



THANK YOU HASHEM For Shabbos Kodesh!

לעילוי נשמת
ר' ישעיה
בן ר' משה
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.



Parshas Tazria-Metzorah

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ליכות רפואה שלמה מלכה בת רחל, מיכאל בן שולמית, יעקב משה בן דבורה שירה ואברהם יחודה בן שרה רבקה

HaMeor Shebah

A Short Burst of Relevance

וַיִּצְוֶה הַכֹּהֵן וַיִּשְׁחַט אֶת-הַצִּפּוֹר הָאֶחָד אֶל-קַלִּי-חֶרֶשׁ עַל-מַיִם חַיִּים:

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

IN PARSHAS METZORAH, we learn about the purification process of a Jew who has been stricken with *tzara'as*, a supernatural form of leprosy caused by improper speech. After this leprosy has healed, a ritual is performed in which a bird is slaughtered over an earthenware vessel containing "*mayim chayim*," spring water. Then, cedar wood and a low grass are wrapped with a red thread, gathered together with a second bird, and dipped in the blood of the first. The Chiddushei HaRim notes that while water is used in virtually all other purification processes, this is the only impurity which requires *spring water*. Why is the reason for this special requirement? Chazal teach that the grass and cedar used in the *metzora's* purification symbolize his resolve to fix the underlying attitudes that caused him to spread slander and gossip by humbling himself like the lowly grass and eradicating his cedar-like arrogance. The process was a demeaning one; the items used were mere symbols for a difficult, complex, and oftentimes painful period of introspection and transformation. The gravity of this sin was so severe, it could cause one to become consumed by the extent of the damage and destruction caused by his improper words. Intense shame and guilt could even lead the *metzora* to the devastating assumption that his relationship with Hashem is severed, culminating in debilitating despair and a deep sense of spiritual lethargy. The Chiddushei HaRim explains that the use of spring water in the *metzora's* purification was to protect against this terrible mistake. The Hebrew term for spring water, "*mayim chayim*," denotes

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vibrancy, vitality, energy, movement, and life. By including *mayim chayim* in this difficult process, the Torah is teaching the *metzora* that while there may be certain things in his life that need correcting, it is important that this process occur against the backdrop of Hashem's unconditional love and His yearning for a relationship with each member of the Jewish nation. Serious and somber a process it may be, the *metzora's teshuvah* must be founded upon "*mayim Chayim*", living waters of excitement, yearning, and the confidence that everything can be fixed, that there is no despair in the world at all. 🙏

Parsha Roundup

A 60 Second Review

- When a woman gives birth, she must undergo a process of purification which 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 ha'Parsha

An Encounter With the Soul of the Torah

IN PARSHAS TAZRIA, Hashem tells Moshe that when the Jews enter the Holy Land, He will place *tzara'as* on their houses. Rashi explains that unlike other forms of *tzara'as*, this plague was not a response to human sin. Rather, this affliction would be sent from heaven for the benefit of the homeowner. When a Jew would approach the kohen and announce, "Something like a plague has appeared on my house", the stricken abode would be rendered impure and closed up for a seven day period after which the stained bricks would be removed. Because the *tzara'as* appeared on a section of the wall behind which the Emorites had hidden money and other valuables, the removal of the bricks would reveal treasures which would then become possessions of the homeowner. According to the Ramban, this plague was entirely unnatural; its appearance guaranteed the presence of a treasure behind the plagued bricks.

In the year 1940, the holy Piacezner Rebbe Hy"d asked the following question to his battered congregants in the Warsaw Ghetto. If the sole purpose of this form of *tzara'as* was to reveal the hidden treasure as explained by Rashi and accentuated by the Ramban, why did the house need to be deemed impure and sealed off for seven days? Why couldn't the kohen simply tear down the wall straight away?

