg."



**A king had a dear and close friend whom he loved very much.** However, this friend once rebelled against his beloved monarch, the king, and was caught. In truth, his sin was so severe that he deserved the death penalty, however, the king could not bring himself to kill his old and close friend - even if he did something so terrible. The king decided on a different punishment. He had a special "collar of shame" created which his friend - and all future generations in his family - would be required to wear at all times, to remind him and the rest of the world that although his crime was great and he really did deserve to die, his sentence was commuted due to the great affection that the king had - and will always have - for him and his family.

The man accepted his punishment and wore the collar in shame. His children and grandchildren wore it as well, however, they began to "dress it up." One had his collar made from silk; another grandchild went even further and made his out of silver.

In a few generations, this collar became a fashion item, and the family was proud of their designation. Only one old man remembered the purpose of the collar and commented, "What fools! This collar

was instituted to bring shame to this family and they make it into a badge of honour!"



**The Tzemach Tzaddik (first Vizhnitzer Rebbe)** explains that when Adam HaRishon was created, he had no need for clothing in Gan Eden. It was only after his sin, that he felt embarrassed and the need to clothe himself. Thus, clothing in and of itself, is really nothing more than a "collar of shame" that has been handed down throughout the generations. Should we now go and wear the latest, most expensive and fanciest styles to show off to the world our "shame".....?

**Almost one hundred years ago, a letter was circulated all throughout the cities of Eastern Europe**, as well as the hundreds of villages in which Jewish communities dotted the landscape; a letter that was so full of harsh words of fury, malicious slander and lashon hara, that it was almost shocking to read. Furthermore, the letter that was written in such a forceful tone, targeted an entire kehilla in one of the largest Jewish cities in Lithuania, the capital city of Vilna. But the greatest shock of all was that this letter was written by none other than .... **R' Yisroel Meir Hakohen ZT"L, the Chofetz Chaim!**

How can this be? The Chofetz Chaim would never talk lashon hara, let alone write a letter against a kehilla in Klal Yisroel! Every young child knows that. Could this have been a mistake? A frame-up of the great tzaddik? The answer lies in the following amazing story.

The city of Vilna was one of the greatest bastions of Torah that the Jewish people ever had. The wealth of righteous men and Torah scholars that emerged from this proud city rightfully earned it its title as the "Jerusalem of Lithuania." From as far back as the mystical Ramchal, **R' Moshe Chaim Luzzato ZT"L**, to the scholarly "businessman" the **Rashash, R' Shmuel Strashun ZT"L**, to the ascetic and saintly **Vilna Gaon ZT"L**, the city of Vilna was a city of giants, and it garnered the respect of worldwide Jewry. As a result of the city's prodigiousness, though, a city-wide ordinance was imposed whereby it was decreed that no "Chief Rabbi" would ever claim the seat of rabbanus in Vilna.

Of course, there were many rabbanim, dayanim and community lay leaders to guide the kehilla and ensure the highest standards of kashrus, ritual and family purity and overall halachic queries, however an official chief rabbi appellation, was never labelled on anyone from the day the Vilna Gaon passed away in 5558 (1797).



During the first half of the twentieth century, one person emerged as the de-facto leader of Vilna Jewry, a towering personality and Torah scholar, a man who never hesitated to carry the load of his brethren in all matters of halacha and askanus, the great tzaddik, **R' Chaim Ozer Grodzenski ZT"L**.

And yet, with all of his accolades and accomplishments, R' Chaim Ozer was not the officially appointed chief rabbi of Vilna. This was fine by most of the city's inhabitants, however, a select few griped

over the fact that every other city maintained an official rabbinic seat of honour, whereas their city only followed the rulings of a few elderly bearded men. These "progressive"-minded people felt that their city's very honour was being desecrated and so they took it upon themselves to officially nominate and then elect a "true" chief rabbi to be Vilna's official leader. - This did not sit well with the establishment, and a tumultuous conflagration broke out in the streets of Vilna, threatening to tear apart the city's very fabric.

When the Chofetz Chaim was informed of the controversy, he immediately wrote a scathing letter of protest against those people who had the temerity to oppose R' Chaim Ozer and his stature in the city. With the sharpest of words, he decried the blatant disrespect to the Torah and the scholars who devote their days and nights to its study, understanding and fulfilment, and he vilified, denigrated and lambasted the agitators who pursued their deplorable agenda.

The Jewish world was turned upside down as people could barely believe what they were reading. This was the great champion of Shemiras Halashon, the holy tzaddik, the Chofetz Chaim himself!

But as most people were left in fearful awe, the progressives spread the word that of course these words were not written by the Chofetz Chaim, as everyone knew that he would never talk like that! It could be none other than some nasty individuals from the opposing camp, who attempted to champion their cause by dragging the name of the tzaddik into it. But since he would never talk like that, this phony letter will surely backfire on them.

This time, the Chofetz Chaim wasted no time. He sent a second letter in which he wrote: "People say that I did not write the letter. Know, that I most definitely did - for when the honour of Torah is involved, personal honour is not a concern. I am surprised at anyone who does not write such a letter himself!" And with that, he put the controversy to rest once and for all!

**וְהִתְגַּלָּח וְאֶת־הַנֶּתֶק לֹא יְגַלֶּחַ וְהִסְגִּיר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַנֶּתֶק שִׁבְעַת יָמִים שֵׁנִית**

One of the wealthiest men in the entire Romanian region of Satu Mare (Satmar), was an ardent follower of **R' Eliezer Fisch zt"l** of Bixad, author of Shem Eliezer. He once came to Bixad to discuss an important matter. His fruit orchards became infested with crop-eating bugs and no amount of pesticide was able to rid him of these vermin. He called in experts in the field and their only advice was to chop down a large swath of his valuable orchards, burn the bark, and destroy the fruit. This, they said, is the only way to truly rid himself of the pesky insects.



The man walked into R' Eliezer's private room with a heavy heart. His entire livelihood was at stake and he poured out his heart to the Rebbe.

Suddenly, R' Eliezer pointed to his head and remarked, "Do you not believe in cutting your hair? Why must you walk around with such a large mane of hair? It is no wonder to me why you are having such issues. It is clear that if you would simply cut your hair, you would not need to cut down your trees! Accept upon yourself to do this and I assure you no harm will come to your orchards!" The man did as he was told - and his entire crop was saved!

A major part of the purification process for a Metzora is the fact that he must shave his head. This will allow the regenerated hair to grow in and the Kohen will then be able to see if the leprosy has faded or if it remains on his head. In other areas, the idea of cutting one's hair is a sign of purity and piety, and traditionally, a Jewish boy

is given his first haircut at age three, to imbue a level of purity within in, as he begins his chinuch process. So, go out and make a statement, for as the barbers like to say, "You're only as good as your last haircut!"

## From the Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo



**R' Avraham Pam zt"l** once overheard a woman berate her child. She said, "You are a bad boy!" The child burst into tears and was inconsolable! R' Pam explained later in a shmuess that the reason the child was so upset was because his mother disqualified him as a PERSON rather than telling him what he did wrong! It would have been much more beneficial had the mother told her child, "What you did was a bad thing. It is not appropriate for a good boy like you to act this way!"

In Parshas Tazria, the Torah teaches us that a kohen must "close off the NEGA for seven days." Why the NEGA? Why not the person? Because the Torah is teaching us that the kohen does not "passul" (disqualify) the person, he only "passul'd" the NEGA! The Metzorah is not a "Bad Boy" - he did a "Bad Thing" and therefore requires punishment and atonement. In life we all make mistakes. In our interpersonal relationships and with people we are close to, we sometimes say the wrong thing or do something that is hurtful. A tiny incident can cause strong feelings of anger and disdain, and an argument can end up lasting a very long time. If only we would be able to separate a person from his negative behaviour and hate the action but continue to love the person!

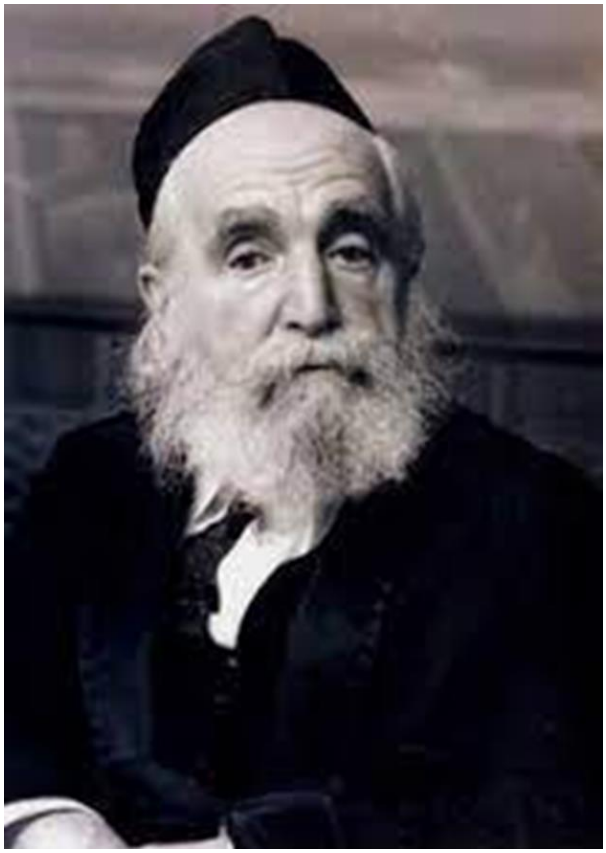
When someone hurts us with words or actions, instead of thinking that the person is mean and terrible, we must think in our minds that what he did was mean and terrible. It was irresponsible to act that way - but the person is good and surely made a mistake. It is our mitzvah to judge favourably and believe that the person can change and improve his ways.

Rosh Chodesh is the only mitzvah Bnei Yisroel received in Mitzrayim because Hashem wanted us to know that we have the power to change! Just as the moon gets bigger and smaller, but it always remains in the sky, so too, we must realize that sometimes people act big and sometimes small, but we can always renew ourselves to change and be the best we can be!



**Rabbeinu Chaim Vital ZT"L would say: וְהוּבָא אֶל־אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן**

Why must the metzorah be brought before Aharon? What happens after the death of Aharon; does this mean that he need not be brought to Aharon's successor? The answer is that since tzaraas is a punishment for spreading lashon hara which foments hatred between Jews, therefore, the metzorah is bidden to come before Aharon, a true lover of peace, a person who constantly worked to increase love and harmony among Bnei Yisroel. The influence of Aharon - which is given over to every succeeding generation - is what is employed to guide the metzorah away from his improper traits, thereby raising the level of love and unity among the nation."



A student from a Modern Orthodox home came to learn in Yeshivah Tiferes Yerushalayim. He was a bright boy and excelled in his studies, until he became one of the most highly regarded talmidim in the yeshivah. One day, the boy came to the venerable Rosh Yeshivah, **R' Moshe Feinstein ZT"L**, and explained that it was time for him to leave the yeshivah. His parents were insisting that he go to college and would not take no for an answer.

R' Moshe went to the father and began extolling his son's virtues. But the father was prepared and answered, "Rabbi Feinstein, I studied mathematics in college and in my world, everything must fit perfectly into an equation. Now, since we know that there are three partners in the birth of a young child - G-d, his father and his mother - therefore, if the boy's mother and father feel one way, they become the majority over the wishes of the third partner, and of course, we all know that majority rules!"

R' Moshe responded, "My friend, you are wrong in your calculation. There is a piece of G-d in every Jew. Even in you and your wife. So now, G-d is in fact the majority, and as you yourself said, majority rules!"

Do we look at every person and see the **צלם אלקים**? Do we embrace the G-dliness that is inherent in every single Jew? The Torah is our guidebook and it teaches us that the most natural thing in the world - a baby being born - is actually much more than that! It is bringing another piece of the Almighty down onto the earth, infusing us all, as well as everything around us, with ever greater holiness!

## L'Maaseh

**The Chofetz Chaim** once explained that while listening to words of Lashon Hara may be enjoyable, nevertheless, one must try with all his might to not listen to it. This can be compared, taught the Chofetz Chaim, to a charlatan who put on elegant clothing and walked out to the centre of town. There was a visitor in the city that day, who was there for the first time and did not know anyone. He wandered around, gazing at the crowded streets filled with people and at the stores selling their wares.

Suddenly, the charlatan approached him and said, "Shalom, to you, my good Jew, I can see that you are a visitor here. Is there anything I can help you with? This is your lucky day, for it just so happens that I have some time on my hands and I am willing to show you around the city." The visitor was overjoyed and grateful for the man's kindness, and immediately trusted him based on the fine clothing he was wearing.



The charlatan led the visitor through the city streets and gave him an extensive tour. When they had finished, he told the visitor, "Since you are my guest for the day, I would like to invite you to my favourite restaurant for a lavish meal, one fitting for such an esteemed guest as yourself. It will be my treat!" They entered an expensive restaurant, and the man told the visitor to order any delicacy he desired, both food and drink, which the quest happily did.

As their meal ended, the charlatan excused himself, and said he was going to take care of the bill, and as soon as he was out of the eyesight of the guest, he quietly walked out of the restaurant and ran away. Soon, the manager of the restaurant presented the bill for the meal to the guest, but he argued that his friend had went to pay it a short while ago. They explained to him that they did not know who that man was as they had never seen him before, and he had left the restaurant already. The guest's claims and protests were of no use, as the manager pointed out that the visitor had ordered everything himself, and he was forced to cover the enormous expense of the meal. He suddenly realized that this imposter was not a friend at all, but a bitter enemy!

The Chofetz Chaim says it is the same when it comes to Lashon Hara. While it may be enjoyable to hear the tales and stories at the time, and he may even be grateful to his friend for allowing him to hear the "precious" secrets, when the time arrives for him to stand in judgment before the Heavenly Court, he will be forced to pay the bill for the Aveiros he partook in, and his "friend" will be nowhere to be found! Only then will he discover just how costly that conversation was, and how the person he thought was his friend was never his friend at all!

## R' Dovid Feinstein (Kol Dodi) would say:

"When tzaraas afflicts a person's garment, it reflects his hypocrisy in trying to conceal his failings, just as a garment is worn to conceal a physical blemish. The only way to induce such a person to repent is to make him strip away the facade and expose the underlying defects that he lives with, so that they may be repaired. For this reason, the plague of tzaraas affects his garments and reveals to him the cause of his affliction."

## Why I matter וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ




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

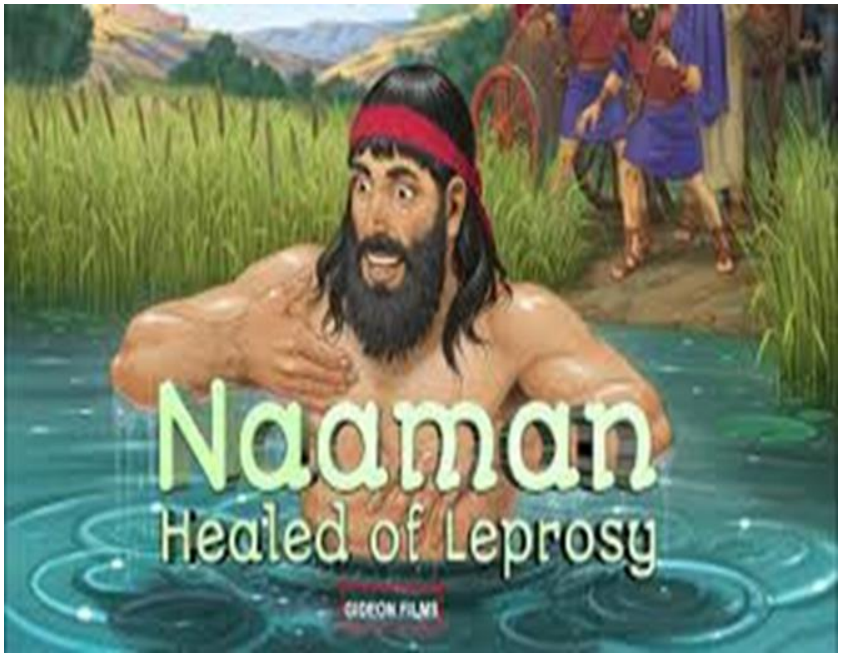
The Gemara (Menachot 43b) relates that King David was in the bathhouse and felt himself devoid of mitzvot, as one cannot wear tefilin or tzitzit or study Torah while taking a bath. The he remembered that he was circumcised, and he rejoiced. Upon leaving the bathhouse, he exclaimed (Tehilim 119:162) **שָׂשׂ אָנֹכִי עַל־אִמְרָתֶךָ כְּמוֹצֵא שָׁלָל רָב** – *"I rejoice over Your words like one who finds a great treasure."*

**R' Shalom Rokeach z"l (1779-1855; the first Belzer Rebbe)** asks: Why is finding a great treasure an appropriate metaphor for the mitzah of brit milah? He explains: Most mitzvot require some form of preparation. Some mitzvot, like Shabbat, require a few days of preparations. Others, such as Pesach, require weeks of preparations. The mitzvah of eating the fruits of a four-year-old tree in Yerushalayim requires years of preparation.

Performing these mitzvot can feel anti-climactic, since one has been anticipating them throughout the period of preparation. One doesn't prepare for his brit milah; in fact, he is barely aware that it is being done. Then, one day, he realizes that he is circumcised. This is indeed like suddenly finding a treasure. *(Midbar Kodesh)*

***"Be first in greeting every man!" ~~ Avos 4:15***

# Etz Chaim - Pushing off Mitzvos - HaRav Ezra Zafrani




The Haftarah (Melachim 2,5) tells us of **נעמן** who was the chief of the army of Aram. He was a great warrior who was looked up to and respected by all. **נעמן** was stricken with Tsara'at & could not find a cure. During one of his victories, he had captured a young Jewish girl. She came to her mistress saying, "Amongst the Jews there is a Navi who can cure your husband of his Tsara'at. If you speak to their king he would pray to Hashem for him." Eventually **נעמן** travelled to Erets Yisrael to seek Elisha the Prophet. However, before **נעמן** had reached Elisha, he had already been sent a message from Elisha, by way of a messenger. Elisha told him, "You must dip in the Jordan River seven times & then your skin will be cured & pure".

Hearing such advice from a prophet had enraged **נעמן**, who had claimed that the rivers of Damascus are better than all the rivers in Erets Yisrael. He then began poking fun & ridiculing the words of the Prophet.

As he was proceeding to return home, members of his entourage convinced him to, at least, try what the prophet set, since they reasoned, "We are already here." He then dipped in the Jordan seven times as the prophet had said & his skin turned to the youth of a young boy & was cured.

He then returned to Elisha & claimed, "I now know that there are no other gods in the world except for the Hashem of Yisrael". He

requested that Elisha should accept a gracious present from him, which was an enormous amount of gold and silver plus garments.

Elisha refused to take anything from **נעמן** for fear that this would diminish his full faith in Hashem, & so he should realize the holiness of pious Jews. **נעמן** then asked if he could take back with him a sack load of earth from Erets Yisrael, since he would not worship any other gods & will not sacrifice to them, but only to the one G-d of the world.

**Harav Chayim Zaytchik zt"**l asked: Why did **נעמן** have to request some earth to take home? He had plenty of servants that could just dig up the dirt & no one would notice. He was impressed by the holiness and sincerity of the prophet, so that his natural instincts to take things without permission were subdued & he could not take anything that did not belong to him. The sense of **גזל**- theft, was imbued in him. How much can one do for others by just being polite & wanting to help them!

Sincerity affects the heart of anyone. Our Rabbis explain that because of this, **נעמן** was ready to convert to Judaism, as one can see from the Pesukim. At the end, he did not convert completely but became a Ger that would not worship idols. What happened that changed his mind?

One reason is that he delayed in accepting upon himself **גרות**-conversion immediately. He was inspired by the prophet Elisha, but he could not make that decision, he wanted to think about it.

If a mitsvah presents itself, do not delay, since it may be lost. How many times has delay caused setbacks & losses, especially in mitsvot. If we would imagine that missing a minyan is comparable to missing the last flight to your destination, mitsvot would then be treated more seriously. Thus, one can gain the greatest opportunity in the world in serving Hakadosh Baruch Hu with true love and respect.



## The Power of Speech

A most important lesson in life! What is it? The tremendous power of speech! Hashem showed us that when you say something, when you utter a word, you actually create something real! A "word" in Hebrew is **דבר**, just as a "thing" is called **דבר**. In fact, they are one and the same, because a word is a real thing and can hurt someone more than a knife. On the other hand, a kind word is greater than all the presents in the world.



**R' Dovid Orlofsky Shlit'a** points out that a magician uses the term "Abracadabra" to perform magic tricks - to make something appear that wasn't there before. In fact, this really comes from the Aramaic terminology, **אעיברא כדברא**- "I will create that which I speak!"

Words do not just dissipate into thin air. They are real; they are "things" that have the power to build and destroy, depending how we use them. Take these "words" to heart. It can change your life!!

***Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz zt"l trained himself to see only what was directly in front of him. Students testified that he could walk past distractions without noticing them at all, and not because he was unaware, but because his inner discipline was absolute. His eyes, like his will, were not hefker.***

## וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ



In the year 5673 - 1913, a seemingly minor event took place in an appropriately quiet manner, which later revealed itself to be of great significance. **R' Moshe Yaakov Rabikov ZT"L**, the "Shuster" or shoemaker, as he was affectionately known by the Eretz Yisroel'dika residents, brought his entire family up from Lithuania and after a number of mishaps at first, eventually settled in a quiet Tel Aviv suburb by the name of Shabazi. Who was this "Shuster," or shoemaker?

It was said about him, by no less of a personality than the holy **Chazon Ish, R' Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz ZT"L**, that R' Moshe Yaakov "is the head of the Lamed Vov Tzaddikim of the current generation!" People who would pass the little house and adjacent shoemaker shop in Tel Aviv had no idea that in fact the person living inside, or standing next to them in shul, or mending their torn shoes, was in fact carrying the weight of the world on his slight and humble shoulders!

R' Moshe Yaakov was brought up by his father before him to maintain a craft and support himself from it. By day, he fixed, mended and created shoes with meticulous care and quality. In the wee hours of the morning, however, he learned the revealed and hidden portions of the Torah, and grew into a tremendous scholar.

But after the Chazon Ish revealed to the world, a glimpse into the real persona of the "Shuster," people began streaming to him from all over for refuos and yeshuos - assistance in all matters. Nobody was turned away and no one left disappointed.

Many stories abound about the greatness of R' Moshe Yaakov and it was said that he enjoyed **גילוי אליהו**- Revelations by Eliyohu Hanavi. One such incident, which occurred in public became widespread.

The "Shuster" was once invited to attend a bris and when he entered the hall in which the bris was to take place, he immediately stopped. He looked around for a moment and then with the hint of a groan, he intoned, **איך זעה איהם נישט - איך זעה איהם נישט**- ***"I don't see him! I don't see him!"*** With that, he turned and walked hurriedly out.

The assembled guests and family members were stunned and became worried. Obviously, the holy "Shuster" was referring to Eliyohu Hanavi, but how could it be that he was not there? Eliyohu is known to attend every bris. The father of the baby ran after R' Moshe Yaakov and declared that he would get to the bottom of this.

Several hours later, an amazing thing was revealed: Somehow, and quite inexplicably, the baby that was brought in the morning to be circumcised was actually switched with the real baby boy. Instead of bringing a Jewish child, a non-Jewish baby was brought to the bris! The parents had no explanation for this incredibly twisted turn of events, but they immediately rectified the situation and this time, made sure to bring the right baby, their son. R' Moshe Yaakov was called back to the bris and this time when he walked into the room, his face lit up and he announced, **אה, יעצט זעה איך איהם**- "Aha, now I see him!"

## Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

When **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt"l**, passed away, a poor woman in Sha'arei Chesed sobbed in her anguish, "Now who will say 'good morning' to me every day?! He was the only one who greeted me!"

## וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ



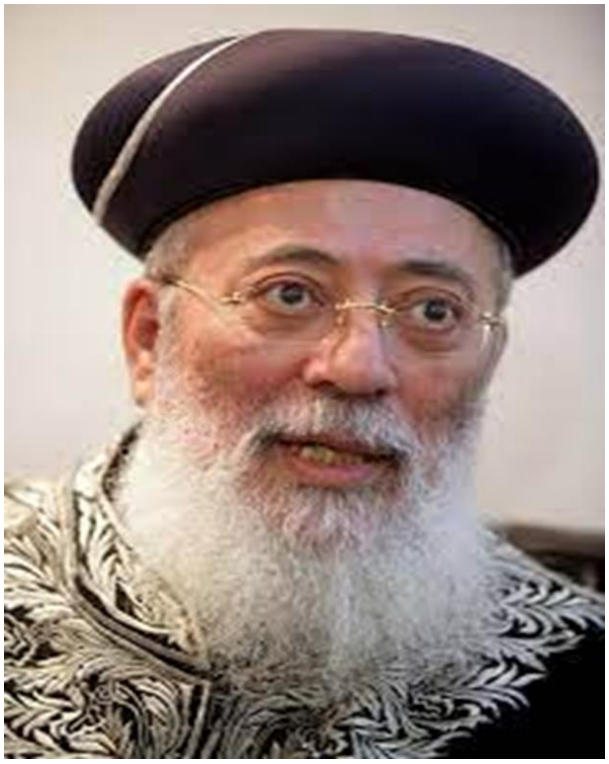

***"On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."*** (Vayikra 12:3)

**R' Aryeh Levin z"l** (1885-1969; known as the "Tzaddik of Yerushalayim" and as the "Prisoners' Rabbi") and **R' Chaim Shmuelevitz z"l** (1902-1979; rosh yeshiva of the Mir Yeshiva) met at a brit milah. There was a long delay in beginning the brit, so R' Shmuelevitz turned to R' Levin and asked, "I am supposed to be at the yeshiva. What should I do?" R' Levin replied: "I cannot tell his honour what to do, but I can tell you a story." This is the story he told:

When I [R' Levin] was younger, I met **R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld z"l** (1848-1932; rabbi of the Eidah Ha'chareidit in Yerushalayim) at a brit milah. There was a long delay in beginning the brit, so I turned to R' Sonnenfeld and asked, "I am supposed to be at the yeshiva. [R' Levin was mashgiach ruchani at Yeshivat Etz Chaim.] What should I do?" R' Sonnenfeld replied: "It is difficult to pass-up an opportunity to meet Eliyahu Ha'navi. It is a rare occasion."

When R' Levin finished his story, R' Shmuelevitz said, "If so, we must wait." (Quoted in Brito L'hodi'am p.92) From the same work: **R' David Cohen z"l** (1887- 1972; instructor at Yeshivat Merkaz Ha'Rav; known as the "Nazir") posed the following question at the brit milah of his grandson (son of R' Shlomo Goren z"l): Why is Eliyahu Ha'navi such a central figure at a brit milah? After all, this is a mitzvah associated with Avraham Avinu, as demonstrated by the blessing we recite--"To bring [the child] into the brit /covenant of Avraham Avinu"!

R' Cohen explained: The covenant that is made at the brit milah is the joining together of the past, the present and the future of the Jewish people. Avraham Avinu represents our past. Those assembled at the brit represent the present. Finally, Eliyahu Ha'navi, the harbinger of the Redemption, represents the future.[*Hamaayan*]



**וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ**

***"On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."*** (12:3) Our Sages say that when a baby cries during his brit milah, it is an auspicious time for prayers to be accepted. Why?

**R' Shlomo Amar** (Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel) explains: We read about Bnei Yisrael who were enslaved in Egypt (Shmot 2:24), "G-d heard their moaning, and G-d remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak, and with Yaakov." Moaning is an expression of feelings without using words. When one's pain is too great to express in words, he moans. This is why Hashem responded to Bnei Yisrael's moaning; it showed that the pain of their enslavement had become unbearable.

R' Amar continues: There is another reason why Hashem responds to Bnei Yisrael's moans. G-d made angels whose job is to keep out the prayers of unworthy individuals. However, angels cannot read a person's thoughts. Thus, a moan, a wordless prayer which might be accompanied by thoughts of repentance, cannot be kept from reaching G-d's Throne. This also is why the sound of the shofar is said to confuse the prosecuting angel. The sound of the shofar carries our thoughts to Heaven without words, so the angels whose

job is to screen prayers cannot evaluate its worth. When the prosecutor sees that Hashem accepts this "prayer," he becomes flustered and is unable to continue.

Likewise, R' Amar concludes, the wordless cry of a baby at the time he enters the Covenant between Hashem and the Jewish People cannot be prevented from reaching the Throne. With it, it can carry the prayers that those assembled for the brit milah offer at that time.

## Mishnas Chayim - Health Concerns

**R' Yitzchak Zilberstein** relates an episode involving a certain individual who required an operation. This man was considered to be in overall decent shape, but as is wont to occur, a certain localized health matter warranted surgical intervention.




It was what happened next that was most unusual. The man recovered nicely from his operation, only to discover... that he required another operation in a different part of his body. The doctors had found something else that needed immediate attention.

As mentioned, this was an otherwise healthy individual. But matters didn't conclude with the second operation either. As soon as that was done, the doctors, upon further examination, determined that he would need yet more operations to address his medical concerns!

The family was obviously distraught – and quite flummoxed. What was going on here? Why would a generally healthy individual suddenly require operation after operation? A relative of theirs, who

happened to be a Gerrer *chassid*, suggested that they consult with the **P'nei Menachem, Rebbe of Ger** at that time. They accepted the advice, and a meeting was arranged.

As soon as the family members finished relating the strange tale to the Rebbe, he turned to them with the following question: "Tell me," he asked. "How are things at your Shabbos table? Is it conducted as it should be?"

Somewhat ashamedly, the family responded in a candid manner. "No," they admitted. "Things are not quite run in the most pristine fashion."

"Do you speak about other people at the meal?" the Rebbe pressed further. "Yes," came the response. "We must admit that it is so." "And do you end up dissecting people's characters at your Shabbos table?""We must confess to this practice as well. Many names are 'brought to the table' over the course of the meal; we dissect the character and deeds of each one."

