

LAMPLIGHTER

4 Nissan
Parshas Matzarah

1133

4 April
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week's Torah portion, Metzora, continues the previous week's discussion of spiritual purity and impurity. Although not applicable today, after the destruction of the Holy Temple, the specific instructions how to purify ourselves after becoming spiritually impure will once again be followed when the third Holy Temple will be established, after the coming of Moshiach.

The first form of impurity to be dealt with is the plague of leprosy, a disease which was visited upon an individual because of the sin of slander. This leprosy bore no resemblance to the modern-day affliction with the same name, but was a Divine punishment sent to make an individual aware of his transgression and afford him the opportunity to repent. This leprosy could affect the person's skin, or even spread to his garments, his furnishings, or the walls of his house. The only authority qualified to determine whether or not a suspicious spot was indeed leprosy was a priest, who then bore the responsibility of effecting the leper's purification, by following the procedure outlined in the Torah.

Once the determination that a person was leprosy was made, the individual was sent outside the camp of the Children of Israel, and made to dwell in absolute seclusion for seven days. After rending his garments, he was forbidden to cut his hair or wash his clothes, much like a person in mourning, until the leprosy was healed. Only the priest could pronounce the leprosy cured. The Torah then details the appropriate sacrifices which were to be brought, and the proper way of offering them. Only after the leper did this and immersed himself in a mikva was he allowed to re-join the rest of society.

The leprosy which affected a garment took the form of either a red or a green spot. If, after two weeks, the leprosy persisted, even after the garment was laundered, it had to be burned. When the plague appeared on the walls of a house, the entire household had to be emptied of its vessels. If the leprosy did not disappear after a certain time, as determined by the priest, the stones of the house had to be removed, and the wall itself dismantled. In the most extreme cases, if the plague persisted, the entire house had to be destroyed. All these regulations pertained only to houses in the Land of Israel.

The affliction of leprosy followed a certain progression. Appearing first on the person's skin, it spread to his garments, vessels and house only if he did not repent of his misdeeds. G-d thereby granted the individual the opportunity to begin with a clean slate after each step, and only sent the next stage of the plague if he persisted in his evil ways.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Healing Hubris

By Shlomo Yaffe

Tzara'at, the skin discoloration mistranslated for millennia as "leprosy," is a curious disease. It is not contagious - it was only acquired by virtue of speaking badly of other people. It was a physical skin discoloration caused by a spiritual defect. The "*metzora*," the sufferer with *tzara'at*, had to stay outside the city and inform all that he or she was spiritually impure.

The Talmud tells us that the penalty of the *metzora* is imposed "measure for measure": his gossip and slander build walls of mistrust and bad feeling between people and isolated them from each other, so he, too, is isolated from society.

The Talmud also discusses the reason why the purification ritual for the healed *metzora* includes a wand of cedar wood, the tallest species of tree, by far, in the Levant: The cedar wood reminds us that arrogance brought us to *tzara'at* in the first place.

This statement does not contradict the idea of slander as the cause of *tzara'at*, but adds texture and depth to the theme.

It teaches us that the root cause of *tzara'at* is arrogance, a sense of being superior to other people. This causes one to look down on others as inferior and therefore to pass judgment on them. Once those judgments fill the mind, the person then shares them with others.

It seems to me that the isolation aspect of the *metzora's* "sentence" is not just to sense the distance from other people caused by the gossip, but also to see how foolish a sense of superiority is. When alone you discover that all the abilities you pride yourself on as making you superior are meaningless.

Are you wise? Who learns from you if you are alone?

Are you articulate and persuasive? Whom do you persuade if you are alone?

Are you a leader? Whom do you lead if you are alone?

Are you an artist? Who will be inspired by your vision if you are alone?

In isolation, the *metzora* learns that all his superiority really comes from those whom he hitherto looked down upon because they received from him.

It is the need in others that we fill that makes our abilities significant. We all are givers and we all are receivers and together we form a stable living community.

We are never greater than another; we are made greater by each other.

In Torah, all *taharah*, purity, is related to life. All *tum'ah*, impurity, is related to death. Arrogance tears us from our garden of life; a system that we give life into and receive life from, and turns us into a dry dead specimen that only dully hints of what it was when it was green and alive.

