



THANK YOU HASHEM For Shabbos Kodesh!

Parshas Tazriah-Metzorah

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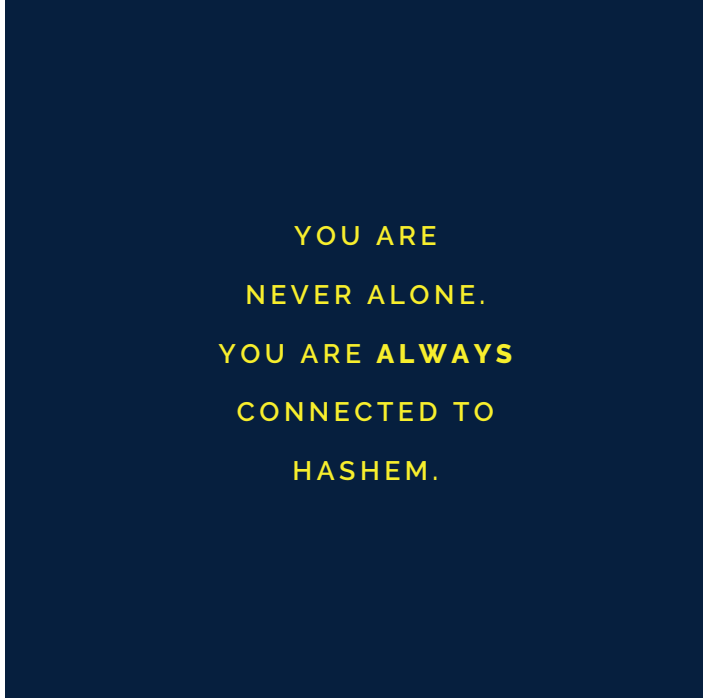
HaMeor Shebah

A Short Burst of Relevance

שְׁנֵי-צִפְרִים חַיִּית טְהוֹרוֹת וְעַץ אֶרֶז וְשָׁנִי תוֹלַעַת וְאֵזֶב...

"And the Kohen shall order one of the birds slaughtered over spring water in an earthenware vessel..."

AS PART OF the Metzora's purification process, the Kohen is commanded to take two kosher birds, cedar wood, and hyssop grass. Rashi explains that "eizov", a lowly kind of grass, is included in the process as a message to the Metzora that, in his *teshuvah* for arrogantly speaking *lashon hara* about others, he must work on minimizing his ego and humble himself. The Sefas Emes asks a foundational question. If all that is needed to eliminate the Metzora's sin is to humble himself, what is preventing one from speaking *lashon hara* and then simply humbling himself to wipe away his sin? More broadly, we find similar teachings of Chazal that relate to rectifying all kinds of sin, such as, "One who transcends his *middos*, his sins are wiped away." Here, too, why shouldn't a sinner act as he pleases only to make use of this teaching and have his *aveiros* forgiven? The tzaddik answers that it is impossible to truly humble oneself without eliminating sin. Similarly, it is impossible to transcend one's *middos* without eliminating sin. Therefore, these teachings do not intend to present a program for achieving forgiveness for one's sins, but rather a set of indicators that one has *already* succeeded in his efforts. When one minimizes his ego,



this serves as an indicator that he has already rectified his sins. When one is able to transcend his *middos*, this demonstrates that his sins have already been wiped away. 🙏

Parsha Roundup

A 60-second Review

- When a woman gives birth, she must undergo a process of purification that includes immersing in a mikvah and bringing offerings to the Beis HaMikdash. Male infants are to be circumcised on the eighth day.
- Tzara'as* is a supernatural affliction, which can appear on people, garments, or houses. If these afflictions appear, a kohen is summoned. The kohen will pronounce it *tamei* or *tahor* depending on various factors.
- A *metzora* must dwell alone outside of the camp until he is healed. The afflicted area in a garment or house must be removed. If the *tzara'as* recurs, the entire garment or house must be destroyed.
- When the *metzora* heals, he or she is purified by the kohen. This process involves two birds, spring water in an earthenware vessel, a piece of cedar wood, a red thread, and a bundle of low grass.
- Other forms of *tumah* are caused by various discharges in a men and women. These discharges necessitate purification through immersion in a *mikvah*.