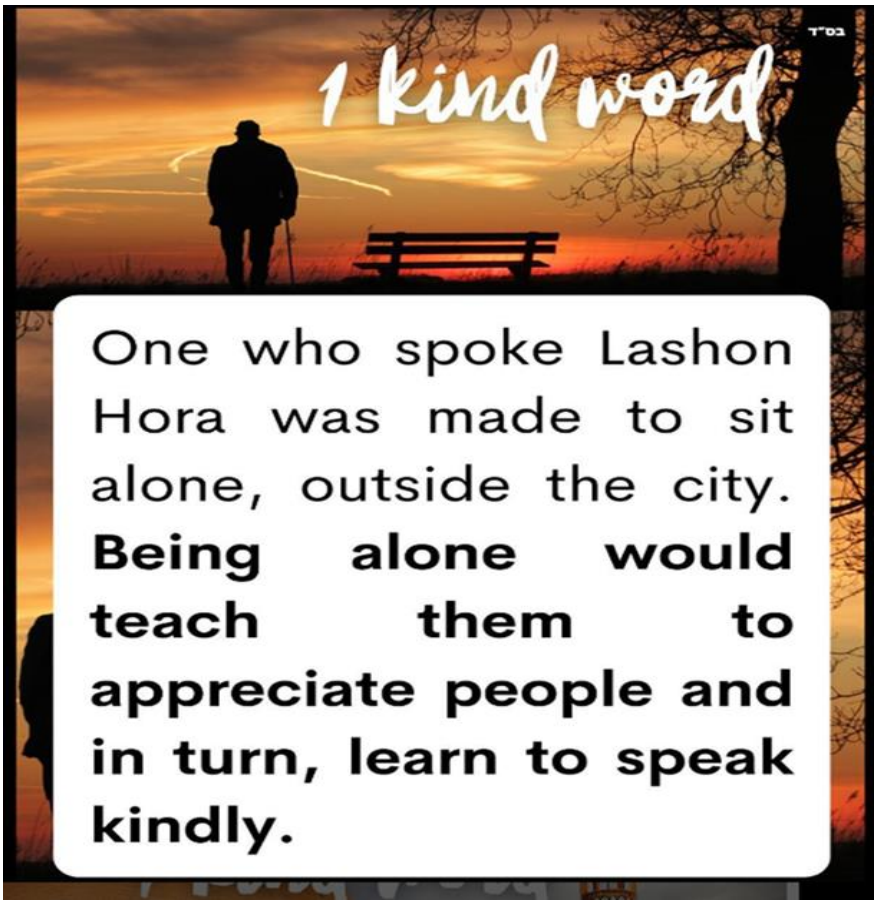
"Well," the Rebbe concluded. "There's your answer. Please refrain from such discussions in the future; speak words of Torah instead. You will see that if you cease your 'dissections,' your father, as well, will no longer need to be 'dissected.'"

And so it was. The family shared the results of their meeting with their father, who agreed that the practice of taking people apart at the Shabbos table would have to stop. Soon thereafter, he himself no longer had to visit the operating table

How was the Rebbe able to so quickly "diagnose" the issue? Indeed, the Gerrer Rebbe was a saintly figure, no doubt on the level of meriting some measure of *ru'ach hakodesh* (Divinely-inspired knowledge). But in this case, it could be that he simply relied on the open teachings of Chazal. In discussing the deleterious effects of *lashon hara* (evil gossip), our sages express the sentiment that the practice is even harmful to one's physical body. This they derive

from the *passuk* that states: אַל־תִּתֵּן אֶת־פִּיךָ לַחֲטִיא אֶת־בְּשָׂרֶךָ... וְחִבֵּל אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ– *"Do not allow your mouth to cause losses to your flesh... and to ruin the work of your hands"* (*Koheles 5:5*). The Medrash (*Koheles Rabbah 5:3*) offers its explanation of this verse: "R' Huna interpreted the verse as referring to *lashon hara*. 'Do not allow your mouth (to cause losses to your flesh)' by speaking evil gossip... '(thereby) ruining the work of your hands'– this refers to organs and limbs of the slanderer's body. Hashem will introduce disease and sickness into (these limbs), causing them to become lost to him."

Indeed, this is one of the major themes of the current *parshiyos*. They feature the severe condition known as *tzara'as*, which, as Chazal relate, comes on account of *lashon hara* (*cf. Arachin 15b*). Thus, we have in stark relief, an extensive elaboration in the Torah – over the course of two *parshiyos* – of the physical debilitation wrought by the nefarious practice of evil gossip.



## Parsha Points to Ponder

The Torah requires (13:45-46) a metzora to dwell outside of the Jewish camp and to call out, "Tamei, tamei!" The Gemora in Moed Katan (5a) explains that this done so that people will pray on his behalf that he should be healed quickly. Why is the metzora required to request other people's prayers more than any other person who is ill? *(Medrash Yehonason Parshas Metzora)*

**Rav Yonason Eibeshutz** answers by citing Rashi's comment (Bereishis 21:17) that the prayer of a sick person is more effective than prayers offered by other people on his behalf. Therefore, other sick people don't need to announce their illnesses so that other people will pray for them. If so, why is the situation of the metzora different? The Zohar HaKadosh explains that a metzora is referred to (e.g. 13:4) as **מוסגר**– literally, closed up – because the Heavens are closed to the prayers of the metzora. As a result, he has no choice but to publicize his situation so that others will pray for him.

## Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings




It states in Mishlei **רוּחַ־ אִישׁ יְכַלְכֵּל מַחֲלֵהוּ וְרוּחַ נְכֵאָה מִי יִשָּׂאֶנָּה** ***A man's spirit can sustain him through illness; But low spirits—who can bear them?*** (18:14).

**The Vilna Gaon zt"l** explains, "When a person is always happy, he will be able to overcome his sickness. Even if he will become ill, chas veshalom, he will annul it with his joy. But when someone is depressed, who can sustain it?" Happy and positive thoughts are helpful for parnassah, for health, and for all one's needs.

**Rebbe Moshe Kobriner zy"a**, toiled his entire life to acquire perfection in emunah. He said, **ואמונה עניתיך** (Tehillim 119) *"I afflicted the emunah."* He struggled so intensely to acquire emunah, it was as if he 'afflicted' the emunah.

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner began his career of perfection in emunah in his youth, after he was hospitalized for a long period in a Lithuanian sanatorium. Before leaving the hospital, he asked the chief doctor, "Is there any remedy that the doctors are certain of?" During his stay in the infirmary, he saw that the doctors were uncertain, and they debated over several issues. Rebbe Moshe Kobriner asked this top doctor whether there was anything at all in the field of medicine that was definite.

The doctor replied, ***"There is one thing that we are certain about. The patient's trust that he will become better, and his happy thoughts are very instrumental for his recovery."*** It was at that moment that Rebbe Moshe Kobriner understood the importance of emunah and bitachon, and from then on, he made it his life's goal, until he reached extremely high levels of emunah and bitachon.

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin zt"l said: It is written, **ואמונתך סביבותיך** Tehillim 89:9). This can be translated as , ***"When one has emunah, it is kiveyachol, like he is hugging Hashem."***

## Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

## The Great Exchange

**The Chovas Halevavos** (Shaar HaKniah 7) reveals that when one speaks lashon hara, he loses his mitzvos, and he gains aveiros. He loses his mitzvos, because his mitzvos are transferred to the person he spoke lashon hara about. And he gains sins, because the sins of the person he slandered, becomes his. The Chovas Halevavos writes, "If someone speaks lashon hara on you… tell him, 'Don't speak about

me, my brother. Have mercy on your merits, so they won't get lost from you, without you recognizing it.



As it has been told about one of the chassidim who discovered that someone spoke lashon hara on him. He sent him a bowl filled with fruits from his country, and attached a note that said: The gifts — your mitzvos and good deeds — that you sent me have arrived. I therefore express my gratitude to you with this bowl…'

Another chassid said, 'Many people will come to the judgment (in heaven) and will be shown their good deeds and will find among their merits many mitzvos that they never performed. They will say, 'We never did these matters.' And they will be answered, 'They were performed by the persons who spoke lashon hara about you.' [Their mitzvos went to you.] And those people, who spoke lashon hara, will discover that they are missing merits and mitzvos that they performed. They will be told, 'You lost them when you spoke about this person, and when you spoke on that person…' Some people will find in their 'book of faults' sins that they never committed. They will complain, 'We never did these aveiros.' They will be answered, 'These were given to you because of ploni and ploni whom you spoke against. [Their sins were given to you]

A great exchange takes place by speaking lashon hara. The person's good goes to the other, and he receives the other's bad. Taking this into consideration, no one will ever desire to speak lashon hara; the loss is just too great.

## Short Vort – Rabbi Moishe Kormornick

**אָדָם כִּי יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אוֹ סַפַּחַת אוֹ בַהֶרֶת וְהָיָה בְעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ לְנֶגַע צָרָעַת וְהוּבָא אֶל אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אוֹ אֶל אַחַד מִבָּנָיו הַכֹּהֲנִים**



*If a person has on the skin of his flesh s'eis or sapachas or vaheres, and it will become a tsaraas affliction on the skin of his flesh, he should be brought to Aharon HaKohen or to one of his sons, the Kohanim (13:2)*

**The Tiferes Yisroel** records that he once asked **Rebbe Akiva Eiger** why there is no such thing as tsoraas today. Rebbe Akiva Eiger answered that he too was puzzled by this question and he has never come up with a suitable answer.

**The Chofetz Chaim** answers that we do in fact have tsaraas even today. However, unlike the tsaraas of the times of the Beis Hamikdash where a Kohen could pronounce a blemish pure or impure, tsaraas today does not afflict one's body; instead it attaches itself and afflicts only one's soul!

The Chofetz Chaim explains that someone who speaks lashon hara may not see any change to his body while he is still alive, but after his death when he is separated from his body, his soul will have nothing to hide the terrible blemishes of tsaraas that his lashon hara caused. Furthermore, there is no greater disgrace and embarrassment that a soul can face, and such a blemished soul will surely not be permitted into Gan Eden, and will instead be forced to stay alone.

The Chofetz Chaim's words are terrifying, especially considering the fact that today we seemingly do not have any means of becoming purified from tsaraas since we do not have a Kohen or a Beis Hamikdash. Moreover, the Gemora tells us that to some degree

everyone has transgressed the prohibition of improper speech; therefore, according to the Chofetz Chaim's words it would seem that everyone will be sitting outside of Gan Eden without any means of rectification!?

The answer to this question is that whereas in the past, the people needed to suffer from their tsaraas and then a Kohen would be required to declare their purity once the tsaraas had gone, today, explains the Chofetz Chaim, all we need is teshuva.

Therefore, although it seems that since we do not see our tsaraas we are in a worse position than in the days of the Beis Hamikdash, in fact, we have an opportunity that they didn't. By doing teshuva for speaking lashon hara and a commitment not to speak it in the future we can quite literally guarantee our places in the World to Come without the suffering that the Jewish People used to face as a result of becoming afflicted with physical tsaraas. May we all merit to reach this level.

## Divrei Torah, Ba`er Heitev. באר היטב פרש"י בע' לשון. דברי תורה, שמחה וחיזוק.

וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַנֶּגַע בְּעוֹר־הַבָּשָׂר וְשֵׂעָר בַּנֶּגַע הָפַךְ לָבָן וּמַרְאֵה הַנֶּגַע עָמֹק מֵעוֹר בְּשָׂרוֹ נֶגַע צָרַעַת הִוא וְרָאָהוּ הַכֹּהֵן וְטִמֵּא אֹתוֹ ***And the priest shall look on the disease in the skin of the flesh; and if the hair in the plague has turned white, and the disease looks deeper than the skin of his flesh, it is a disease of leprosy; and the priest shall look on him, and pronounce him unclean***. {Vayikroh 13:3}

If a person sins in his youth, there is hope that in his older years he will repent; but "if the hair in his affliction has turned white" - if he continues to sin year after year, even after his hair has turned white, "he is impure" and there is no hope for him. – • **Tiferes Yonoson.**

## Anger – Sha'arei Eliyahu



Our Sages teach us in Pirkei Avot (Chapter 4, Mishnah 4): "Rabbi Levitas of Yavneh says: One must be exceedingly low of spirit." The lowness of spirit mentioned here refers to humility, for anyone who is not humble, besides for transgressing the sin of haughtiness, which is a grave sin in and of itself, this can also lead one to transgress all of the sins of the Torah. One of the sins to which haughtiness can lead a person is anger, which is a repulsive character trait indeed.

Our Sages have taught (Nedarim 22b), "One who is angry does not even consider the presence of Hashem important," for when one is angry, one acts completely out of character and acts in ways that never would have occurred to him had he been in his right state of mind.

For instance, if one starts to argue with one's wife or other family members, this can sometimes cause one to say inappropriate things that he never would have said otherwise. All this was said in a brief moment of insanity. As a result of the hurtful and insulting things one says, one will need to work for numerous days and nights to repair the damage he has caused. The Sefer Kol Bo (Chapter 41, quoted by Maran Ha'Bet Yosef at the end of Chapter 299) records an incident that once occurred with a man who was smitten with boils from head to toe and whose entire body was racked by sores and fresh wounds.

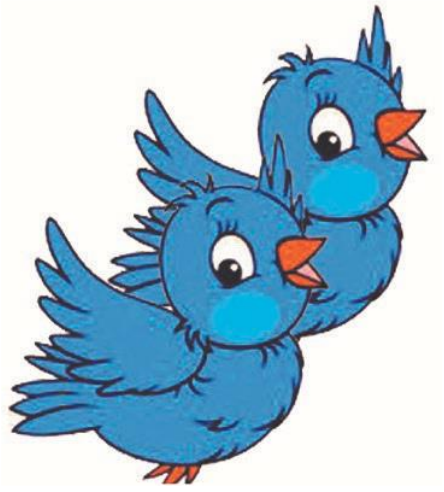
Once, his wife went on a certain Motza'ei Shabbat to draw water from the well and warm it up for drinking as was customary for all the women in the neighbourhood, for the Gemara teaches us

(Shabbat 119b), "Hot water on Motza'ei Shabbat heals." At this particular time, water from "Miriam's Well" (which moves around from place to place) found its way into this particular well.

The woman filled up her jug with water from this well and started home. Due to the weight of the jug of water, the woman's arrival home was delayed. When she finally arrived, her husband become very agitated about her lateness and screamed at her; she became was so scared that the jug dropped from her shoulder and the water spilled in all directions. Only a few drops splashed on the man's skin and wherever they did, the boils there vanished and the skin under them became like as smooth as a baby's. Had he not become angry, he would have been able to drink that water and become completely healed.

We see from this story how terrible anger is, for it can remove a person from this world and it can cause a person to do things that, will be to his own detriment. Thus, one must take care to slowly remove anger from within himself until one finds himself calm and tranquil in all of his actions; this will serve to bring peace between one and the rest of one's household.

## Parsha Thoughts – by Mordechai Sapoznick



The **פְּסוּק** says that someone who got **צָרַעַת** for speaking lashon hora had to bring two birds to the Kohein to become **טָהוֹר**.

Why did he have to specifically bring birds?

The **ילקוט האזובי** answers that when someone speaks lashon hora, his words fly in the air from his mouth to someone's ears. - He was able to get a **כַּפָּרָה** with birds that also fly in the air. **[ספר פרשה פשעטיל]**

## Rabbi Y Richtman - A Real Simcha



The Gemarah in Kesuvos (8a) paskens that at the seuda of a bris milah the special brachos of "shehasimcha b'mono" are not mentioned. The Gemarah explains that this is because the baby is in pain, and therefore the Simcha is somewhat diminished. This is difficult to understand. If a father passes away and leaves his son a large inheritance, the halacha is that the child makes two brachos. One bracha is "dayan haemes" over the death of his father and also a "hatov v'hametev" on receiving the inheritance. Why is this situation any different from the case of the pain of the baby? There is both simcha and pain; why does the pain here take away from the simcha?

**The Otzar Margolus** answers that there is a simple difference between the two situations. If one person experiences both happiness and tragedy together, then he can make a bracha on both feelings. However, by a bris, while the father feels joyous the baby only feels pain. One cannot make a statement of simcha if someone else is going through pain and not feeling any Simcha.

**The Vilna Gaon, R' Eliyohu of Vilna ZT"L** wrote in a letter to his wife: "I implore you, do not go to shul on Shabbos. Do not fall into the trap of Lashon Hara which tends to occur when a crowd of women get together. Better to daven at home."

## Sanctification of the Kohen



"There seems to be a contradiction in the pesukim . One time the metzora is brought to the Kohen (14:2) while in the next pasuk (14:3) it is written that the Kohen goes out to the metzora. The proper understanding of these verses is that it is really proper for the metzora to go to the kohen but since the metzora must remain in isolation; the Kohen must travel to see him. In deference to the Kohen's honour, however as soon as he reaches the area where the metzora is staying, the Kohen stops walking and the metzora approaches him.

We learn from here that there is special honour that is due to Kohanim. A story has been told which illustrates this concept.

Once, **R'Chaim Brisker and R' Zelig the Dayan of Brisk** were walking toward a certain building in Brisk when they happened to meet the **Chofetz Chaim**, who had come to speak to R' Chaim. As they approached the entrance there was a debate regarding who should enter the building first. The Chofetz Chaim said R' Chaim, as the Rav of the city should go first followed by R' Zeilg the city's Dayan. As a guest in town, the Chofetz Chaim felt he should enter last. R' Chaim, however, refused to go before the Chofetz Chaim. After a few minutes of standing outside, R' Chaim said 'I have the solution. You (Chofetz Chaim ) should go first, since you are a Kohen, then I will go because I am a Levi, then R' Zelig because he is a yisroel.

## Mrs. Devorah Stieglitz - The Shabbos Walk

***והיה בעור בשרו לנגע צרעת And it will become a tzaraat affliction on the skin of his flesh 13:2***

Maya, born in Russia and raised by her Communist parents, was unfortunately never told that she was Jewish. Being taken to Church by her father and mother, she grew up knowing a life fairly distant from Judaism. However, as Maya turned thirteen and the Iron Curtain fell, her parents decided to move to America. Settling in Flatbush, a community heavily made up of Orthodox Jews, her parents looked to receive some financial support. Life was difficult and the family was in search of community assistance.

After looking into the matter, they were told that they would in fact be entitled to such financial aid with one condition: they send their daughter to a Jewish school. Greatly in need of establishing themselves and being provided such amenities, the parents agreed to send Maya to the Bais Yaakov of Flatbush.

As Maya began learning about Yiddishkeit, she instantly gravitated towards it. Tremendously inspired and driven to learn more and do more, Maya grew significantly in her knowledge of Torah and observance of mitzvot. Being given modest clothing from her friends, she soon looked like any other religious girl. Pleased with her own spiritual growth, Maya was quite content with her life situation. But her parents were not.

Now fourteen years old and earnestly learning about Judaism, her parents could no longer handle it. Pressuring her to refrain from immersing herself in Judaism, they offered her an ultimatum: lighten up on her commitment to Judaism or leave the house. Daily fights and tantrums embittered the lives of her parents and by now Maya was not eating at home. And so, with the food not up to any kosher standard and constant pandemonium present in the house, Maya was asked to leave for good. And she did.

One Shabbat afternoon, as Maya was staying at a friend's house, she decided she would perform an act of chesed and visit an elderly woman. As she happily began walking down the street in Flatbush, however, a nearby driver lost control of his car and hit a light pole. Colliding head on with the light pole, the impact caused the pole to come crashing down. But it didn't land simply on the ground; it took Maya down with it and landed on her arm.



Now stuck underneath a gigantic light pole, Maya was in excruciating pain. Hatzalah immediately rushed to the scene and began tending to Maya. Doing their utmost to lift the pole off her arm and salvage her arm's manoeuvrability, it was too late. The pole was heavily lying on her arm and crushing it. And so, the final decision was made to amputate her arm. Otherwise, concluded the Hatzalah members, her life was endangered.

Waking up hours later in the hospital, Maya was discernibly groggy. Feeling as if her arm was still there, she internally sensed that she was moving something. However, in reality, that was not the case.

As she awoke and remained motionless in bed, her father stood in front of her. And then he began to yell. "This is the G-d you believe in! You fight with us, leave the house, keep Shabbat, and this is what He does to you? How do you understand this? Why is G-d doing this to you?"

Hearing such roaring words nearly moments after she opened her eyes, Maya was traumatized yet poised. She replied to her father, "Papa, if I would understand everything Hashem does to me in my life, then I would be Him. The fact however is that I don't always understand what He does, and that goes to show me just how perfect

He is." Responding with such powerful yet honest words as a mere fourteen-year-old, Maya understood that this event in her life was somehow for her good. It was what G-d wanted and she was going to accept it.

Years later, Maya was now looking to get married. Going out with one boy after the next, the fact that she had a plastic arm did not bode too well for her. Although she was a sweet girl with a vibrant personality, finding her bashert was an elongated process. Finally, however, she made a decision which was the beginning of a life-changing process. Contacting the Hatzalah member who had years earlier helped save her life, she began to live with the family. Becoming a sister to the other girls in the family and herself a daughter to the husband and wife, Maya slowly but surely began to feel that she had a home and support system. All that she now awaited was to build a home of her own with a family.

And then came the fateful day. As the Hatzalah member who had once saved her life was out and about one day, he was introduced to a brilliant young man. Talking for a while with him, he began to sense that here was a prospective match for Maya. And indeed, after meeting Maya and getting to know each other, they planned on getting married.

Today, Maya happily lives with her husband and family in Israel. If not for that one Shabbat afternoon when that life-altering incident occurred, perhaps today she would be in a very different place. But now, after years of spiritual growth coupled with hardships and misfortunes, Maya stands as a proud religious woman raising beautiful Jewish children.

*While Maya could have given up and buckled under pressure many times throughout her upward climb in Judaism, she remained steadfast in her dedication through and through. Notwithstanding the most debilitating of setbacks, she surged forward in life trusting that Hashem would take care of her every step along the*

*way. And indeed, He did. The same lesson is to be learned from tzaraat. Those experiences in life viewed as an "affliction" are in fact to be taken as the most opportunistic times for growth. For Maya, that very sorrowful Shabbat afternoon became the beginning of a long journey that today has paid unbelievable dividends for her and her wonderful family.*



## Why Do Women Bring A Chatos? - By B Rose

Our Posuk says "And when the days of her purification are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for an Olah, and a young dove, or a turtle-dove, for a Chatos". The obvious question is… Why does a woman who gave birth have to bring a Korbon Chatos – a sin offering? What sin has she committed to require her to bring such a Korbon?

Some Meforshim explain, since during her labour pains, she might have made an oath to never have another baby, she therefore brings a Korbon to atone for that oath and nullify it.

**Kli Yakar** offers a different explanation. He says the atonement is not for this woman but rather for Chavah – the first woman. Since pain from pregnancy and labour is a punishment for Chavah's sin, eating from the Aitz HaDaas, this woman brings a Korban now to atone Chava's sin. After going through all the pain of her pregnancy and labour she wants to bring an end to this suffering and brings a Korbon for Chava's Aveira.

## Lone stranger Written by Rabbi Daniel Leeman



One of the main causes of the Biblical disease tzarass was evil speech. Part of the repentance program for a metzora (suffering from tzarass) was that he would have to "sit alone". But surely, he should instead be doing the opposite: learning how to integrate into society?

Furthermore, we are told that "on the day of his purification he will go to the Kohen" (for instructions of his repentance program). But the question is asked, Why is it referred to as "the day of his purification" if a series of repentance is specified afterwards.



Finally, forbidden speech is generally called 'lashon hara', literally translated as 'evil language'. But 'lashon hara' can include various types of speech even if they are not actually evil.

Indeed, entire volumes have been dedicated to discussing them! In fact, under some circumstances even saying something good could be within the category of 'evil language'! So why then is forbidden language called 'EVIL language'?

A middle-aged couple had been married a long time but had still not merited to have children. They tried everything and were almost ready to give up hope, but as a last effort, the husband – who we will call Ploni – sought the advice of a Rabbi. The Rabbi asked him if perhaps someone was bearing grudge against him.

Ploni nearly fainted. Indeed, there was somebody whose forgiveness he had to seek. But would he forgive him after all these years? Would he even be able to find him after all these years?

It took significant amount of extensive, even fanatic research, but eventually Ploni found the address of his old classmate. It was in a rundown part of town, and the house was no more than a hovel. Looking through the broken window, he noticed what appeared to be the bedroom: there was a single bed in the corner, the rest of the room a complete mess. He knocked on the door and waited a while. He knocked again, and then began thinking of the contrast to his own spacious home, well kept by his faithful wife. His thoughts were suddenly interrupted by a movement of the door.

What do you want?" a broken voice called to him. "I am an old friend of yours. Can I come in to speak with you?" The door closed.

It took a number of efforts until the door finally opened and there stood a broken man in tatters. Could this really be his old classmate? The man turned to clear the floor and make a pathway for his guest – and there was his limp. Yes – it really was his classmate.

Ploni profusely apologised for all the pain that he had caused. In tears he related how he had also been suffering in his own life, not meriting children, and what the Rabbi had told him. He begged and begged until he was finally forgiven.

A short while later Ploni and his wife received their long-awaited good news – but Ploni never forget the effect of his words upon his classmate. - Who can possibly predict what his actions and words will ultimately cause?

"Sitting alone", the metzora not only has a chance for general reflection of his evil language, but it also gives him a chance to taste what he might ultimately be causing the person he spoke about. Even

if his words do not physically isolate a person, evil speech can at least emotionally 'isolate' them to some extent.

Therefore, when the metzora simply leaves seclusion, he has hopefully learned and internalised this message and is already (largely) considered "pure" once again.

'Evil language' might not be 'evil' words per se when spoken, but the results could ultimately be devastatingly evil – and so Divine wisdom dictates that it is always called 'evil'.

## Retrieving What Was Lost

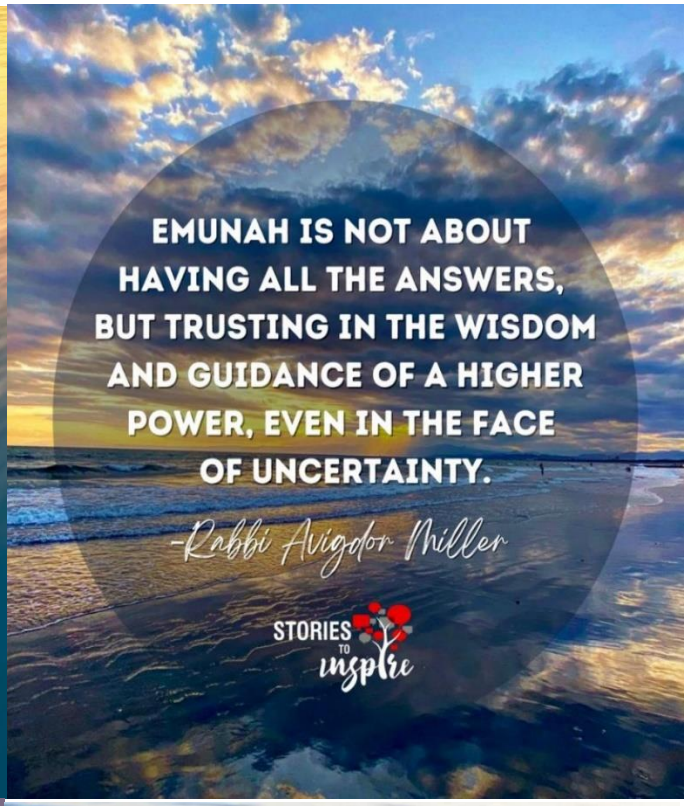
Once the Kohen determines that the blemishes that have developed on a person skin are tzara'as, there is a process of teshuva that the afflicted person must go through to be cleansed of his sin. After the whole process is completed, the Torah writes "this is the Torah of the metzora on his day of purity".

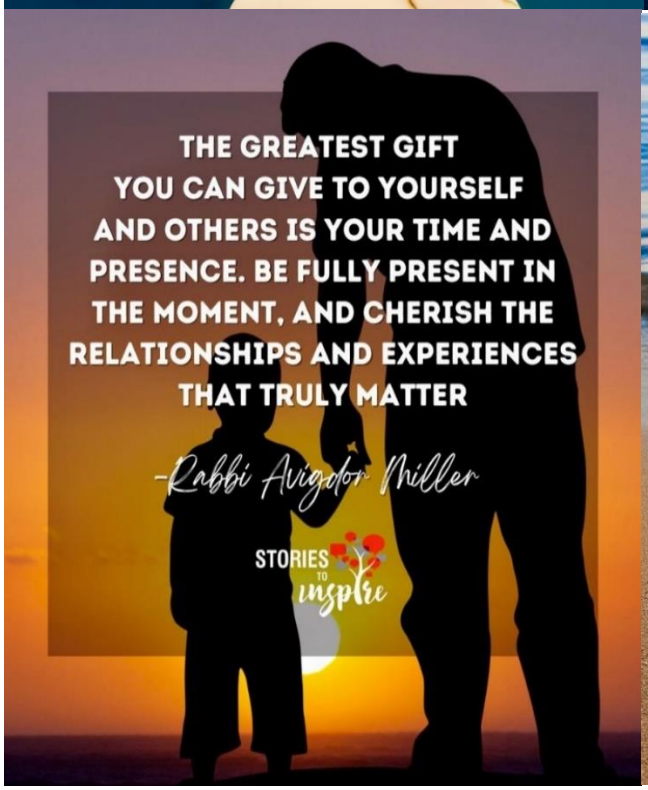
**The Chida** asks why it is written the "Torah of the meztora" when the pasuk could simply say "this is the purity of the ….."? There is a well-known fact that when one speaks lashon hara he does himself a terrible disservice. All of his Torah and mitzvos get transferred over to the subject of his slander, and the speaker acquires all of the sins of the victim.