Fortunately, this death is reversible through honest introspection; the *metzora* is then cleansed and welcomed back to his/her community.

Slice of LIFE

A LONG DUTCH DRIVE

Some 30 years ago, Rabbi Yitschok Vorst,* was just beginning his assignment as a Chabad representative in Amstelveen, Holland. Shortly before Passover, he received a phone call from Lubavitch Headquarters in Brooklyn. Rabbi Hadokov, the Rebbe's personal secretary, informed him that the Rebbe wanted him to go to a certain small town and give *shmura matza*, the special matza hand-made from flour that was guarded against moisture, to the Jew that lived in that town. The young rabbi asked for the name of this Jew, whereupon he was informed that the Rebbe did not mention any names. Rabbi Hadokov assured him, though, that he would be able to locate him once he got to the town.

Rabbi Vorst attempted to explain that the town was many hours' drive from Amsterdam, that he was busy making preparations for his first communal seder in Holland and distributing matzas, and besides, he did not believe there were any Jews located in that town anyway. Rabbi Hadokov was adamant. The Rebbe said that he should leave tomorrow for this town. There was no choice.

The next morning Rabbi Vorst packed a lunch and spent the day driving to this secluded town. Once there he spent hours searching and inquiring for any Jews in the town, to no avail. He finally decided that the expedition was a total waste of time and went to fill his car with petrol for the return trip. The gas station attendant asked the rabbi what had brought him to town. Upon hearing his story the attendant replied that he believed that a worker at the local butcher shop was indeed Jewish.

With nothing to lose, Rabbi Vorst made his way to the shop. When he walked in, the man behind the counter took one look at him and fainted. When he revived he told Rabbi Vorst the following story:

His mother and he were the only survivors in his family of the Nazi horrors. They moved to this secluded part of Holland to avoid further persecution. On her deathbed, his mother made him swear never to marry a non-Jewish girl and always be true to his faith. That had been five years prior. For the last several months the local priest had frequented his shop and began proselytizing him. They would enter into long discussions, but for this man, conversion was out of the question.

Eventually, though, the priest began to make headway. One of his arguments G-d had abandoned the young man, as proved by the fact that he was the only Jew in the area. Therefore he should convert and become part of a community.

After several months of being worn down, the young Jew agreed to be baptized. But, he insisted, first he wanted three days to think it over further.

He felt confused and depressed. He was indeed all alone. But how could he abandon his faith? How could he renege on the vow he made to his mother? He cried bitterly.

Finally he called out to the Almighty, "I will wait for you, dear G-d, to show me a sign that you are still watching over me. If I do not see anything from you by 6:00 PM on the third day, I will convert!"

And so the man cried. For three days he became more morose. He found work impossible. The third day had arrived and still no sign. The man spent the day looking at the clock. At lunch time he took a break and again beseeched the Almighty. There was less than six hours before he would agree to convert.

During his 3:00 break the man again turned and prayed. Now there was less than three hours. If he did not see some sign indicating that the G-d of the Jews still cared for him, he would be baptized.

As the minute hand passed the 5:00 mark, the man was beside himself. Perhaps the priest was right after all. Maybe it would be better for him to convert. The minutes ticked on. Each

one felt like an entire hour. At 5:45, he began closing the store. At 5:55 PM Rabbi Yitschok Vorst, armed with his matza from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, walked into this man's store.

After hearing this story, Rabbi Vorst begged the man to come back with him to Amsterdam and spend Passover. The man agreed. Every step of the way was a new beginning for this man. He had never been exposed to Judaism as his mother wanted to hide him from it. After Passover, he thanked the Rabbi and left.

Twenty-five years later, Rabbi Vorst travelled to Jerusalem for the wedding of a relative. He was praying devoutly at the Western Wall, deep in concentration, when he heard his name being called and felt a hearty slap across his back. He turned and saw a large, burly man. The man asked him in Dutch, "Rabbi, don't you recognize me, I am so and so from the town of I spent Pesach in your house one year. Now I live in Jerusalem with my family. I owe everything to you."

