



This week we read the 2nd Perek of Pirke Avot

5TH OF IYAR 5781
APRIL 17TH, 2021
CANDLE LIGHTING 7:26PM
SHABBAT ENDS 8:26PM



**REVEALING
OUR HIDDEN
TREASURES**

**TWO BIRDS: ONE FOR
EVIL SPEECH & ONE
FOR GOOD SPEECH**

**LIFE & DEATH IN
THE HANDS OF
THE TONGUE**

PARASHAT TAZRIA TAHARA (MEZORA)

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THIS WEEK'S BULLETIN HAS BEEN KINDLY SPONSORED LEILUY NISHMAT
שלמה בן יעקב ז"ל, BY HIS DEAR FAMILY.



April / May 2021	לילה לרבינו תם R' Tam's Nightfall	לילה Nightfall	שקיעת החמה Sun set	הדלקת נרות Candle Lighting	פג Plag	מנחה קטנה Mincha	מנחה גדולה Earliest	חצות Mid day	תפילה Latest Shachris	סוף זמן קריאת שמע Latest Shema	הנץ החמה Sun rise	זמן ציטית ותפילין Earliest Talis	עלות השחר 72 Dawn 72 Minutes	דף היומי Daf Yomi	אייר תשפ"א	
13 Tue	8:56	8:54	8:19	7:43	ראש חודש	6:23	5:03	1:21	11:13	10:10	9:34	9:35	7:00	6:17	5:47	א שלישי
14 Wed	8:56	8:55	8:19	7:43		6:23	5:04	1:53	1:20	11:13	10:09	9:33	6:59	6:16	5:47	ב רביעי
15 Thu	8:57	8:55	8:20	7:44		6:24	5:04	1:53	1:20	11:12	10:08	9:32	6:58	6:15	5:46	ג חמישי
16 Fri	8:57	8:56	8:20	7:44	7:26	6:24	5:04	1:53	1:20	11:12	10:08	9:32	6:57	6:14	5:45	ד ששי
17 Sha	8:57	8:56	8:21	7:44	[תזריע-מצו']	6:24	5:04	1:53	1:20	11:11	10:07	9:31	6:56	6:13	5:44	ה שבת
18 Sun	8:58	8:57	8:21	7:45		6:25	5:04	1:53	1:19	11:11	10:07	9:31	6:55	6:12	5:43	ו ראשון
19 Mon	8:58	8:58	8:22	7:45		6:25	5:05	1:52	1:19	11:10	10:06	9:30	6:54	6:11	5:42	ז שני
20 Tue	8:59	8:58	8:22	7:46		6:25	5:05	1:52	1:19	11:10	10:06	9:30	6:53	6:10	5:41	ח שלישי
21 Wed	8:59	8:59	8:23	7:46		6:26	5:05	1:52	1:19	11:10	10:05	9:29	6:52	6:09	5:40	ט רביעי
22 Thu	9:00	9:00	8:24	7:47		6:26	5:05	1:52	1:19	11:09	10:04	9:28	6:51	6:08	5:39	י חמישי
23 Fri	9:00	9:00	8:24	7:47	7:29	6:26	5:05	1:52	1:18	11:09	10:04	9:28	6:50	6:07	5:38	יא ששי
24 Sha	9:01	9:01	8:25	7:48	[אח"מ-קדו']	6:27	5:06	1:52	1:18	11:08	10:03	9:27	6:50	6:06	5:37	יב שבת
25 Sun	9:01	9:02	8:25	7:48		6:27	5:06	1:52	1:18	11:08	10:03	9:27	6:49	6:05	5:36	יג ראשון
26 Mon	9:02	9:02	8:26	7:49	פסח שני	6:27	5:06	1:52	1:18	11:08	10:02	9:26	6:48	6:04	5:35	יד שני
27 Tue	9:02	9:03	8:26	7:49		6:28	5:06	1:51	1:18	11:07	10:02	9:26	6:47	6:03	5:34	טו שלישי
28 Wed	9:03	9:04	8:27	7:50		6:28	5:06	1:51	1:18	11:07	10:01	9:25	6:46	6:02	5:33	טז רביעי
29 Thu	9:04	9:04	8:28	7:51		6:29	5:07	1:51	1:17	11:06	10:01	9:25	6:45	6:01	5:32	יז חמישי
30 Fri	9:04	9:05	8:28	7:51	7:33	6:29	5:07	1:51	1:17	11:06	10:01	9:25	6:45	6:00	5:32	יח ששי
1 Sha	9:05	9:06	8:29	7:52	[אמור']	6:29	5:07	1:51	1:17	11:06	10:00	9:24	6:44	6:00	5:31	יט שבת
2 Sun	9:05	9:07	8:29	7:52		6:30	5:08	1:51	1:17	11:05	10:00	9:24	6:43	5:59	5:29	כ ראשון
3 Mon	9:06	9:07	8:30	7:53		6:30	5:08	1:51	1:17	11:05	9:59	9:23	6:42	5:58	5:28	כא שני
4 Tue	9:06	9:08	8:31	7:53		6:31	5:08	1:51	1:17	11:05	9:59	9:23	6:42	5:57	5:27	כב שלישי
5 Wed	9:07	9:09	8:31	7:54		6:31	5:08	1:51	1:17	11:05	9:58	9:22	6:41	5:56	5:26	כג רביעי
6 Thu	9:07	9:09	8:32	7:54		6:31	5:09	1:51	1:17	11:04	9:58	9:22	6:40	5:56	5:25	כד חמישי
7 Fri	9:08	9:10	8:32	7:55	7:37	6:32	5:09	1:51	1:17	11:04	9:58	9:22	6:40	5:55	5:24	כה ששי
8 Sha	9:08	9:11	8:33	7:55	[בקר-בחו']	6:32	5:09	1:51	1:17	11:04	9:57	9:21	6:39	5:54	5:24	כו שבת
9 Sun	9:09	9:12	8:34	7:56		6:33	5:09	1:51	1:17	11:04	9:57	9:21	6:38	5:53	5:23	כז ראשון
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11 Tue	9:10	9:13	8:35	7:57		6:33	5:10	1:51	1:17	11:03	9:56	9:20	6:37	5:52	5:21	כט שלישי

Tuesday (May 11) 8:31 PM + 7 חלקים סיון: מולד חודש סיון: [Get FREE daily sefirah reminders by text or email > http://alerts.myzmanim.com](http://alerts.myzmanim.com)

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SHABBAT SCHEDULE

- Candle Lighting: 7:26pm
- Mincha 6:00/7:15pm
- Shir Hashirim: 6:20pm
- Shaharit Netz Minyan: 5:55am
- Shaharit: 8:30am
- Zeman Keriat Shema 9:32am
- 2nd Zeman Keriat Shema 10:07am
- Seudat Shelishit should be done at home prior to coming to the Bet Hakeneset.
- Shiur 6:30pm
- Mincha: 7:25pm
- Followed by Devar Torah & Arvit
- Shabbat Ends: 8:26pm
- Rabbenu Tam 8:57pm

Birkat Halebana BH this Mosae Shabbat

Anyone Wishing to Join the Daf Yomi New Masechet Yoma dealing with the Services of Yom Kippur etc. Please contact the Rabbi!

WEEKLY SCHEDULE SUNDAY

- Shaharit: 6:10am
- Hodu approx.: 6:30am
- Shaharit #2 Hodu 8:30am
- Mincha 7:35pm
- Followed by Arvit.

MONDAY TO FRIDAY

- Shaharit 6:10am
- Daf Yomi 7:25am
- Shaharit #2 Hodu 8:00am
- Mincha 7:35pm
- Followed by Arvit & Shiurim
- Shiur in Spanish Recess

We would like to remind our Kahal Kadosh to please Donate wholeheartedly towards our Beautiful Kehila. Anyone interested in donating for any occasion, Avot Ubanim \$120, Kiddush \$350, Seudat Shelishit \$275, Weekly Bulletin \$150, Weekly Daf Yomi \$180, Daf Yomi Masechet \$2500, Yearly Daf Yomi \$5000, Weekly Breakfast \$150, Daily Learning \$180, Weekly Learning \$613, Monthly Rent \$3500, & Monthly Learning \$2000, Please contact the Board Thanking you in advance for your generous support. Tizke Lemitzvot!

Donors Column

בס"ד

We Sincerely Thank you for your generous contributions this Week! We truly appreciate it! Hashem should Bless you all with Health, Happiness, Parnasah Tova, Success, & All the Berachot of the Torah Amen!