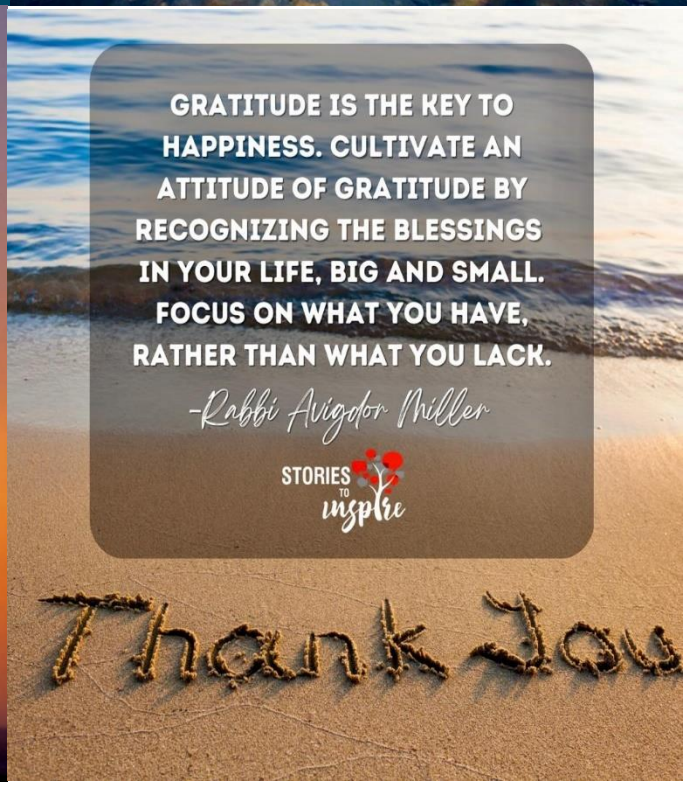
However, once the speaker does teshuva and asks forgiveness from the subject of his words, then all of his mitzvos and Torah are returned to him. As it states in the pasuk "this is the Torah [which he had lost through his sin and which is returned to him] on the day of his purity".

***"A door not open to good deeds is open to the doctor." ~~ Song of Songs R.***




***"Your potential is not determined by your circumstances, but by your mindset. Cultivate a positive mindset and believe in your own capabilities." – rabbi Yitzchak Hutner.***

## A Father Always Wants His Son Back - Daniel Fine



The opening Rashi of the sedra notes that just like man was created after all the animals, so too are we given certain laws [leprosy here] after the animal details were given in the korbanos sections. But of all the 'human' laws, why speak about tzara'as first?

In creation, it was man who completed the creation of the world and is thus the most important and beloved member of creation to HaShem. HaShem wants us to complete His world by doing mitzvos and serving Him. And in putting the tzara'as portion first, the message is to remember that as much afflictions as we might get, we are still the most important members of creation and are HaShem's Children.

And so, HaShem wants us back, He wants us to commit to Him – the punishments and afflictions are therefore for our good. That is why tzara'as is put first in the human laws here so we can make that parallel with the creation of the world and realise that a Father wants his sons back, no matter how many things the son does wrong.

## Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger




***"One who acts humbly is hardly acting. Man is – in truth- a lowly, pathetic creature…" ~ Harav Menachem Mendel of Skurnowitz.***

## Zera Shimshon

***כָּל־יְמֵי אֲשֶׁר הַנֶּגַע בּוֹ יִטְמָא טָמֵא הוּא בָּדָד יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה מוֹשָׁבוֹ All the days that the disease is upon him etc. he shall dwell in isolation etc. outside the camp*** *(13:46)*

The Gemara says (Erchin 16b), that the reason the Metzora must sit alone is because the affliction of Tzar'as is due to his speaking of Lashon Hara. When a person speaks Lashon Hara he creates divisions between people. Therefore, his punishment is that he must sit alone to feel the same pain he caused others. Regarding Shalom, peace between people, which is the rectification and flipside of Lashon Hara, the Zera Shimshon writes the following.

The Mishna says (Avos 1:12), Be from the students of Aharon. Love peace and run after it (literally: persecute it). Love mankind and bring them closer to Torah. The Zera Shimshon asks - why does the Mishna use the word **רודף** to express how one should pursue Shalom. The word **רודף** literally means to 'persecute' peace? If the Mishna wishes to impart the lesson that one should run after peace, there are many words with a more positive connotation that could have been used instead of the word **רודף**?



The Zera Shimshon answers with the following Medrash. The Medrash says (Bereishis Rabba 88:5) that when Hashem decided to create man the angels were divided about creating this being. The trait of Kindness said that man should be created since he will do acts of kindness. Truth said he should not be created since he is full of falsehood etc. The trait of Shalom said that man should not be created since he is all about quarrelling. Hashem threw

Truth to the ground (dismissed his opinion). The Zera Shimshon asks - why was Truth dismissed and not Shalom, they both said that man should not be created?

The Zera Shimshon answers that when there is a lack of Truth, there still can be Shalom. However, if there is no Shalom, there is no Truth, since when there is no Shalom, Hashem removes His presence from amongst us and there can be no Truth in such a situation. Even so, Shalom was against the creation of man. Therefore, when people love peace and try to increase it, they are essentially disproving Shalom's claim that man is nothing but quarrel and should not be created. This is why, when the Mishna says that one should love Shalom, the Mishna uses the term **רודף שלום**, which means to 'persecute peace' because by loving peace and running after it, we are in fact persecuting Shalom by proving it wrong.

This is why the Mishna continues to say that one should love all of mankind. The Mishna could have said that one should love his friends or his neighbours or his fellow Jews. Instead, the Mishna chooses another interesting term which seems to include all of mankind, even non-Jews. The Zera Shimshon explains that by perusing Shalom, one shows his belief that all of mankind is worthy of being created since mankind is not all about quarrel. The original question was about the creation of all of mankind, which was in danger of not being created due to its nature to fight. Thus, when one works to increase Shalom, it shows that all of mankind is worthy of being created and given the chance to prove its worth.

**R' Yankel Taub would say:** ***"The tongue is compared to an arrow. Unlike a sword that has been drawn and can be returned to it's sheath, an arrow, once shot towards it's mark, can never be returned."***

## Rabbi Avi Matmon - Celebrating Marriage

***חתן נותנין לו כל שבעת ימי המשתה The Kohen does not examine or declare tzaraat on a groom during his seven days of festive celebration (Moed Katan 7b)***

In Parashat Tazria we read how one suspected of being stricken with the spiritual malady of tzaraat was required to leave the Jewish camp and remain quarantined until a week later when he would be further examined by the Kohen. In the event that he in fact possessed tzaraat, he remained isolated until it disappeared, at which point he would undergo a purification process as detailed in next week's Parsha.

There was however an exception to this rule: a groom within seven days after marriage. While the determination that one possessed tzaraat needed to be pronounced by the Kohen, in the event that one was a chattan, the Kohen would simply avoid visiting him. In this way, the chattan's condition would remain in abeyance until the completion of his seven days of festivities (Sheva Berachot) and only then would he be examined.

Dealing with a chattan in such a manner is particular intriguing. Being that an affliction of tzaraat bespeaks of negative behavior and is something which could hamper his future relationship, why would we let the newlyweds carry on with their celebration and married life before treating the issue? Why don't we require that the chattan sit in isolation until he repents and improves his character flaws? What is so special about Sheva Berachot that pushes aside the normal procedure of investigating a potential metzora?

The concept of marriage, referred to as Nisuin, is multi-faceted. On the one hand, the word "Nisuin" stems from the word "Nasa," meaning to carry. The essence of marriage is the carrying of responsibility toward the other spouse and the family. One must brunt the burdens and worries of his family and insure their well-being and stability. At the same time, Nisuin also relates to the word

"Mas'eit," a gift. Aside from being a tremendous responsibility, marriage is undoubtedly the greatest gift. It is a gift the husband gives the wife, the wife gives the husband and Hashem gives them both.

Additionally, the experience of marriage is transformative and uplifting. It is something which "Nasa'o," elevates and raises the hearts of those involved to levels unable to be reached otherwise. And lastly, it invests the husband and wife with a pristine status, similar to Nesiim (princes), and forever catapults them to euphoric heights that only the institution of marriage can offer. For this reason, we dance around the chattan and kallah in recognition of their new steps toward a life-changing endeavour.



"We are behind you," we tell them, "and will always be there to support you every step of the way." Seeing such a magnificent display of love and warmth from so many of their friends and family boosts the confidence of the chattan and kallah and immeasurably enhances their joy.

Anti-social behaviour is often exhibited when one is unhappy with themselves. Feeling underappreciated by society, one grows depressed and cowers in isolation. At times, such estranged feelings can even engender negative judgments of others. It is for this reason that at the very incipient stages of marriage we forego on isolating the afflicted chattan from his festivities and instead allow him to continue celebrating with friends and family. The special attention he receives during his Sheva Berachot uplifts his spirits and therapeutically supports any deflated feelings he may inwardly feel.

It is thus hoped that the very presence of other people cheering him on and providing encouraging words will transform his behaviour and change his personality. By making him feel important and empowering him with self-confidence, he will be spurred to improve any character flaws and mend his ways.

From the moment the chattan and kallah joyously walk back from the chuppah through the next seven days of Sheva Berachot, actions and words which express good-will are conveyed to them. They are made to feel valued and esteemed and be reminded of their wonderful life ahead filled with responsibility and contentment. Upon experiencing such a blissful occasion, a chattan is undeniably in a better position to perform teshuva.

Chazal therefore saw that the best antidote to remedying the chattan of his malaise is in fact having people surround him as opposed to sequestering him in seclusion. Such is the transformative effect of social support and the far-reaching impact exhilarating dancing and singing can have on another.

## Why I Matter

**וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהִנֵּה כִסְּתָה הַצָּרַעַת אֶת־כָּל־בְּשָׂרוֹ וְטִהַר אֶת־הַנָּגַע כֻּלּוֹ הָפַךְ לָבָן טָהֹור הוּא**

One of the peculiarities of tzaraas is the fact that someone whose body is fully engulfed in the disease is considered tahor (ritually pure). Tzaraas is an affliction that is commonly misidentified as leprosy. In fact, whereas leprosy is a medical condition, tzaraas is the physical manifestation of a spiritual deficiency.

The Torah lists a number of blemishes and blotches which would appear on various areas of the body which, if identified by a trained Kohen (priest) to be tzaraas was declared to be tzaraas, would render the bearer tamei (ritually compromised) and he or she would be sent out of the local population center to a remote location, where

the bearer would contemplate his deeds, attempting to identify that which he did which brought G-d to deliver this malady.

The most common cause was lashon hara (slanderous speech). But the Torah notes that if "the Kohen shall look and the affliction covers his entire flesh then he shall declare the affliction to be pure, having turned completely white, it is pure. And on the day that healthy flesh appears in it, it shall be contaminated." (13:13-14) How is it that partially afflicted he is impure but completely diseased he is pure? This is the nature of a spiritual illness.



**The Chofetz Chaim** (Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen Kagan of Radin; 1838-1933; author of basic works in Jewish law, philosophy and ethics and renowned for his saintly qualities) explained that this illness is consistent with G-d's revulsion for haughtiness, as stated in Mishlei (16:5), "The haughty of heart are an abomination of G-d," and His appreciation of humility.

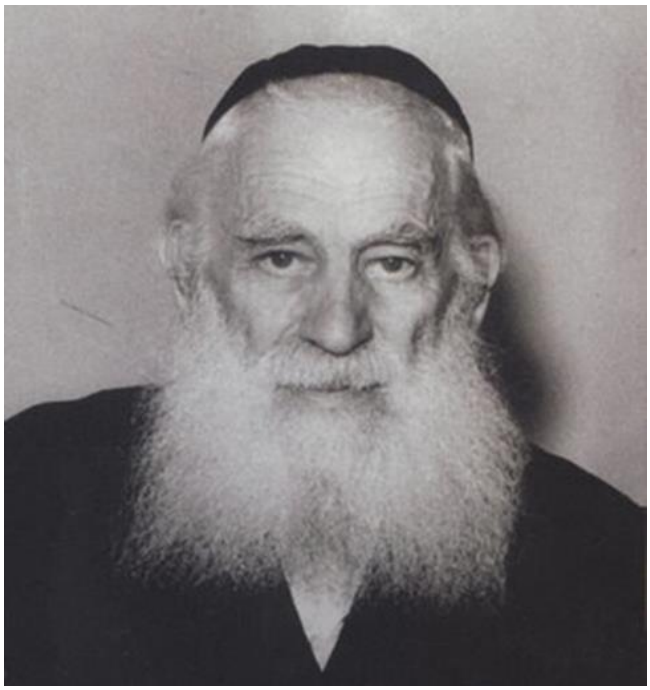
The root cause for a willingness to speak derogatorily of others is the feeling that the negative traits or acts of others makes the speaker superior to him. Rabbi Kagan elucidates that the tzaraas sufferer is exiled, not even allowed to reside with other others who have tzaraas, to humble him as he considers his great sin and repents. This is necessary for someone who bears only a few splotches of tzaraas, who without being exiled and forced to spend a week in absolute solitude, would feel no significant consequence to being tamei and could, therefore, dismiss it as irrelevant. The exclusion from society is a necessary component to appreciating the Divine displeasure and creating the humility that is key to repentance. But for one who is completely afflicted, from the top of

his head to the tip of his toe, there is no dismissing the situation; therefore, exile is extraneous and unneeded, thus the Torah classifies him as tahor.

We no longer have tzaraas as a reminder that G-d maintains an interest in our spiritual success, but He does send us reminders on a regular basis. They may not be as obvious as turning lily white from top to bottom, but they are there…we just need to look for them. [*Rabbi Pinchas Avruch - Kol HaKollel]*

# SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS TAZRIA

## A Thought on Unintentional Inspiration By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon



My parents settled in Detroit, Michigan, in 5714 (1953). At that time, many prominent Rabbonim would come there to raise money. One of them was Rabbi Yosef Kahaneman, the Rov of Ponevezh and founder of many yeshivos.

One day, as the minyan concluded davening Shacharis and the people left, Rav Kahaneman sat down to learn. Suddenly, he heard someone davening with tremendous emotion. Initially, he thought that this man was experiencing an extremely difficult situation and was pouring out his heart to Hashem, beseeching for His help and mercy.

Although he was there to raise money for his institutions, Rav Kahaneman felt it was his duty to help another Jew in distress. He waited for almost an hour until the individual concluded davening. He

then went over to him and said, "Reb Yid, how much money do you need to cover your immediate expenses? I am willing to help you."

The Jew looked at him in bewilderment; he didn't understand what he was talking about. Rav Kahaneman saw his perplexed expression and thought that perhaps the man was too embarrassed to disclose his situation. So he continued: "I heard your heartfelt tefillos to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, and I said to myself, 'Hashem sent me to this shul today for a reason, and I believe the reason is to help you.'"

The Jew replied, "I don't understand. Boruch Hashem, my family is healthy. I have nachas from them and we are covering the expenses. I don't need any assistance."

Rav Kahaneman persisted: "If that is so, please tell me, why were you pouring out your soul to the Aibishter? If everything is good and there are no problems, why were you crying like a child?"

The Jew replied, "Today is a legal holiday, and my place of employment is closed. Since I have a few extra hours, I decided to connect myself to Hashem, and the way one connects to Hashem is through davening."

Hearing this, Rav Kahaneman recognized that my father was not just one of the only Jews in Michigan who did not cut his beard, but rather he was a person of tremendous depth. He began to carry a conversation with him. When he heard that my father *shechted* his own chickens, he requested that he be invited to eat in our house, saying, "I am confident that I can rely on your *shechitah*."

Years later, my brother, Rabbi Gershon Avtzon, heard from one of Rav Kahaneman's students that when he returned to *Eretz Yisroel*, he was full of praise, stating: "After meeting such a Jew, I knew there is a future for Judaism in America."

## The Ultimate Guarantor *written by Jack E. Rahmey.*

Around forty years ago, a wealthy Jewish philanthropist in London suddenly lost his fortune. He did not tell anyone what happened, because he did not want those in need to hesitate to approach him to ask for help. He loved giving, and he did not want to stop even after his financial collapse.

The man went to a prominent wealthy Jew in Manchester and requested a loan so that he could continue helping people. He explained that he has a number of investments that would be maturing in two years, and so he asked for a two-year loan of 2 million British pounds, which was roughly equivalent to $4 million dollars.

The man was prepared to provide the loan to the philanthropist but asked if he had a guarantor for the loan. The man from London explained that he'd rather not give any guarantors because he did not want anyone to know about his reversal of fortune. Therefore he preferred borrowing the money without a guarantor.

"*You are asking me to do the impossible,*" the man from Manchester said. "*How can I lend you so much money without a guarantor?*"

"*I am doing this I'shem Shamayim,*" the man explained, "*in order to help people. I know Hashem can be the Guarantor.*"

The man from Manchester, with complete faith in Hashem, responded, "*You are correct. Because this money is needed I'shem Shamayim, we will name Hashem as the Guarantor.*" And he gave him the sum he requested!

Two years later, the man from London returned to Manchester – without the money. He explained that he did not yet have the funds to repay the loan, and that he needed another two months. The man from Manchester began thinking that he would never see the money again, and so he went into his private room and spoke to Hashem.

"*You are the Guarantor for this loan,*" he said, "*and the time has come for it to be repaid. But I don't want the money. I have a daughter who is already of age and has not been able to find a shidduch. Hashem, please send her husband and I will consider this as a payment of the loan.*"

The man's daughter was engaged less than three weeks later. He also closed a profitable business deal that yielded almost the complete sum he had lent to the man from London.

Two-and-a-half months later, the man from London returned, ready to repay the loan. But the lender refused, explaining that Hashem, the "*Guarantor*" had already repaid the debt in full, and the man did not owe him anything. But the man from London insisted, saying that he did not take free gifts and was intent on repaying the money he had borrowed.

An argument ensued between them as each party was insisting that the other keep the money. Remarkably, they brought the case to a *beit din* in Israel. One of the judges who presided over the case, Rabbi Zickerman, who related this story, said that the judges were all in tears and overcome with emotion upon seeing the honestly and sincerity of these two Jewish men.




They eventually ruled that the money should be returned to the "Guarantor," to Hashem. It happened to be a *shemittah* year, and so the money was given to a special fund set up to assist farmers in Israel who observed *shemittah.*

Both these men put their faith in Hashem: the one who borrowed the money in order to continue giving *tzedakah,* and the lender who gave the loan relying on Hashem as the Guarantor. And Hashem did

not let them down; He was there ready to catch them. As David HaMelech says (*Tehillim* 25:2), *My Hashem, I trust in You, so I shall not be shamed."*

May we all be able to make sacrifices with our heart in order to get closer to Hashem and may we always have the same enthusiasm for our mitzvot and tzedakot weather we have a gain or not. May we also learn from Hashem to be careful with our neighbor's honour, no matter what his financial situation is.



## The Legacy of Rabbi Mordechai Dubin, Zt"l By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

Rabbi Mordechai Dubin was a well-known devoted follower (Chassid) of the Sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe; Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak. He was an extremely talented man and at one period of his life he held two high positions in the Lithuanian government that he used his to help save the Rebbe's life, free him from communist prison and get him out of Russia.

But his talents made him a target of communist suspicion as well that brought him several close encounters with death. Here is one of them.

Once he was arrested for no clear reason and imprisoned in one of the several thousand 'correctional' facilities in communist Russia. His cell was a dim, cold, concrete room with eight or nine other 'criminals' Death waited every second, the air smelled of it and it reflected in everyone's dulled eyes.

Suddenly the iron door of his cell opened and an official shouted, "DUBIN!"

Two guards stood at the open door behind the official who took one step into the room and was reading from a paper. "Mordechai Dubin? On your feet! Come with us!" Was this the end? Would he never

see his family or friends again? He stood upright, walked to the door. It was pointless to argue or to plead. He had nothing to fear - death would be a macabre blessing to end the cold, bitter uncertainty.



Exactly the opposite, his only chance was to show them that he was not afraid, fear would only draw their contempt.

He said words of Torah by heart as he walked down the corridor and with every step he became filled with a strange pride. He was far superior to his captors. They were animals, worse than animals, living a lie; they were really dead. But he was attached to life… to infinite, undying truth. He was a follower of a true servant of the Creator; the only man in the Russia to defy Stalin; the Lubavitcher Rebbe!

"DUBIN!" Another voice broke his thoughts. He looked up to see he was standing near the main entrance of the penitentiary. They would probably take him outside and shoot him. Just throw him in the snow somewhere for the wolves and dogs to drag him away.

"YOUR NAME IS MORDECHAI DUBIN?" - "Yes" he answered firmly.

A smile came across the face of the officer speaking to him. "Congratulations" He said as he handed him an envelope "Your period of correction is over. Here are your papers of discharge and a few other things." He nodded to the guards at the door and they began to open the massive iron structure. "But, my clothes? My clothes? At least a coat?" As the words came out he knew it was a mistake."Ahhh! He wants to stay." Smiled the officer. "Close the...""No, no!" he whispered as he moved toward the door. They

opened it a bit more and he slipped out into the bitter cold grabbing the envelope in his fist. It was ten below zero.

The iron door closed behind him muffling the laughter of the guards. It must have been one A.M. In the distance he could vaguely see the outline of a nearby town, lucky the moon was full.

He put the envelope in his shirt and began to run. He had to keep moving, it was his only chance to keep from freezing. The snow wasn't too deep...another stroke of fortune, a blessing! He hugged himself to keep warm and ran.

He wasn't used to running; in Yeshiva there was no running, but he ran. The night was spinning around him, he ran out of breath quickly, he couldn't breathe but he ran. He tripped rolled on the ground, his nose was bleeding, his knee hurt but he stood up and ran again.

Finally he reached the first hut. Who knows how many times he had fallen. He knew that his only chance was to find a Jew. No one else would open the door, especially not at two in the morning. He was shivering uncontrollably. A Jew. A Jew would open for a Jew. It was his only hope! He ran from house to house looking at the right door post of each one until… Aha! A door with a Mezuza!!!

He began knocking, pounding. His head was spinning. But he mustn't wake the neighbors, they could kill him. "Ratavet! Ratavet" (Yiddish for save me). He pressed his mouth to the door and whispered as loud as possible "Ratavet!!".

He was going numb. He didn't feel his feet at all and his legs were buckling under him. It must be twenty below zero, up to now he hadn't noticed wind. He gave thanks to G-d for that, no wind up to now. And with his last ounce of strength he knocked for the last time.

A small hole opened at the side of the door and closed. He heard the man say to his wife in Yiddish, "A Drunk meshuga in prison clothes with no coat … probably saw our mezuzah and pretends to be a Jew.

Rabbi Dubin slid slowly down, he couldn't stand, face pressed to the door until he was huddled up in a ball on the ground near the door. His strength was gone. He would go to sleep. It wasn't so hard. He stopped shivering, closed his eyes and said his last "Shma Yisroel" thankful to G-d that at least he wouldn't die in jail. Maybe he'd get a Jewish burial. Maybe...

Suddenly he opened his eyes and a horrible thought entered his mind. Wait a minute!!! - "When this Jew opens his door tomorrow morning and sees me dead at his doorstep and realizes that I'm Jewish… he'll realize that because he didn't open the door he killed a Jew. Could be he'll never forgive himself!

I can't do that to another Jew!" He stood like a madman, pounding the door with renewed life and yelling in Yiddish "I'm Mordechai Dubin. My mother's name is such and such and my father's is such and such… let me in! Let a Jew in!! Shma Yisroel HaShem Elokeinu..."

The door opened and he fell into the house, almost unconscious but alive and safe. His love for another Jew actually saved his own life!!!

## Horav Aharon Kotler זצ"ל

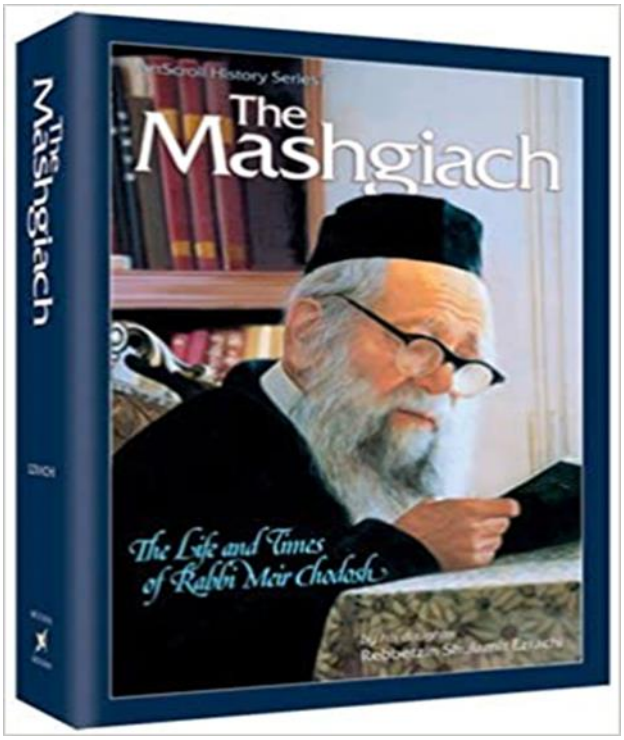
One day, a talmid noticed that his Rosh Yeshiva, Horav Aharon was fasting. He asked the Rosh Yeshiva why he was fasting.

Rav Aharon answered that he heard that someone might call him to find out information about a certain bochur for a shidduch for his daughter, and this bochur was not a very good bochur. Rav Aharon decided to fast and daven to Hashem that they should not call him, so he would not have to say anything bad about the bochur.

## Reb Meir Chadosh's Kabalos

Reb Meir Chadosh zt'l learned in the Chevron yeshiva at the time of the Chevron Massacre [1929]. To save his life, he lay down among the murdered bodies. As he lay there, he promised Hashem a long list of kabalos (resolutions) he would keep if he survived.

When the murderers left, he forgot almost everything he promised, aside from a few things, which he faithfully kept for the rest of his life. He realized that had he remembered all of his many kabalos, he would end up doing none of them. They were too many to keep them all.




He told his students that he learned from that that one shouldn't take on too many kabalos. It's better to take on a few good resolutions, and to keep them always. The Torah (Devarim 22:8) says, "When you build a new house, build a gate on the roof… [so no one will fall off it]".

**The Chasam Sofer zt'l** explains this pasuk as follows: when you make new resolutions and new kabalos to improve your ways, make a gate. Limit how much you take on, because if you take on too much, you will fall, and not do anything.

*(Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Eli Biderman.)*

***A Wise Man would say: "Strength is not from winning but from struggle. When you go through hardship and don't surrender, that is strength."***

# The Midnight Mystery And the Halted Plague By Elchonon Isaacs



**The synagogue of the Maharsha, as it can be seen today, in Ostroh**

During the years when **Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Eidels (1555–1631, known as the Maharsha)** was the rabbi of Ostroh, a deadly plague broke out. The rabbi and the venerable members of the *beit din* instructed that a day be dedicated to prayer, fasting, introspection and repentance. The rabbi also announced that if anyone knew of issues in the community that needed to be rectified, they should discreetly notify him.

One of the townsfolk lived on the fringes of society and was never seen at the communal prayers. Up to this point, not much attention was paid to this fact, but after the rabbi's request to share any information that could remedy the situation, two townspeople decided to investigate the man and track his whereabouts.

After a few days, they noticed that every night he left his house at midnight and headed to the forest outside the city. They followed

him discreetly until he left the town behind, but when he disappeared into the thick forest, they lost him. Minds racing, the duo imagined that he must be up to some nefarious activities, perhaps even part of a band of thieves.

he next day they shared their findings with the rabbi, as well as their suspicions. Much to their surprise, the rabbi said, "Tonight I will join you, and we will follow him together."The scene repeated itself. At midnight the man left his house and began walking quietly towards the forest. Urged on by the rabbi, the small group followed him until he came to a clearing. There he stopped, sat down on a rock, and lit a candle. He then took out a small prayer book and began reciting Tikkun Chatzot, the traditional dirges lamenting the destruction of the Holy Temple, with great fervor.

The three men stood open-mouthed, listening to his prayer. Suddenly he broke out in tears that melted their hearts. But there was something else that struck them; they seemed to hear a second voice reciting the prayer with him.

"This fellow is certainly not a highway robber," murmured the rabbi.

"But who is the second voice that we are hearing?"

When he exited the forest, the three men approached the man. Apologizing for the surprise encounter, the rabbi explained: "Your conduct piqued the curiosity of some members of the community, so we had to track you. Now we ascertained that our fears were unfounded. But please explain who the second voice that we heard with you was?"

The man was perplexed by the question, but out of respect for the rabbi, he answered: "It has been my custom for some time now to mourn the destruction of the Holy Temple, and it seems that my prayers caused great satisfaction on high. Jeremiah, the prophet who foresaw and experienced the destruction, joins me on a nightly basis."

The three of them looked at him in amazement. The rabbi broke the silence and asked: "If you have such a merit, why don't you inquire in heaven as to the reason for the plague in our city? Additionally, why is it that you never join the community in prayer?"

"Tomorrow, I will come to the morning prayer and answer both questions together," the man replied and headed home. The next morning in the main synagogue, the rabbi watched the door, awaiting the arrival of the hidden saint whom he met the previous night. The prayers began on time, but the man did not show. About halfway through, the man entered while wrapped in his *tallit* and *tefillin*.

Suddenly there was a commotion in the crowd, and an incomprehensible fear fell on those present. Worshippers who tried to look at him were filled with anxiety and had to take their eyes off him, and some of them even went outside the synagogue to calm down. All the while, the man stood in the corner and prayed devoutly, clearly oblivious to the commotion he was causing.

When the prayers concluded, the man removed and folded his *tallit* and *tefillin*. The rabbi approached him and said: "Now I have a third question, what caused the fear when you entered?"

The man explained: "The Torah states: 'Then all the peoples of the earth will see that the name of the L-rd is called upon you, and they will fear you' (Devorim 28:10). And our sages note: This refers to the *tefillin* that are on the head.

Thus, *tefillin* causes fear, and that is why fear gripped those who saw me wearing my *tefillin*."

"But I also wear *tefillin* daily," countered the rabbi. "Why is no one awestruck by me?" "It is because I am careful not to speak anything mundane while the *tefillin* are on me. I respect the *tefillin* properly; therefore, their sanctity is preserved. You all

fulfill your obligation to wear *tefillin*, but because you are frivolous, the sanctity of the *tefillin* is compromised."