P'nimiyus haParsha

An Encounter with the Soul of the Torah

וַיֵּצֵא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל־מַחֻץ לַמִּחֻנָּה...

"And the kohen shall go outside the camp..."

IN PARSHAS TAZRIA we read, "This is the teaching regarding the *metzora*: On the day of his purification, he shall be brought to the Kohen. And the Kohen shall go out of the camp..."

The Lubavitcher Rebbe notes a seeming contradiction in these verses. While in the first verse we are told that the *metzora* is brought to the Kohen, the very next verse states that the kohen goes out to visit the *metzora*! Which is it?

It is well known that *tzara'as* would come upon a Jew as a rectification for the sin of *lashon hara*. Chazal teach that because he has caused distance between people with his words, the *metzora* is distanced from others and must remain outside the camp. Disrupting the holy unity of the Jewish people by sowing hate and discord causes a spirit of impurity to descend upon the *metzora* which requires his removal from the Jewish camp. Still, our tzaddikim teach that every Jew has the ability to return to Hashem and begin anew regardless of how low he may have fallen or how defiled he has become. As Rebbe Nachman of Breslov so iconically declared, "There is no despair in the world at all!" Hashem is constantly pulling the strings behind the scene, working to bring His lost sheep back to the flock; *"ki lo yidach mimcha nidach."*

However, our experience is a bit different. We aren't always able

to perceive the manner in which Hashem is directing our return, drawing us in with His magnetic pull of holiness and love. From our perspective, it often appears as if our spiritual gains are the result of our own effort; as if we are drawing Hashem toward us instead of being pulled, effortlessly, into His warm embrace. But in truth, there is something deeper taking place. Our efforts to return to Hashem in *teshuvah* are just that, *teshuvah* – an answer to His call of infinite concern that echoes deep within the recesses of our souls.

The tzaddik teaches that this concept resolves the contradiction in the *pesukim*. The first verse reveals the truth from Hashem's perspective. **"He shall be brought to the kohen"**: The *metzora* is being pulled toward the "Kohen", a reference to Hashem. The second verse tells of how it appears from the sinner's perspective, **"And the kohen shall go out of the camp"**: Hashem arranges our return in a way that makes it seem to be the fruit of our own labor.

Each and every Jew is forever caught in the magnetic field of Hashem's ultimate concern and unconditional love. Are we ready to surrender to our Source? 🙏



The permissible elements of our physical reality are intended to aid us in avodas Hashem. When a person eats kosher food, all elements of his meal become included in his commitment to a life of Torah and avodah and are elevated to the loftiest level.

Profiles of Tzaddikim

Biographical sketches of the Chassidic Masters

The Ohev Yisrael zy"ra

Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heschel was born in Neustadt, Poland in 1755 (5515). A scion of well-known Rabbinic families, Avraham Yehoshua showed tremendous promise from a young age. After developing a reputation as a master of the Talmud, Reb Avraham Yehoshua studied Chassidus under the Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk as well as Reb Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov. A number of years later, the tzaddik began his career as the Rav of Kolbasov. With time, he grew to become one of the primary spokesmen for the growing movement of Chassidus, and in 1800 (5560) the tzaddik took a position as the Rav in the city of Apt. Although he held many Rabbinic positions, his Chassidim always lovingly referred to him as "The Apter Rav."

The Apter Rav was eventually offered a position in the Romanian city of Iasi. However, due to communal strife, he was forced to leave and ultimately settled in Medzibozh, birthplace of the Baal Shem Tov and the cradle of Chassidus. It was there that he devoted himself to the dissemination of the Baal Shem's revolutionary spiritual doctrine. His influence began to spread far and wide, and he soon attracted thousands of followers.