- **Mr. Abraham Bengio**
- **Mr. Moshe Suissa**
- **Mr Barak Benchetrit**
- **Mr. Stephane Bsiri**
- **Mr. Amram Mouyal**
- **R' Ronen Abitbol**
- **Mr. Yoel Wahnnon**
- **Mr. Remy Allouche**
- **Mr. Teddy Kassin**
- **Mr. Daniel Suissa**
- **Mr. Salomon Cohen**
- **Mr. Gabriel Amos**
- **Mr. Jack Franco**

If anyone would like to contact our Synagogue, please feel free to email info@hechalshalom.org

Torah Teasers (AISH)

1. This parsha discusses the law of circumcision. a) Who is the first person in the Torah to receive a circumcision from his parent? b) Who is the first baby to have a circumcision when he was eight days old? c) Which other baby is circumcised elsewhere in the Torah?
2. a) Where does the number 33 appear in this parsha? b) Where in the Torah and in the Prophets is the number 33 mentioned?
3. In which law is a female double that of a male?
4. Which of the ten plagues appears in this parsha?
5. Which 5 colors are mentioned in this parsha?
6. In what two contexts is fire mentioned in this parsha?
7. Which two topics in this parsha involve the number seven?
8. In this parsha, in what two contexts must clothing be torn?
9. What two other places in the book of Leviticus is there a commandment not to tear clothing?
10. In this parsha, what word must a leper call out twice? What other law (in the book of Numbers) requires someone to call out a word twice?

Answers

- 1) a) In parshat Lech Lecha, Avraham circumcises his 13-year-old son Yishmael (Genesis 17:23). b) In parshat Vayera, Yitzhak was the first baby to receive a circumcision at 8 days old (Genesis 21:4). c) In parshat Shemot, Moshe's second son is circumcised by his mother Tzipora (Exodus 4:25).
- 2) a) After giving birth to a boy, a mother is ritually impure for 33 days (Leviticus 12:4). b) In parshat Vayigash, when the Jewish people travel down to Egypt, Leah's descendants number 33 (Genesis 46:15). King David ruled for 33 years in Jerusalem (2-Samuel 5:5).
- 3) The ritual impurity of childbirth lasts seven days for a male child and 14 days for a female child (Leviticus 12:2,5). In addition, the subsequent days of purity are 33 days for a baby boy and 66 days for a baby girl (Leviticus 12:4,5).
- 4) The Torah discusses the laws of someone whose skin has leprosy on boils (Leviticus 13:18). Boils is one of the ten plagues in parshat Va'era (Exodus 9:9).
- 5) The following colors appear, all relating to the laws of leprosy: white (Leviticus 13:3), red (13:24), yellowish gold (13:36), black (Leviticus 13:37), and greenish yellow (13:49).
- 6) a) The Torah discusses someone who has leprosy on a burn that has healed. The word for burn is michvas aish - "a fire burn" (Leviticus 13:24).
(b) Clothing that has incurable leprosy must be burned by fire (Leviticus 13:52,57).
- 7) (1) A woman who gives birth to a boy is ritually impure for seven days (Leviticus 12:2). (2) Someone with leprosy, and clothing with leprosy, are quarantined in seven-day periods (Leviticus 13:4,20,21,26,31,33,50,54).
- 8) The Torah states that a person with leprosy, "his clothing be torn" (Leviticus 13:44). If a garment has leprosy it must be washed and put away for seven days. If after this period the leprosy stain has dimmed, one must tear away the section containing the leprosy stain, and the rest of the garment may possibly be salvaged (Leviticus 13:56).
- 9) In parshat Shmini, after the death of Nadav of Avihu, Aharon and his remaining sons are prohibited from tearing their clothing as a sign of mourning (Leviticus 10:6). In parshat Emor, a High Priest is prohibited from tearing his clothing (Leviticus 21:10).
- 10) A leper must call out the words, "Tame Tame" (impure impure) (Leviticus 13:45). In parshat Naso, a woman accused of adultery (sotah) must answer the Kohen's oath with the words, "Amen Amen" (Numbers 5:22).

Community Announcements

(It is YOUR Community, make the most of it!)

Miscellaneous Announcements:

- **This Week's Congregational Kiddush/Seudat Shelishit & Breakfast is in Recess.**
- **This Week's Daf Yomi** is still available for Sponsorship!
- **This Week's Learning** has been **Kindly Sponsored by Mr. & Mrs. Salomon Cohen in memory of his dear Father R. Saadia Cohen Bar Mesoda z"l** the 11th of Iyar. Tihye Nishmato Tzerura Bitzror Hahayim Began Eden Amen!
- We are trying to update our **Congregant's contact information**. We would like to start sending texts about different Events and Shiurim. We would also like to start emailing the weekly bulletin. **We would like to start a list of Nahalot/Azkarot/Yahrzeits**. We would also like to make a **Refuah Shelema list**. Please send your contact information to the Board at info@hechalshalom.org

Important Message!!!

Eruv Update: Surfside: The Eruv in Surfside now includes the walking paths along the beach. Pushing strollers and carrying is permitted on the paths, but not beyond the path or onto the beach.

Bal Harbour: The Eruv in Bal Harbour included the inner (western) walking path only. The pier at Haulover Cut is not included.

- Before hanging up anything anywhere in the Bet Hakeneset, please seek authorization from the Board. This includes flyers etc.
- Please be advised that prior to bringing any food or drinks for any occasion, you must first seek the authorization from the Board.

Special Announcements

- We are pleased to announce that Ness 26 is part of the **Amazon Charity Program**, which would allow our community to collect 0.5% of all the orders made by any of you on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). In order to register you need to log on smile.amazon.com and select Ness 26, Inc as the Charitable Organization you want to support, and from then shop on smile.amazon.com instead of www.amazon.com. It won't cost anything more, and is an easy way to contribute to our budget needs.
- Anyone wishing to receive the **Daily Halacha** please send a whatsapp message to Simon Chocron 786-351-1573

Community Calendar:

- **The program for Teenaged Boys** ages 13-18 Started again with Great Succes with Shiur & Supper on **Sunday Evenings After Arvit at around at 6:30 pm With Supper**. New Participants Welcome! Anyone wishing to sponsor this Shiur Please contact the Board. Tizke Lemitzvot! In Recess
- We have started the **Mishmar Program** Every other Thursday evening at 8:00 pm **with Chulent, Beer, & Snacks. Everyone is welcome!**

Avot Ubanim: This Mosae Shabbat at 7:50pm

Youth Minyan

- We are very proud of our YOUTH/TEEN MINYAN lead by our Dear Dr. Ari Benmergui geared to train and teach our future generations on the different Tefillot and Parashiyot. Please encourage your children to come early & participate. Looking forward to seeing lots of Nahat from them!

Refuah Shelema List

Men

Women

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yosef Zvi Ben Sara Yosefia, • Yosef Haim Ben Mesouda • Mordechai Ben Brucha Malka Shmalo • Yizhak Abraham Ben Sheli, • Yosef Yizhak Ben Sara Hana, • Mordechai Ben Miriam, • Meir Raymond Ben Mathilde • Yaakov Ben Simha Alegria • Aviv Ben Luba Miriam • Mordechai Ben Mercedes • Yaacov Refael Ben Alegria • Shalom Gibly Ben Fortuna 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isaac Ben Mesoda, • Haim Ben Marcelle, • Yizhak Ben Simja • Reuben Ben Eta, • Michael Ben Aliza, • Avraham Ben Leah • Ruben Leib Ben Eta • David Benichu Bar Aicha • Menahem Ben Shira • Moshe Ben Rahel • David Ben Freha Rina
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simja Bat Esther, • Rachel Bat Sarah, • Nina Bat Rachel, • Gitel Rina Bat Yael, • Miriam Bat Sofy, • Rahma Bat Simha • Esther Bat Fortuna • Malka Bat Dina • Raizel Bat Miriam • Leah Bat Rivka • Sol Bat Perla • Chana Bat Bilha • Yael Bat Rut 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sara Leticia Bat Mesoda, • Alegria Simha Bat Esther, • Naomie Bat Rarel Adda, • Malka Bat Joyce Simja, • Sivan Simha Bat Yehudit, • Natalie Rachel Bat Nancy, • Abigael Haya Bat Esther • Madeleine Bat Esther • Nurit Jacqueline Bat Rahel • Marcelle Mesoda Bat Alegria • Eva Bat Yael Khayat • Camouna Bat Fortuna

Hechal Shalom / Or Oziel

שויתי ונגדי תמיד

**We Would like to Wholeheartedly
Thank our Dear Friends**

Salomon Murciano

**For Generously
Donating the Rent of**

Iyar 5781

**Leiluy Nishmat his Dear Mother
Felicia Amalia Bat Miriam z"l**

Tihye Nishmata Tzerura Bitzor Hahayim

Began Eden Amen!

We truly appreciate it.