The rabbi listened, as did the others. Then the man added: "This is why I do not come to the synagogue, because the masses are not meticulous in respecting the synagogue's sanctity. I do not want to be tempted to speak while in the synagogue, especially when I wear *tefillin*." After a moment of silence, the man continued. "In my opinion, if this problem will be remedied, the epidemic will stop."

The story quickly spread, and all residents agreed to strengthen their commitment to upholding the sanctity of the synagogue and *tefillin*, and in a few days, the plague stopped.

The residents of Ostroh continued to keep their commitment even after the plague ended and life returned to normal. The synagogue became known as the Maharsha's *shul*, after the rabbi, and it was treated with the utmost sanctity.

## A Miracle with Gloves By Rabbi Binyamin Pruzansky



Rabbi Binyamin Pruzansky writes the following remarkable story, which took place in Israel with two bachurim learning in yeshivah. Duvi had a friend, Shlomo, who received a phone call from his wealthy uncle in America. The uncle told him that there was an orphanage in Chaderah which was in need of financial assistance. The orphanage had invited the uncle to take a tour of its facility, so he could consider offering his help.

The uncle told the orphanage that he would send his nephew who was in Israel at the time, and the nephew would tell him his impressions.

Shlomo invited Duvi to join him, and they arranged that they would meet at the central bus station for the 2:00 bus to Chaderah.

Duvi wanted to take care of a couple of errands first, so he headed out early, and went first to the barber to take a haircut. He walked into the barber shop, took off his jacket and gloves, and sat down for a haircut. Fifteen minutes later, when the barber had finished, Duvi rushed out and went to the Machaneh Yehudah market to buy some candy for the children of the orphanage. He bought some chocolates and put them into his jacket pocket, when he realized that he did not have his gloves with him anymore, he had left them at the barber shop

It was a cold day, but he didn't have the time to return to the barber shop and get his gloves. Instead he went to catch his bus, and two hours later he and Shlomo reached Chaderah. When they got off the bus, they saw a Yemenite man selling his wares out of a cardboard box, and Duvi noticed he was selling a very interesting pair of elbow-length gloves. They were peculiar, but Duvi was desperate for gloves, and he did not want to wait until he returned to Yerushalayim, so he purchased the gloves.

When they arrived at the orphanage, they were met with a very warm greeting, and began touring the facility. At one point in the tour, their guide escorted them to the director's office, and as they waited outside, a 10-year-old boy excitedly ran from the room with a huge smile on his face, announcing that he had received a 100 on his Chumash test.

Duvi went over to the boy to congratulate him, and asked if he could see his test. The boy happily agreed, and Duvi looked over the test paper and was very impressed, and further complimented the child. He then glanced at the name at the top of the paper, and noticed that the boy's name was Yitzchak Alfasi, which was the same name as the Rif, one of the most famous and influential Sephardic Sages, whose commentary is found at the back of every Gemara.

Duvi asked the boy, "Did you know you have the same name as the great Rif?" The boy replied, "Sure, he's my great-great-great-great grandfather. That's why my father named me Yitzchak."

Duvi couldn't believe it. If this child was a descendant of the Rif, he figured that he must have great potential. Duvi then turned to meet with the director, who had come to join them, and he asked the director how much Torah was taught at the orphanage.

The director told him that they did not have sufficient funding for serious Torah instruction, and all they were able to afford was to bring a Rabbi in once a week to learn Chumash with the boys. Duvi then turned to the boy and asked him, "What would it take for you to agree to learn Torah every day, if I could find a Rebbi to come learn with you?"

The boy said, "Well, I really like the gloves you are wearing. If you give them to me, I'll learn Torah every day."

Duvi happily took off his elbow-length gloves and gave them to the boy. The boy was thrilled. He put them on, and they were so long they reached his shoulders. Duvi and Shlomo left the orphanage with a very good feeling about their visit, and especially their encounter with this promising young boy.

When they returned to Yerushalayim, Duvi went directly to the barber shop to see if his gloves were still there. He arrived just as the barber was closing his shop. He asked the barber if he had seen his gloves, and the barber went over to a drawer, pulled them out, and gave them to Duvi.

The barber proudly announced, "Everyone will know that Moshe Alfasi is an honest man!" Duvi looked at him with surprise and said, "Your name is Alfasi? Do you happen to have a son?"

The barber said, "I prefer not to talk about it."

Duvi persisted, "Please tell me."

The barber sadly told of how he had once been married, but his wife had an illness and mistreated their son. The courts stepped in and took their son away from them and placed him in an orphanage.

Even after the couple had divorced, the courts refused to tell Moshe where his son was. He told Duvi, "I haven't seen him in five years."

Duvie softly asked, "Is his name Yitzchak?"

Surprised, the barber said, "Yes. How did you know that?"

Duvi said, "I just saw him today! He's in an orphanage in Chaderah. He looks terrific, and he's doing great! He showed me that he just got a 100 on a Chumash test, and he agreed that he would learn Torah every day!"

The barber was overjoyed at this news. He ended up moving to Chaderah to be with his son and became very involved in his son's life. Hashem brought the boy and his father together through an extraordinary sequence of seemingly insignificant, and unrelated events.

***Nothing in life is random. Everything that happens has a purpose, and has been carefully orchestrated by Hashem!*** *("Torah U'Tefilah: compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)*



***The Kinyan (acquisition) of meshichah (pulling) is halachically stronger than hagba'ah (lifting an object).***

***Similarly in chinuch – drawing students close will have a better outcome, as meshichah is a stronger kinyan than force. ~ R' Aharon Leib Shteinman, quoting the Chazon Ish.***

## The Jewish Weekly

"Please be careful, I'm impure." That's what the Metzorah would declare. As described in Parashat Tazria, a person afflicted with leprosy was required to go outside of the camp. And when people were approaching, they would shout out, **טמא טמא** – "please be aware of the fact that I am impure." As the Torah says, – **וטמא טמא יקרא** that's what he must call out.

The Gemara in Masechet Moed Katan (daf hey amud alef) tells us that he shouted out **טמא טמא** for two reasons: the first was so that people passing by would be aware of his ailment and would pray for him; the second, was that they needed to be aware of the fact that they shouldn't come too close, so that they themselves would not become **טמא** .

**The Kotzke Rebbe** brilliantly reads something deeper here. He places the comma in the middle of the statement. You see the Torah says **וטמא טמא יקרא**, he must call out **טמא טמא**. Rather, says the Kotzke Rebbe, we should read **וטמא** – "as for this person who is impure" – " **טמא יקרא**" – his problem is that he calls out to others, "you are impure." You see, he doesn't attribute any weakness or negativity in character to himself. His problem is that he's complaining about the deficiencies of character in others all the time. Indeed, that's why he becomes **טמא** in the first place.

The Gemara in Masechet Kiddushin (daf ayin amud alef) says something that's really very perceptive. – **כל הפוסל במומו פוסל** "there are many people who criticise others regarding weaknesses in their character, but actually, **במומו פוסל** – they're talking about themselves. It's a classic example of projection".

An elderly man once went to his doctor, he said to the doctor, "I think my wife is going deaf." "So how serious is this?" asked the doctor. He said, "I don't know, she's just not hearing me." The doctor said, "Well, why don't you call out to her when her back is turned and see how close you have to get before she hears you."



So, he stood well behind her as she was standing in the living room, and he called out, "What's for supper tonight?" - No answer.

He came a few steps closer, "What's for supper tonight?" - No answer.

A few steps further, no answer. Until eventually he stood just behind her and called out, "What's for supper tonight?"

This time she turned around and shouted at him, "Fish and chips, as I've already told you five times!"

She wasn't the one who had a problem – it was him. And so too in life. Let us recognize that in the tense moments of some relationships, (while sure enough there might be weaknesses on the other side) we should ask ourselves, where might we have gone wrong? What mistakes might we have made? What words might we have said out of turn? What could we be doing in order to improve the situation ourselves?

***Let's learn that lesson of the טמא טמא יקרא, and if we have this approach to life, I guarantee you that this world will be a much better place. We can also start by praying with all our hearts for all those who are sick from the epidemic as well as those who need healing, shidduchim, children and parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, sweet and happy Shabbat.***

## Zera Shimshon

Interestingly, Tzara'as is white. **The Zera Shimshon** is bothered by this fact and asks why is it that something that comes from a sin and makes a person impure is white? White is the colour that symbolizes purity and forgiveness of sin as we find on Yom Kippur. Why then is this the colour of Tzara'as?

The Zera Shimshon explains this as follows. The passuk in Zecharia 14:6 says וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֹא־יִהְיֶה אוֹר יְקָרוֹת וְקִפָּאוֹן - ***It will be on that day the light will not be bright or dim."***



The Gemara (Pesachim 50a) explains this passuk to mean that in the world to come, those people that were very bright in this world will be dim. Rashi explains that this refers to the respected people who often are wealthy but are sinful, although in this world they have status and they have it well (symbolized in the word bright), in the world to come they won't be respected (dim). The opposite is true as well. Those that don't have any special status in this world but are indeed righteous will shine in the world to come. In this world however, the righteous do not have it that easy.

In fact the Gemara (Horayos 10b) says, *"Lucky are the Tzaddikim that receive in this world that which the wicked receive in the next world."* Similarly, the Gemara (Kiddushin 39b) teaches, that someone who has more merits than sins appears to be treated in this world as though he burned the entire Torah. Thus, when a person has it hard in this world which is symbolized by darkness (dim) it is a sign that in the next world that person will have light - that it will be

good for them. However, when a person is having it good in this world which symbolized by light, it will be dark for him in the next world.

Yom Kippur is an exception to this since the day of Yom Kippur itself is like the world to come when the white actually represents purity and forgiveness. This is why the colour of Tzara'as is white. It is to hint to the person that he is sinning and if he continues like this, he will be from those people who have the white, the light, the bright etc. in this world and not the next.

## Siddur - A Closer Look at Davening

**Rav Paysach Krohn** related that he once went to give a talk to a girl's high school, to give encouragement to the students after the events of September 11, 2001. He said that when the principal, Rebbetzin Rochel Reifer, z"l, introduced him to speak, she shared something so meaningful, that he never forgot it.

She pointed out the third paragraph of Aleinu, which some people don't recite. In that paragraph it states, **אַל תִּירָא מִפַּחַד פִּתְאֹם וּמִשֹּׁאַת רְשָׁעִים כִּי תָבֹא עֲצוּ עֵצָה וְתֻפָר דַּבְּרוּ דָבָר וְלֹא יָקוּם כִּי עִמָּנוּ קל: וְעַד זִקְנָה אֲנִי הוּא וְעַד שֵׂיבָה אֲנִי אֶסְבֹּל: אֲנִי עָשִׂיתִי וַאֲנִי אֶשָּׂא וַאֲנִי אֶסְבֹּל וַאֲמַלֵּט "*Don't be afraid of sudden terror, or the destruction of the wicked when it comes. Plan a scheme and it will be cancelled, speak your word and it will not stand, for Hashem is with us. Even when you reach old age, I remain unchanged, and even in your older age, I will endure. I created you and I will carry you. I will endure you and rescue you.*"**

Rebbetzin Reifer spoke to the students, "Girls, never be so frightened, because Hashem is with us." Rabbi Krohn later confided that before that day, he never said that paragraph of Aleinu, but from that day on, he made up his mind never to skip it!

## The Unavoidable Option - Yerachmiel Tilles

In the first half of the 18th century, there lived in Hungary a significant scholar known as the **Pessinger Rav**. Once, a man came to him and asked to be converted.

The Rav could see that this man was sincere. However, a serious obstacle remained: it was forbidden to convert someone to Judaism without a permit from the Hungarian government, and he was well aware that if he should ask, permission would not be granted. Nevertheless, the Rav decided to convert him anyway, without receiving a legal permit from the government.



**The Chasam Sofer, zt"l**

After the required period of study came the brit mila [circumcision], where tragedy struck. The mohel (circumciser) couldn't staunch the bleeding, despite the various proper medical methods he applied. Not only was the new convert's life in danger, so was the continued existence of the entire community.

If they called for a doctor, it would certainly be discovered that they had converted someone without permission; the entire community might be banished or executed. However, if they didn't call the doctor, and the convert died, it would also surely become public knowledge with the same dire results.

They were in a great dilemma. The Pessinger Rav didn't know what to do, so he ran to the greatest Torah sage in Hungary, the Chatam Sofer, for counsel and expert opinion in Torah Law. After deep

thought, the Chatam Sofer told him, "There is no other choice. You and the poor innocent convert must go and drown yourselves in the Danube River!" The esteemed rabbinical authority and judge ruled thus in order to save the entire community from annihilation, he explained.



This was the first real test in the convert's short life as a Jew, and he passed the test perfectly. Both he and the Pessinger Rav agreed to follow the Chatam Sofer's ruling.

They took a wagon, and drove down to the raging river. At the river bank, they met an elderly Jew.

"Shalom aleichem," he greeted them. "Where are you going? What are you doing here?"

The Rav didn't want to reply. But when the elderly Jew wouldn't stop pressing him for an answer, he decided to tell him the entire truth. "The Chatam Sofer told us to go down to the river and end our lives, because this ger tzedek ('righteous convert') still hasn't stop bleeding from his circumcision, no matter what we tried. His life and the life of the entire community are in danger."

The elderly Jew told them: "I am an expert mohel, and I have a special powder with me which can stop the bleeding." He applied the powder, and the blood stopped. Thus their lives and that of the entire community were saved.

The Pessinger Rav turned around to ask their savior to return together with them, but the elderly man had disappeared. That is when they realized that he must be none other than Eliyahu HaNavi

(Elijah the Prophet), the angel who attends all Jewish circumcisions conducted according to Torah Law.

The Pessinger Rav asked the Chatam Sofer, "If you were going to send us Eliyahu HaNavi to stop the bleeding, why did you require he and I go through this deadly ordeal? Why did you tell us to throw ourselves into the raging river?"

The Chatam Sofer replied: "In order to see Eliyahu HaNavi, you must first do a deed of mesirut nefesh (self-sacrifice)." To attain such supernatural grace, one first needs to serve the Al-mighty in a supernatural mode.

## Vedibarta Bam - A Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

**"אשה כי תזריע וילדה זכר... וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו"** ***"When a woman conceives, and gives birth to a male... On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."*** **(12:2-3)**



**QUESTION:** Why is circumcision mentioned in the middle of the *parshah* pertaining to a woman who gives birth?

**ANSWER:** At every *brit milah* it is customary for a woman to take the child from the mother and bring him to the entrance of the room where the *brit* will take place. Afterwards, her husband takes the child and brings him into the *brit* room. The man and woman so honored are called the *"kvater"* and *"kvaterin."*

Although only the father is obligated to circumcise the child, the command to circumcise, occurring in the *parshah* discussing the laws

of childbirth — and so dealing with women — is a hint for the custom that a woman should also participate in the *brit*. (**לקוטי שיחות חכ"ב ע' 56**)

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**QUESTION:** What is the meaning of the word "*kvater* (**קוואטער**)?"

**ANSWER:** The honour given to the woman is to take the child from the mother and bring him to the door of the room where the *brit* will take place. She stops at the entrance to the room, because it is improper for a woman to be among men. The man carries the child from the door into the room.

The word "*kvater*" is a merging of the words "*kavod*" (**כבוד**) — "honour" — and "*tir*" (**טיר**) — "door" — the *honour* of bringing the child to the *door* (of the *brit* room), and the honour of bringing the child from the door into the room for the *brit*. (**לקוטי שיחות חכ"ב ע' 56**)

**"וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו" *"On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."* (12:3)**

**QUESTION:** Why is it customary to recite the *Shema* to a baby on the night before his *brit*?

**ANSWER:** The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 13a) explains that the reason we recite the portion of "*Shema Yisrael*" before the portion of "*Vehayah im shamo'ah*" is so that one should first accept upon himself the yoke of Heaven and afterwards the yoke of *mitzvot*.

The following morning the child will be performing his first *mitzvah*, the *mitzvah* of circumcision; therefore, *Shema* is recited the night before, so that he should accept the yoke of Heaven before accepting the yoke of *mitzvot*. (**ר' פינחס זצ"ל מקאריץ**)

**"וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו"** ***"On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."*** **(12:3)**

**QUESTION:** At a *brit* it is customary for everyone present to proclaim: "Just as he is entered into the covenant, so may he enter into Torah, and into marriage, and into good deeds."

Why do we associate these three things with the *brit*?

**ANSWER:** The circumcision done at the *brit* is permanent. Once it is performed, it cannot be changed in any way. Those present at the *brit* express a threefold blessing and prayer for the child. First, just as the *brit* is permanent, so his connection to Torah should be everlasting. Secondly, the person he marries should be his permanent companion. The third and concluding blessing is that throughout his lifetime he should constantly perform good deeds. **(לקוטי בתר לקוטי)**

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Alternatively, the first *mitzvah* in which the child is involved is a *brit*. Due to his young age, his parents must take an active role in the planning and preparation. When it comes to *Yiddishkeit*, many parents have a tendency to say, "When our child will become older, he will make his own decisions." Therefore, all present at the *brit* call out to the parents: "*Kesheim shenichnas labrit*" — just as at the *brit* the parents were actively involved — "*kein yikaneis leTorah ulechupa ulema'asim tovim*" — so too, when the son reaches the age of Torah study and marriage and good deeds, the parents should be actively involved in all of his decisions.

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Alternatively, considering the young and tender age of the child, the shedding of his blood is a very difficult experience. Nevertheless, the child is subjected to it and thereby becomes a full-fledged member of *K'lal Yisrael*. The message of this pronouncement is that just as he has *mesirat nefesh* to fulfil his first *mitzvah* of the

Torah, likewise, when it comes to Torah study, conducting his marriage according to Torah, and the performance of good deeds — he should not permit anything to hinder him.

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Alternatively, this is a blessing to all those present at the child's first *simchah*, that just as they are here today, they should live and be healthy to witness and participate in his introduction to Torah study, his wedding, and his performance of good deeds for many years.



**"וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו"** ***"On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."*** **(12:3)**

**QUESTION:** The *Gemara* (*Menachot* 43b) relates that, when King David was in the bathhouse unclothed, he proclaimed, "Woe to me; I am now naked of *mitzvot*." As soon as he recalled the *mitzvah* of *brit milah*, he regained his composure. Why did this occur in the bathhouse and not at other times when he was unclothed?

**ANSWER:** The reference to a bathhouse is metaphorical. King David was a great *tzaddik* and, from time to time, he would "visit the bathhouse" — he would undergo self-introspection, examining his deeds to see if they were "clean," devoid of ulterior motives and done purely for the sake of Heaven.

Once, during this evaluation he became apprehensive that his *mitzvot* were not performed from pure intentions. He reminded himself of the *mitzvah* of *brit milah,* and in this he found comfort, because it was definitely one *mitzvah* performed without any ulterior motives. (**חתם סופר**)

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This thought deepens our understanding of the blessing recited at a *brit*: "Just as he has entered into the covenant, so may he enter

into Torah and into marriage, and into good deeds." The child is blessed: Just as he has entered into the *brit* without any ulterior thoughts, so throughout his entire life may he do everything solely for the sake of Hashem. (**טעמי המנהגים בשם ר׳ ברוך זצ״ל ממעזעביז**)

**"וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו"** ***"On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised."*** **(12:3)**

**QUESTION:** Why is the ceremony called ***brit*** *milah*?

**ANSWER:** There are 613 *mitzvot* in the Torah; one of them is the *mitzvah* of circumcision. On the eighth day, the child fulfils the *mitzvah* of *milah* but still has 612 *mitzvot* to fulfil. The word "*brit*" (**ברית**) whose numerical value is 612, reminds the child of all the remaining *mitzvot*. ( **עי׳ פרדס יוסף, שמות ד:כד דמצות מילה מקיים הקטן וראי׳ מרש״י חולין מ״ז ע״ב ד״ה המתינו ועי׳ לקוטי שיחות**)

**"והיה בעור בשרו לנגע צרעת"** ***"And it will be in the skin of his flesh the plague of leprosy."*** **(13:2)**

**QUESTION:** The word "*Vehayah*" denotes *simchah* — joy (*see Midrash Rabbah Vayikra* 11:7). Where is the joy in being afflicted with leprosy?

**ANSWER:** The leprosy discussed in the Torah is not the well-known disease of that name, but rather a form of punishment meted out to those guilty of *lashon hara* — evil talk (*Arachin* 15b).

A violation of the Torah is a serious matter, and the violator deserves to be penalized. The speaker of *lashon hara* should be happy that his penalty spares his internal organs and is only skin deep. (**זכרון אלעזר**)

***ושער בנגע הפך לבן... נגע צרעת הוא וראהו הכהן וטמא אתו If hair in the plague is turned white..it is a plague of leprosy; and the Kohen shall look on him and pronounce him unclean.*** (13:3)

**QUESTION:** The colour white is usually considered a sign of purity and *taharah* (cleanliness). Why is it a sign of *tumah* (defilement) in *nega'im?*

**ANSWER:** According to the *Gemara (Arachin* 16a) one of the reasons for which a person may get a *nega* is *tzarat ayin* — stinginess. A person who is stingy does not give *tzedakah* whole-heartedly, often embarrassing the poor man with his attitude.



The *Gemara (Bava Metzia* 58b) says that if someone causes his friend to be embarrassed in public, it is as though he killed him, because the one who is embarrassed blushes, and blood rushes to his face (as if trying to leave of the body). Then his face pales as blood rushes to other parts of the body, and it takes on the ashen, pallid appearance of a corpse.

Since a punishment is *midah keneged midah*, when he becomes white, it is a sign that his *teshuvah* is incomplete and he is still being punished for making a person turn pale. (**פרדס יוסף**)

***"There is no family in the world who studies the laws of Shmiras Haloshon who has not seen some form of yeshuah in their lives." - HaRav Yehuda Zev Segal zt'l, The Manchester Rosh Yeshiva, Founder of Shmiras Haloshon Yomi.***

**נגע צרעת כי תהיה באדם והובא אל הכהן *"When a man is afflicted with leprosy he shall be brought to the Kohen."* (13:9)**



**QUESTION:** Na'aman, the General of the armies of the King of Aram, became a leper. His king sent him to Achav the King of the Jews to heal him. Achav was unable to do anything, but the prophet Elisha sent word to send Na'aman to him. When Na'aman arrived at his door, Elisha sent instructions that he wash himself seven times in the Jordan river. Na'aman, who anticipated that Elisha would heal him by placing a hand on the stricken area, reluctantly followed instructions and was healed.

Why did Elisha volunteer to help Na'aman, and why did he use the waters of the Jordan?

**ANSWER:** Elisha analyzed the name "Na'aman" (**נעמן**) and found that there were only three *pesukim* in the Torah which start with a "**נ**", end with a "**ן**", and have an "**ע**" and a "**מ**" somewhere in the middle:

"**נ**גע צר**ע**ת כי תהיה בא**דם** והובא אל הכה**ן**" — "When a man is afflicted with leprosy he shall be brought to the *Kohen*." (13:9)

"**נ**ביא מקרבך מאחיך כמני יקים לך ה' אלקיך אליו תש**מעון**" — "A prophet from your midst, from your brothers, like me, shall G-d, your G-d, establish for you — to him shall you hearken" (*Devarim* 18:15).

"**נ**חנו נ**ע**בר חלוצי**ם** לפני ה' ארץ כנען ואתנו אחזת נחלתנו מעבר לירד**ן**" — "We shall cross over, armed, before G-d to the land of Canaan, and ours shall be the possession of our inheritance across the Jordan" (*Bamidbar* 32:32).

Elisha learned from this that when Naman (**נעמן**) will become a leper (1st *pasuk*), a *navi* will heal him (2nd *pasuk*) through the waters of the Jordan (3rd *pasuk*). (**מגלה עמוקות**)

## Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections by Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



A person who has a *Tzaraas* blemish on his body is sent out of the camp and he lives alone there as long as he has his blemish (13:46).

**Rav Yosef Chaim of Baghdad** (*Benayahu*, *Arachin* 16b) explains the reason for these particular punishments. Generally, *Tzaraas* came to a person because he spoke *Lashon Hara*, which causes friction between friends, and even between spouses. His being sent out of the camp is so that he can experience the result of friction amongst friends. His being alone, without his wife or family, allows him to understand the feelings of friction between husband and wife which he caused.

By experiencing feelings similar to those which he wrought, he will realize the power of his words and be careful not to repeat his wrongdoing. Sticks and stones break bones, and words can definitely harm everyone.

***"A person should not let a single day pass by without articulating, at least once, "I love you, Hashem." ~ R Avigdor Miller.***

## Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

**וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו** ***On the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised*** (12:3)



**The *Zohar Ha'kadosh*** writes (*Lech Lecha* page 93a): Eliyahu *HaNavi* appears at every *Bris* because he spoke *Lashon Hara* against Israel. When *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* asked him (*Melachim* I 9-10): **מה לך פה אליהו**- ***'Why are you here Eliyahu?'*** He replied: **כי עזהו בריתך בני ישראל**- ***'For the Children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant'.***

*HaKadosh Baruch Hu* told him, 'By your life, you will be at every *Bris Milah* and you will testify that they did the *Bris* [covenant].' Eliyahu is the representative of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, as it were, who comes to every *Bris Milah*.

Therefore, the *Zohar* says, at a *Bris,* a chair of honour must be placed for the holy *Shechinah*, and it is called 'The *Kisei* of Eliyahu'. (*Doresh Tzion – Rebbe Ben Tzion Mutzaphi*)

***R' Itzele of Volozhin ZT"L would say: "A person who lies has a phenomenal memory. Some people remember things that happened 30 years ago. Others remember things that happened 50 years ago. The liar even remembers things that never happened!"***

## Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

***אשה כי תזריע וילדה זכר וטמאה שבעת ימים When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male,she shall be impure for a seven-day period.*** (12:2)

A famous question is asked, why is the *Parshah* of *Tazria*, which mostly discusses the spiritual malady and symptoms of *Tzara'as*, immediately following the *Parshah* of *Shemini*, which mostly discusses the foods that we are prohibited from eating?

**Rav Yisroel Salanter, *zt"l***, answers that the main reason that a person is afflicted with *Tzara'as* is because he spoke *Lashon Hara*.



Analyse, if you will, the two *Parshiyos*. When it comes to food, most people are so careful not to eat anything inappropriate. They check for worms that can only be seen with the use of a microscope. However, when it comes to speech, they are not as careful regarding what they say about their fellow man, thus leading to *Lashon Hara*. Therefore, the *Torah* adjoins these two *Parshiyos* to teach us that just as we must be careful regarding forbidden food, we must be just as careful regarding forbidden speech. Just as we are careful regarding what goes into our mouths, we must be just as careful regarding what comes out of our mouths.

***"The most important thing in life is to recognize the hand of Hashem in everything that happens to us." – Rabbi Avigdor Miller.***

## Covered Face by Rabbi Ari Neuwirth

People have a habit of looking at everybody else. What they have, what job they have, the spouse they have, the children they have, the car, the house. It doesn't end, and it creates a tremendous amount of jealousy, anxiety and unhappiness. Why? Because we are always looking at *yenem*- the other person.



This is a thought from the **Raishis Chochmo**. Every single morning, we put on our tallis. We wrap our tallis around our face, our eyes, we cannot see. What words do we say after the baracha when we do this? We say the words מַה־יָּקָר חַסְדְּךָ אֱלֹקִים - ***How precious is Your kindness, Hashem***. Why are we saying that now when we wrap ourselves in the tallis? What does kindness have to do with the tallis?

The answer is that kindness is the sweetest when I am not looking at someone else. When I am wrapped in that tallis, I can't see anybody else. I only know about myself. That's the greatest kindness. There is no anxiety. There is no jealousy. I am happy. That's the greatest kindness.

That is why we specifically say these words when our eyes are covered with the tallis. **מַה־יָּקָר חַסְדְּךָ אֱלֹקִים**

***The greatest gift is to be happy with what you have.***

***Don't try to fix people; try to love them. Love will do the fixing. ~ Inspired by the teaching of Reb Noson of Breslov (1780-1844).***

## Language Barrier by Rabbi Ephraim Eliyahu Shapiro



A friend of mine from New York shared with me that he went to Los Angeles to the city of Hope Hospital because he needed a bone marrow transplant. He had to remain in the city for 100 days in case he had to come in at short notice. So my friends flew in from New York to do *bikur cholim* to see how he was.

In the middle of their visit, the person that underwent the bone marrow transplant turned to them and said, you know, there is a Yid from Yerushalyim that is also undergoing the same operation. Let's go and visit him and give him words of encouragement.

The three of them got into the car, but much to their chagrin, they were too late. The procedure had already taken place half an hour earlier. They were dejected.

They were about to leave, when they heard someone calling them. They turned around to see the head male nurse. He said to them," Hey, you three, I see that you are religious Jews. Can you do me a favour please. I have been the head nurse in this hospital for over 40 years. I have carried out this procedure thousands of times and I always let the patient know beforehand what they can anticipate. They won't have any strength for about 48 to 72 hours. They will literally lie there thinking that they are dead, listless, lifeless, no strength, but don't worry, they will be okay. I couldn't tell it to the man because he only speaks Hebrew, and I only speak English. So because of the language barrier, I couldn't convey that message. His wife is there. Do you three mind telling her in Hebrew that she shouldn't worry when she sees that he looks listless and lifeless."

The three of them are staring past the nurse looking through a glass partition and they are white like ghosts. The nurse turns to see what it is that they are looking at. And there was the Jew from Jerusalem that had just had the procedure, and he got out of his bed slowly, and grabbed onto the IV pole, he walked over methodically over to his bedside cabinet, put on a head covering, then proceeded over to the wash basin and washed *netillas yadayim* and then got back into bed.

The male nurse started to shriek," It's not possible! It's just not possible!" He was about to pass out. My friend turned to the male nurse and said," Listen, there are two possible explanations as to what just happened. Either we just witnessed a medical miracle. A one in 10 million chance, or this was the first time because of the language barrier that you couldn't convey to the patient what they wouldn't be able to do. Maybe because you did not tell him what he couldn't do, he was able to do it. Because, if you don't tell somebody what he can't do, that it is impossible or unsurmountable, **כה יהיה זרעך** -he will be able to do it."