Sometimes, it is possible to make a deal with the Almighty.

[Adapted from the rendition of Rabbi Herschel Finman in his weekly email "The Torah e-Parsha" shliach613@aol.com.]

Biographical note:

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (11 Nissan 1902 - 3 Tammuz 1994), became the seventh Rebbe of the Chabad dynasty on 10 Shvat 1950. He is widely acknowledged as the greatest Jewish leader of the second half of the 20th century. Although a dominant scholar in both the revealed and hidden aspects of Torah and fluent in many languages and scientific subjects, the Rebbe is best known for his extraordinary love and concern for every Jew on the planet. His emissaries around the globe dedicated to strengthening Judaism number in the thousands. Hundreds of volumes of his teachings have been printed, as well as dozens of English renditions.

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ISSUE 1133

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Why is the belief in Moshiach one of the thirteen principles of the Jewish faith?

To clarify the question: There are 613 commandments, yet there are only 13 principles. This shows us clearly that not every commandment is a principle. If the above understanding of the 13 principles is true, why is the belief in Moshiach one of them? Can't a person be considered an Orthodox Jew - keeping Kosher and Shabbos - and simply not believe in Moshiach?!

The answer: What do we mean when we say - in the Shema prayer that Hashem is one? Hashem's oneness does not only mean that there is no other creator; rather, it means that there is no other creation but Hashem. The entire world - even though it seems to exist as an independent entity - is actually G-dly.

When Moshiach comes, the Truth of creation will be revealed. The world will be seen as a place created solely to perform Hashem's will. If one does not believe in Moshiach, then one does not believe that Hashem's true unity will ever show. He believes that the worlds will forever remain "independent" of Hashem's oneness. It is obvious that such a person is lacking something in his basic Jewish belief.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

From a letter by the Lubavitcher Rebbe

I received some information about the relationship at home, but I do not know to what extent it reflects the actual situation. Hence I want to convey to you some thoughts in light of what the relationship should be according to the Shulchan Aruch [Code of Jewish Law]—the Jew's practical guide in life. If the relationship is, indeed, in keeping with it, the purpose of this letter will be to strengthen and deepen it, as there is always room for improvement in all matters of goodness and holiness, Torah and mitzvot. On the other hand, if it is not quite what it should be, I trust that, since the Torah is surely "a lamp unto your feet," you will bring it up to the desired level, and you will do it with joy and gladness of heart.

The central aspect in the manner of conducting a Jewish home and family life is that it has to be based on the way of the Torah, "whose ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace." If this rule applies to all activities of a Jew, even outside the home, how much more so does it apply within the home itself!

Of course, since G-d has created human beings with minds and feelings of their own and these are not uniform in all people, peace and harmony can be achieved only on the basis of "give and take," that is, meeting each other half way. For a husband and wife to make concessions to each other is not, and should not be considered, a sacrifice, G-d forbid. On the contrary, this is what the Torah teaches and expects, for we are talking about concessions that do not involve compromise in regard to the fulfillment of mitzvot, and both of you are of the same mind that the laws of the Shulchan Aruch must not be compromised.

Furthermore, to achieve true peace and harmony calls for making such concessions willingly and graciously – not grudgingly, as if it were a sacrifice, as mentioned above, but in the realization that it is for the benefit of one's self and one's partner in life, and for one's self perhaps even more, since it is made in fulfillment of G-d's Will. And if our Sages exhort every Jew "to receive every person with a friendly face," certainly it applies to one's wife or husband.

There are many sayings of our Sages, as well as those of our Rebbes, urging husband and wife always to discuss matters of mutual concern, and to give patient attention to the opinion of the other and then act in mutual agreement. It is also very desirable that they should have at least one regular study period in a section of Torah which is of interest to both, such as the weekly Torah portion, or a timely subject connected with a particular season or festival.

While the major obligation to study Torah is incumbent on men, it has been emphasized that women, too, have to fulfill the mitzva of Torah study in areas where they are directly involved, as explained in the laws of Torah study. All the more so in the present day and age when women have the possibility – hence the obligation – to do their share of spreading Judaism no less than men.