In this Merit,

**May Hashem Bless you & your Wonderful
Family with all the Berachot in the Torah Amen.**



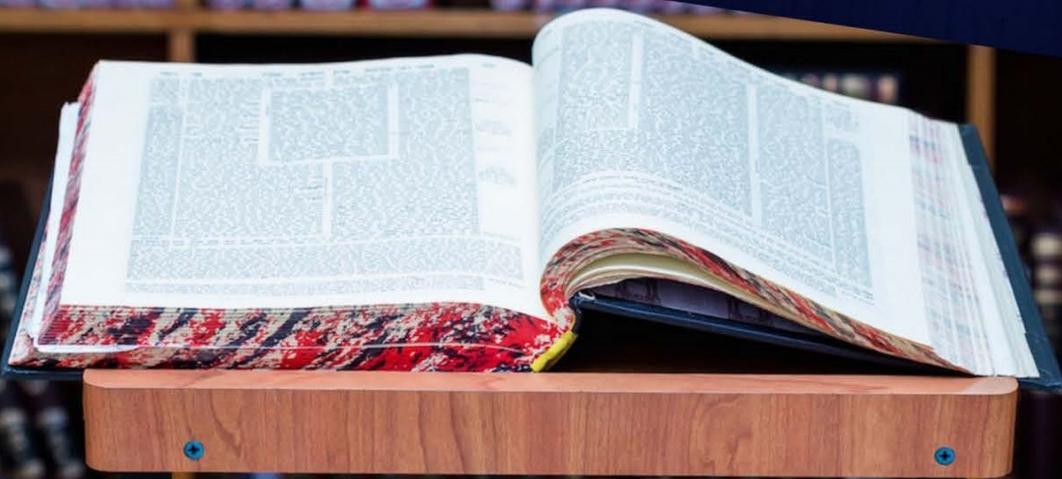
DAF YOMI SPONSORS



THIS YEAR'S LEARNING OF THE DAF YOMI
IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY

THE KAMHAZI FAMILY

IN MEMORY OF THEIR DEAR FATHER
SHELOMO BEN YAAKOV Z"l
& FOR HATZLACHA OF THE WHOLE FAMILY.
HASHEM SHOULD BLESS THEM WITH
HEALTH, HAPPINESS, & LONG LIFE, AMEN.



THIS YEAR'S LEARNING OF DAF YOMI IS
GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY

THE AKKAD FAMILY

LEILUY NISHMAT

אברהם בן גרסי-ה ז"ל, שלמה בן תמם ז"ל, אליהו בן רחל
ז"ל, ותמם בת אורו ז"ל תנצב"ה

HASHEM SHOULD BLESS THEM WITH
HEALTH, HAPPINESS, & LONG LIFE, AMEN.



We would like to Wholeheartedly Thank our Dear Friends,

Mr. & Mrs. Simon Benchimol

for generously Donating the TORAH LEARNING of

Iyar 5781

Leiluy Nishmat his Dear Mother

Rajel Bat Nina z"l

Tihye Nishmata Tzerura Bitzror Hahayim Amen!

We truly appreciate it. In this merit may Hashem Bless you & your wonderful family with all the Berachot of the Torah. Amen.

We would like to Wholeheartedly Thank our Dear Friends,

Mr. & Mrs. Julien Ayache

for generously Donating the TORAH LEARNING of

Iyar 5781

Leiluy Nishmat his Dear Father

Moshi Ben Eliyahou Ayache z"l

Tihye Nishmata Tzerura Bitzror Hahayim Amen!

We truly appreciate it. In this merit may Hashem Bless you & your wonderful family with all the Berachot of the Torah. Amen.

Happy Birthday To

- David Gad – Mon. Apr. 19th,
- Dr. Jean Jacques Edderai – Tue. Apr. 20th,
- Deborah Shira Gad – Tues. Apr. 23rd,
- Eliyahu Shlomo Michael – Tues. Apr. 23rd,
- Mrs. Camila Benmergui – Shabb. Apr. 24th,
- Mr. Yigal Cohen – Shabb. Apr. 24th,
- Aaron Isaiah Hooge – Sun. Apr. 25th,
- Mr. Yizhak Amran – Mon. Apr. 26th,
- Mr. Shabetai Maya – Mon. Apr. 26th,
- Ruben Menachem Zonana – Mon. Apr. 26th,
- Lisa Cohen – Thurs. Apr. 29th,

Nahalot

- Nissim Cohen Bar Rahel z”l the 6th of Iyar (Father of Mr. Philipe Cohen)
- Saadia Cohen Bar Mesoda z”l the 11th of Iyar (Father of Mr. Salomon Cohen)

Next Shabbatot:

- Hanna Amsili Silver Bat Alegria Freha z”l the 12th of Iyar (Sister of Mrs. Renee Levine)(Shabbat)
- Rivka Bat Freha z”l the 12th of Iyar (Mother of Mr. Jack Benoudiz)(Shabbat)
- Mercedes Nahon Bat Esther z”l the 14th of Iyar (Sister of Dr. Max & Mr. Isaac Nahon)
- Rosa sayegh Mat Mazal z”l the 15th of Iyar (Mother of Mr. Charles sayegh)
- Tzivvia Eisen Bat Berele z”l the 16th of Iyar (Mother of Mrs. Raquel Eisen Benoudiz)
- Moshi Ben Eliyahu Ayache z”l the 17th of Iyar (Father of Mr. Julien Ayache)
- Bernard Elazar Ben Shalom z”l the 18th of Iyar (Father of Mr. Yaacov Allouche)
- Bracha Eisen Bat Leopoldo z”l the 22nd of Iyar (Grandmother of Mrs. Raquel Eisen Benoudiz)
- Touna Sayegh Bat Rosa z”l the 24th of Iyar (Sister of Mr. Charles Sayegh)

WEEKLY INSPIRATION

Revealing Our Hidden Treasures

(Rabbi Eli Mansour itorah)

Parashiyot Tazria and Mesora describe several different kinds of manifestations of Sara’at – discolorations on a person’s skin, garment or home, which, under certain conditions, brings a state of impurity. Our Sages have explained that Sara’at would strike a person as a punishment for repeated violations of the sin of Lashon Ha’ra – negative speech and slander about other people.

One of the manifestations of Sara’at, as mentioned, is discolorations on a person’s home. If the discoloration is confirmed as Sara’at, then the entire house must be dismantled.

Rashi (14:34) famously cites from the Midrash that this manifestation of Sara’at was, in truth, a blessing for the people: "The Emorites hid golden treasures in the walls of their homes throughout the entire forty years when Yisrael were in the wilderness, and as a result of the

affliction [on the walls], one dismantles the house and finds them." A Sara’at plague on the walls of one’s home would end up as a "blessing in disguise," as by dismantling the home, one would discover the treasures which had been hidden in the walls by the nations which inhabited the Land of Israel before it was conquered by Beneh Yisrael.

The question arises as to why Rashi mentions here specifically the "Emoriyim" (Emorites). Seven different nations inhabited the Land of Israel before being vanquished by Beneh Yisrael. Why are only the Emorites spoken of as concealing their treasures in the walls of their homes?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rav Menachem Mendel Schneerson, 1902-1994) explained that the word "Emoriyim" in Rashi’s commentary contains a deeper message. This word is associated with the verb "E.M.R." – "speech," and thus alludes to the cause of Sara’at – forbidden speech. Rashi here is alluding to the fact that Sara’at would strike specifically the homes of the "Emoriyim" – those who speak inappropriately about other people.

But if so, then we must ask why the person would then be worthy of receiving a precious gold treasure. If he is guilty of the grievous sin

of Lashon Ha'ra, then why does he receive a large fortune?

The Rebbe explained that the "gold treasure" mentioned by Rashi alludes to "golden speech" – appropriate and valuable speech. After enduring the punishment of Sara'at, and taking the lesson to heart, the individual is then able to turn his speech around, to transform it from harmful and destructive gossip and slander, to precious "pearls of wisdom," to words of Torah, words of praise and encouragement to other people. The purpose of Sara'at is not to lead a person to be silent, to stop speaking, but rather to reveal his hidden treasures, to help him find the power of constructive speech, to uncover the greatness within him. Speech can inflict great harm, but can also bring great blessing. Once we recognize the evil of inappropriate speech, we can then unearth the hidden treasure of positive, productive speech.

More generally, Rashi's comments teach us that sometimes, when our lives are "dismantled," disrupted and shaken, we are given the opportunity to discover "hidden treasures." We have many strengths and gifts which might be obscured by the pressures and bustle of day-to-day life. These "treasures" are concealed deep within us, but we cannot see them, because we are distracted by the many different things which occupy our time and our minds. But when our lives are "dismantled," these precious gifts are unearthed. We hope and pray that the current crisis, which has shaken our lives to their core, ends very soon, and that we will emerge from this difficult time with precious "treasures," newfound reservoirs of faith, strength, and love for our fellowman and for Hashem, Amen.