The nurse broke down crying. He never intended to be malicious. He meant to tell his patients that they would be ok. But he admitted that he would never do it again.

Because if you always tell the patient that you can't, you won't, it's impossible, it is a self-fulfilling prophesy. But if you don't tell somebody their limitations, if you don't tell them what they can or can't do, then they can do it! They will surprise you.

Some things in life seem unsurmountable or impossible. Don't let anybody tell you this. Because if you are not told this message, then maybe, just maybe you will be able to!

***Don't believe your self-limiting beliefs.***

## Who's Making the Money? By Rabbi Duvi Bensoussan

People think that times have changed. They have not. Not in the system of heaven. Just like in the *midbar* when we woke up in the morning, for 40 years in the desert and the *manna* fell on our doorstep. Your parnassah was dropped from heaven right on your front doorstep - **לחם מן השמים.**

Did anything change since then? No, the only thing that has changed is us. Hashem didn't change. Every single day He gives us our parnassah for what we need. So if that's the case, then why do we have to go out and work nowadays? Oh, we have to go out and work today because we are in *galus*. We are under Hester Panim. In the midbar Hashem did open miracles. But nowadays, Hashem wants to test us, to see if we really believe.

Is it you that is making the money, or do you believe that I am giving you the money? So, Hashem requires us to go out and work in order to create a camouflage to make it look like the money is coming from the deal. But really the deal is coming from Hashem, because that is the amount of money that He wants to give you.

People have it all wrong. They think that the deal is making the money. No, G-d wants to give you that money in a way that is not an open miracle. So He throws you a deal. But if He would drop it on your front doorstep, then it would be a miracle, and there would be no reward for your belief in Hashem. From the deal you are going to profit and you will have the test, what do you believe, that the money comes from the deal, or did the money come from Hashem. Did the deal bring you the money, or did the money bring you the deal?

***Never forget, the deal always comes from Hashem.***

***"A good wife is a crown to her husband." ~~ (Mishle) 12:4***

## Rabbi Paysach Krohn – Project Mesorah




We know that the whole world is talking about the loss of the Sar Hatorah **Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l**.

We all know how close he was to his Rebbetzen. When she suddenly passed away on a Shabbos, it was so stunning and shocking to everyone, but nobody could do anything until motzei Shabbos. That afternoon, the family gathered around Reb Chaim, and one of the children asked him, "What would you say was the Rebbetzen's greatest midoh?"

People were surprised at what he said. He didn't talk about her tzneus, shmiras halashon, or her Ahavas Yisrael. He spoke about her savlanus – patience.

This is incredible because not only did he complement the fact that she had the patience to listen to thousands of people who came to beg, cry and to be listened to and get brachos, but Reb Chaim himself did the same thing. Thousands came to him, and he had the patience to listen to everyone, and answer many letters that he received.

Savlanus is something that we have to adopt. We should have patience with our spouses, children and everyone. This is a sign of Ahavas Yisrael.

## The last word A one-liner worth remembering

***"The ultimate purpose of everything that happens in the world is to enable Klal Yisrael to learn Torah." – Rav Yitzchok Feigelstock***

## L'Maaseh - A Tale to Remember

***Nachlas Tzvi*** relates a powerful story that demonstrates the devotion and commitment which a young *Yeshivah* student demonstrated, as well as the reward he achieved for his sacrifice in order to study Torah.

During World War I, **Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, *zt"l***, decided to close his *Yeshivah* in Kletzk, stating that he could not take responsibility for the safety of his students. He therefore sent everyone home for their own benefit. Upon returning home, one young student was asked by his mother, "Why have you come home?"

He said, "The *Rosh Yeshivah* sent everyone home for their own safety." The mother began to raise her voice, "Do you think that you are safer here than in the *Yeshivah*? I want you to return to the *Yeshivah* to learn Torah!"

The boy said, "But Mother, I have no money to purchase a ticket for the train." She responded, "Then you will walk. Return immediately to the *Yeshivah*. The Torah will protect you!"

The young student listened to his mother, and he began to walk the few hundred kilometers back to the *Yeshivah*.

After almost a week of walking, the young student appeared before Rav Isser Zalman and said, "Rebbe, I have come to study Torah!" Rav Isser Zalman said, "Why are you here? I sent you home for your safety!"

The student related his conversation with his mother and how he walked back to the *Yeshivah*. Hearing this, Rav Isser Zalman was overcome with emotion. He was impressed with a Jewish mother's self-sacrifice to risk her child's life for the sake of Torah. To have such amazing faith in Hashem was incredible! To see this devotion transmitted to her son, who was willing to walk hundreds of kilometers to learn Torah, was overwhelming.



Rav Isser Zalmen said to the student, "I would like to buy your shoes from you. I will treasure the shoes that were worn by a young *Yeshivah* student who displayed such remarkable devotion for Torah study!"

Hashem repaid this student for his unparalleled devotion to Torah, as he eventually became the *Gadol Ha'dor*, the preeminent Torah sage of the generation— **Rav Elazar Menachem Mann Shach!**

**לשון הרע**

When the **Chofetz Chaim**, the author of Shemiras Halashon, would have a conversation with someone, he would dominate the conversation so that **לשון הרע** would not be spoken. Many of us may think that if one learns the Halachos of **לשון הרע** he will not be able to talk. However, in truth it is the opposite! It is only when one learns the Halachos of **לשון הרע** that he is able to talk.

***Rav Chaim Kanievsky זצ"ל was once asked: How is one able to achieve peace of mind and not become distracted by various thoughts and worries?***

***His answer: "One must constantly remind themselves that everything - even those thoughts, are from Hashem. By realizing that, we will have Menuchas HaNefesh"***

***With great pain and worry of who will lead us now ?? we add the words Zecher Tzaddik Livrochah..... May his words be a source of comfort to Klal Yisroel.***




**לשון הרע**

**Rebbe Uri of Strelisk *zy'a*** said, "When a person has an urge to say something forbidden and he holds back it's as though he fasted eighty-four days.

**Rebbe Ahron of Belz *zy'a*** added, "And I say, *nach un nach, un nach*," which means that it's like fasting for eighty-four days, and much, much more than that.

## Change

**The Klausenberg Rebbe zt'l** once spoke asked the mashgiach of his yeshiva why he threw out a certain bachur. The mashgiach described the bachur's behaviour to the Rebbe, and added, "It's impossible to keep him in the yeshiva if he acts like that." "That's true," the Rebbe agreed, "but I spoke to the bachur, and he told me that he's prepared to change." The mashgiach replied, "He promised me about a thousand times he will improve. But, so far, he never kept his word."

The Rebbe grabbed his white beard and said, "I promised Hashem more than a thousand times that I will improve. I haven't done so yet. In your opinion, should I give up? Chas veshalom! As long as a Yid lives, there's hope that he will improve his ways."

***R' Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev ZT"L (Kedushas Levi) would say: "Were the issue of arrogance not written about in the Torah, it would be impossible to believe that a human being made of dust and ashes - alive today, dead tomorrow - could be so haughty!"***

## Etz Ha Chaim – Rabbi C T Blau

## Reb Chaim's Chovos

Rav Chaim Started his Chovos when he was a bochur of 16 years old. Rav Chaim would never miss a day even during very hard, difficult and very busy times.

Rav Chaim would start with **משנה ברורה, רמב"ם שו"ע, בבלי, ירושלמי תיקון חצות, זוהר, תהילים, נ"ך**

On erev Shabbos when Rav Chaim would come back from the Mikvah, Rav Chaim would learn **שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום** with Rashi. During sefer Shemos – with Mechilta, and during **ויקרא** with **ספרא** and **במדבר דברים** with **ספרי**.

Many times people came to Rav Chaim and cried about how they were drowning in financial chovos and Rav Chaim would respond **גם לי יש חובות** . Rav Chaim would reply to some "**אני בעל חוב גדול**".

Someone once asked Rav Chaim what he should do to be saved from falling into financial chovos, and Rav Chaim said, **כמה שיש יותר חובות בלימוד, ירדו החובות הכספיים**

Rav Chaim once told someone **בזכות חובות האלו – אין חובות אחרים**

Someone once gave Rav Chaim a **ברכה** that Rav Chaim should be able to finish his chovos and Rav Chaim responded **החובות שלי לא יסתיימו אף פעם** – "My Chovos never ever end!"

When They Asked Rav Chaim what he meant, Rav Chaim explained "The reason my chovos never finish is because as soon as I finish my chovos of today, my chovos for tomorrow begin.

***"The greatest tragedy is not realizing the full extent of your potential. Don't settle for mediocrity when you are capable of greatness." – Rabbi Moshe Feinstein.***

## Reb Yoel Rotenstien On The Parsha

**רבי יהושע מקוטנא**




**וראה הכהן את הנגע...וראהו הכהן וטמא אתו יג:יג** ***"And the kohen should see the blemish…the kohen shall see it and declare him to be tamei."***

**Question:** Why does the *pasuk* repeat **וראהו הכהן**?

**Answer:** When one looks at another person, he should not only see his blemishes (the places where he is lacking). Rather, he should see him as a whole person, taking all his good points into account.

So too with the *kohen;* even though he must first look at the affliction, afterwards he has to look at the whole person and see his strengths as well.

## Rabbi Ariel Mizrahi – All Your Heart

I was standing in shul on a regular weekday right after davening. Someone walked over to me and said, "Rabbi, do you mind if we can open the Heichal one more time before we go down for breakfast?" I said, "Sure, what's the problem?"

"It's my cousin, she is here from Mexico. She is booked into the hospital to have surgery on her back for an entire day. I don't know much Rabbi, I am not such a religious man, but if we can just daven or say some Tehilim for a few moments, that would be amazing."

I said, "No problem." We opened the Heichal, and together we started saying Tehilim: **שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶשָּׂא עֵינַי אֶל הֶהָרִים** – Where does my help come from? Only from Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And then we said a mishebeirach and I asked him to keep me posted on any news.

A few days later I met him again. I asked him how everything went. With tears in his eyes, he said, "Rabbi, you are not going to believe me when I tell this to you."

"She went into the hospital and prepared for the surgery. The surgeons do one last pre-op scan. When they received the results, they turned to her and said, ' we don't know what you are doing here, go home, there is nothing wrong with you!' "

There was supposed to be a month of rehab. However, she was back in Mexico the next day - **כי מי גוי גדול**. Who is so lucky, who is such a nation? We can daven. We must daven. What an opportunity, how lucky we are that we can turn to Hashem at any time.

We should be zoche to be able to tap into this deepest part of us, to be able to daven with all our heart and b'ezras Hashem, we will see yeshuos.

**Tap into the depths and daven with all your heart.**

## Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Having survived the Holocaust, **the *Klausenberger Rebbe*** picked himself up from the ashes and built a thriving community in *Eretz Yisroel* and established the well-known Laniado Medical Centre.

The Rebbe was once meeting with the Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion, who asked him what his expectations of the newly founded State of Israel were. The *Klausenberger Rebbe* replied, "I have both maximal and minimal expectations for Israel.

I'd love to see you wearing *Chassidic* clothing, but at the very least, I hope that you'd let me wear mine!"

***A righteous man falls down seven times and gets up.***

## Rabbi David Shelby – Their Positive




The gratitude and appreciation that you have in life, Hashem will only give you more bracha. But **The Kedushas Levi** says that there is more to it. If our looking at something has a physical affect and could change matter in this world, then if you look at the good in somebody, even if they sometimes do bad, you are changing that person for the better.

When you look at someone with a positive attitude, you are changing them physically and spiritually. You are turning him into a better person.

I have a friend that no matter whatever he looks at, he only sees the good in things. He always gives the benefit of the doubt.

**Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev** would always see the good side of everybody. He knew, that if he would look positively at somebody, it would change them for the better.

**Look at their positive to help remove their negative.**

***"Truth is the tree of life, and from it you will eat all your days." ~~ Sefer Hachinuch***

## Fake Problems by Rabbi Ilan Meirov

Chazal tell us, ***"Don't complain about what you don't have, be grateful that Hashem doesn't give you what you really deserve."*** We sometimes don't appreciate the bracha that we have in life.




I know somebody non- religious whose father is deathly ill. He said, "Rabbi, I want to tell you something. I always used to think of the concept of a bracha as a very silly thing. You eat something and you are blessing Hashem? He needs our blessings? But I now realise that while my father is very sick, and he is unable to function properly, the blessings are not so much for Hashem, but for us. So that we can appreciate all that Hashem does for us. To appreciate that we are able to eat and drink, or to go to the toilet."

We don't realise, that instead of saying "thank you", we are constantly bickering and complaining. Instead of appreciating the fact that we may have parents, grandparents, wife, husband, children etc, we can sometimes be blind to it.

When we have challenges in life, we should have Emunah in Hashem to enable us to overcome those challenges.

**Don't be blinded to all the blessings in your life.**

## Circle Time by Rabbi Moshe Mizrahi- Gematria

In the passages teaching about the various forms of tzara'as, the term "zos haTorah" or "zos Toras" appears 5 times. This comes to teach us that if someone speaks lashon hara, it is like he went against all 5 Chumashim of the Torah!

## Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages




**Rav Shmelke of Nicklesburg, zt"l**, was once asked how one fulfils the Mitzvah of loving his fellow Jew, when the other individual acts inappropriately towards him?

He explained, "The entire Jewish people have one great unified Neshamah. No one would ever think of hitting himself every time he has inadvertently hurt himself. It happens. People bump into things or bang their hand. Is this a reason to hit himself again? Certainly not!

Similarly, when another Jew hurts us, it is the result of a lack of sense and intelligence. He does not realize the silliness of his action. Now, if one were to reciprocate and harm him, he is actually harming himself, again!

Hurting another Jew is hurting ourselves. To care about and love another Jew, is actually a sign of love for ourselves, because we are all one!"

***In Eretz Yisrael, there lived a special Yid who was always happy, although he was confined to a wheelchair. People asked him how he managed to be upbeat in his state.***

***He answered, "If everyone were wheelchair-bound like me, no one would wonder how I can be happy. So now that most people are healthy and don't need a wheelchair, is that a reason for me to be sad?"***

## Torah Tavlin

אִשָּׁה כִּי תַזְרִיעַ וְיָלְדָה זָכָר 12:2

As much as he desperately wanted to just sit and learn, **R' Chaim Kanievsky zt"l** gave away many hours of his precious later years to help people with their problems.

One very distraught man came to R' Chaim in tears. He explained how he was married for a number of years already and has still not merited having children. R' Chaim listened patiently and responded in a cryptic manner: "Write and distribute a sefer," said the Tzaddik.

Undaunted, the man immediately set out to accomplish the task at hand. A few months went by, and the man worked diligently until he felt ready to release his hard work. Sure enough, it didn't take long after its release and the married couple had good news to share: they were expecting a child!

When this "miracle story" was told to R' Chaim, he humbly replied, "Miracle? It's a Gemara in Chulin 59b." Well, not exactly, but sort of. The Gemara relates that due to his vast Torah learning, Rav Shmuel ben Rav Avahu knew it was permitted to eat the fat of the karkoz goat. He said about himself, מִפְּרִי פִי־אִישׁ תִּשְׂבַּע בִּטְנוֹ (Mishlei 18:20). In other words, Torah learning is referred to as **פרי בטן** (offspring).

R' Chaim humbly pinned the "miracle" on Chazal! A little while later, an updated edition of the sefer was produced and they merited a second child! With a third edition, came a third - and with the fourth edition, a fourth child!

R' Chaim related that when **R' Isser Zalman Meltzer zt"l** put out the last volume of Sefer Even Ha'azel, he exclaimed to those around him, "Mazel Tov, I had another child!"

Writing a sefer, or taking part in such a lofty accomplishment, is a powerful form of spreading Torah. Chazal tell us, **ותלמוד תורה כנגד**

כולם. This tremendous mitzvah is equal to all other mitzvos in the Torah. Hence, every word of Torah is a merit for the one who spreads it.



## The Way of Emunah – Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum - The Benefit of Every Good Word

**The Zohar Hakadosh** states: "Just like a person is punished for every bad word, he also receives reward for every good word." It is impossible to describe how much a person can help another man with the power of a good word. Sometimes, one can literally save a person with a word.

A prominent communal activist from Lakewood told me the following incredible story: I was invited to give a speech at a gathering held to celebrate a siyum on Shisha Sidrei Mishnah. At first, I had no idea why they asked me to speak, as I had no connection to this gathering. But when I heard the details, I understood and was extremely moved.

Ten years ago, I met a man who complained bitterly about his lack of parnassah. He had no source of income and was unable to support his large family. I had no way of helping him but I did offer him a bit of advice. I told him that **Rav Chaim Palagi zt"l** writes that the reason parnassah has decreased in our times is because in olden times working men were accustomed to learn Mishnayos. The word "Mishnah" has the same gematriah as the word "Parnassah". This symbolizes the fact that learning Mishnayos brings parnassah.

In our times, the learning of Mishnayos has decreased and this has caused parnassah to decrease. I told the man that I would advise him to undertake to learn at least one Mishnah every day, and this would be a zechus for parnassah. He took my advice and began to learn one Mishnah each day. Over the course of time, he increased the amount he learned every day and ten years later, he completed

the entire Shisha Sidrei Mishnah. It goes without saying that he has become a wealthy man and a generous giver of tzedakah.

From this story, we see the power of speech. This activist simply spoke to the man for one minute and offered him some words of encouragement, and this led to the man finishing all of Mishnayos and finding a source of livelihood for him and his family. It is certain that the activist will receive a share in the reward for both of those mitzvos.

In the same vein, I can add another story that I heard directly from **Rav Efraim Wachsman shlita**, Rosh Yeshivas Meor Yitzchok in Monsey. He related: The great gaon, **Rav Eliyahu Dovid Rabinjowitz Teumim zt"l**, who was known as the Aderes, printed his first sefer while he lived in Yerushalaim. After this, he stopped printing his sefarim until one day a Jew from the city of Baghdad, Iraq came to Yerushalaim and asked to be directed to the home of the Aderes.

He related that one day years ago, the **Ben Ish Chai zt"l**, the Rov of Baghdad, made an announcement that he wanted to arrange a festive Hachnasas Sefer Torah that day. He said that all of the men, women and children should put on their best Shabbos clothes in honour of the Torah and gather in the main street of the city.

Everyone came to the main street, dressed in their finest clothing and with torches in their hands. They saw that the Ben Ish Chai was holding in his hands a small sefer that he had wrapped in a talis. He began to dance joyously while holding the sefer. Although no one understood what was going on, they all danced with him as he brought the sefer into the bais medrash.

When he entered the bais medrash, he unwrapped the sefer and everyone could see that it was the new sefer written by the Aderes. The Ben Ish Chai explained that he was treating this sefer with such honour because he was very happy to see that great talmidei chochomim like the Aderes, who have the ability to write such a brilliant sefer, were living in Eretz Yisroel.

When the Aderes heard this, he began to cry. He showed the man that he had many boxes full of his handwritten notes that he had not published because he had received no compliments from anyone on his first sefer. Since no one had told him anything good about the sefer, he had come to believe that no one needed his sefarim and it would be a waste of time and money to print them. But now that he heard this story, he would continue to print his chiddushim.

Again, we see the power of a good word. The Aderes was one of the gedolei hador of his generation and even he testified that he only had the strength to continue publishing his sefarim after receiving these compliments from this man.

## Reb Zusha of Anipoli




***Reb Zusha of Anipoli (1718-1800) writes: Sometimes the harshest criticism comes from within. We set unrealistic expectations, compare our journey to others, and begin to stress over imagined deadlines.***

***But the truth is, spiritual growth is deeply personal. There is no single timeline for success; everyone's path unfolds differently – and that's not a flaw, it's the design.***

***Quiet the inner critic. Don't measure your progress with someone else's ruler. You are not behind. You are not late. Compare yourself only to who you were yesterday, not to who someone else is today. - Trust in your journey, stay in your lane, and run your own race.***

## One Who Accepts to do Good Receives Heavenly Assistance

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אִשָּׁה כִּי תַזְרִיעַ וְיָלְדָה ***Speak to the children of Yisroel, saying: When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male…*(12:2)**

**Sefer Ach Pri Tevuah** explains the pasuk of אִשָּׁה כִּי תַזְרִיעַ to be saying that if a person accepts to do something good, Hashem will give him the ability to do it. Accordingly, the pasuk is saying that if a woman plants the idea of doing a specific good deed, she will "give birth to a male", meaning that she will receive the Heavenly influence to fulfil her good intention.

## Rav Avigdor Miller on Weeping for Lost Tzadikim

**QUESTION:** At the outset of the shiur the Rav said that we shouldn't be distraught when tzaddikim are niftar from this world. But shouldn't we be upset because we don't have their guidance and also that we don't have the protection they give us by just existing?

**ANSWER:** It's a good question. Shouldn't we have been upset when, let's say, the Chofetz Chaim passed away? Shouldn't we be upset that a great man passed away?

Absolutely we should be sad. The Gemara says when a tzaddik *chalilah* dies, **מלמד שקשה סילוקן של צדיקים כשריפת בית אלקינו**– ***it's like the Beis Hamikdosh was destroyed.*** And don't think it's just a mashal. The truth is that the death of a tzaddik is worse than the burning down of the Beis Hamikdosh because a tzaddik builds up in himself all the great Torah ideals, all the greatness of Torah and Awareness of Hashem; he trained himself to think about Hashem and to love Him and to walk in His ways. And therefore, this man becomes in his mind a Beis Hamikdosh. He built a Beis Hamikdosh right here in his head! And when he dies it's like

the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed. So of course, we weep. Absolutely. Absolutely!

Are we weeping because we're missing his guidance, his wisdom? Suppose the tzaddik would have said, "I'm resigning. I'm not going to give any more advice to anybody. I'm going into a hermitage." Nobody would weep that much. We weep mostly because of sympathy for the fact that a great man lost his life.

Of course, the truth is that when a tzaddik goes lost, it's a loss for us. A tremendous loss! The mere fact that he lived was a benefit for us. Even if a tzaddik doesn't speak a word, his presence on this earth is a benefit for us.

And so, we weep for that loss; the destruction of a Beis Hamikdash as well as the loss of a tzadik who benefited us by his mere presence. However, there's a certain limit to our mourning. And after that limit is passed, we are consoled because we know the tzaddik is in Gan Eden. We cannot imagine the happiness of the reward in the afterlife. No matter what you'll say, you're going to understate it. It's such an eternal ecstasy that the tzaddik is enjoying right now that it's impossible to have sympathy for him now.

Let's say, the Chofetz Chaim; I remember when he passed away. I was present at the hesped in Kovno. After all these years, am I going to weep that he passed away? He wasn't going to live forever after all. He's in the next world now. The only thing I can do is envy him. That's all I can do; I'm jealous of him; of his happiness, of his success forever and ever.

And so, that's how we should view all the things in this world – as Hashem views them. And everything in this world is nothing but a preparation for our great career in the World to Come. This tzaddik prepared his whole life for the World to Come and that is our consolation, that we know he's in Gan Eden now.

## Recalling Rav Chaim by Rabbi Shmuel Choueka



Last week the Jewish nation suffered a great loss with the passing of the gadol hador, **Rav Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l**. Besides being from a family of Torah giants – he was the son of the **Steipler Rav**, nephew of the **Hazon Ish** and son-in-law of **Rav Elyashiv** – he was very great in his own right and was considered the premier Rav and posek of our generation.

His funeral last Sunday was attended by hundreds of thousands of people, not to mention the countless people who watched it live on video. It is therefore incumbent upon us to speak about his greatness and to use it as a springboard to commit ourselves to improve our ways.

Rav Chaim had a rigid and intense learning schedule, waking up at 2:30 am every morning. Every year he would complete the entire Shas Babli, Shas Yerushalmi, Rambam, Shulhan Aruch and other important works. His learning cycle did not allow him any extra time to write his own sefarim, but since his schedule ran through the twelve months of the Jewish calendar, he had an extra thirty days in a leap year, which is when he wrote all of his sefarim.

The timing of his passing was amazing, because it was exactly twelve months after he began this year's learning cycle! His was very dedicated to his uncle, the Hazon Ish, and to his teachings. When he was young, he studied in yeshivah in Petah Tikvah.

One day there was a berit milah in Bnei Brak that he felt he should attend, so he took a bus to Bnei Brak. When he got there, the Hazon

Ish saw him and said to him, "Why are you here? You left yeshivah to come to the berit milah?"

Rav Chaim immediately turned around and took the next bus back to Petah Tikvah. He didn't say, "Well, I'm here already. I might as well stay for the berit milah and then go back." If the Hazon Ish felt that he didn't belong there, that was enough for him.

His Torah knowledge was vast and legendary. He once needed to travel to the south and was sitting in the back seat of the car with his son, when someone suddenly jumped into the front seat and said, "Oh, you're going to the south. Mind if I join you?" They didn't want to embarrass the man so they let him come along. Then the man turned around and said to them, "I own a dog." (I don't know why he felt the need to tell them this information.)

Rav Chaim then turned to his son and said, "He mentioned a dog. Let's go through all the places in Shas that mention a dog." And they spent the rest of the ride recalling and expounding on every place where the Gemara says anything about a dog.

Despite the fact that every minute was so precious to him, he always made time to accept visitors. Some people came to him with halachic questions, others needed advice on family or medical issues, and some simply came for his famous 'booha' (short for berachah v'hatzlahah). Even though it took many hours from his busy schedule, he had such a great love for every Jew that he made this one of his priorities.

Rav Chaim was the Shield of our generation. His greatness in Torah protected us, and his passing is a great loss to every one of us. We need to take a lesson from his greatness and step up our Torah learning and service of Hashem. May his zechut protect us and help us to reach the final geulah, Amen.

## Rabbi Shmuel Donn Remez

**וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ** 12:3

The Navi says in Yirmiyahu 33:25 : **כֹּה אָמַר ה׳ אִם־לֹא בְרִיתִי יוֹמָם וָלָיְלָה חֻקּוֹת שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ לֹא־שָׂמְתִּי** – Hashem said, "***If my Bris with the day and night would not be, I would not have set up heaven and earth.***"

**The Yalkut Shimoni** brings down, that this Pasuk is hinting to Bris Milah. Indeed, the Gemara in Mesechta Nedarim (31b) brings the Mishnah that describes the greatness of the mitzvah of Milah – "***It is so great, that if not for Milah, Hashem would not have created the world!***"

Amazingly, the remez to this fundamental mitzvah can be found ***inside*** the words **יום** and **לילה**.

**יום לילה - לילה יום = מילה!**

A hint that the words in the Pasuk in Yirmiyahu – **אִם־לֹא בְרִיתִי יוֹמָם וָלָיְלָה** are referring to Bris Milah – as the Medrash says! **[חיים של תורה]**

## Short Vort – Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

**וְהַצָּרוּעַ אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ הַנֶּגַע בְּגָדָיו יִהְיוּ פְרֻמִים וְרֹאשׁוֹ יִהְיֶה פָּרוּעַ וְעַל־שָׂפָם יַעְטֶה וְטָמֵא טָמֵא יִקְרָא** – ***And the person with tzara'ath, in whom there is the lesion, his garments shall be torn, his head shall be unshorn, he shall cover himself down to his mustache and call out, "Unclean! Unclean!"***

When someone develops tsaraas from speaking lashon hara, he is forced to declare that he is "tamei, impure". **The Dubna Maggid** used to say that the Torah is teaching us a very important lesson with this commandment. He explained that many people speak lashon hara because they do not feel that their words are really so harmful,

after all, how can a few words cause such damage to a person? To answer this claim, the Torah makes this person say just one word - "Tamei" - to show him, and those around him, how just one word can change someone's life so drastically.

In fact, the damage that a few careless words can cause is so great that **Rav Yisroel Salanter** was known to say "If you say that a Rabbi can't sing, or a chazzan can't learn, that is lashon hara, but if you say that a Rabbi can't learn and a Chazzan can't sing, that is tantamount to murder."

And he would conclude by declaring that "***It is worthwhile for a person to study Mussar his whole life… if it will save him from speaking lashon hara even once***!

## Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

**לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב זצ"ל- נפטר כ׳ט שבט תשע׳ד**





The main colour of tzoraas is white. We already know that the main colour of white is compared to taharoh - purity. When the Cohen did the avoida on Yom Kippur, he wore white clothes as a symbol of purity and kaparah.

Why is it that over here, it is a symbol of tumah?

**The sefer Pardes Yoseph** says that the Gemarah in Eruchin 16a says that tzaraas comes from **צרות העין** - stinginess. When this person gives tzeddakah, he doesn't give it with simcha and wholeheartedly. As the Gemarah in Bava Metziah 58b says - **כל המלבין פני חבירו ברבים**

**כאילו שופך דמים** – '***Anyone who humiliates another in public, it is as though he were spilling blood***.'

Why is this true?

Because, says the Gemarah, 'we see that after the humiliated person blushes, the red leaves his face and pallor comes in its place, which is tantamount to spilling his blood.'

Says the Pardas Yoseph, that the Gemarah in Chagigah 5a that a person that doesn't give tzeddakah b'simcha, he causes the poor person to be ashamed. This causes the blood to drain from his face, to be replaced by a pallid whiteness.

**שאם נתן האדם צדקה באופן שנתבייש העני מחמתו, ענוש ייענש על זה, וזה לשון הגמרא: כי את כל מעשה האלוקים יביא במשפט על כל נעלם אם טוב ואם רע... מאי אם טוב ואם רע )דמשמע אף על הטובה מביאו במשפט(? אמרי דבי רבי ינאי: זה הנותן צדקה לעני בפרהסיא. כי הא דרבי ינאי חזייה להההוא גברא דקא יהיב זוזא לעני בפרהסיא, אמר ליה: מוטב דלא יהבת ליה מהשתא דיהבת ליה וכספתיה.**

As a punishment for this, the tzaraas is white, to remind him of the whiteness that he caused to another person, by shaming him or speaking lashon harah about him or being stingy towards him.

## Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

## The Importance of Not Speaking Lashon Horah

There was a Yid that went to South America to raise money for tzeddakah. He got up to speak to the crowd. The first time, people really enjoyed it. But when he spoke on Shabbos to the main kehillah, the response was very cold, and the strange looks that he was getting, did not sit well with him.