It may sometimes appear difficult for the husband to take time out from his preoccupations in order to discuss mutual problems with his wife, or study Torah with her, but he should not look at it as a sacrifice. On the contrary, he should do it eagerly in fulfillment of a most important mitzva – sholom bayit – peace in the home. And if any mitzva has to be carried out with joy, how much more so such a fundamental mitzva.

Finally, I would like to add that of the mitzva campaigns which have been emphasized in recent years, special attention has been focused on the mitzva of ahavat Yisrael [the love of a fellow Jew], which embraces every Jew, even a stranger; how much more so a near and dear one.

I hope and pray that each of you will make every effort in the direction outlined above and will do so with real joy and gladness of heart, and may G-d grant that you should have true nachat [joy] – which is Torah nachat, from each other and jointly from your offspring, in happy circumstances materially and spiritually.

CUSTOMS CORNER

The Impact of Speech

King Solomon said:

- "The words of the wise are heard [when spoken] softly, more than the shout of a ruler of fools."
- "A gentle reply turns away wrath, but a distressing word stirs up anger."
- Nachmanides, in his famous letter to his son, instructs him: "Speak gently at all times... When someone calls you, don't answer loudly, but gently and softly, as one who stands before his master."

When Rebuking

- One who needs to rebuke another should do so in a loving way. For example, he might point out to that person how wise and learned he is, and that therefore it would be proper for him to alter his behaviour.

There are many mitzvot that involve speech. Several of them are: Torah study, Prayer, to say blessings before and after eating, not to speak slander or gossip, not to blaspheme—curse the Almighty, not to curse a fellow Jew, not to bear false witness.

A WORD

from the Director

This week's Torah reading begins with the description of the purification process for a person who became impure because of tzaraas, a skin condition resembling leprosy. Only it is not leprosy. Indeed, it is an ailment that has no biological cause whatsoever, but instead comes about because of a person's conduct. Because he spread lashon hara, malicious gossip about another person, his own body is affected and his skin begins to decay.

How can he correct himself? After the kohen (priest) determines him to be impure, he is told to go outside the city limits and live alone, distant from others. As our Sages explain: "Since he created separation among others, he is forced to live alone." As he lives his solitary existence, he hopefully learns the severity of his transgression and in this way, expiates his sin.

How does he become pure? A kohen comes out beyond the city limits and inspects his body to see if his skin ailment is healed or not. Now usually a Kohen is not allowed to become impure himself; he must take utmost care in this regard. This is of essential importance to him. For if a kohen becomes impure, he may not serve in the Temple for the duration of his impurity, and that is his primary mission in life. It is highly likely that impure objects will be located in the place where the person afflicted with tzaraas stays. And yet, the kohen makes an exception and goes out to help this person.

His conduct is an example for us in our present-day lives. It is obvious that our relationships with our fellow men should not be negative, spreading discord and strife, but should instead lead to harmony and love. The kohen, however, teaches the extent of the commitment we must make, showing that these efforts are necessary even when there is a risk to our own personal selves - and not only a risk to our material position, but also to our spiritual welfare. Even though we may be prevented from entering G-d's Temple as a result, we have to do what we can to enable another person to attain purity and resume normal social relations with his fellow men.

J. I. Gutnick

IT HAPPENED

Once...

PURIM DURING PESACH!

This amazing story was told annually by Rebbe Yosef Meir of Spinka, after the *Seder* on the second night of Pesach.

Once, on the second Seder night, after finishing all the *haggada* and songs, a certain young man was still not tired. The thought entered his mind that as it is written that evil Haman was hanged on the second day of Pesach, it would be appropriate to now read the *Megillah* (Book of Esther). He decided to do so.

Upon finishing the reading, suddenly a soul of a deceased person appeared to him. "What do you have to do with me and what do you want from me?" he asked it.

The poor soul explained:

There are souls that even after being judged and receiving theirs (i.e., their punishment), they are still unable to enter the Garden of Eden until they have a special merit. However, there is one time in the year when anyone can enter, and that is on Purim at the time of the *Megillah* reading. Many months before Purim, there is already a line of tens of thousands of souls waiting for the gates to be opened. Still, the duration of the *Megillah* reading is only two or three hours. Whoever succeeded to enter attains his place, but the rest must wait until the following year. Every year, I also get on line, but because of the great crowding, the time ends and the gates are again closed before I can get in.