Sara'at and Confronting Hardship

(Rabbi Eli Mansour)

Parashiyot Tazria and Mesora deal mainly with the laws of Sara'at – a skin disorder resembling leprosy that would befall people on account of certain sins. The Torah outlines the various guidelines by which it is determined

when a person indeed has Sara'at, the restrictions that apply if he does, and the process entailed in regaining one's status of Tahara (purity) after recovering from Sara'at.

One of the interesting laws of Sara'at is the prohibition against surgically removing the infected skin. A person with Sara'at may want to spare himself the long, difficult process that Sara'at imposes, and simply tear off the discolored skin. The Torah strictly forbids such an act, requiring instead that one follow all the procedures entailed in the process of the Sara'at.

The Sefer Ha'hinuch (anonymous work commonly attributed to Rav Aharon Ha'levi, Spain, 1235-1303) explains that this law reflects the Torah's general approach to suffering and hardship. When a person is stricken with some malady, or faces some difficult situation, his response must not be to simply cure the illness or resolve the problem. His main response must be to undergo an internal process of change and repentance. Our Sages taught that hardship must trigger introspection. We cannot just "remove" the crisis and then live as if it never happened. We must respond with a process of looking into ourselves and trying to improve.

The Gemara tells the story of Rav Huna, whose cellar was filled with barrels of wine, which one day suddenly turned to vinegar. Distraught, he approached his colleagues to seek their assistance. They urged him to think of something which he might have done wrong to cause this misfortune, and it was discovered that he employed a certain sharecropper whom he had not paid. Rav Huna paid the worker, and suddenly the vinegar turned back into wine. According to a different version of the story, the Gemara relates, the price of vinegar drastically rose, and Rav Huna earned a large profit.

The Gemara in Masechet Berachot (5) speaks at length about the topic of "Yisurin" – suffering and hardship. It teaches us that hardships atone for sin in a manner resembling bankruptcy protection. Each sin we commit should, in truth, be met with severe punishments, but Hashem, in His great mercy and kindness, gives us a "reduction." We can

"pay" our "dues" with just pennies on the dollar – with a flat tire, a lost client, a broken window, or an insult from a friend. These Yisurin seem harsh or even devastating when they occur, but in the grand scheme of things, they are an expression of Hashem's great compassion, as He lets us off easy by allowing us to earn atonement through these kinds of losses and inconveniences.

This is one of the lessons of Sara'at. We hope and pray to never suffer any sort of affliction, but when we are, Heaven forbid, stricken by "Sara'at," by any form of hardship, let us respond the right way, by taking a good look into ourselves and finding mistakes that need to be corrected and habits that need to be changed.

A Frightening Idea by the Chovot Ha'Levavot Et Al

(Rabbi Frand from Torah.org)

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 Kotnot 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 Tzipori, 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 tongue 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 Kotnot Ohr references a very frightening passage in the *sefer Chovot Ha'Levavot* ("Duties of the Heart" by Bachye ibn Pakuda). The truth of the matter is that this idea is not only in the Chovot Ha'Levavot, but it also appears in the Maggid Mesharim (which relates conversations between a *Malach* and the Bet 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 Chovot Ha'Levavot writes in the "Gates of Acquisition" (Chapter 7) that when Reuven speaks *Lashon Ha'Rah* about Shimon, Reuven's (prior) *mitzvot* are transferred to Shimon and Shimon's (prior) sins are transferred to Reuven! 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 Shabbat* 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 Chovot Ha'Levavot cites an incident involving someone about whom *Lashon Ha'ra* 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'ra* 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 Bet Yosef (and this is recorded in the Maggid Mesharim) that he should not worry about the *Lashon Ha'rah* because he would get the *zechuyot* (merits) of the people who slandered him, and all of his *Averot* (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 *Mitzvot* in "their ledger" that they never did. They will tell the "Gate Keepers," we never did these *Mitzvot*, 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 *Mitzvot*, keep Shabbat, 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 Chovot Ha'Levavot et al — a person can lose his *Mitzvot* and lose his reward. He can, Heaven forbid, wind up with *Averot* that he did not do and with *Mitzvot* that were lost!

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

Rav Bernstein writes that the Chafetz Chaim brings this idea in the Sefer Shmirat HaLashon Chapter 3. He writes that there is a footnote by the Chafetz Chaim (which I could not find; I assume he had a different edition). Many people at the end of Shemoneh Esre 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 Shlah 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 Shlah. 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 *mitzvot* that he well knows he never performed in his lifetime, he will recognize that this is Chaim Ben Yosef's *Mitzvot* and these are Shmuel Ben Shalom's *Mitzvot* and these are David ben Tzvi's *Mitzvot*. He will have credited to his account hundreds — maybe thousands — of *Mitzvot* from different people. They will call him David 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 Chovot Ha'Levavot.

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 Chovot Ha'Levavot and Maggid Mesharim and Marpeh Lashon do not put the fear of G-d into you, nothing will. The specter of going up to the World of Truth and suddenly discovering that you have lost your hard-earned reward for doing *Mitzvot* 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 *Mitzvot* 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 Chovot Ha'Levavot 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 Chovot Ha'Levavot, 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 Chovot Ha'Levavot really means to in fact say, “Well, you have lost all your *Mitzvot* and you get all of his *averot*.”

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 *Mitzvot* and *Averot* might apply.

Still, the take home message from all this is: “Don't speak *Lashon Ha'Rah*.”

Two Birds: One For 'Evil Speech' and One For 'Good Speech'

(Rabbi Frand)

The *pasuk* says, “The Kohen shall command and shall take for the person being purified (from the affliction of *Tzara'at*) two live, pure, birds...” [Vayikra 14:4]. The Zohar cryptically comments that one bird atones for evil speech and one bird atones for good speech.

The *Tzara'at* that is mentioned in this week's Parsha is not the physical affliction commonly translated as leprosy. Rather, it is a spiritual affliction, which manifests itself in a physical way. Our Sages say that the word *Metzora* (meaning one who has the disease of *Tzara'at*) is a contraction of the words “*Motzi Rah*” [one who spews forth evil], because *Tzara'at* comes as a punishment for ‘evil speech’ (*lashon haRah*). However, the Zohar is also informing us that the second bird comes to atone for ‘good speech’. What does this mean?

The Shemen HaTov offers the following explanation. There are two reasons why a person would be afflicted with *Tzara'at*: for speaking evil and for improperly using the gift of speech. Improperly using the gift of speech means abstaining from uttering “good speech,” when that is called for. Just as speaking gossip can sometimes destroy a marriage, a partnership, or a friendship, so too, sometimes speaking words of encouragement and friendship can take a person who is depressed, lonely and

disheartened, and bring him back to life. Sometimes, merely withholding that little compliment, the “Good morning”, the “How are you doing?”, “Thanks”, “Nice Job” can destroy a person. The Zohar is informing us that the sin of *Lashon Harah* includes both ‘Evil Speech’ and withholding ‘Good Speech’. Sometimes withholding the compliment or the good word can be as destructive as speaking evil.

Perhaps we can expand on this by explaining that these two sins – speaking evil and failing to speak well of someone really stem from the same sin. If we analyze the deeper nature of the sin of *Lashon Harah*, we discover that these are really two sides of the same coin. If we ever want to discover the root of something in the Torah, an approach to use is to look at the first place that it occurs in the Torah. When we examine what happened in the first place where the Torah mentions something, we can find the key to understanding what the mitzvah or prohibition is all about.

The Snake spoke the first ‘*Lishna Bisha*’ [Evil Speech] in the Torah. Chava refused the Snake’s suggestion to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, explaining that G-d had forbidden them to eat from it. The Snake dismissed this as a sinister plot on G-d’s part. “G-d knows that when you will eat from that Tree, your eyes will be opened and you will become G-d-like...” [Bereshit 3:5] Rashi elaborates on the Snake’s argument: “Every professional hates competition. G-d ate from that tree, and then acquired the knowledge to create the world. He is jealous and does not want you to have the same capabilities as Him.

Adam had the best situation imaginable. He was sitting in the Garden of Eden. Angels fed him. Nothing could be better! However, then the Snake came and argued – “Nah! It is not so perfect. You do not have the Tree of Knowledge; you are not G-d-like!” The Snake looks at a situation that is virtually perfect and finds fault with it. He focuses on the flaw.

This is the essence of *Lashon Harah*. *Lashon Harah* is not so much a crime of the mouth. It is a crime of perception. Someone can look at his neighbor and see a nice person, see talents, and see accomplishments.