Afterwards, he asked the gabbai, "What's going on? Why am I getting this cold reaction? Have I said something wrong?

The gabbai said, "No, but I will be honest with you – are you a sofer?

The speaker said, 'Yes.'




"Ahh, because we've heard about you, that you steal Sifrei Torah, and then sell them on- so we are not very impressed!"

He replied, "Where have you heard such a thing from. Chas V' Sholom, I have never stolen a Sefer Torah in my life."

"Somebody here in the kehilla told us."

"Do you mind taking me to him, so that I can find out where this unfounded information originated from, so that I can clear my name?"

So he took him to the person, and he asked him, "You heard that I steal Sifrei Torah?- where did you get this information from?"

"No, I didn't hear that you actually steal many Sifrei Torah- I heard that you stole one particular Sefer Torah."

"Where did you hear that from? I've never stolen a Sefer Torah in my life!"

"Somebody here in the kehillah told me."

"Will you take me to him, so that I can find out what's going on?"

He took him to the person, and he asked him, "You heard that I stole a Sefer Torah?"

He replied, "No, no, you've got it all wrong – I didn't hear that you stole a Sefer Torah- I heard that you stole a Sefer!"

"What are you talking about, I never stole anything in all my life. Where did you hear this from? I must clear my name."

"I heard it from that Yid over there."

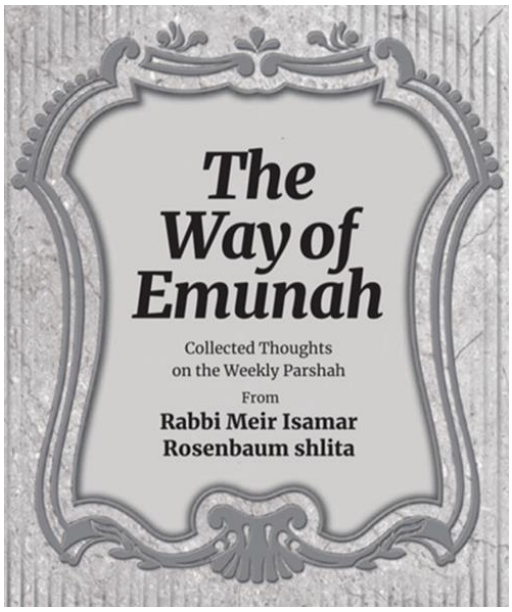
He went over to the Yid, and asked him, "What's this all about, that I stole a Sefer? Where did you hear this from?"

"I heard it from that person over there."

He goes over to the person, and asks him, "When did I ever steal a Sefer?"

"No, no- I was at your last drosho, and it was so insightful, brilliant and inspiring , that I made a comment that you must have stolen the ideas from a Sefer!"

This is the dangers of speaking lashon Hara – Be careful what you say! The repercussions could destroy somebody!




## Teshuva Heals Nega'im

The Medrash Rabbah (15:4) says a moshol of noblewoman who enters the palace of the king and sees a whip hanging on the wall. This made her scared but the king calmed her and said, "Don't worry. This is for the slaves. You, however, can eat, drink and rejoice here."

So too, when the Yidden heard about the nega'im, they got scared. Moshe Rabenu then told them, "Don't worry. This is for the nations of the world. But you can eat, drink and rejoice, as is stated (Tehillim 32:10): 'There are many maladies for the wicked but those who trust in Hashem are surrounded by kindness."

**The Dinover Rebbe zy"a** (Sefer Tzemach L'Dovid) asks how Moshe could say that nega'im are only for the nations of the world, when we know that they actually only apply to Jews, as is stated in the Gemara (Gittin 82A): "Non-Jews do not become tamei from nega'im."

He answers by quoting the Bnei Yissochor who explains the Gemara (Yoma 86B) that says that teshuva transforms sins into merits by saying that the bad influences created by the sins one committed go

off of him and transfer to the account of wicked people after one does teshuva. This leads to the enemies of Klal Yisroel receiving more punishment.

Nega'im are sent to arouse a person to do teshuva. If the person takes the message and does teshuva out of love, his "nega" is turned over and becomes "oneg", a source of joy. Accordingly, the Medrash is saying that one need not worry because if he does teshuva, his nega will turn into an oneg.

If one asks where the sin that caused the nega will go, the answer is that it will go to the nations of the world.

## Fulfilling Mitzvos With No Impediments



It is related that the **Bais Yisroel** explained the words we recite at a bris: **כְּשֵׁם שֶׁנִּכְנַס לַבְּרִית, כֵּן יִכָּנֵס לְתוֹרָה וּלְחֻפָּה וּלְמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים** "***Just like he entered the bris, he should also enter into Torah, chuppah and good deeds***" by asking why we mention other mitzvos while performing this one?

He answered that tzadikim call the mitzvah of milah a "mitzvah nekiyah" (a clean mitzvah), because it is done by the baby with no desire for honour or personal gain.

When a person does most mitzvos, he also has thoughts of personal gain, which corrupt the mitzvah somewhat, but such thoughts do not exist when a baby gets a bris. Therefore, we say that just like the bris was done with no such impediments, all other mitzvos should be done in the same way.

פנינים על התורה
PENINIM ON THE TORAH
בית חינוך הרב דסלר-קליבלנד
Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

**וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי יִמּוֹל בְּשַׂר עָרְלָתוֹ** ***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 new-born 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 circumcizor, 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 aggrandise 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 rationalise 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, externalised 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 modelling 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

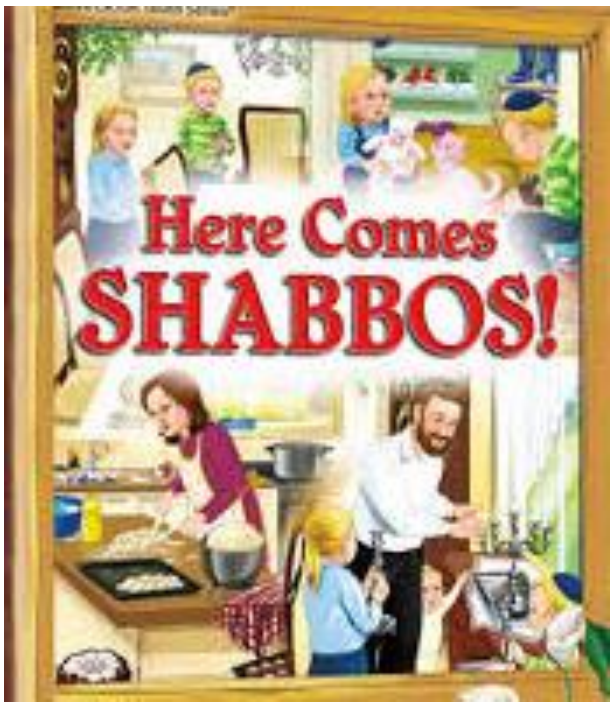
performance of good deeds will be worth incorporating and building upon.

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'l'maasim tovim*? Clearly, every blessing that I could give is included in these three blessings."

## TORAH Sweets

## Short Story of The Week - Rabbi Mordechai Levin

**Rav Elyah Lopian, ZT"L**, (1872-1970), a great Rosh Yeshiva and Mashgiach, was himself a disciple of the renowned Yeshiva of Kelm in Europe. As Rosh Yeshiva in Kfar Chassidim in Israel, Rav Elyah considered Shabbos a time for growth in spirituality rather than simply a day to rest. He would complain about the fact that some students were often absent from the Yeshiva on Friday, claiming that they needed more time to prepare for Shabbos.




In Kelm, Rav Elyah explained, this problem was alleviated by giving the students time to tend to their needs on Thursday afternoons. Boys took haircuts, did their laundry, wrote letters, and tended to all their other Shabbos preparations a day in advance. The logic in doing so was that

on Thursdays the Yetzer Hara to waste time is not as strong as it is on Friday.

In Kelm, the learning schedule on Friday was extended until shortly before Shabbos, leaving just enough time for the students to bathe and change their clothes. (Rav Elyah, ArtScroll)

Comment: Parshas Tazria discusses giving a Bris Milah on the eighth day after the birth of a baby boy. Why the eighth day? **The Rambam** (Moreh 49) writes that we wait in order to allow the baby to gain some strength. The Torah Temima (Tazria 22) explains that waiting eight days ensures the passage of a Shabbos.

One of the benefits of Shabbos is that it gives a person strength, as the Midrash says that the World upon Creation was weak and shaking until Shabbos came and solidified Earth. We must use the gift of Shabbos to strengthen our Torah learning and Mitzvah observance.




## Sefiras HaOmer

Some kehilos recite the brachah of sefiras ha'omer very loudly. Someone asked **Reb Yosef Salant zt'l** why people shout out this brachah.

Reb Yosef Salant replied, "What is the question? Every brachah should be said that way!"

The person countered, "No one shouts the other brachos!"

"Now, that is a question!" Reb Yosef replied.

So, the question shouldn't be why people say the brachah on sefira with a fiery hislahavus. The question is why every brachah isn't said that way.




A student of **Reb Chaim of Tzanz zt'l** said, "When Reb Chaim of Tzanz counted *sefiras ha'omer*, his face turned black like coal, and he climbed up straight walls!"

## Today

One of the lessons of Sefiras Ha'Omer is to focus on today. We proclaim **היום יום... לעומר**. I ignore yesterday's failures, errors, and aveiros, and I don't think about how I will keep up my teshuvah tomorrow. Today I can serve Hashem, and that is my focus.

It states at the beginning of parashas Metzora (14:2) **ביום טהרתו**, "on the day of his purification."

**The Divrei Shmuel zt'l** explains that the pasuk instructs us to focus on **ביום**, this day, and that will help us attain taharah.

He writes, "Don't think about your aveiros of the past [which will make you lose hope] and don't think about what will be in the future [which will make you feel that it is impossible to maintain your teshuvah]. Think about this day alone. Today I can make a nachas ruach for Hashem with Torah and mitzvos."

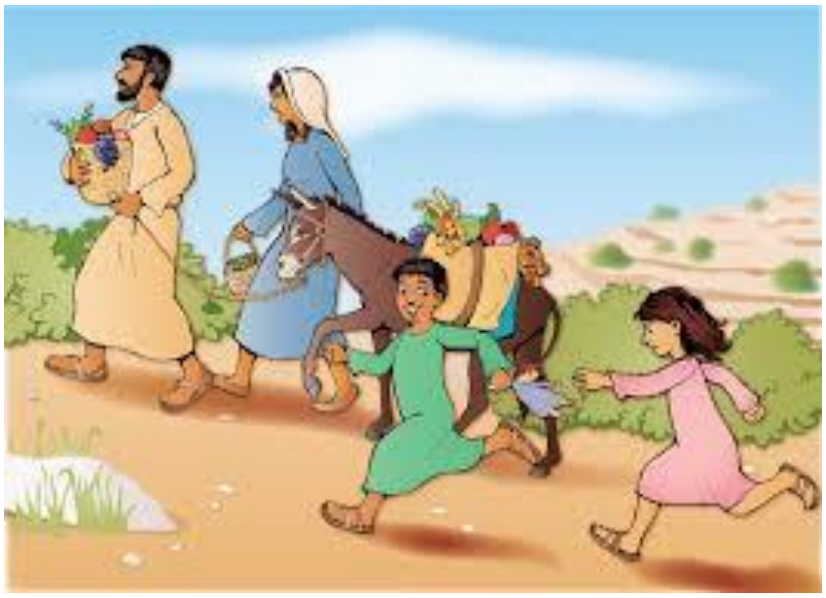
Focus on this day alone, and you will become tahor.

***If a problem can be solved with money, then it's not a problem but a cost.***

## The Beauty of Struggles

It states (Shir HaShirim 7:2) **מה יפו פעמייך בנעלים**, "How beautiful are your footsteps in the shoes…"

The Gemara (Succah 49:) says that **בנעלים** refers to **עליה לרגל** when the Yidden go up to the Beis HaMikdash for the mitzvah of **ראיה ברגל** on the three regalim.



**The Vilna Gaon zt'l** asks the following question. How can the pasuk be referring to the mitzvah of **עליה לרגל** ? Why, it is forbidden to enter the Har HaBayis with shoes!

The Vilna Gaon zt'l answers that the Torah promises (Shmos 34:24) **וְלֹא־יַחְמֹד אִישׁ אֶת־אַרְצְךָ בַּעֲלֹתְךָ לֵרָאוֹת אֶת־פְּנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ שָׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה** , "*No man will covet your land when you go up to appear before Hashem, your G-d, three times a year.*"

However, as they walked to the Beis HaMikdash, there were certainly many moments when they became very scared. They thought, "I shouldn't have come! Everything I own will be stolen!" - They had to repeatedly remind themselves to rely on Hashem's promise and that they had nothing to fear.

When they came to the Beis HaMikdash, they no longer had these anxious thoughts. They were overcome by the kedushah they saw and felt in the Beis HaMikdash, and they totally forgot about their anxieties.

Which part of the pilgrimage did Hashem enjoy most? Was it when they journeyed to the Beis HaMikdash with a heavy heart or when

they were in a state of spiritual bliss as they stood in the Beis HaMikdash?

Most people will say Hashem enjoys more when we are in the Beis HaMikdash, wholly attached to Hashem. But the pasuk tells us that the opposite is true.

The pasuk says **מה יפו פעמיך בנעלים** - your feet are so beautiful when you perform this mitzvah of aliyah l'regel, and the most beautiful part is **בנעלים** when you were still wearing your shoes, walking up to the Beis HaMikdash.

Those are the most precious moments to Hashem. It is your struggles with the yetzer hara that Hashem loves the most.

**Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l** repeated this vort from the **Vilna Gaon** and noted that it is a great chizuk for bachurim.

Bachurim struggle with their yetzer hara, and they think that Hashem doesn't have nachas ruach from them because of their struggles. But it is the opposite. These are the times that they are most precious to Hashem.

**Reb Yitzchok Hutner *zt'l*** writes in a letter, "When we tell stories of the greatness of *tzaddikim*, we have a habit to begin at the end [of their lives] and discuss the great levels the tzaddikim reached. We skip the many years they struggled with their yetzer hara, and we think they were born tzaddikim.

Everyone praises the **Chofetz Chaim's** *shemiras halashon*, but who speaks about his struggles and the ups and downs he encountered until he reached that level?

This is just one example among a thousand. Leaving out these chapters of their lives is a problem because when a *bachur* with a strong desire to grow in *avodas Hashem* is confronted with a challenge or a downfall, he becomes convinced he will never reach the levels of the tzaddikim he wishes to emulate.

He thinks that if he faces challenges, he has no hope. But that is ridiculous. Know, my friend, you will fall time and again, and there will be battles that you will lose. But in the end, you will emerge victorious and wear the crown of success on your head.

The wisest of all men said, **שבעה יפול צדיק וקם** - ***'A tzaddik falls seven times and rises***.' - The wise understand that the tzaddik rises *because* he fell seven times [and kept lifting himself again].

I beg you, don't think of tzaddikim as people who are at peace with their *yetzer tov*. Rather, when the *yetzer hara* is burning inside you, and you're struggling to overcome the *yetzer hara*, those are the moments when you are most similar to the *gedolim*, even more than when you are at peace with the yetzer hara."

We daven that we shouldn't have nisyonos, but when they come, we must know that these are the best times.

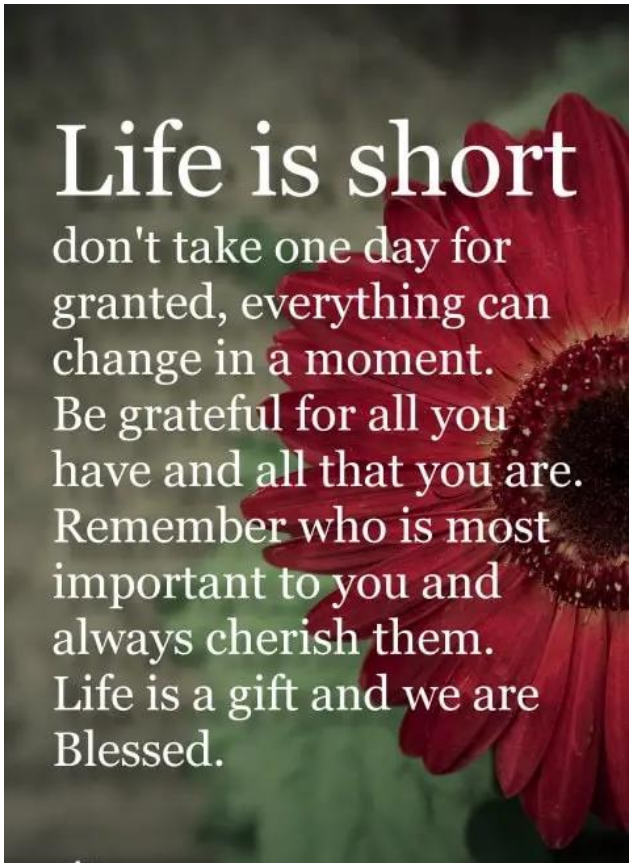
Hashem loves those times more than when we are at peace with the yetzer hara because these are the times we struggle to serve Hashem.

***Once, the Imrei Emes (the Rebbe of Gur) zy"a was a guest, and his host wanted to honour him, but the Imrei Emes was shying away from the honour.***

***The host said, "Chazal say, כל שאומר לך בעל הבית עשה – 'the guest must do everything the host requests.' So, since I want to honour you, you must accept it."***

***The Imrei Emes corrected him: "Chazal say, כל שאומר לך בעל הבית עשה חוץ מצא - 'Do whatever your host requests of you, except when he tells you to leave,' and you are asking me to leave. As Chazal tell us, honour drives a person out of this world."***

## Praise Hashem




People take all the good they enjoy in life for granted. They think it couldn't be otherwise, so they don't recognize that they must praise Hashem for everything they enjoy.

Someone wrote a letter to **Reb Matisyahu Luria zt'l** bemoaning all the hardships he was going through. Reb Matisyahu replied, "If a person would put on one side of a scale everything he should be thankful for, and on the other side he places the issues he is frustrated and upset about, the good will far outweigh the bad.

He will laugh at himself for making an issue over his troubles since he has so much good in his life."

**The Kav HaYashar** (ch.18) writes, "There isn't a person who doesn't experience miracles. Especially in these generations when there are so many tzaros. Evil dictates, frightening wars, hunger, captives, and many illnesses exist.

If Hakadosh Baruch Hu showered His kindness on you and saved you from all of the above, you must always remember His kindness. You cannot be a kafuy tovah."

A girl suffered from a lot of mucus and couldn't breathe well. She went to many experts, but they all said they never saw anything like it before and didn't know what was causing the problem.

The only advice they received was that the girl should go to Arizona, where the air is arid. She was there for three weeks, but it didn't

help much. The girl with her family returned to their home in New York, frustrated that they didn't yet find a solution.

At this time, the girl made a kabalah that every night, before going to sleep, she would write in a diary ten things she was happy about; ten good things that happened to her that day, and praise Hashem for these favours.

On the forty-first day of this good custom, she had a special notation to write in her diary.

She wrote, "***I am breathing well, without pain. It is like I was never ill.***"

She had her salvation from praising Hashem. (I heard this story from the girl's father.)

## Rabbi Avigdor Miller Z'TL - 27th of Nissan



Thirteen years ago, the world lost a giant of Torah learning and Mussar. The 27th of Nissan, marks the Yahrzeit of Rabbi Avigdor Miller. Rav Miller's weekly speeches have been compiled and annotated by his grandson, Rabbi Simcha Bunim Cohen, and printed by ArtScroll in the form of a *sefer*, '**Rabbi Avigdor Miller Speaks.**'

The foreword describes this great scholar:

Rav Miller was born in the United States in 1909, at a time when yeshivos were almost non-existent and Torah observance was rare among the American-born youth. Despite his family's poverty, which drove so many others to think first and foremost of financial security, Rav Miller exhibited from his earliest youth a strong desire for truth and a love of Hashem and His Torah. He was the "Avraham HaIvri," the

"Avraham of the other side," of his time, for he stood on one side of the great river of American life, while the rest of his world stood on the other.

It is almost impossible for the modern generation that has grown up in a world in which Torah, yeshivos, Chassidus, and *shemiras hamitzvos* flourish widely, to appreciate what it meant for a young person to be *frum* — let alone become a *ben Torah* — in those days of rampant Americanization and assimilation.

Rav Miller was blessed with an abundance of Heavenly assistance in overcoming the sea of religious indifference that flowed all around him. Whereas it is the nature of a person to be influenced by the standards of the society around him, Rav Miller from his earliest days was prepared to steer his own course. Early on he developed a strong yearning for truth and a fierce will to pursue it to its logical ends, regardless of the obstacles placed in his path or the difficulties encountered on the way.

Our Sages teach us that one who sets out to purify himself is helped by Heaven to attain that goal. In his old age he would recount a number of inspiring thoughts he heard as a child. He remembered a teacher telling him once that when he recited *Modeh Ani* in the morning, he should reflect on how fortunate he was to have been given another day of life — and how many people had not been so fortunate!

This thought made such a lasting impression on him that he was still able to picture the face of that teacher eight decades later. As anyone familiar with his lectures and tapes can attest, it was a thought he repeated numerous times throughout his long life.

Once, as a young boy in Baltimore, he came out after Ma'ariv from shul and heard two old European Jews talking to each other. One said, "Ah! What a *geshmacke* Ma'ariv this was." The man rubbed his hands together in pleasure. Rav Miller would often tell what a deep

impression it made upon him to discover that praying could be "*geshmack*."

His first encounter with the classic *mussar* work, *Chovos HaLevavos*, was as a teenager, in a *sefarim* store on the Lower East Side of New York. For the rest of his life, this *sefer* served as his constant companion and the foundation for so much of his thinking.




***How should we understand the sins of the students of Rabbi Akiva that caused so many thousands of them to die?***

There's a certain tradition that in the time of sefirah many talmidim of Rabbi Akiva perished by a plague. And we have a tradition that it was because **שלא נהגו כבוד זה בזה** – they didn't treat each other with respect.

So I'll explain this to you. If you look for chametz, you might find some forgotten piece of bread that is hidden away. If you don't look, you won't find. It doesn't mean you don't have some chametz stacked away. Everybody has some chametz stacked away; a bottle of whiskey here or a biscuit there. If you don't look, you'll have chametz in your possession. The Jew always looks for chametz, for sins, all year round and therefore he discovers wrong things of which he rids himself.

Now, there was a plague. And so, the disciples of Rabbi Akiva said, "Chatanu! It's our fault. We weren't polite enough to our comrades. We mistreated them."

Now, we don't have any bas kol that tells us that this was the reason for the plague. They themselves told us that. They searched in their hearts and couldn't find anything else. If they could find other sins, they would have told us, "For these sins we're being punished." But they couldn't find anything. So they finally said, "It's probably because you weren't polite enough to each other."

That's a monument, a testimonial, to the greatness of the old generations. They blamed themselves. And therefore, today every Sefirah we think about it, and we decide we're going to be more and more polite to each other. That's how we should learn.



נֶגַע צָרַעַת כִּי תִהְיֶה בְּאָדָם ***If the leprosy is on a man***... (13:9)

The Biblical plague of leprosy was visited upon a person who had participated in the sin of lashon hara - gossip.

During a private audience with the Previous **Lubavitcher Rebbe** a Jew asked for a tikun, a "prescription" to correct the spiritual damage his misdeeds had caused. The man went on about how badly he had behaved and used extremely harsh words to describe himself.

"I'm sure you know," the Rebbe reminded him, "how grave the Torah's prohibition is against speaking lashon hara. But just as it is forbidden to speak lashon hara about someone else, it is also forbidden to speak lashon hara about oneself!"



**אָדָם כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אֽוֹ־סַפַּחַת אֽוֹ בַהֶרֶת וְהָיָה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ לְנֶגַע צָרָעַת וְהוּבָא אֶל־אַהֲרֹן** (13:2) - (**Ma'ayana Shel Torah**)

The Mishna (Negaim) states: "A person can see all afflictions except his own...or those of his relatives." It's very easy to find fault in others; much more difficult to recognize one's own deficiencies.



## Tzaraas Teaches a Major Life Lesson About Negiyus - Rabbi Frand

The process of Negaim involves the Kohen viewing the blemish on the skin of the person and then ruling whether or not that blemish is Tzaraas. The Mishna says [Negaim 2:5] "A person can view (and rule on) all blemishes except his own." The correct interpretation of this Mishna is that even though a Kohen can pasken on anyone else's blemish, but if the Kohen has a blemish of his own, he may not view it and pasken on its status.

Beyond the simple and correct interpretation of this Mishna, there is also a life lesson to be learned from the Mishna's formulation of this halacha. The life lesson is that "All blemishes a person can see" – meaning I can look at other people and notice their faults. "This person has a temper, this person is haughty, this person is envious" and so forth. I see every fault under the sun in other people! But "except for his own blemishes" – We do not see our own faults. They can be staring us in the face, but we do not see them.

This is one of the great challenges of life. We all have personal biases that do not allow us to see our own shortcomings. We are not even aware of these biases. I always comment that if ever you hear a person say "I may be *nogeah* (personally affected), but…" do not pay attention to the rest of the sentence. There is no such thing as "I may be nogeah but…" If you are affected by the matter, then your opinion is for sure tainted. This is the life-lesson of the Mishna's formulation "All blemishes a person may see except his own blemishes."

There was a person named Rav Dovid Mirer from the city of Mir and a second person named Rav Dovid Novardok from the city of that name. (In Europe people were often identified not by their last names, but by their city of origin.) The cities were not far from each other, and the two Dovids knew one another. In the course of their business dealings with one another, they had some kind of dispute

which they brought to a Din Torah. They came before the great **Rav Chaim Volozhiner** to adjudicate their case.

Rav Chaim Volozhiner ruled in favor of Rav Dovid Mirer. Rav Dovid Novardok felt that Rav Chaim Volozhiner made a mistake and that he was wronged in this Din Torah. However, Rav Chaim Volozhiner was the Gadol HaDor and Rav Dovid Novardok was not about to challenge him. However, he always felt that he lost the case unjustly.



Several months later, Rav Chaim Volozhiner met Rav Dovid Novardok and asked a favor of him: "There are two Jews that I know who asked me to hear their Din Torah. I am too busy to adjudicate their dispute. Would you mind taking the case for me? I will even pay you for your wasted time (Schar Batalah) ten gold pieces. But I want you to hear the case and you adjudicate it."

Rav Dovid Novardoker accepted the assignment. He went to adjudicate the case. The two people sat down in front of him and they each presented their claims. Rav Dovid Novardoker ruled in favor of one of the parties. Rav Chaim Volozhiner later asked him "Nu, who did you rule like?" He responded, "I ruled like this one person."

It hit him suddenly like a bolt of lightning. It was the exact same case that he had with Rav Dovid Mirer. But he had not been able to see then how his logic was wrong because it was dealing with his own pocket. And yet, when he saw these same facts being replayed with other individuals, he was easily able to see the truth.

After Rav Chaim Volozhin died, these two people came to Rav Dovid Novardoker and explained to him that they never had a Din Torah between themselves. It was all a charade that Rav Chaim Volozhin set up with them. He wanted to teach Rav Dovid Novardoker this

lesson – when it is a case involving your own money, you do not view things correctly!

**The Shach** (Rav Shabsi Kohen, (1621-1662) once had a Din Torah with another Jew. However, nobody in the Shach's city wanted to adjudicate the case because they did not want to take a case where they might have to rule against the Gadol Hador.

The Shach and his disputant decided they would travel to another city where nobody knew the Shach and they would have the case heard there. In the seventeenth century, people did not know what the Shach looked like. There were no Jewish newspapers and there were no photographs. People did not see the Shach burning his chometz or lighting his Chanukah candles or making Birkas Ilanos – so people did not know what he looked like!

They went to a Rav in another city. The Shach gave his side of the story, and his disputant gave his side of the story and the Rav ruled against the Shach. The Shach said "Ok. You are the Rav. You have paskened, I need to accept it. But tell me, why did you pasken like that?" To which the Rav said, "I paskened that way based on the opinion of the Shach in Choshen Mishpat and he quoted the exact chapter and paragraph where the Shach's ruling was recorded.

At this point the Shach was startled. "It is an explicit Shach! It is me!" But even though the Shach ruled clearly in an abstract case, he was still not able to apply it to himself. He was blinded by his personal involvement in the matter! It was because "*all blemishes a person may rule on, except on his own blemishes*."

We see everyone else's faults except our own. This is the scary part about negiyus.

***Hashem gave man two ears and one mouth, so listen more and talk less.***

## Elisha Told Na'aman to Immerse in the Yarden Based on the Letter Nun (Haftarah) -Rabbi Frand



The Haftorah of Parshas Tazria is the story of Na'aman, the Gentile general of the King of Aram. He had Tzaraas and could not find a cure for his condition. He came to the Prophet Elisha seeking help. Elisha told him, ***"Go immerse in the Jordan River."*** Na'aman dipped himself in the Yarden. Lo and behold, his Tzaraas was cured. This is the story of Chapter 5 in Melachim II.

**The Rokeach**, an early Biblical commentary asks: Where did Elisha get the idea that the way for Na'aman to cure himself from Tzaraas would be to immerse in the Yarden?

I would never ask such a question because a Navi is a Navi, and if a Navi says to go dip in the Yarden, you do that. If the Navi says to stand on your head, you do that. You assume the Navi is telling you the word of G-d. But the Rokeach is a Rishon, and he asks this question and gives an incredible answer that only a Rishon could give.

The Rokeach says that there are three—<u>and only three</u>—pesukim in the entire Torah that both begin with the letter Nun and end with the letter Nun. The first pasuk is **נֶגַע צָרַעַת כִּי תִהְיֶה בְּאָדָם וְהוּבָא אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן** "***Nega Tzaraas, when it will be found in man, he shall be brought to the Kohen.***" [Vayikra 13:9].