Chazal teach that whatever happens to a person is for his ultimate spiritual betterment - "*Kol mah d'avid Rachmana l'tav avid*". This means that all trials and tribulations of the human experience are intended to aid us in our personal journey toward closeness with the Master of the world. While not always easy to apply, it is simpler for us to understand how this rule manifests in day-to-day annoyances such as a missed bus, a broken-down car, a failed business endeavor, or illness. However, when the difficulty we encounter is religious in nature, it becomes far more difficult for us to understand how this

could possibly be heaven-sent in order to aid our growth. Unable to pray in a shul or visit the mikvah, forced to enter Succos without *dalet minim*, and having no menorah to light on the first night of Chanukah - these tragic difficulties seem to impede on our growth, trampling on our avodas Hashem and stomping it into oblivion. Can there be a glimmer of light even here, in the spiritual desolation of a Warsaw Ghetto or - on an infinitely smaller scale - the social isolation of a Coronavirus quarantine?

The holy Aish Kodesh teaches that the answer is to be found in the laws regarding *tzara'as* on a house. If the kohen were to break down the wall immediately after the *tzara'as* appeared, this would perhaps teach that everything, even leprosy, is for the purpose of revealing a hidden treasure. However, the introduction of impurity into the process broadens the lesson dramatically: even heaven-sent impurity manifest in impassible spiritual obstacles lead to a treasure in the end. This is why instead of saying "A plague appeared on my house", the homeowner would say "*Something like a plague...*". As limited human beings, we are not privy to understand the true nature of things - even those things which seem unjust and negative. All we can ever say is "*Something like...*", acknowledging that despite how a given situation may appear, we believe it is ultimately for the good. One day we will understand that even the crisis represented by the inability to properly serve Hashem itself paves the way for the most awesome, incomprehensible spiritual treasure. May we see it with the rebuilding of the third Beis HaMikdash, speedily and in our days! 🇺🇸



All challenges - even impassable obstacles along the road toward closeness with Hashem - are for the purpose of our ultimate spiritual betterment.

Zechus Avos

Yahrtzeit of the Week

3 Iyar (Sunday night, Monday - April 27th)

Reb Yeshaya Steiner of Kerestir (1851 - 1925)

3 Iyar is the *yahrtzeit* of legendary tzaddik, Reb Shayele Kerestirer - Reb Yeshaya ben Moshe zy"a, who was known his piety, sweetness, humility, *ahavas Yisrael*, and for the astounding power of his *berachos*. He was especially known for his concern for the *parnassah* of Klal Yisroel. Indeed, the name ישעיה is numerically equivalent to פרנסה.

He was also known for giving people *berachos* to save them from non-Jews that sought to harm them. This is alluded to in the name by which he was affectionately known, ישעיה, which is equal to תכיה, the letters of a mystical Name which destroys the enemies of Klal Yisroel. *Tehillim Yomi* of the third day of the month - the day of Reb Shayele's *yahrtzeit*, contains *perek chaf* which speaks about being saved from suffering and defeating our enemies. The words משיחו יענהו משמי קדשו בגברות ישע ימינו, which speak about Hashem saving us from our enemies, can hint to the name ישעיה from the words "הושיע ישע". The first letters of משיחו יענהו משמי קדשו בגברות ישע are the first letters of משה קערסטירער.

The tzaddik's *yahrtzeit* is on the 18th day of the *omer*. *Tehillim* 18:15 states: וישלח חציו ויפיצם וברקים רב ויהמם - "He sent forth His arrows and scattered them; a multitude of lightning and He confused them." The word ברקים contains the initial letters of משה קערסטירער.