Alternatively, a person can look at the same person and see only his shortcomings and flaws. A person who gravitates to *Lashon Harah* has a jaundiced eye on the world. The root of this sin is always picking out the bad, rather than the good. The glass is always half empty.

The other classic example of *Lashon Harah* in the Torah concerns the Spies. They went to Eretz Yisrael. The fruits were huge and delicious. G-d preoccupied everyone with burials so that they would not notice the spies. What did the spies see? “A land which consumes its inhabitants” [Bamidbar 13:32]. It takes a perverse talent to find the wicked in a virtually idyllic situation.

If that is the case, the Zohar’s references to ‘Good speech’ and ‘Evil Speech’ are really references to the same thing. We speak evil about someone because we fail to see the good in him. We only focus on the negative. Likewise, when we see a person do something nice, and a mere compliment would cause him to feel good, but we cannot be generous enough of spirit to offer that compliment, this is also because of the same jaundiced approach, the inability to see and appreciate the good. *Lashon Harah* boils down to a stinginess of perception. It is not so much a crime of speech; rather it is a crime of how a person perceives the world.

Rabbenu Yonah (1200-1263) cites the following parable in his Share Teshuvah on the *pasuk* “the foolish person points out the evil, but the straight person sees the positive” [Mishle 14:9]: Two people walked past a carcass. The carcass was putrid. One person said, “That stench is horrible”; the other person said, “Look how white its teeth are”. Rabbenu Yonah says that the first person is called foolish, and the second person is called straight. The fact that the first person saw the negative does not mean that he is bad, but he is foolish because a person who only focuses on the negative becomes a negative, destructive, and bitter person. A person who speaks *Lashon Harah* has the strongest negative impact on himself. Forget about righteousness, forget about right and wrong – such a character trait is simply foolish!

Life and Death in the Hands of the Tongue

(Rabbi Zev Leff)

Remember what Hashem, your G-d, did to Miriam on the way when you left Egypt (Devarim 24:9)

Almost all of Tazria and most of Metzora are concerned with the intricate laws of tzara'at. Tzara'at afflicted people as a consequence of having spoken lashon hara. This is hinted to in Ki Tetze, where the Torah warns us to be careful with respect to the laws of tzara'at and immediately thereafter to remember Miriam's punishment in the desert for speaking lashon hara about her brother Moshe. Miriam was immediately afflicted with tzara'at and forced to leave the encampment for seven days.

It seems paradoxical that the Torah chose to admonish us not to speak about the faults and shortcomings of others by reminding us of Miriam's sin.

During the entire time Miriam was afflicted, the nation did not travel. The whole nation waited for her as a consequence of the merit she accrued by waiting to see what would happen to her three-month old brother Moshe when she placed him into the Nile in a basket (Sotah 9b). Again we wonder: What benefit was it to Miriam to have the entire Jewish people delayed for her sake. Did that waiting not highlight the cause of her banishment? Would it not have been better for Miriam for the nation to proceed, unaware of her sin?

The answer is that Miriam did not sin. Her intentions in speaking about Moshe were completely well intentioned, without any malice. She meant no harm to her beloved brother; nor did she cause Moshe any harm, or even ill feeling. Despite this, she was stricken with tzara'at. Her disease was not a punishment but rather the inevitable, natural result of lashon hara. Because she had not sinned, Moshe did not pray for forgiveness for Miriam - only that she be healed.

The command to remember Miriam does not denigrate her, for she committed no intentional sin. But we do learn from that act of

rememberance the devastating effect of lashon hara, even when spoken unintentionally and without malice. Just as it makes no difference if one swallows poison intentionally or unintentionally, so, too, lashon hara devastates us, even when spoken without deliberate malice.

To highlight the intrinsic devastation wrought by lashon hara, it had to be crystal clear that Miriam did not sin and that her intentions were in fact pure. Miriam exhibited her love for Moshe when she waited anxiously to see what would happen to him. The waiting of the nation for her was a reminder of her earlier waiting and, at the same time, the proof that she had acted without malice towards Moshe. As Rambam in Hilchot Tumat Tzara'at (16:10) writes:

...Concerning this the Torah warns us to be careful with tzara'at and to remember what Hashem did to Miriam, as if to say: "Contemplate what happened to Miriam the Prophetess when she spoke against her brother' who was younger than her, whom she brought up on her lap and for whom she endangered herself when she saved him from the sea and whom she had no intention to harm. She erred only in comparing him to the other prophets and [Moshe] did not care about what she said because [he] was a very humble person and still was immediately punished with tzora's...

There were two distinct aspects of the Mikdash that atoned for lashon hara. The Gemara (Zevachim 88b) relates that both the ketoret (incense) and the me'il (the garment of the Kohen Gadol from which bells and pomegranate-like ornaments hung) atoned for lashon hara.

The Gemara explains that the me'il atoned for the lashon hara spoken publicly and the Ketoret for the lashon hara betzina (literally hidden lashon hara). The latter is difficult to understand, however, since we learn of the Ketoret' ability to atone for the lashon hara from its use to stop the plague that broke out when the people blamed Moshe and Aharon for the deaths of Korach and his entourage. That lashon hara was public.

Perhaps, then, the Gemara is referring to two aspects of the damage caused by lashon hara. According to this understanding, public lashon hara refers to the harm done to the person that it was spoken against. Hidden lashon hara refers to the spiritual damage to the speaker of the lashon hora himself, the destruction of his neshama.

What, then, is that spiritual destruction, which is physically manifested by tzara'at? It is the power of speech that distinguishes man from all other creatures. The faculty of speech enables man to fulfill his purpose in the universe. Through speech man attaches himself to his Creator by learning and teaching Torah; through speech man addresses his Creator in prayer; through speech man crystallizes his thoughts, which in turn leads to action, as it says (Devarim 30:14), "for this mitzvah is close to you in your mouth and heart to do it;" and finally, it is speech that enables man to communicate with others to unite in the communal service of the almighty.

When man uses his unique power of speech to unite the world in service of Hashem, he realizes his potential as the pinnacle of Creation. The Hebrew word for tongue, lashon, is related to lash, the process of mixing solids and liquids together. The tongue takes the spiritual inner essence of the soul and expresses it in the physical realm - thereby mixing spiritual and physical together.

Utilizing the tongue for lashon hara, to degrade, to defile, to cause strife and dissension, divests man of the very essence of his distinction as a human being by corrupting his most exalted faculty. The Yerushalmi says that there are three sins for which man is punished in this world and in the next - immorality, murder and idolatry - and lashon hara is equal to all three. These three sins represent the destruction of man's physical, emotional and spiritual self. Lashon hara equals them all. For the totality of the human being is destroyed by the corruption of his ultimate distinction, his speech. Thus, one afflicted with lashon hara defiles like a corpse. He is banished from society and mourns himself, for the essence of his being has been negated.

At the conclusion of shemoneh Esre we beseech Hashem, "My G-d, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceitfully." After we have used our mouths for communicating with our creator, we can fully appreciate the calamity inherent in corrupting that same wondrous instrument by using it for lashon hara.

The laws of childbirth precede the laws of tzara'at. Man has the ability to be a partner in creation, to create a new being, or he can take his own body and divest it of its Divine essence by speaking lashon hara. Both extremes are presented. The choice is ours. That is the literal intent of the words of Chazal that life and death are in the hands of the tongue.

Parashat Metzora

Selfishness and Narrow Vision

(Rabbi Zev Leff)

When you arrive in the land of Canaan that I give you as a possession, and I will place a tzara'at affliction upon a house in the land of your possession (Vayikra 14:34)

The last of the various forms of tzara'at is that affecting homes. That form of tzara'at was unknown until Bnei Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael. According to Chazal, the previous inhabitants hid their valuables in the walls of their homes to prevent them from falling into the hands of the conquering Jewish army. When the walls of these houses were subsequently struck with tzara'at, necessitating the removal of parts of its walls and, in some cases, the destruction of the entire house, these hidden treasures were discovered by the new House owners.

This is extremely puzzling. We are also told that tzara'at in the walls of homes was a punishment for selfishness. Why should those who displayed the extremely negative characteristic of selfishness have been rewarded with the discovery of hidden treasures?

The Torah tells us that before the Kohen comes to inspect the suspected discoloration to determine whether there is in fact tzara'at, all the contents of the house are to be removed (Vayikra 14:35). That way they do not become impure if the house is declared to have tzara'at. The Midrash, however, adds another reason for removing all the vessels: it is a corrective for the selfishness which causes tzara'at in the first place. Selfish people often pretend that they have less than they do to avoid lending others their possessions or giving tzedakah. Having to remove all his possessions in public causes him acute embarrassment and helps to atone for and correct his selfishness.