The tzaddik was known for his burning love for the Jewish People, earning him the title *Ohev Yisrael* which later became the title of his *sefer*. Despite its treating lofty concepts and replete with Kabbalistic insights, *sefer Ohev Yisrael* remains one of the foremost texts on Chassidic thought. True to its name, one can feel the author's love for of am Yisrael on each and every page of this holy work.

Rav Avraham Yehoshua left this world in 1825 (5585) and was buried in Medzibozh next to the Baal Shem Tov. However, when Reb Chaim Elazar of Munkatch visited Teveriah in 1930, he asked the elders of the city if any of them knew where the Apta Rav was buried. They led him to a stone slab in the old cemetery, explaining that it was the place that their own elders, who had already left this world, had shown them – the place to which the Apter Rav had been miraculously transported and brought to rest. 🙏



Zechuso yagein aleinu! This section is written by R' Akiva Bruck, author of "From Behind the Curtain" (Mosaica Press)

Tohameha

Tasting the Depth of Shabbos Kodesh

BASED ON HIS explanation of the *neshama yeseirah* discussed in last week's column, the holy Chernovitzer explains the end of the *pasuk* he began to examine earlier - "For it is a sign between Me and you throughout the generations, to know (*la'daas*) that I am Hashem who has consecrated you." The tzaddik teaches that the word "*la'daas*," "to know," is a reference to the *neshama yeseirah* which illuminates the Jewish heart with the light of Shabbos, inspiring spiritual clarity and intellectual lucidity. Thus, this word should be seen as the subject of the sentence - it is this aspect of "*la'daas*", the incredible light of the *neshama yeseirah*, that is "a sign between Me and you etc." However, as we have learned, while this light is essentially undeserved, a gift, it still requires some measure of preparation on our part if we are to be able to access it. This is also hinted to in the *pasuk*: "**It is a sign between Me and you**" - the Jewish nation must play their part in the process of receiving the gift of Shabbos, "**to know**" - if they are to gain access to the awesome light of the *neshama yeseirah*. Ideally, a Jew should be thinking about Shabbos the entire week, readying himself both spiritually and materially for the Day of the Soul. But even if one finds himself unable to prepare for Shabbos on this level, there are so many different ways to do our part in beckoning Shabbos into our hearts and homes. Whether it be going to the mikvah erev Shabbos, saying some extra *tehillim* before lighting Shabbos Candles, or dressing for Shabbos early and arranging a chavrusa in shul a half hour before *mincha* begins - the possibilities are endless. The more we prepare, the bigger our spiritual vessel will be, and the more powerfully the *neshama yeseirah* will be able to illuminate our lives. *Good Shabbos!* 🕯️

This section is adapted from the sefer "Sidduro Shel Shabbos" by R' Chaim of Chernowitz zy" a (1760-1816)

Chassidus 101

Exploring the Foundations of Chassidus

ONE OF THE central components of Chassidus often discussed in the writings of the tzaddikim is the importance of immersing in a mikvah. Beyond its practical application in halacha and the standard times most Jewish men are accustomed to immersing, such as during the Yomim Noraim, the importance of the mikvah and what it represents is fundamental not only to Chassidus, but to avodas Hashem in general.

The Shem MiShmuel writes that the word *tumah*, impurity, stems from the word *timtum*, referring to *timtum halev*, a "closing-off" or sealing of the heart. One's heart should be metaphorically open in order to receive what the tzaddik calls *ho'oras haseichel*, an illumination of the mind. On a simple level, this means that as long as one's heart is open, the Torah one learns can enter and penetrate one's being, evolving into far more than a mere piece of knowledge - a palpable experience of Hashem's Essence. When a person falls victim to their temporary wants or desires, it becomes increasingly difficult for the Torah they study to be felt within their heart.

The tzaddikim explain that each of the four elements – fire, water, earth and wind – are sourced in different parts of the body. Fire, which is obviously associated with warmth and passion, is rooted in the heart. Water, on the other hand, which is associated with purification, is rooted in the intellect. Parenthetically, this is one of the reasons why we shed tears when overcome with emotion; they are symbolic of the purification that results from our most heartfelt

prayers and spiritual experiences.