3 Iyar is the day of נצח שבתפארת in *sefiras ha'omer*. This day may be seen as an allusion to Reb Shayele, as the tzaddik's father whose name was Moshe, an aspect of נצח, while תפארת is numerically equivalent to רב ישעיה בן משה זי"ע. May his great merit protect out holy nation in these trying times! 🇺🇸 *This section is adapted from the yahrtzeit remazim of R' David Friedman.*

A famous portrait of Reb Shayale Kerestirer



WITH HASHEM'S HELP, let us delve into the Chernovitzer Rav's exploration of the inner meaning of Kiddush. The tzaddik begins by reviewing a foundational idea in *p'nimiyus haTorah*: a Jew's actions in the lower realms has an enormous effect on the spiritual realms above. A deeper understanding of the verse "*b'fichah uvil'vavcha la'asoso*", "(It is not far from you... in your mouth and heart to do it)" sees these words as hinting the following message: "*Bficha*": Even mere words of holiness, "*uvil'vavcha*": as long as they are heartfelt and bursting with emotion, "*la'asoso*": are able to bring about awesome rectifications throughout creation. This concept is the foundation of the Torah and its mitzvos, as when we live in accordance with the Torah's ideals, we become a literal partner with Hashem in creation. He is our shadow ("*Hashem tzilcha*"); our actions below trigger an influx of blessing and holiness which flows through the channels of being. This "shadowing" is quite exact: if a Jew serves Hashem within the constraints of his nature, refusing to push himself beyond his limits for higher spiritual goals, Hashem repays this effort with divine assistance that similarly remains within natural boundaries. However, when one shatters his nature to serve God on lofty levels at great personal sacrifice, he experiences awesome miracles which breach the limitations of nature. But the primary goal in this matter, a goal within the grasp of each and every Jew, is to perform the mitzvos with one's "body" - the simple intention of fulfilling Hashem's commandments, as well as with one's "soul" - studying and reflecting upon the deeper mystical meanings hinted by every detail and halachic nuance of the mitzvah. When we approach the mitzvos with the simple intention as well as an understanding of the inner dimension, this arouses Hashem's deep love and pride for His holy nation and He showers us with physical and spiritual plenty. Next week, we will begin to explore some of the secrets of kiddush, so that our mitzvah can be complete in both aspects of body and soul. 🙏

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

P'nimiyus ha'Halacha

The Inner Dimension of Jewish Law

AS WE JOURNEY from the redemption of Pesach to our receiving the Torah on Shavuos, we are engaged in a the special mitzvah *d'oraysa* of *sefiras ha'omer*. This mitzvah involves counting forty-nine days between the second day of Pesach (when the Korban Omer was brought) and Shavuos. Although the pasuk states "*tisperu chamishim yom*", to count fifty days, Tosafos (*Menachos* 65b) explains that this is an instance of "*ad v'lo ad bichlal*" - until fifty days, excluding the fiftieth. The *berachah* of "*shehechyanu*" is *not* recited on *sefiras ha'omer*. Ideally, one should recite the *beracha* on *sefiras ha'omer* after *tzeis hakochavim* (see *Mishna Berurah* 489:14) and standing (*Mishna Berurah* 489:6). If one forgot to count sefirah the entire night (with a *beracha*) as well as the following day (without a *beracha*), one should continue counting the next night without a *beracha*. This ruling satisfies divergent opinions as to the very nature of the mitzvah: we continue to count because of the opinion that each night of *sefirah* is a separate mitzvah (*Tosafos*), but we do not make a *beracha* because of the opinion that all forty-nine days of *sefirah* represent one long mitzvah (*Behag*). (See *Mishna Berurah* 489:36-37) However, this person can still listen to the *beracha* of someone else, thus fulfilling his obligation according to the opinion that each night is a separate mitzvah.

In the works of the Chassidic masters, we discover the awesome depth and beauty of *sefiras ha'omer*. In the following weeks, we shall explore a few of the foundational ideas underlying this special mitzvah.