The Mishnah in Nega'im (12:5), however, gives a totally different explanation of the removal of the contents from the house: Divine concern for the property of a Jew. Only relatively inexpensive earthenware vessels can be easily purified by immersion in a mikveh. Nevertheless, Hashem is concerned with even this small loss, and allows the removal of all vessels before the house is declared impure.

One might have thought that if the intention was to cure selfishness, a lesson on the unimportance of material possessions would be more fitting, and not one which conveys the value of every penny.

The truth is, however, that selfishness - literally tzorat ayin, a narrow eye - is the result of not appreciating the true value of material possessions and viewing them from a very narrow perspective. We are taught that tzaddikim value their material possessions even more than their lives. Thus Yaakov put his life in danger to retrieve some inexpensive earthenware vessels.

Earthenware is unique in that it contracts tumah, spiritual impurity, only through exposure, of the source of impurity, to its inside surface, but not through contact with the outside walls of the vessel. Why are earthenware vessels singled out in this fashion? The value of any vessel can be measured in two ways: in terms of the intrinsic value of the material from which it is made or in terms of its functional value. The materials of

an earthenware vessel have little intrinsic value. Their utility alone gives earthenware vessels their value. In order for something to contract ritual impurity, it must have a value. Hence, an earthenware vessel becomes impure only through contact with its functional part - the inside - and not through contact with the materials of the outside wall.

A tzaddik views his material possessions as earthenware vessels - i.e., of no intrinsic value themselves, but rather deriving their importance only from their function. Material possessions, in his view, are tools in the service of Hashem. They may, for instance, allow him to do acts of chesed and benefit others. Both his body and his material possessions are means to serve Hashem. They differ only in that the body is acquired as a "birthday present". The acquisition of material possessions requires effort. Thus his material possessions are more precious to the tzaddik than his own body because their acquisition required more effort. The tzaddik's perspective on possessions contrasts with the narrow perspective of the one who sees only the personal benefit his possessions can bring him.

When the person whose house was afflicted with tzara'at was made aware of Hashem's concern for every Jew's material possessions, his selfish view (tzarat ayin) was challenged and the corrective process begun. The embarrassment of being exposed to the neighbors' scrutiny was another aspect of the same process. The removal of the vessels to the public domain hints to the fact that their purpose is not just to serve oneself.

The valuables hidden by the Emorim were tainted and contaminated by intense selfishness. The Emorim hid them to deprive the Jews from benefiting from them, even though they were doomed to lose them anyway. In the hand of people with a tendency towards selfishness, this wealth would have been terribly detrimental. Therefore, Hashem utilized the tzara'at as a vehicle to provide the wealth in a manner designed to correct the evil of selfishness. The victim of tzara'at was forced to recast his attitudes towards material

possessions prior to receiving this new bounty.

If one fails to learn the lesson of tzara'at afflicting the house, his selfishness will grow into haughtiness. Then his clothes, called by Chazal the instruments of honoring a person, will be afflicted as well. If he still does not heed the warning, he will descend yet further until he acts with total disregard for anyone but himself. That latter attitude is manifested as lashon hara and motzi shem ra, speech designed to denigrate others. As a punishment the perpetrator's very body will be scourged with tzara'at.

We can now understand what appear to be conflicting opinions regarding the deaths of the students of R' Akiva. The Gemara (Yevamot 62b) says that they did not treat each other with respect. The Midrash (Bereshit Rabbah 61:3) says that they exhibited tzarus ayin, selfishness, with regard to their Torah and did not share it with one another. Torah is one's most precious possession, but it must not become a means of personal aggrandizement. When one truly appreciates his fellow Jew and honors him, he desires to share with him his tools for service of Hashem. In this vein, sharing one's Torah is the supreme expression of honor for one's fellow man. Hence the two descriptions of the faults of the students of R' Akiva are in fact one.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

7 Things to Say to Prevent Stress in Our Kids

How to help set up our homes so that our kids can be worry-free. (By Adina Soclof, MS. CCC-SLP)

There are many things we can do to help children to be less worried and tense. Stress is often the result of feeling that no matter what

you do, you don't have control over your life. Any challenge feels like it's too much. Stress can also come from feeling as if the world is a scary, lonely place. It can come about by being cowed by failure and a fear of making mistakes.

To prevent stress in our children we need to find ways to help children feel that they can effect change in their own lives, that life is good, failures are just steppingstones to success and finally that they can manage the challenges that come their way.

Here are 7 things to say to our children that can help us do just that:

1. "Think ahead, and I'm sure you can handle it."

We often say to our children, "Be careful!" Our constant warnings paint the world as a scary place. It also sends the message that they don't know how to conduct themselves out in the world safely.

It is better if we can use more positive language, like "Use your head and have fun!" This helps children embrace life, new experiences and lets children know that we believe in their ability to manage themselves in the outside world. Children whose parents give off the vibe that children are trustworthy and will conduct themselves appropriately are more likely to have children that are trustworthy and conduct themselves appropriately.

2. "Can you tell me one good thing that happened to you today?"

Parents often grumble about their children's constant complaints and all-around moodiness. There is something called the "negativity bias." People are more attuned to the negative in their lives than the positive. It has been suggested that this harkens back to pre-historic times, where extra vigilance needed to be taken to protect oneself from predators. Whatever the reason, sometimes positivity needs to be taught explicitly to children.

Asking your kids to describe something positive that happened to them at dinner or at bedtime can go a long way in reinforcing

optimism in our children. A positive attitude can go a long way in preventing worries in our kids.

3. “When you are ready and get comfortable, you can try the new bike, getting into the water, saying hello to your teacher...”

We sometimes push children to do things before they are ready and comfortable, adding more stress. Letting children know that we will support them as they try new things or meet new people will allow them to embrace new activities, or even ideas more readily. Acknowledge your child’s timetable; believe that they will eventually be ready for novel experiences.

4. “Reading new words can be hard.” or “Tying shoelaces takes a lot of fancy finger work.”

When children are learning new skills, (and they should be learning new skills often; that’s what childhood is all about!) can be frustrating, or disheartening. We want to acknowledge that and validate their feelings. We want to avoid using phrases that disregard children’s fears and hesitancy: “There is nothing to be afraid of. The book won’t bite.” “Tying shoes is easy, I’ll show you how.”

Instead, validate their feelings and give them the space to feel and express their concerns and fears.

5. “Mistakes are a great way to learn new ways to do things.”

Stress in children often comes from a fear of making mistakes or failure. Reassuring children that they will not get in trouble for making mistakes and that it’s an important part of life can go a long way in reducing a child’s anxiety.

This is sometimes hard for adults to do, but we need to let children make mistakes and learn from them. We need to watch them struggle, solve their own problems and let them do as much as they can for themselves. This helps children embrace life without fear and builds within them a mindset, that they can handle anything life throws at them.

6. “When you were a baby, you couldn’t walk. Look at you now! You run so fast, I can hardly keep up with you.”

Reminding children of their past accomplishments breeds confidence. We want children to take note of their accomplishments so that they can see how far they have come without focusing on the mistakes they may have made on the journey.

7. “This question is a hard one to answer, and I don’t even know if there is a right answer out there. What do you think?”

Children who are anxious are often fearful of taking risks; they feel as if everything needs to be perfect. This may be true especially in the classroom when they are asked questions or asked to share their opinions. We can build a child’s risk comfort level so they will learn to have a healthier view of failure.

Like in the above phrase, we can encourage risk taking by prefacing any of our questions or even discussion with invitations to be wrong. This helps children feel more confident about voicing their opinions and risk being wrong without embarrassment. Teaching children to have the courage to volunteer an answer that may not be correct can be helpful to those who suffer from school anxiety.

Marital Survival Guide: **From E to H**

From empathy to hope, more practical advice on improving your marriage.

(By Dr. Alan Singer)

Following my first article, I received several requests for a continuation of the alphabet. Below are the E, F, G, and H of the 50-day Marital Survival Guide. Your comments are greatly appreciated.

E

Empathy:

It is normal to want to help your spouse soothe when they are upset. Telling them to “calm down” doesn’t work. It is simply another way of conveying that you feel they are

overreacting. Dr. John Mordechai Gottman suggests that the goal is not to try to fix your spouse's feelings but to communicate that you understand and accept them. This is empathy.

Ears:

There is a well-known question: Why did God give us two ears and one mouth? The answer: so that we can listen twice as much as we speak. Here is sound advice for productive conversations: be interested, not interesting.

Easy:

Men, do you want to make regular deposits in the Care Bank? Ask your wife each morning what you can do to make her day easier.

Enforce a no-phone zone at family meals. Researchers found evidence that mobile phones have negative effects on closeness, connection, and conversation quality. (See G section below _ Google) Przybylski and Weinstein, May 6, 2013.