It is of primary importance for us to understand how we can reopen our hearts in order to let that which we know flow freely into the depths of our being. We all know what is asked of us, yet sometimes, by dint of the flaws rooted in the physicality of our bodies, we fall victim to our desires, to the "fire" rooted in the heart. In order to rectify this mistake, the tzaddikim explain that we must ascend to a place beyond the point of sin: If our mistakes are rooted in the element of **fire**, sourced in the **heart**, the rectification for these shortcomings must come about through the element of **water**, which is sourced in the **mind**. In other words, reopening our hearts requires us to transcend our desires and ascend to experiential congruence with what we know – that our loving Father wills for us to live a particular lifestyle because He wants to shower us with good, both in this world and the next.

This is where mikvah comes in. The symbolism of mikvah is that one is immersing themselves in a world beyond fire, beyond our worldly, temporary desires - a place of intellect. Entering the mikvah enables us to forego our shortcomings and realign ourselves with who we truly are. With this understanding, we are able to emerge from the mikvah's waters spiritually refreshed, filled with newfound passion and desire to draw ourselves closer to Hashem, opening our hearts to experience a renewed relationship with our Father in heaven. 🕯️

This section is written by R' Akiva Bruck, author of "From Behind the Curtain" (Mosaica Press)

A Quick Mayseh

A Story to Warm the Heart

THE HOLY APTER RAV was famous for his devotion to the mitzvah of *ahavas Yisrael*, a devotion that led to his being known as the “Oheiv Yisrael”. The tzaddik saw *ahavas Yisrael* as being core to a Torah lifestyle to the point that he believed every single Torah portion contained a reference to this special mitzvah.

On one occasion, a chassid asked the Oheiv Yisroel where this mitzvah could be found in parshas Balak. How could a parsha about Bilaam’s attempts to curse the Jewish nation possibly contain a reference to the mitzvah of *ahavas Yisrael*?

The Apter Rav looked at the chassid in surprise and said, “Parshas Balak? Why, that’s the most obvious of all! The very name “*Balak*” is an acronym for the words “*V’ahavta L’reacha kamocho*”, the Torah’s commandment for a Jew to love another as himself!

Confused, and with a strange expression on his face, the chassid hesitantly asked, “Please forgive me if this comes across as disrespectful, but Rebbe... Isn’t the word “*Balak*” spelled **beis lamed kuf**, while the words “*v’ahavata lereicha kamocho*” begin with the letters **vav, lamed, and chaf**? It seems that the Rebbe is confusing a *beis* with a *vav* and a *kuf* with a *chaf*! Those aren’t the same letters!”

The Apter Rav looked at the chassid with his deep, penetrating gaze: “All these years you’ve been my chassid, but you haven’t yet learned - *ven es kumt tzu ahavas Yisrael ken me’nisht medakdek zayn!* - When it comes to loving the Jewish people, you can’t be so particular!”

True Ahavas Yisrael is rooted in an overwhelming love for the collective soul of our nation, a shared entity that transcends affiliation, physical location, age, mode of dress, language etc. When we can look past the particularities to find the shining spark of holiness within every Jew, we will be able to love each and every member of our holy nation fully and unconditionally. 🕎

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“Thank You Hashem” is a powerful sound bite. These simple words are a prayer, blessing, appreciation, sanctification, and expression of spiritual intimacy—all in one. Jews from all walks of life utter them in all life circumstances, finding meaning and strength in direct access to Hashem. Our mission is to ignite that passion and pride in every Jew worldwide. To remind us all that Hashem exists in every single aspect of life. That He loves each of us in every situation, environment, and spiritual position. And that by saying His name with gratitude, we return His love every day.

“THANK YOU HASHEM
FOR SHABBOS KODESH! WEEKLY”
IS WRITTEN BY R’ YAAKOV KLEIN,
AUTHOR OF **THE STORY OF OUR LIVES** (FELDHEIM)
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