The second pasuk is **נָבִיא מִקִּרְבְּךָ מֵאַחֶיךָ כָּמֹנִי יָקִים לְךָ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ אֵלָיו תִּשְׁמָעוּן** "***Navi from your midst amongst your brethren like myself shall the L-rd your G-d raise up, to him you shall listen (tishma'un)***" [Devorim 18:15].

The third pasuk is נַחְנוּ נַעֲבָר חֲלוּצִים לִפְנֵי ה' אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וְאִתָּנוּ אֲחֻזַּת נַחֲלָתֵנוּ מֵעֵבֶר לַיַּרְדֵּן "***Nachnu (we) shall cross over armed, before Hashem, to the land of Canaan, and ours shall be the heritage of our inheritance across the Jordan.***" [Bamidbar 32:32].

Those are the only three pesukim in all of Chumash that both begin and end with the letter Nun. One is about Tzaraas; one is about a prophet; and one is about the Yarden.

The Rokeach says this was Elisha's insight: The three pesukim reference a Metzorah (Na'aman), a prophet (Elisha), and the Yarden. The clear message is that the prophet should tell the Metzorah to immerse himself in the Yarden.

## On the Way by Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky



Moshe, a relative of mine, had a doctor's appointment in North Jersey, an hour away from his home in Lakewood. Unable to drive, his wife drove him to the appointment, and he arranged for a friend of his, who worked nearby to drive him home after the two-hour appointment.

An emergency came up and his friend had to leave work early but assured him that he will arrange another ride for Moshe by posting this chessed on the "North Jersey rides to Lakewood WhatsApp chat".

Sure enough, Moshe received a text a few minutes before he was ready to leave from an unknown baal chessed, informing him that he will swing by to pick him up and drive him to Lakewood.

Chaim, a Lakewood resident who works a few miles away from where Moshe was, drove by and welcomed Moshe into his car, and began.

"I'll tell you the truth, I had a hard and busy day at work, and I was not up to taking a passenger home. I received a notification on the chat that you needed a ride, but I ignored it, hoping that someone else will take you. I was just too drained to pick anyone up. But then I received a message from Hashem.

As I got in my car to drive home, my mother sent me a video clip. Instinctively, I started playing the clip from Torah Anytime. The speaker told the following story.

A man was hitching a ride outside Kever Rochel when someone pulled up. "Where are you headed?" The hitchhiker, not wanting to take the driver out of his way, simply replied, "Take me wherever you are going, and I'll take a bus home.

But the driver insisted. "Tell me where you need to go and I'll take you."

"O.K. Anywhere in Yerushalayim is fine. Really. I'll take the bus from where you drop me off."

He got in the car, but the argument intensified.

"Please. Tell me where you live!"

"Its ok. Please don't go out of your way. I just needed to get back to Yerushalayim. I promise. I'll be fine. Just drop me off at a bus stop.

But the driver persisted, and the passenger, defeated, admitted that he lives in Neve Yaakov.

"Perfect! That's on my way! I'll take you to your house!"

The passenger wasn't born yesterday, but he had no choice. A free ride was his fate.

They spent the rest of the ride making small talk, as the kindhearted driver navigated the streets of Yerushalayim, eventually parking in front of his new friend's building.

The passenger thanked him profusely for going more than 30 minutes out of his way, but the driver would have none of it.

"I promise you! It's on my way anyway! It was not a big deal!"

"I don't understand." the passenger told him. "It's NOT on your way. I know that you don't live close to here. You went completely out of your way! Why did you keep telling me that it's on your way?"

The driver smiled and replied. "***It IS on my way. You're right. It's not on the way to my house, but it's on my way to Olam Habah***!"

Chaim looked at Moshe. "After I heard this story, I knew that it was meant for me - for this moment. I stopped and texted you that I'm coming to pick you up."

My grandfather, **Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l** quotes the "**Kozhiglover Gaon" Rav Aryeh Tzvi Frommer zt"l**, who explains the opening pesukim of the sedra through the lens of machshava.

A tzaddik is one who journeys through this physical world in spiritual pursuit, fighting and fighting, rising above the materialistic realities, and winning over his natural evil inclination. Eventually, he can reach the next level - chassidus.

A chassid, an extremely rare phenomenon, (Moshe Rabbeinu reached this level. See introduction of Meshech Chochma to Sefer Shemos) is no longer enticed by temptation, rather he uses all the material in this world for his path to Olam Habah and conquers his evil inclination completely. He is then free and clear to serve Hashem without the hindrance of temptation.

This level is a challenge. But we can all take steps by realizing that whatever we do, we are truly on the way to the level of Olam Habah.




# משל למה הדבר דומה

## אשה כי תזריע וילדה זכר ... (יב-ב)

**Harav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zt"l**, Rav of Yerushalayim, was originally named Chaim at his bris. Later in his life, it happened that one year shortly before Yom Kippur he suddenly fell gravely ill.

R' Chaim's Rebbi, the illustrious **R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin zt"l**, also known by Maharil Diskin, gave him his word that he would be able to fast safely - on the condition that he spent Yom Kippur day resting at home. R' Chaim did so but after Yom Kippur his situation took a turn for the worse.

His holy Rebbi spent an entire day at his bedside until he finally decided to add the name Yosef which literally means "add," to the name Chaim - "life." Almost immediately, R' Yosef Chaim began to feel better and within a few days was back to his regular routine.

A few years later, on Purim, R' Yosef Chaim brought his Rebbi mishloach manos very early in the morning. The Maharil was happy to see his student arrive so early and praised him saying, "Zerizin Makdimin L'mitzvos."

R' Yosef Chaim smiled and said, "It was the holy Rebbi who turned me into a zariz (one who acts quick). At first, my name was only Chaim. When the Rebbi added Yosef to my name, the numerical equivalent of my full name, Yosef Chaim, became 224, equal to the gematria of the word זריז."

Hearing the clever response, the Maharil rose and recited the blessing written in the Gemara to be recited when one sees that his

student is successful: **בָּרִיךְ רַחֲמַנָא דַּחֲמִי לִי פֵּירִין עַד דַּאֲנָא בְחַיִּים** - "***Blessed is Hashem Who has shown me fruits during my lifetime.***" (Yerushalmi Horayos 3:4)

Chazal say that a person's name is a very powerful tool, as it can affect a person's life and have a meaningful effect on him as well. Hence, when parents choose a name for their new-born child, they must be aware that it can be instrumental in the child's progression in life.

## Now You Know



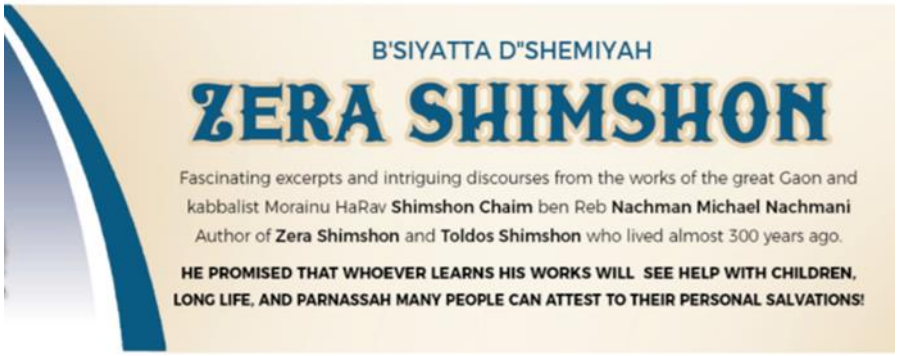

Parshas Tazria speaks of the laws of how one becomes a Metzora, one who has tzaraas, a spiritual disease with a physical manifestation. Parshas Metzora begins with discussions of the purification process. It seems counterintuitive that the names of the Parshiyos belie what's really happening in them.

While Parshas Tazria sounds like it will be a fruitful and productive topic, it speaks of one of the most destructive episodes in Jewish life. Parshas Metzora, on the other hand, speaks about someone turning themselves around and having a rebirth. Becoming purified from this disease involves changing themselves and getting away from the actions that made them get the blemish. - It would make sense for the two parshiyos' names to be reversed!

There is a deep lesson here. The person who views the world negatively and casts aspersions everywhere THINKS he is wise and

astute. He recognizes the insidious nature of people he thinks others miss, and so considers himself to be giving life!

Only when he identifies himself as the Metzora, the one who is blemished could begin repairing the damage and purifying himself. When he is ready to acknowledge that HE is the problem, he is finally ready to deal with it and put it behind him.




**כָּל־יְמֵי אֲשֶׁר הַנֶּגַע בּוֹ יִטְמָא טָמֵא הוּא בָּדָד יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה מוֹשָׁבוֹ** All the days that the disease is upon him etc. he shall dwell in isolation etc. outside the camp (13:46)

The Gemara says (Erchin 16b), that the reason the Metzora must sit alone is because the affliction of Tzar'as is due to his speaking of Lashon Hara. When a person speaks Lashon Hara he creates divisions between people. Therefore, his punishment is that he must sit alone to feel the same pain he caused others.

Regarding Shalom, peace between people, which is the rectification and flipside of Lashon Hara, the Zera Shimshon writes the following. The Mishna says (Avos 1:12), Be from the students of Aharon. Love peace and run after it (literally: persecute it). Love mankind and bring them closer to Torah.

The Zera Shimshon asks - why does the Mishna use the word **רודף** to express how one should pursue Shalom. The word **רודף** literally means to 'persecute' peace?

If the Mishna wishes to impart the lesson that one should run after peace there are many words with more positive connotations that could have been used instead of the word **רודף** ?

The Zera Shimshon answers with the following Medrash. The Medrash says (Bereishis Rabba 88:5) that when Hashem decided to create man the angels were divided about creating this being. The trait of Kindness said that man should be created since he will do acts of kindness. Truth said he should not be created since he is full of falsehood etc. The trait of Shalom said that man should not be created since he is all about quarrelling. Hashem threw Truth to the ground (dismissed his opinion).

The Zera Shimshon asks - why was Truth dismissed and not Shalom, they both said that man should not be created?

The Zera Shimshon answers that when there is a lack of Truth, there still can be Shalom. However, if there is no Shalom, there is no Truth, since when there is no Shalom, Hashem removes His presence from amongst us and there can be no Truth in such a situation. Even so, Shalom was against the creation of man. Therefore, when people love peace and try to increase it, they are essentially disproving Shalom's claim that man is nothing but quarrel and should not be created.

This is why, when the Mishna says that one should love Shalom, the Mishna uses the term **רודף שלום**, which means to 'persecute peace' because by loving peace and running after it, we are in fact persecuting Shalom by proving it wrong.

This is why the Mishna continues to say that one should love all of mankind. The Mishna could have said that one should love his friends or his neighbours or his fellow Jews. Instead, the Mishna chooses another interesting term which seems to include all of mankind, even non-Jews.

The Zera Shimshon explains that by perusing Shalom, one shows his belief that all of mankind is worthy of being created since mankind is not all about quarrel. The original question was about the creation of all of mankind, which was in danger of not being created due to its nature to fight. Thus, when one works to increase Shalom, it

shows that all of mankind is worthy of being created and given the chance to prove its worth.

## Parsha Potpourri, by R' Ozer Alport

**אָדָם כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵת אוֹ־סַפַּחַת אוֹ בַהֶרֶת וְהָיָה בְעוֹר־בְּשָׂרוֹ לְנֶגַע צָרָעַת וְהוּבָא אֶל־אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אוֹ אֶל־אַחַד מִבָּנָיו הַכֹּהֲנִים** 13:2

A person who has a nega (lesion) that he suspects may be tzara'as must show it to a Kohen for his evaluation, and its status is not legally confirmed until verbally pronounced by a Kohen.

**The Rambam** writes (Hilchos Tumas Tzara'as 9:2) that if the Kohen is unfamiliar with the pertinent laws – or even if he is a mentally incompetent shoteh – a non-Kohen Torah scholar can examine the affliction and convey its status to him. The Kohen may then "rule" by repeating this determination, which legally takes effect.

**The Kesef Mishneh** (Ibid.) maintains that the Kohen referred to by the Rambam is not a true shoteh, who is so mentally incapable that his actions have no legal significance. Rather, he is an uneducated am ha'aretz, who is deemed ignorant relative to the more learned scholar who diagnoses the lesion for him.

In his sefer Oznayim L'Torah, **Rav Zalman Sorotzkin** questions this interpretation. Since the phrase "am ha'aretz" is frequently used in Rabbinical literature, why would the Rambam substitute the seemingly imprecise term "shoteh" instead?

Rav Sorotzkin notes that Kohanim in Eretz Yisroel used to be financially supported by the community, while their priestly responsibilities only required them to work in the Beis HaMikdash for two weeks each year. This left them with a tremendous amount of free time to study Torah. Unlike his neighbours who spent their days struggling to support their burgeoning families, a Kohen who remained uneducated had no excuse for his lack of knowledge.

The Gemora (Chagigah 4a) defines a shoteh as someone who squanders what is given to him. Accordingly, a Kohen's decision to remain an ignorant am ha'aretz by failing to take advantage of his unique opportunity to learn Torah calls his mental capacity into question.

Applying this insight to our own lives, **Rabbi Dan Lifshitz** notes that in our prosperous society, we too are blessed with countless daily opportunities to augment our Torah knowledge, and it behooves us to capitalize on them, for failure to do so borders on folly.

## Synthetic Materials




Parshas Tazria concludes (13:47-48) by discussing the laws governing tzara'as found in clothing. The Torah specifies that this discussion only applies to afflictions found in garments made from wool, linen, or leather.

For this reason, **Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman** suggests that clothing made from synthetic materials such as polyester or nylon is exempt from these halachos. Thus, if a person discovers an apparent case of tzara'as in such a garment, because it is not made from any of the components listed, he does not need to show it to a Kohen.

The Torah recognized that in the future, articles of clothing may be made from other materials, so it singled out wool, linen, and leather to teach us that garments made from synthetic fabrics are not governed by these laws.

Along these lines, **Rav Yisroel Reisman** notes that the consensus of most poskim (**including Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, and Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv**) is that plastic and other

artificial substances are not mekabel tumah (susceptible to any form of impurity).

Rav Reisman suggests that in enabling scientists to develop these manmade materials, Hashem is preparing us for the Messianic era, when the halachos of tumah and taharah will once again be in effect. We will be required to keep track of our dishes, cars, and other possessions to ensure that they remain tahor, and we will need replacements for items that become tamei and cannot be purified.

Recognizing how tedious and expensive this can be, Hashem in His kindness has helped us discover ways of making many items from artificial substances that cannot become tamei and can therefore always be used without any worries.

## Jaundice in Babies



At the beginning of Parshas Tazria, the Torah says that on the eighth day, male sons are circumcised.

It is very prevalent nowadays that when a baby is born, it is often very jaundiced, and there are often lengthy delays in carrying out the bris due to this.

I met a mohel from London - R' Dovid Chaim Gluckstadt, who told me as follows:

Prior to a baby being born, its life source is connected to its mother with the strongest bond possible. Once the baby is born, it is suddenly detached from this comfortable warm environment. As a result, the is some trauma that causes the baby to become jaundiced due to the sudden massive change.

Some women nowadays hand over their baby as soon as it is born to a carer who looks after and cares for the child, so that the mother can get some much-needed rest.

He maintains that this is holding back the baby's natural attachment to his biological mother – and is causing the jaundice to linger.

He offers the following advice to the mothers and brings a proof of this from **תשובות והישב משה** and **תשובות פני לוי** who say that if the mother would cuddle the baby and stay close – 'skin to skin' as much as possible, this would cause the jaundice to rectify itself very quickly!

He said that this works in the vast majority of cases!

## A Matter of "Life and Death" by Rav Yissochor Frand

**Rav Issar Zalman Meltzer** (1870-1953) was a great genius and Tzaddik. Rav Issar Zalman Meltzer was sitting in his study one Chol HaMoed, the "Intermediate days of the Festival," with **Rav Dovid Finkel**. [During these days, basic work is permitted, but activities such as writing are avoided unless absolutely necessary.]

Rav Issar Zalman asked Rav Dovid Finkel for a pencil and paper to write something down. Rav Dovid Finkel questioned his mentor, "Rebbe, how can you write something down, it is Chol HaMoed?"

Rav Issar Zalman responded that the issue is a matter of great urgency, "almost like a life and death issue".

Rav Dovid Finkel became all excited and asked, "Rebbe, what's wrong? What is the matter with you?"

Rav Issar Zalman brushed him off. "There is nothing really the matter. It is just that for me this is something almost akin to a life-or-death matter."

Rav Dovid Finkel brought the pencil and paper and Rav Issar Zalman wrote down a pasuk from Proverbs [Mishlei 4:25] **עֵינֶיךָ לְנֹכַח יַבִּיטוּ וְעַפְעַפֶּיךָ יְיַשְּׁרוּ נֶגְדֶּךָ** -"***Let your eyes look ahead, and your eyes will direct your path.***"

Rav Dovid Finkel was perplexed. "This was the life-or-death matter — just to write down a pasuk that you already knew by heart?"

Rav Issar Zalman explained. "Hundreds and hundreds of Jews come to visit me and wish me 'Gut Yom Tov' during the course of Chol HaMoed. Some of the people who come in are not the most distinguished residents of Jerusalem. Included among those who visit are many who are mishugaim (crazies), braggarts, ignoramuses, etc. I have to sit here, patiently, with person after person and smile. Sometimes I am tempted to lash out and lose my patience. I need something to hold me back.

Every year, before Chol HaMoed, I write down this pasuk to remind me of its homiletic interpretation: 'When your eyes look at someone else, turn your eyes inward'. (In other words 'Do not look at HIS shortcomings, look at your own shortcomings'.)

This is critically important to me, to have this pasuk sitting on my desk so that I will not criticize (mentally). I absolutely need that. When people come in, I look at this pasuk and think to myself 'Do not think about them; think about yourself'.

This year, I forgot to write down the pasuk before Yom Tov. For me, it was vital to write down the pasuk — even on Chol HaMoed!"

Rav Issar Zalman felt that this lesson — of taking extra care to avoid criticizing and looking at the faults of others — was truly akin to a matter of life or death.

There are only two types of people in the world — those who view the glass as half empty and those who view the glass as half full. Those who speak Lashon Horah always view the glass as half-empty. The people who view the glass as half full are not the critics and

faultfinders, but they are the happy people in life who can see the positive in their spouses, their children and their surroundings. As such they are happier people.

Lashon Horah is destructive not only to the person about whom it is spoken – – it is destructive to the person who speaks it himself, because it teaches him to be negative and that is a terrible thing.

## Frum.org - Weekly Dvar Torah by Michael Winner

"Why did Hashem create man last, after all the other creations?

Two reasons are offered. First, because man is the ultimate reason for Creation. Therefore, everything else was created beforehand to be ready to serve him. Second, to prevent him from arrogance. He should know that even a flea was created before him" (Sanhedrin 38a; Ein Yaakov).

**Rav Nachman m'Breslov** notes that last week's parsha dealt with which animals are considered kosher and which are not; while this week's parsha deals with tzaraas (leprosy), and how they can determine and rid themselves of it. This week's parsha also deals with the mitzvah of bris milah. So, what's the connection between them all?



He answers (Kikutei Halachos V, 181a) that in the Torah, the laws pertaining to man, milah and tzaraas, come after the laws pertaining to animals. And in conjunction with the Ein Yaakov above, we learn if man merits, he is circumcised and becomes an exalted person by guarding the covenant. But if he is haughty, he will be lowered and smitten with leprosy.

The world is full of animals. Some have four legs, and some have two. Each person has the choice on whether he wants to be a "descendant of a monkey" and no greater than that, or to live on a higher realm.

## FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

Beauty is only skin deep, goes the expression. But do you know what else is? Tzora'as. Yes, tzora'as, the skin disease that we read about in the Torah, which leads to discolorations on the skin and investigation by the Kohain, and of course, being sent outside the camp to sit in solitude.

Have you ever asked yourself why this is? Why doesn't tzora'as attack the lungs that gave forth the breath for the words of Lashon Hara? Why doesn't the heart that became arrogant suffer blockages or stoppage? Why does the message of tzora'as remain on the surface?

It is precisely because the one who got the tzora'as viewed the world and others superficially. He didn't look beyond the surface of others to learn their true natures and positive attributes. He judged them with a quick glance and condemned them. He didn't stop to think there might be a reason for their actions, or whether his actions might pain them. He didn't take the time to reflect.

And that's where the isolation comes in. When the Metzora was sent outside of the camp, the only thing he could do was think. He would think, reflect, and re-examine his impressions, choices, and actions. He would realize that there was much more beneath the surface than he'd realized before. And that's when he would be ready to be healed.




**אִשָּׁהּ כִּי תַזְרִיעַ וְיָלְדָה זָכָר** 12:2

When we live for our **נשמה**, nothing can compare with our importance.

Last week's *parsha*, **שמיני**, contained the **הלכות** concerning animals and other creatures, regarding whether they are **טמא** or **טהור**. This week's *parsha* turns to focus on the **טומאה וטהרה** of human beings.

**רש"י** quotes a **מדרש** which explains the reason for this: *just like humans were created after the animals, so too their laws of* **טהרה** *are also mentioned last.*

Another **מדרש** takes it even further: *if Man is worthy then he is told that he is the purpose of the whole Creation, but if he is not worthy then he is reminded that even a mosquito preceded him!*

The **זצ"ל כתב סופר** explains the message of these **מדרשים** in the following way: If we study the human being, we discover that physically it is inferior to much of the animal kingdom. Many creatures can run faster, fly higher and are much stronger than Man. Furthermore, these animals need very little to get by. They are able to live outdoors in the freezing cold and extreme heat, eat just one type of food, uncooked, and barely suffer from the myriad of ailments that beset the human. - In comparison, the human being is a very feeble, weak creature.

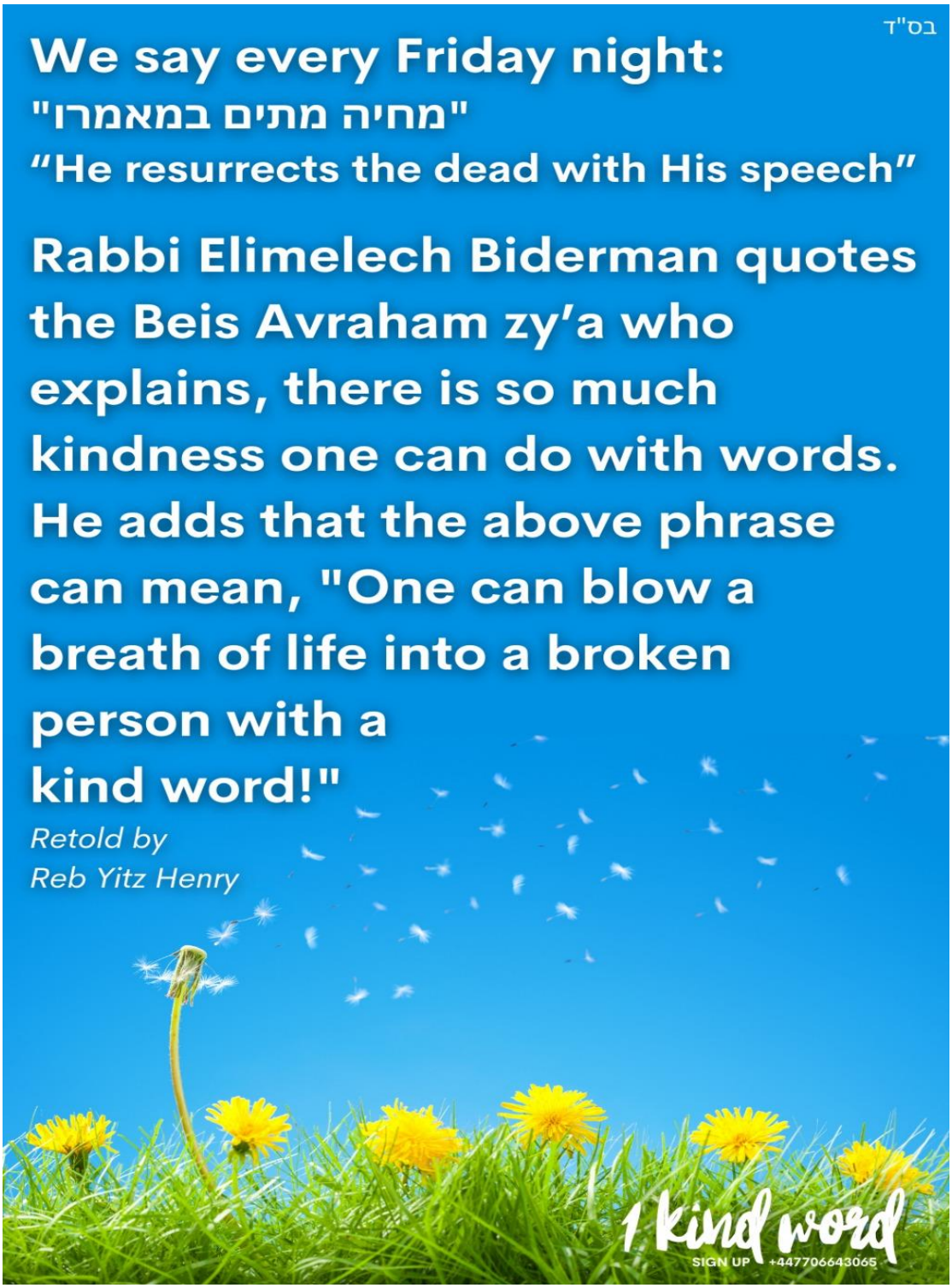
But that is all from a physical perspective. From a spiritual viewpoint, it is a very different story. The human can learn, be kind and improve. He can use his intellect to make the world a better place and his heart to share with others.

This of course is due to what makes him different – his soul, his **נשמה**, the key ingredient missing from the animal world.

The **כתב סופר** encourages us therefore to turn our focus away from the allure of the physical world – it only leads to misery, and to the

realisation that the "mosquito" is ahead of us in the queue. However, when we live for our **נשמות**, then **there is nothing that can even compare with our prominence**.

Every time we perform a **מצוה** or learn a word of **תורה** we soar above the entire physical world, all of which was created for our purpose…



## First Impressions

Hillel says in Pirkei Avos **אַל תָּדִין אֶת חֲבֵרְךָ עַד שֶׁתַּגִּיעַ לִמְקוֹמוֹ – *'Don't judge your friend until you have reached his place'*.**

The **Chidushei HaRim** says, it means until you have reached his place with everything. You must have had the same upbringing as that person. The same parents, the same siblings, the same school, the same teachers, the same strengths, the same weaknesses, the same family, the same environment, the same financial status – Everything! - Is that even possible? – NO.

Says the Chidushei HaRim, that what Hillel is saying is that you mustn't judge someone until you have reached his place – with everything – which is impossible! Therefore, **never** judge another person!

This week's parsha mainly teaches us about Tzaraas. Chazal tell us that a person gets tzaraas because he spoke lashon harah – because they spoke bad about someone else.

So, when a person thinks that he has tzaraas, he has to go to the kohen. In the introduction to the parsha, (13:3) it tells us **וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַנֶּגַע** - '*The kohen should see this affliction.*' And it has all the signs and symptoms of being tamei - **וְרָאָהוּ הַכֹּהֵן וְטִמֵּא אֹתוֹ** –'*When the kohen sees this, he shall pronounce him unclean.*'

The Torah could have simply said, that the kohen should look at this affliction, and if it has all the signs of tumah, then he should announce to the person that he is tamei.

Why does the Pasuk tell the kohen to look twice?

I heard from **Rabbi Zacharia Wallerstein Zt'l** whose yartzeit is this week: In English, there is a concept called '***First Impressions***.'

First impressions are very important. But, we must understand that in Yidishkeit, first impressions can be very dangerous, because very often, we judge people by first impressions.

So, the Torah is telling the kohen, that before he condemns the person to being tamei after initially seeing the affliction that appears to be tzaraas –וְרָאָהוּ הַכֹּהֵן - he should take a second look to ensure that this is the case!

This teaches us the source as to why we speak lashon horah – because we generally judge people on 'first impression'.

# Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

**A Short Prayer**

וְהַצָּרוּעַ אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ הַנֶּגַע... וְטָמֵא טָמֵא יִקְרָא – "And the person with Tzaraas... he is to call out "tamei, tamei." (13:45)

The Gemara (Shabbos 60a) teaches that the purpose of this is so that the Metzora's pain is known to others and they would pray for his recovery. The Gemara says that we see from this that when one's tree is not producing fruit, he should put a mark on the tree so that other people see it and know to pray for it to be revived.

**Harav Yechezkel Levenstein zt'l** explained: The Gemara isn't suggesting that we declare an intense "day of prayer" on behalf of the tree. Rather, as someone walks by, they will see the barren tree and utter a quick prayer as they walk by. This is because even the smallest request to Hashem is a treasured by him.

You should never say, "I don't have time for a long prayer, I might as well not pray". Every prayer to Hashem is precious.

***The Vilna Gaon (Iggeres HaGra) states that for every moment a person restrains himself and remains silent, he merits a share in the Or HaGanuz, the hidden, primordial light reserved for the righteous.***




**Rabbi's Message – Rav Mordechai Shifman, of Los Angeles**

In this week's Torah portion, we are introduced to a form of Tzara'as known as Tzara'as Habayis. This manifested itself as a discoloration upon one of the walls of a person's house and reflected certain transgressions committed by the homeowner. The purification process of the house often resulted in its complete demolition. Rashi cites a Midrash which teaches that upon destruction of the house, precious gems, gold and silver hidden in the walls by the Amorites who inhabited the Land of Canaan prior to Bnei Yisroel entering the land, would be found. The commentaries question why it was necessary for the homeowner to find these treasures? It would appear that the transgressor was being rewarded for his bad behavior.

Hashem punishes not simply in a punitive manner, rather a corrective one. He wants us to stop being self-destructive and change our ways. Very few people can receive criticism graciously. Often, being criticized has the opposite effect, causing the negative behavior to become even more entrenched. Most of us interpret the criticism being levied against us as not being for our benefit, but to fulfill the agenda of the person who is complaining. What measures need to be taken to ensure that criticism will be constructive? In what manner can Hashem mete out punishment so that it will be viewed by us as a benevolent act?