Engage the services of a qualified pro-marriage therapist earlier than the norm of two years that most couples wait before seeking professional help. Why pro-marriage? Because some therapists will proudly proclaim, "I'm not about saving marriages, I'm about helping people." My slogan is the opposite: "I'll be the last person in the room to give up on your marriage."

F

Failed Bids:

What do couples argue about most often? Nothing. It turns out that most arguments are not about topics; they are about failed bids to connect. That's fancy wording for "nothing" says Gottman, as illustrated in this example using the television remote control. The husband is changing channels on the remote as they're watching television together on the couch. The wife says, "Leave it on that channel." The husband responds, "I will but let me just see what else is on." She counters, "No, leave it on that channel." He says, "Fine!" Finally she declares, "Well the way that you said 'fine' hurt my feelings." He effectively ends the discussion by retorting, "I don't even want to watch television with you now." What

was this couple arguing about? Nothing, or like stated above, failed bids to connect.

Family:

The greatest danger of having a child-centered family is that when the children leave home, often the marriage does too. Empty nesters know this well.

Second is the danger that even if the couple stays together after the children leave home, they may feel diminished as a couple. One couple that I counsel told their adult children "We were a great mom-dad team but a lousy husband-wife team."

The third danger is benign but still regrettable. Some couples work on fixing their marriage after the children leave home and make significant progress. This is positive but sad for two reasons: many years of unmet marital potential, and even more important is the lack of good marital role models for their children (Dr. Bill Doherty).

Father:

The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother (Theodore Newburgh).

Feeling:

You are not going to feel "in love" all the time. If you want to recapture that magic from when you were in love, be loving (Dr. Frank Pittman obm).

Forgive:

You hear the phrase "forgive and forget" so often that the two become equated with one another, when in fact, they have nothing to do with each other. Just because you have forgiven someone and given up the desire to take revenge does not mean that you have forgotten the event ever happened (Michelle W. Davis).

The weak can never forgive; forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.

Friendship:

This is a combination of affection, loyalty, love, respect, and trust (Oxford Dictionary). Friendship is an infinitely more stabilizing basis for marriage than romance. Get good at

friendship before you even think about falling in love (Pittman).

G

Gaze:

Men and women tend to experience intimacy differently (Dr. Helen Fisher). Women experience intimacy from face-to-face contact; they use the "anchoring gaze". This comes from thousands of years of mothers holding their babies in front of their face. Women tend to draw closer, face each other, lock eyes, and proceed to reveal their hopes, worries, and details of their lives. Men are not going to look deeply into another's eyes because this is foreign to them. Men experience intimacy by working or gaming side-by-side. This male approach to intimacy probably also dates back thousands of years. Fisher suggests that in order to build intimacy with a man, a woman should do things with him that are side-by-side so that he isn't threatened by her gaze.

Grand Gestures:

Gestures like diamond rings and weekends in the Caribbean are not as effective as smaller daily gestures.

Gradual is the key to successful change. Drastic change like huge swings of a pendulum tend not to be enduring.

Grammar:

Surprisingly, correcting your spouse's grammar in the middle of a disagreement can be considered contempt which is the most harmful form of communication. Who'd have thunk it?

Grudge Bearing:

Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski heard this at an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting and it helped him to rid himself of resentment. "Harboring resentment is like allowing someone you don't like to live inside your head without paying rent....and I'm not that nice a guy."

H

Happiness:

The happiest people don't have the best of everything, they make the best of everything (Old Adage).

Marriage is not supposed to make you happy; it is supposed to make you married. And once you are safely and totally married, then you have a structure of security and support from which you are free to make yourself happy rather than wasting your adulthood looking for structure (Pittman).

Holler:

I never met someone who wants their spouse to raise his or her voice. It is contemptuous because the spouse feels and acts superior. It is putting oneself on a higher plane looking down from a position of authority, with an attitude of *I am better/ smarter/ neater/ more punctual than you*. Gottman asserts that contempt is the single best predictor of relationship dissolution. It is for this reason that I give every spouse who I counsel permission to yell only these three words (when applicable) "Fire! Get out!"

Hope:

Think hopeful. Speak hopeful. Act hopeful.

When hope is lost, all is lost. Be hopeful that all your efforts at nurturing your marriage will bring you true and lasting *Shalom Bayis*.

DAILY HALACHA

Halachot of Sefirat Haomer

(Daily Halacha)

Reciting "Lamenase'ah Bingenot" After Birkat Kohanim During the Omer Period

Many books record a custom to recite "Lamenase'ah Bingenot Mizmor Shir," the 67th chapter of Tehillim, during Birkat Kohanim throughout the period of Sefirat Ha'omer. The custom is to recite this Psalm according to the structure of a Menorah (as depicted in many Siddurim). It is recorded that observing this custom protects a person from harm throughout the year and brings him success in all his endeavors.

This custom has given rise to a discussion among the Poskim (Halachic authorities) regarding the propriety of reciting Biblical verses

DAF YOMI

Daf Yomi Masechet Shekalim

(Daf Notes)

during Birkat Kohanim. The Shulhan Aruch indicates that one should remain perfectly silent during Birkat Kohanim, except for the quiet response of “Baruch Hu U’baruch Shemo” and the audible response of “Amen.” Seemingly, then, it would be improper to recite a chapter of Tehillim during the recitation of Birkat Kohanim. Nevertheless, several Aharonim (recent authorities), including the Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909), record the practice to recite this chapter during Birkat Kohanim.

However, Rav Daniel Frisch ZT"l, in his work *Ushartem Lachem* (listen to audio recording for precise citation), notes that this practice deviates from the authentic custom as recorded in the earlier sources. The custom originates from the writings of the Roke’ah (Rabbi Elazar of Worms, Germany, late 12th-early 13th century) and other sources, which mention reciting this chapter of Tehillim after the recitation of Birkat Kohanim, and not during Birkat Kohanim. Indeed, this is the version recorded in the writings of several Aharonim, including the Shalmeh Sibur, *Mo’ed Le’kol Hai* (by Rav Haim Palachi), *Shebet Musar* and others. However, as Rav Frisch points out, some Aharonim did not have access to the Roke’ah and other primary sources, and recorded the custom based on what they saw in secondary sources. Their account of the custom was thus imprecise, as it mentioned reciting “Lamenase’ah” during Birkat Kohanim, rather than afterward. But now that we have access to the original sources, Rav Frisch writes, we should follow the authentic practice of reciting this chapter of Tehillim during the Sefirat Ha’omer period after Birkat Kohanim, as the Hazan recites “Sim Shalom,” and not during Birkat Kohanim.

Summary: There is a custom to recite “Lamenase’ah Binginot Mizmor Shir” (Tehillim 67) after Birkat Kohanim throughout the period of Sefirat Ha’omer, and this practice helps protect a person from harm and guarantee his success. Some sources record a custom to recite this chapter of Tehillim during Birkat Kohanim, but the correct practice is to recite it after Birkat Kohanim.

Power of Speech

Why did a man consecrate his flock without specifying it was for the Altar? We can assume it was for Temple up-keep.

We see that we are able to “create” sanctity of an animal merely by calling it *Kodesh* through our power of speech.

Daf Digest cites a Brit Avraham, who says: This same power of speech can be used for consecrating ourselves to holy activities.

They continue in the name of the Chazon Ish: Life and death are in the hands of the tongue. This refers to not only *lashon hara* or the ‘stab in the back’ negative expressions that can harm, but even good, supportive and congratulatory words can save a life and help a person get on the right track.

The 613 Mitzvot and the Ten Commandments

The Gaonim write that the entire Torah is included in the Ten Commandments, each Commandment being a general principle, a “root” as it were, from which all the details of the Mitzvot branch out.

One proof for this is drawn from our sugya, where Chananya the nephew of R’Yehoshua said: “Between the Ten Commandments were written the details and the letters of the Torah... Just as the ocean has large waves with smaller waves between them.” (This was true only of the first set of *Luchot* – Bet HaLevi, *Drashot* 18). We see from here that the Ten Commandments are the general principles, upon which the entire Torah is based (*Taklin Chadatin*). In *Yerushalmi Taanit* (4:5), the Gemara states this even more explicitly (see *Korban Ha’Eida* on *Taanit* *ibid*; Rashi, *Shemot* 24:12).

How is the entire Torah included in the Ten Commandments? R’ Saadia Gaon authored a poetic work listing the mitzvot entitled “*Azharot*,” to be recited on *Shavuot*. In this work, he explains how the Ten Commandments include the entire Torah. In one of the stanzas he writes,

"In His wisdom He included in the Ten Commandments, the 613 to be instructed."