This year, I decided not to leave the gate; I would wait there until Purim the next year. But after only a short time, a month, I suddenly heard the *Megillah* being read, on Pesach night! I knocked on the gate of Gan Eden, until the guardian of the gate came out and asked me why I am knocking. I told him I heard the *Megillah*, so please let me in. He said, true, someone is reading the *Megillah*, but now is not the time for *Megillah*. I said, if the *Megillah* is being read, you must admit me.

In the midst of this dispute, a member of the Heavenly court came out and asked what we were arguing about. He listened to our explanations and agreed with the guard that now is not the time for *Megillah*. But he also said that if I were to go down to that young man who is reading *Megillah*, and he should decide that I can enter, then I will be permitted inside.

The veteran Spinker chasidim like to point out that whenever Rebbe Yosef Meir told a story about one of the tzadikim, he was always careful to include full details, and especially the name of the tzadik involved. Therefore, if he every year left this young man nameless, it could not be otherwise than that it was he himself!

Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from a submission by Reb Ezra Rebhun.

Biographic note:

Rabbi Yosef Meir (ben Rabbi Samuel Tzvi) Weiss (18 Adar 1838- 6 Iyar 1909), founder of the Spinker dynasty, attended the Chasidic masters of Belz, Vizhnitz, Zhidichov and Sanz, and studied under several prominent rabbinical sages in his native Hungary. In 1876 he became a Rebbe in his own right, eventually attracting many thousands of followers including prominent Torah scholars. He authored a number of important books, of which the most well-known is *Imrei Yosef* on the Torah readings and the festivals. He was also famous as a miracle worker. After many decades of being buried abroad, his remains were brought to Israel in 1972 and reinterred in Petach Tikvah; his body was completely intact!

Thoughts THAT COUNT

Two birds (14:4)

Because the plague of *tzaraat* comes in punishment for evil talk, which is an act of chatter, therefore birds are needed for his purification, because these chatter continuously with a twittering sound. (*Rashi; Talmud*)

Cedar wood... and hyssop (14:4)

Because he has exalted himself like a cedar... he should humble himself like a grass. (*Midrash Tanchuma*)

If the point is that he should show humility, why does he bring *both* a cedar and hyssop? But the true meaning of humility is not to broken and bowed, but to be humble even as one stands straight and tall. (*The Chassidic Masters*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 4 APRIL 2014

| BEGINS | | ENDS |
|--------|------------|------|
| 6:50 | MELBOURNE | 7:48 |
| 6:50 | ADELAIDE | 7:44 |
| 5:26 | BRISBANE | 6:17 |
| 6:31 | DARWIN | 7:20 |
| 5:24 | GOLD COAST | 6:16 |
| 6:52 | PERTH | 6:45 |
| 6:30 | SYDNEY | 7:24 |
| 6:38 | CANBERRA | 7:32 |
| 6:42 | LAUNCESTON | 7:39 |
| 6:54 | AUCKLAND | 7:49 |
| 6:52 | WELLINGTON | 7:49 |
| 6:40 | HOBART | 7:39 |
| 6:23 | BYRON BAY | 7:15 |
| 6:54 | SINGAPORE | 7:42 |



CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMANN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS METZORA
4 NISSAN • 4 APRIL

| | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| FRIDAY NIGHT: | CANDLE LIGHTING: | 6:50 PM |
| | MINCHA: | 7:00 PM |
| | KABBOLAS SHABBOS: | 7:30 PM |
| SHABBOS: | SHACHARIS: | 10:00 AM |
| | LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA: | 10:30 AM |
| | MINCHA: | 6:50 PM |
| | SHABBOS ENDS: | 7:48 PM |
| WEEKDAYS: | SHACHARIS: | SUN-FRI: 9:15 AM |
| | MINCHA: | MON-FRI: 8:00 AM |
| | MAARIV: | MON-THURS: 5:50 PM |
| | | 6:40 PM |