Many of the commentaries deal with the seeming anomaly in this that we do not make a "*shehechyanu*" (the *berachah* generally recited upon new fruits, new clothes, as well as mitzvos with a fixed time which come irregularly) upon beginning to count *sefiras ha'omer*, a mitzvah we have not performed in over three hundred days. Some of the more basic answer include: *sefirah* is merely in anticipation for the joy of *matan Torah* (*Levush*, 489:1), *this beracha* is reserved for

mitzvos that involve elements of joy and pleasure (*Ba'eir Heiteiv* 489:5), and that because (according to some opinions) *sefiras ha'omer* is simply a *zecher l'mikdash* which evokes our pain over missing the exile, it is improper to recite the joyous *beracha* of *shehechyanu* (*Ba'al HaMeor to Pesachim* 28a). The holy Kozhnutzer Maggid (*Avodas Yisrael*, Pesach) provides another answer which touches the spiritual essence of this mitzvah. While they may seem like separate *yomim tovim*, the Arizal teaches that Pesach and Shavuos are inextricably connected. In the Torah, Shavuos is called "*atzeres*" because just like "Shemini Atzeres" is the eight day of Succos, Shavuos is considered the "eighth day" of Pesach. Seen in this light, it emerges that the forty-nine days of *sefirah* represent a kind of "*chol hamoed*" bridging these distinctive holidays which are truly two halves of a single whole. The Arizal explains that the redemptive energy which enabled the Jewish nation to escape the **forty-nine gates** of impurity derived from the Torah which is called "freedom" and was given on the **fiftieth** day – representing its ability to transcend this grave measure of impurity. Each and every year on seder night, we experience these awesome spiritual lights of redemptive consciousness anew, but not for long. The very next day, these lights are taken away from us once more. Lacking the vessel of proper preparation (due to the Jewish nation's miserable spiritual state at the time of the initial redemption), these lights cannot remain. Rather, we must spend the forty-nine days of *sefirah* correcting our emotional traits until finally, on the fiftieth day, Shavuos, the lights descend again, this time into vessels in which they can be properly contained. This, explains the Kozhnutzer Maggid, is why no *shehechyanu* is made on *sefiras ha'omer*. Because the mitzvah of *sefirah* is simply to contain the light of seder night which descends once more on Shavuos, it is implicitly included within the *shehechyanu* of seder night - the true source and premise of this unique mitzvah. 🙏

A Quick Mayseh

A Story to Warm the Heart

Along his journey, a fiery chassid was once praying in a kretchmer (inn) together with the other guests. He noticed that their prayers were mumbled, unclear and incomprehensible. Seized by passion, the chassid resolved to express his disapproval.

After the prayers, he approached of the guests and said very quickly in a soft, murmuring voice: “Werurygoigtdy?”

“Excuse me, what did you just ask?” answered the puzzled man. The chassid repeated: “Wurarygongtdayisd?”

The man looked at him with confusion. “I am sorry, but I still do not understand your question!”

“Of course not!” retorted the chassid. “I said, ‘Where are you going today?’ but I said it just as quickly and vaguely as you mumbled the words of your prayers! Is that a way to speak to the Master of the world?”

The man hung his head and accepted the chassid’s chastisement in silence. Together with the other travelers, he promised that even though he was no scholar and didn’t know exactly how to pronounce the Hebrew words, he would make more of an effort to pronounce his prayers properly.

When the chassid arrived home from his trip, his small toddler bounded up to him with great joy. After a warm hug, the baby stretched out his little arms and gurgled: “Gooaaghgoogoo.” “Ah,” said the chassid’s wife, “you want some milk! Come with Mommy!” She took him by the arm and went to the kitchen.

“You know something,” the chassid remarked, “You are truly an amazing mother. Little Yankel’s sounds are all the same to me, but you really understand what he means!” His wife smiled at the compliment. “It is only because I am with him day and night. This is why I know what he means with his different ‘goohs’ and ‘gaahs’.” Suddenly, she paused for a long moment. “You know something?” She continued. “I think it is the same in our relationship with Hashem. Hashem knows what we, His children, want from Him, even if our speech is not perfect or if we do not always understand what we pray. What matters most is that we pray sincerely.”

Jumbled as our tefillos may be, Hashem desires the sincerity of the heart. 🙏

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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
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