For criticism to be effective, the critic must establish a loving and caring relationship with the recipient. Only then is there a chance that the message will be viewed as constructive rather than self-serving. Hashem allows the homeowner to find the gems that will permit him to rebuild his home to ensure that the punishment will be viewed as constructive and emanating from a place of love.

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE
A PROJECT OF THE Mesorah Heritage Foundation
WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

## Double-Edged Message - The Maggid on Tefillah by Rabbi Paysach Krohn



The Warsaw Jewish Cemetery is one of the largest Jewish cemeteries in the world.

To me, the most meaningful kever is that of a noted mohel in Poland, R' Yaakov Tzvi Witelsohn, known as R' Kuppel Mohel, who served in that capacity for close to sixty years.

**R' Paysach Krohn at the kever of R' Kuppel Mohel. Note the Kisei shel Eliyahu chairs, the pasuk of romemos kel and the image of a double-edged bris knife.**

His monument is shaped like a kisei shel Eliyahu (Chair of Elijah's), alongside the chair where the sandak sits at a bris. Among the engravings on the tombstone is the pasuk **רוֹמְמוֹת קל בִּגְרוֹנָם וְחֶרֶב פִּיפִיּוֹת בְּיָדָם** -'*The lofty praises of Hashem are in their throats, and a double-edged sword is in their hand.*' (Tehillim 149:6).

As I am a mohel, the story behind this tombstone enhanced my davening. I believe it will enhance yours as well.

R' Hillel David once attended a bris in the Rotberg family in Brooklyn. The infant's great-grandfather, R' Yehuda Friedman, was a

Holocaust survivor, and his joy was boundless. Before the bris, R' David approached him and said, "Mazel tov! After all you endured during the war, living to see this day must be a source of great joy."

"You are right," replied Mr. Friedman. "There were times in the camps when I did not think I would survive. Who could have imagined marrying, becoming a father, a grandfather, and now a great-grandfather? It is truly an extraordinary simchah."

R' David continued, "When I was young, I heard of R' Boruch Berkowitz of Williamsburg. Every Friday night he attended as many shalom zachars as possible, sometimes climbing ten flights of stairs, just to say mazel tov. Some nights he went to ten homes.

"When asked why, he said, 'This is my revenge on Hitler. The Nazis tried to wipe out the Jewish people. Every new Jewish child undoes their plans. The growth of Klal Yisrael is our revenge, and I love to witness it.'"

A few days after the bris, Mr. Friedman called his grandson, who davens in R' David's shul, and said, "Please give your rav this message. This morning during davening, a thought came to me that I never would have had if not for his story about the shalom zachars in Williamsburg."

In the Hallelukahs we say, the pasuk **רוֹמְמוֹת קל בִּגְרוֹנָם וְחֶרֶב פִּיפִיּוֹת בְּיָדָם** -'*The lofty praises of Hashem are in their throats, and a double-edged sword is in their hand.*' (Tehillim 149:6).

This alludes to the double-edged knife that is used by a mohel during a bris. The next words in the pasuk are remarkable: **לַעֲשׂוֹת נְקָמָה בַּגּוֹיִם** – 'to execute vengeance among the nations' [who seek our death].

"Dovid HaMelech, in his infinite wisdom, alluded to the fact that every bris is retribution against those who wished to annihilate Klal Yisrael. Indeed, the birth and growth of our children is our greatest rebuttal to all who wished to eradicate us."

# The Weekly Vort

■ **והבגד כי יהיה בו נגע צרעת** – ***If a garment has a mark of tzara'as on it…*** (13:47).

Clothing is one of the catalysts in bringing about sins that result in *tzara'as* (leprosy). When a person dresses lavishly, it is inevitable that haughtiness will find its way into his heart. It will also spark feelings of jealousy in the heart of his fellow man, and from jealousy stems hatred and *lashon hara* – for which the punishment is *tzara'as*.

We must strive to emulate the traits of Yakov Avinu, who asked Hashem for "bread to eat and clothes to wear" (Bereishis 28:20) – he wanted clothing only for the purpose of *wearing;* not for the purpose of adorning himself. (The Chofetz Chaim) (A Shabbos Vort)

## GOLDEN NUGGETS ON THE PARSHA WITH A FOCUS ON LESSONS HOW TO SERVE HASHEM AND BE A BETTER JEW BY R' YEHOSHUA GOLD הנחמדים מזהב

The **Vilna Gaon *zt"l*** writes powerfully about the importance of restraining oneself from speaking *lashon hara*. He explains that until a person's final day in this world, one must self-train in spiritual discipline, not through fasting or physical affliction, but through restraint in both desire and speech. He expresses that true *teshuva* is achieved through limiting one's mouth and one's desires.

Every moment a person holds back from speaking improperly, he merits an "**אוֹר הַגָּנוּז**", a hidden light so great that even angels are not granted access to it.

The Vilna Gaon concludes that this is one of the primary paths through which a person merits Olam Haba. - **וְזֶה יוֹתֵר מִכָּל הַתּוֹרָה**.

***Tefillah is not about changing Hashem's will. It's about changing you. ~ The Mabit zt"l.***

## Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff Shlita

**זאת תהיה תורת המצרע**

When the **מצורע** is going to be *m'taher* himself, he takes the pair of birds **וצוה הכהן ולקח למטהר שתי צפרים חיות**, two live birds, one is *shechted* and with that he dips he does some process with the blood of this bird and the other one he takes and lets it go free.

Just one of the things I'd like to say about those *tzipporim* is to talk about a very important message from the *Zohar HaKodesh*.

And that's the following. It's very interesting just looking at this *parsha* within itself. You take two birds, one is set free and one is *shechted*. So what's the point of taking two birds if it's only anyway going to be let free *al pnei hasadeh*, so just take the one and *shecht* it and do whatever process you do with it.

What's the importance? You take the blood and you do the *tahara* etc. So what do you need the second one for?

On this the *Zohar HaKodesh* makes a very important *yesodistike nekuda* which is really something we should internalize from the message of the *parsha*. The *seder* of *Tumas Negoim*, the detail, it's a whole *masechta*, it's a somewhat of a complex *seder* of *halachos*. But the message behind it is something so important. The *avon* of *lashon hara* is something so terrible, so severe.

And we need to take the message from the *parsha* how we distance ourselves from *lashon hara*. It's a question of outlook, it's a question of attitude, it's a question of seeing positivity in others as we've often discussed.

The *Zohar HaKodesh* says a *davar nifla*. He says inasmuch as it's so severe to speak negatively about people, so too is it so severe to withhold a positive *lashon* and a positive word to somebody else.

The one hand, the negative side of all this is speaking negatively, looking at other people critically with a critical eye. The other part

of this *avoda* is to be complimentary to other people, to say good things to and about other people, to make people feel good with themselves. The truth is that there are two parts of *avoda be'emes* which one is the antidote to the other. Inasmuch as a person looks positively and speaks positively, he doesn't come to speak *lashon hara*.

But the *Zohar HaKodesh* says just the following words, inasmuch as *chalila* there's an *onesh* for saying bad, there's an *onesh chalila* for withholding the good. And that's the message from the two *tzipporim*. The *tzipporim* as *Chazal* tell us are *meramez* for the chirping birds, the birds which talk, the birds which chatter. One is *shechted* to tell us that the negative speech has to be withheld and has to be something which is a total stop towards.

But the other *tzippor* is equally important. The other *tzippor* is left to go back, back to live and continue to speak, that's the *meramez* for the positive speech, telling people how good they are, talking positively about other people, making people feel good through the speech that you have and that's an *avoda gedola v'chashuva* equal to withholding speech that we shouldn't say.

And with that very important message we *mechazek b'shneih chalakim*, not talking negatively about others on the one hand and talking so positively about other people on the other hand which is an *avoda* which goes hand in hand.

The *Aibershter zul helfen* that the *kedushas hazman* should elevate us closer to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. We should see *yeshua* and *bracha mei'eis Hashem*. *A gebenzhte zumer*, a *lichtege chodesh*, and a *gut Shabbos*. *Kol tuv*.

***"Treat every person you meet as if they were Moshiach in disguise" ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.***

## What it Means to be Human – Rabbi Menachem Creditor

This week we read the portion of Tazria, often experienced as among the most difficult passages in the Torah. Their language is intimate, physical, and at times unsettling.

Tazria and Metzora are not marginal texts. They are central to the Torah's deepest honesty about what it means to be human.

The portions open with the realities of the human body, speaking of birth, of emissions, of changes in the skin. These are not abstractions. They are the lived experiences of embodied life. The Torah does not turn away from them. It lingers. It names them. It insists that our physical existence, in all its complexity, belongs within the sacred conversation.

To have a body is wondrous. It is also difficult.

Our tradition recognizes this each morning in the blessing Asher Yatzar:

**בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּחָכְמָה וּבָרָא בוֹ נְקָבִים נְקָבִים חֲלוּלִים חֲלוּלִים גָּלוּי וְיָדוּעַ לִפְנֵי כִסֵּא כְבוֹדֶךָ שֶׁאִם יִפָּתֵחַ אֶחָד מֵהֶם אוֹ יִסָּתֵם אֶחָד מֵהֶם אִי אֶפְשַׁר לְהִתְקַיֵּם וְלַעֲמֹד לְפָנֶיךָ אֲפִילוּ שָׁעָה אֶחָת. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' רוֹפֵא כָל־בָּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת:**

Blessed are You, Holy One, Who formed our bodies with wisdom and created within us openings and hollows. It is revealed and known before Your Presence that if one of them were ruptured or blocked, it would be impossible to exist and stand in Your Presence even for a moment. Blessed are You, Holy One, Who heals all flesh and performs wonders.

We give thanks for a body created with Divine wisdom, a network of openings and pathways whose proper functioning sustains our lives. The blessing is striking in its specificity. It does not romanticize the body. It acknowledges its fragility. If even one part fails, we cannot stand before Hashem.

Tazria and Metzora extend that awareness. They ask: what do we do when something in the body becomes unfamiliar, when it resists our understanding, when it disrupts our sense of wholeness? The Torah's response is not silence. It is structure. It is relationship. It is the insistence that we not face these moments alone.

In the ancient world, a person turned to the priest for diagnosis and guidance. Today, we turn to physicians, therapists, and other experts in healthcare. The details have changed, but the underlying truth has not. When we are vulnerable, we need one another. We need knowledge, even when it is difficult. We need action, even when it cannot fully resolve what we face.

There is a quiet wisdom here. Knowing what is happening, even when the news is hard, is better than uncertainty. Taking steps toward care, even when healing is incomplete, is itself a form of healing. And perhaps most importantly, being accompanied matters. Presence is not a cure, but it is never insignificant.

These portions also draw us toward a deeper awareness of fragility. Our bodies are resilient and intricate, yet they are not permanent. Many of us carry stories of illness, of loss, of loved ones whose lives were cut short. Some of these stories are spoken. Many remain private. Tazria and Metzora create space for all of them. They remind us that vulnerability is not an exception. It is part of the human condition.

There is tenderness and profound compassion in this. The Torah seems to say: I know. I know that life in a body is complicated. I know that you will encounter moments that unsettle you. Do not turn away. Speak about it. Seek help. Stay connected. - In that insistence, there is healing.

May we be granted health and strength. May we care for our bodies with wisdom and humility. May we have the courage to seek support when we need it, and the sensitivity to offer presence to others.

And may we learn to hear, within these ancient words, a voice that understands us more deeply than we might have expected.



**The Thank You That Saved His Eyes by Rabbi Hillel Eisenberg**

Rabbi Hillel Eisenberg shared a powerful story about a man named Avi from Rehovot. Avi was a middle-aged father of three. One morning, he woke up and immediately sensed that something was terribly wrong. He could barely see out of one eye.

At first, he tried ignoring it. Maybe it was dust. Maybe it would pass. Maybe it was nothing serious. But within hours, the fear became real. He rushed to the hospital. Doctors performed tests. Specialists examined him. Eventually they delivered devastating news. A rare parasite had entered his eye and was silently destroying it from within.

The prognosis was frightening. There was a very high chance he would permanently lose vision in that eye. Then the doctors told him something even more shocking. "There is only one doctor in the world who can attempt this surgery, and he lives in Boston."

Avi didn't hesitate. He immediately flew to Boston, but by the time he arrived, things had become far worse. He could no longer see at all from that eye. And now the doctors warned him that the infection was spreading, and the second eye was at risk.

Blindness was no longer just a possibility. It was becoming a reality.

The surgeon looked at Avi and said: "If we operate, it must happen immediately. There is no time." The doctors bandaged his eye and left him alone to decide.

For the first time, Avi completely broke. He walked out of the hospital and entered the first shul he could find. He stood before the Aron Kodesh and something inside him collapsed. He began crying uncontrollably.

"Hashem, I'm sorry."

"I'm sorry I went fifty years without truly thanking You."

"Thank You for eyes that see."

"Thank You for ears that hear."

"Thank You for a mouth that speaks."

"Thank You for legs that walk."

"Thank You for lungs that breathe."

"Thank You for a heart that beats."

"Thank You for a body that works."

"For an entire life, I was too busy to appreciate."

For over an hour, Avi sat in front of the Aron Kodesh. Not asking for refuah. Not bargaining. Not demanding miracles. Only thanking Hashem again and again.

Eventually he returned to the hospital and informed the doctors he was ready for surgery. But when they examined him again, the room suddenly became quiet. The parasite had stopped progressing completely. The infection that had been racing toward blindness had stabilized. Not after surgery. Not after treatment. Not after medication. Before the operation had even begun!

The doctors were stunned. Still, they carefully proceeded with the surgery and baruch Hashem it was successful.

Avi returned to Eretz Yisrael with two functioning eyes. But the story did not end there. That Shabbos, Avi made a large kiddush in shul and shared what had happened. He explained how thanking Hashem had changed everything.

A few months later, he received a phone call. A man on the other end said: "I was there when you spoke at the kiddush. I heard your story." - The man explained that he had two daughters who were still

single. One was twenty-eight and the other was thirty-two. He said he had tried everything—tears, segulos, travel, advice—but nothing worked.

After hearing Avi's story, he decided to try something different. He gathered his family together and asked his daughters to publicly list everything they were grateful to Hashem for. Not what they lacked. Not what they were missing. But what they already had.

The daughters began speaking and thanking Hashem for the brachos already present in their lives. Then the father shared something astonishing. - "Three weeks later, my older daughter became a kallah." "And yesterday, my younger daughter got engaged."

Rabbi Eisenberg explained the deeper message behind the story.

Every day Jews say the bracha of Asher Yatzar, usually quickly and automatically, without much thought. But Asher Yatzar is one of the most radical declarations a human being can make. It is a Jew stopping in the middle of an ordinary day and declaring: "My body functioning is a miracle."

The tragedy is that most people only notice the body when something stops working. When breathing becomes difficult. When walking hurts. When eyesight fades. When one tiny system breaks down and suddenly life changes. Only then do people realize how many silent miracles were happening every second. The heart beating. The lungs expanding. The eyes seeing. The body healing. The legs carrying us. And because it all happens quietly, we begin believing we are entitled to it. Until one day we realize we are not.

Rabbi Eisenberg ended with a powerful message: Don't wait until something breaks to thank Hashem for what works. Because every breath, every blink, every heartbeat, and every ordinary moment your body carries you through life is already a miracle.






**Horav Yisroel Friedman Shlita - Letters Of Chizzuk During The Coronavirus Pandemic**

**רב ישראל פרידמן רב קלויז טשארטקוב מנשסתר**

## מכתב התחזקות

**ערב ר״ח אייר, י״ד למב״י**

In this weeks parsha we are told that someone who might have tzoraas has to go to a Kohen **והובא אל אהרן הכהן או אל אחד מבניו הכהנים** who has to then decide if it is tzoraas or not. This possuk has in it a message which is a big chizuk for us in our current situation.

Chazal tell us (**מדרש תהלים א, ח**) that Dovid HaMelech requested from Hashem, that whoever recites Tehillim, **העוסק בתהלים יהיה חשוב לפני הקב״ה כעוסק בנגעים ואהלות** it should be considered equal to the halachos of tzoraas and negoim.

The meforshim question the meaning of this request, why did Dovid Hamelech ask that Tehillim should be equal specifically to halochos of tzoraas and negoim, and not to some other areas of the Torah?

Explained the first Tolna Rebbe Reb Dovid Twersky zt"l and the Ohr Somaich zt"l, a most beautiful idea. The Torah tells us that when it comes to tzoraas, only a kohen has the authority and is able to declare whether a person is **טהור** -pure or not. Even if the kohen is a simple and ignorant man, still, only he can decide. In such a case, a talmid chochom has to go with the kohen and he instructs the kohen what to say, but at the end of the day it is only the utterance of the kohen than can and will render a person tomei or tohor.

Dovid Hamelech asked that in the same way as the kohen has the power in his words to change the status of a person, - even if the

kohen is ignorant and does not understand the reasons behind what he is saying - in the same way Hashem should accept our recital of Tehillim even if we do not fully understand the meaning of what we are saying. The mere recital of the words of Tehillim have the power to arouse Rachmei Shomayim and bring refuos and yeshuos.

This is a big chizuk for us all, although we are currently unable to daven with a minyan, and we are missing the hissorerus and the strength of the tzibbur, despite this, our humble recital of the pure words of Dovid HaMelech is precious to Hashem even when said without full kavonoh.

This concept is also written in the Sefer Chassidim (**סי' יח**): "Our Creator who knows and examines the hearts of all, does not ask only that one be sincere, therefore even if he does not know how to ask correctly, Hashem considers it as if he has asked correctly. Similarly those who sing Pesukei Dezimro in a loud joyful voice, but they don't know how to say the pesukim correctly without making mistakes, their tefillos and their zemiros are accepted as a pleasant **ריח ניחוח** and Hashem rejoices over their recital with great joy and Hashem says "how beautifully he is singing according to his understanding and about this it is written **ודגלו עלי אהבה** (see later on).

We find a very moving medrash (**שמות, כא, ד**) about the power of every Yid to daven to Hashem. "If a poor person wants an audience with a king, the king is not interested to listen to him, but if a rich and powerful person comes, the king will meet him straight away. But with Hashem this is not so, everyone is equal in front of Hashem, men, women, poor and rich. This is proven by the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu the greatest of all Neveim, is described in the same fashion as the simplest Jew. The tefillo of Moshe Rabbeinu is described as **תפלה למשה איש האלוקים** and the tefillo of a poor man is described in the same way **תפלה לעני כי יעטוף ולפני ה' ישפוך שיחו**. This is a tefillo and this is a tefillo, to prove to you that all are equal in the eyes of Hashem".

The Chortkover Rebbe zt"l related that his life was saved by the plea of one lady. As a young man he became deathly ill, and the doctors gave up hope, His father, the first Chortkover Rebbe zt"l came to visit his son, and all were hoping that somehow during this visit the Rebbe would succeed in beseeching the gates of Heaven to spare his one and only child. All ears were focused on the Rebbe as he arrived, hoping to hear some words of comfort and hope. When the Rebbe saw that his son seemed to be literally on his death bed, and his minutes were counted, he accepted the verdict and said: "Ribbono Shel Olam if this is your wish, I will not say anything, and You should do as You see fit!"

The Rebbes words hit everyone present like a thunderbolt, they realised the gates of Heaven were closed. One lady who was standing by the side, gave a shriek and exclaimed "Even the Czar ym"s does not snatch away an only son for conscription into the army!" It was this lady's heartfelt cry that pierced the heavens, bringing a miraculous recovery for the Rebbe. This is the power of **דברים היוצאים מן הלב** a sincere and pure tefillo.

In the same way that our tefillos can be answered even when we don't understand their full meaning, so it is also with limud HaTorah. Normally, Rosh Chodesh Iyar is the day the new zeman starts, and the bochurim go back to yeshiva and the yungerleit to kollel. This year however, things are different, and everyone is quarantined at home. Many are very worried what type of zeman are they going to have, without their chavrusa, without their chaburah and maggid shiur? Learning together in a group is very important for properly understanding the gemara and when one sits alone it is often difficult to concentrate and learn with a geshmak.

Here again the medrash (**שה"ש פר' ב אות ב**) consoles us: "Said Rebbi Yissocher, it is written **ודגלו עלי אהבה** even if a person is sitting and learning Torah and he is **מדלג** "he trips and stumbles" from one halacho to the next, from one possuk to the next, says Hashem about

him "How precious he is to me". He is precious to me even when he was unable to understand the pshat in what he is learning". **ודגלו עלי אהבה** Hashem loves him even if he trips and stumbles.

Indeed, during times like this it is difficult to learn with proper concentration. Rabbinu Chaim zt"l the brother of the Maharal of Prague, writes in his introduction to his sefer HaChaim that he wrote during a plague:

"I want to mention all the kindness that Hashem has performed for me during these times, how He redeemed me from death during a plague. I and my family remained at home and for almost two months our door remained locked, without anyone going in or out. The trials and worries of the time took away my ability to be able to delve into intricate and complicated sugyos, which need much clarity of thought. But cholilah for me to sit idle of Torah either, which is a shield against the Angel of Death. Therefore I decided to delve into the portion of Agodo to replace the **דאגה** –worry– with **אגדה**."

The days of Sefiras HaOmer are the time when we should be preparing ourselves for Kabbolas HaTorah with more intense learning, but although we are unable to learn in the way we normally do, we should not feel disheartened. The first Strikover Rebbe Reb Zev Landau zt"l, made the following observation. The medrash that we quoted above mentioned that even if a Yid is unable to daven and to learn properly and he trips and stumbles, Hashem still loves him and exclaims about him **ודגלו עלי אהבה**.

The gematria of the word **ודגלו** – to trip and stumble- is 49. This is to be mechazeik and remind us that even if we have tripped and stumbled during the 49 days of the Omer, unable to daven and learn in the way we normally do, still Hashem still proclaims about each and every Yid **ודגלו עלי אהבה** How precious he is to Me!

**ידידכם ישראל פרידמן**




When Efrat got engaged to her chassan, she was so happy. He was such a great guy. But with all the happiness, in the back of Efrat's mind was a lot of concern, as was in the mind of her chassan. Because you see, they both came from beautiful families, but they were both poverty-stricken families.

There was no idea how they would even be able to make the chasuna. And as it got closer to the chasuna and nothing was being purchased, Efrat began to worry more and more. And one day she remembered that she had a great aunt who lived in Tiveria, who told her one time, "Efrat, if you ever need anything, feel comfortable coming to me. Maybe I could help you." And Efrat decides that's her hishtadlus.

She gets onto a tender that goes from Yerushalayim to Tiveria. She sits down next to a woman and the tender begins to travel. About a half an hour into the journey, she realizes that the three guys who were rather raucous and rowdy were all talking lashon hara. And Efrat was so careful with shmiras halashon, it bothered her tremendously and she put her fingers in her ears.

One of the boys noticed this and instead of stopping to speak lashon hara, he began to poke fun at her. And the boys increased the volume and the intensity of their lashon hara, and Efrat couldn't take it. At that point she says to the driver, "I need to get out of this tender. Please let me off." And the driver says to her, "I'm sorry, you can't get off now, we're near an Arab village. It's not safe."

"I need to get out anyways." He says, "Okay, there is a red light coming up ahead, I'm going to let you out there, but I'm telling you,

I wouldn't wait there at the side of the road." She goes, "I can't stay in this tender. That's more dangerous to me."

At the next light, she gets out of the tender and she stands there all alone. The tender drives off. Luckily, within 60 seconds, another tender pulls up, sees a Jewish girl standing at the side of the road, says, "Hop in! You can't stand here.

Where are you going?" - "Tiveria." He says, "Great, we're going to Tiveria. Come with us." The two tenders pull up to Tiveria at exactly the same time. As Efrat gets out of one, the woman sitting next to her sees Efrat, she goes, "Baruch Hashem, I was so concerned about you. You are a hero! You couldn't take lashon hara and you were willing to risk your safety? I can't believe it!" And the two of them walk and eventually in the conversation, she asks Efrat, "Why are you here?" Efrat shares her predicament.

The woman says, "You're never going to believe why I'm here in Tiveria." She says, "A few years ago our family had a tremendous miracle happen to us. And every year we get together and we committed after the first anniversary that each year in the zchus of the chesed Hashem did for us, we're going to sponsor a young woman, everything she needs to get married from the wedding, to the clothing, to the pots and pans, to the apartment, and we will even pay the first three months of rent from our family's coffers. I can't think of anyone more appropriate to gift it to than to you.

I'm going to talk to the family, we'll be in kesher and with Hashem's help you will go to the wedding fully equipped and fully outfitted."

You know, it says that if a person wants life, they shouldn't speak lashon hara. Life doesn't just mean the ability to breathe, for your heart to pump. It also means shalvas hanefesh, tranquility. And when a person commits to not speaking lashon hara, some of the most incredible things can happen to them.




**וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן.... וְטִמְּאוֹ הַכֹּהֵן (פרק יג)**

We find that all the **הלכות** of **צרעת** can only be **פסקנד** through a **כהן**. A man can have a **נגע** with all the signs of **טומאה**, and if a **כהן** does not pronounce the word **טמא**, he does not become **טמא**. The same is true with becoming **טהור**. Why is that?

The **דובנער מגיד** explains: **צרעת** comes for speaking **לשון הרע**. Why does a person speak his words. Because he does not realise the potential damage that can be caused through his words. He thinks words don't harm..... So the **תורה** teaches him: look at the power of one word!

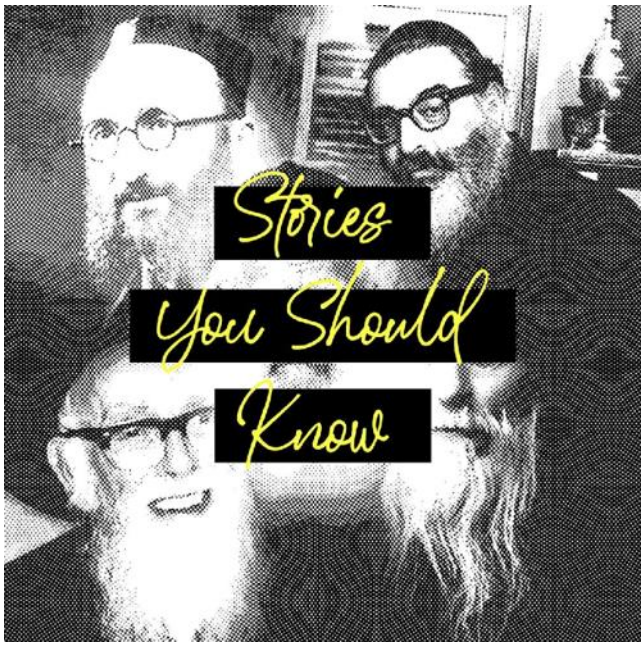
One word from the **כהן** can change a person from **טמא** to **טהור**. This is the power of One word. It can change the status of a person from living at home with his family to living alone outside the **מחנה** in solitude. Now he sees the power of one word and from now onwards he will be careful with his words. (**מקה טוב/ אוהל יעקב/יד-ג**)

It was 1945 and America was still at war with Japan. The Japanese were beginning to think about surrendering -but on their terms. America was not happy with this. They insisted on nothing less than unconditional surrender. Following the Potsdam conference (with Truman, Churchill, Stalin and Chiang Kai-Shek) a stiffly worded declaration of the terms they demanded was sent to the emperor of Japan, advising him that failure to meet those terms would result in "prompt and utter destruction" They sat back and waited for his reply.

Reporters in Tokyo questioned Japanese Premier Kantaro Suzuki about his government's reaction to the Potsdam declaration. Not knowing himself what the emperor had decided, he chose to reply with one nice but ambiguous word, "mokusatsu." -A Japanese word, derived from the Japanese word of silence, that can either mean;

"I'm thinking about it," "I haven't decided yet," or it can mean "ignore" or "treat with silent contempt."

The translator employed by the allies translated the term to mean "not worthy of comment." At no point did he give any inkling that the word had other possible meanings. President Truman made his decision, declaring that it was his responsibility as president to use every weapon available to save American lives, Truman ordered the military to drop the atom bomb on the city of Hiroshima. Between 80,000 and 120,000 people died instantly, and thousands more died later due to burns and radiation poisoning. 11 That one word "mokusatsu", sealed the fate of over 100,000 people.




**We Need Something MORE- The Eternal Message of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter**

We can't read the mind of Rav Yisrael Salanter, but there is yet another story that explains what could have possibly been his motive for creating the *mussar* movement.

In Rav Yisrael Salanter's time, Vilna was filled with *talmidei chachamim*, but there were not big, well-known *yeshivos*.

One day, Rav Yisrael Salanter was offered to become the *Rosh yeshivah* of one of these small *yeshivos*. He accepted the offer and soon became extremely popular. His *shiurim* were well-attended and his words were being soaked up by scores of *talmidim*. His *mussar* discourses were wowing everybody, that is, until he heard how he became *Rosh yeshivah*.

He was informed that the *yeshivah* wanted Rav Yisrael so badly to be *Rosh yeshivah* that they fired the previous *Rosh yeshivah*. Not

only that, but that the previous *Rosh yeshivah* had supporters, and a lot of fights and *lashon hara* ensued as a result of his firing and the subsequent hiring of Rav Yisrael.

When Rav Yisrael heard this, two things happened as a direct result: one, Rav Yisrael resigned from being *Rosh yeshivah* immediately.

Now, to put things in perspective, to resign immediately indicates the depth and greatness of Rav Yisrael's character. There were many *talmidei chachamim* in Vilna, yet he was the one chosen to become *Rosh yeshivah* and his teachings were being received with effusive praise. To step down immediately because of his disapproval of the way he became *Rosh yeshivah* is nothing short of astounding.

And two, the second thing that came out of this, is that Rav Yisrael recognized at that moment that learning Torah was not enough to perfect one's character. People need to learn about character development and work on themselves actively. Whether it be on *mitzvos* between man and G-d or *mitzvos* between man and his fellow man, work must be done.

If *Rashei yeshivah* and *talmidei chachamim* of such a high stature could be subject to such fights over power and feelings of jealousy for each other, study alone cannot perfect the character of man.

There must be something more that is necessary.