In Kad HaKemach, Rabbenu Bachaye writes that the 248 positive Mitzvot are included in the three positive Commandments, whereas the 365 prohibitive Mitzvot are included in the seven prohibitive Commandments. Here, we list a few examples. The Commandment, "I am Hashem your G-d who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery," is a positive commandment to believe in Hashem, Who rescued us from Egypt (Ramban, Shemot 20:2). The word "Egypt" hints to all the Mitzvot that are performed as a remembrance of the Exodus: sanctifying the firstborn children and animals, observing the festivals, etc. The Commandment, "Do not make an idol for yourself," is a prohibition against idolatry. It also includes all the prohibitions associated with idolatry, including the prohibitions against resembling idolaters. In Hilchot Avoda Zara, the Rambam lists 49 different prohibitions, which are all intended to distance us from idolatry. In this way, Rabbenu Bachaye goes through each word of the Ten Commandments, detailing how all the Mitzvot are derived from them.

It is interesting to note that in years gone by, there existed a shortened listing of the Mitzvot. The Rishonim cite from R' Saadia Gaon that when Bnei Yisrael first crossed the Yarden, they set up stone upon which they wrote this shortened listing. In regard to this, the possuk states, "You shall write upon them all these words of the Torah" (Devarim 27:4). The pasuk in Yehoshua (8:32) also refers to this when it states, "They wrote upon the stones a repetition of Moshe's Torah" (See Ibn Ezra, Devarim ibid; Radak on Yehoshua; Meiri, Sotah 33b).

613 words: The Midrash says that from the first word of the Ten Commandments, "I am Hashem," until the last Commandment, "Do not covet your friend's wife, his slave, his maidservant, his ox or his donkey..." there are exactly 613 letters (Bamidbar Rabba 13:16, et. al). However, the last two words of the last Commandment, "asher l're'echa - or all that belongs to your friend," are not included in this counting. The Midrash explains that the seven letters of these last two words correspond to the seven days of creation. This teaches us that the entire world was created for the sake of the Torah. Others explain that the seven extra

letters represent the seven Rabbinic Mitzvot: Chanuka, Purim, Eruvin, Shabbat candles, washing hands, Hallel and berachot (Torat Ha'Ola by the Rema, Ill ch. 38). Together, the Torah Mitzvot and Rabbinic Mitzvot equal 620, the gematria of keter – crown; signifying that the Jewish people were crowned with the wisdom of the Torah (see Torah Shlema, 16, appendix 1).

KIDZ CORNER

INTERESTING MIDRASH

(from Torah Tots)

Bye Bye Baby

The *Parsha* starts off with a tribute to childbirth. But way before a baby is ready to be born, *Hashem* has a whole system set up in *Shamayim* (heaven).

It all begins with a call to *Layla's* office. *Layla* is the *Malach* (angel) in charge of the *neshama* (soul) factory. From his office high above *Gan Eden*, this *Malach* can see all the precious *neshamot* basking in the warmth of *Hashem's* greatness.

Suddenly the phone rings. It's the boss, - *Hashem*. "We've got a baby girl due to arrive in Brooklyn in about nine months. Send me a *neshama* model 32471 and make it snappy!" Well, as you can imagine, there's no *neshama* too eager to leave the comfort of the garden for the perils of life. It's a struggle, but *Layla* finally tears the little one away from its favorite basking spot.

Kicking and screaming, *neshama* model 32471 appears before *Hashem*. "There I was, a pure untainted link to your Holiness," the *neshama* argues. "Why blow all that purity on a human life?" Well, someone's gonna have to have a talk with the *olam hazeh* PR department. *Hashem* explains to the *neshama* that it's got life all wrong.

With the aid of charts, graphs and slides, *Hashem* explains to 32471 that life is what you make of it. "If you think *Gan Eden* is bright, just see what a couple of *mitzvot* under your belt

will do for your tan - you'll be wearing sun glasses it'll be so sunny! You see, a *neshama* alone is nothing compared to a body & soul team. Together, they can rack up enough *mitzvot* to buy a mansion on the exclusive end of *Gan Eden*."

Well, that convinces the *neshama* to make a merger with an unborn baby. Now it's time to do a little pre-programming. *Hashem* decides the unborn child's fate; boy or girl, healthy or sickly, genius, dope or in-between, rich or poor and even who it will marry.

Practically a person's whole life is pre-programmed. But there is one important detail that *Hashem* leaves you to figure out for yourself. Only you can decide whether you will become a *tzadik* or a *rasha*. It is the job of every person to become as great a *tzadik* as possible. Of course, some people fail miserably. On the other hand, some people endure many struggles to be G-d fearing. They are willing to even sacrifice their lives for *Hashem*.

Before model 32471 is born, a *Malach* will teach it the entire *Torah* (*Rashi* too!). The *Malach* shows the baby travel brochures of both *Gan Eden* and *Gehinom*. The *Malach's* parting words urge 32471 to become a *tzadik*, not a *rasha*. With that, the *Malach* slaps the baby on the lips. Instantly, 32471 forgets all the *Torah* (*Rashi* too!) that it has been taught.

Chazal teach us that the birth of a child is a greater *Nes* (miracle) than the parting of the *Yam Suf* (Red Sea). But the greatest miracle of all is that in a world that is filled with miracles, *Hashem* took the time to program each and every one of us with our own special purpose and plan.

Here a Spot, There A Spot, Everywhere a Spot-Spot

Okay, we all know by now that *Tzara'at*, trivially translated as "leprosy" isn't quite so. Actually, this spiritual disease takes on an interesting spirit of it's own. For one thing, it leaves your social life hanging by a hair. And where else but in the *Torah* would a *Kohain* be better qualified than a doctor to treat a patient. But here's the strange thing: not only does he

make house calls but sometimes he calls on houses!

Houses? Why would *Hashem* strike an inanimate object like a house?

Hashem doesn't immediately send *Nega'im* (*Tzara'at* spots) to a person's body. If he deserves a punishment, *Hashem* will strike his house first, If the person does *Teshuva*, good. If not, his clothing gets it next. If he still doesn't get the hint, the leper has truly earned his spots - the *Nega'im* (*Tzara'at* spots) finally make an appearance on his body.

But if the order is house, clothing, then body, why does the *Torah* first discuss the *Nega'im* on the body, then the spots in clothing, and then the spots in the house?

The *Torah* teaches us a good lesson. When a father is punishing his child, he says, "I should really slap you in the face because you were a bad kid, but because I love you, I am going to hit you on your clothing." Then he reconsiders and says, "I wanted to hit you on your clothing, but I love you so much that I'm going to give you another chance, and I'm only going to strike the wall." If you get the message, you won't misbehave again.

Hashem did the same thing in the *Torah*. First *He* told us the laws of the *Nega'im* on the body, saying, "You really deserve to be stricken on the skin, but I'm willing to give you another chance, and I'll just send *Nega'im* on your garments." Then *Hashem* goes even further and says, "I will send the *Nega'im* on your house, then maybe you'll get the message."

Let's return to the reasons for the house infections.

The most popular reason for *Nega'im* is *Lashon Horah*. Another reason for *Nega'im* is stinginess. Let's say your neighbor comes to borrow a spaghetti strainer. But you lie and tell him that you don't have one. You think to yourself, "Why should I give this guy MY spaghetti strainer. Let him go down the block and buy one for himself." Well, that's a no-no. The fact is everything comes from *Hashem*, and *Hashem* gave you property to do *Mitzvot*

with. You should share that spaghetti strainer with a friend in need.

Well, *Hashem* doesn't go for that kind of stingy attitude. *He* sends a plague on his house. The *Kohain* will be by forthwith for a "house call," but first the owner must remove everything from the house as fast as he can. Of course, he'll be asking all his neighbors for a helping hand.

Among his possessions, guess what shows up? The spaghetti strainer! His neighbor sees it. "Aha, here's the spaghetti strainer I asked you to lend me awhile ago, and you said you didn't have one."

A third reason for *Nega'im* is to rid *Eretz Yisrael* of houses built by the Amorites for idol worship. They would build their homes and dedicate the cornerstone to their pagan G-d and to a demon spirit. *Hashem* did not want the *Shechina* to rest in an unclean land. These homes had to go. So *Hashem* placed *Nega'im* in the walls of these homes. This shows that these homes were unclean and had to be torn down and rebuilt as a home dedicated to *Hashem*. That is why new wood and stones, and even new dirt, had to be used to rebuild the home.

The forth reason for *Nega'im* was a happy reason. While *Bne Yisrael* was roaming the desert for 40 years, the Canaanites knew that the *Bne Yisrael* were headed to take over the land and rule over them. So what did they do? Hide their cash, of course! Many of the Canaanim built secret rooms in their homes and hollowed out their walls and hid their treasured possessions.

Now, eventually the *Bne Yisrael* stopped marching in circles, entered *Eretz Yisrael* and crushed the Canaanim. As they took over the land, they inherited many beautiful homes that belonged to their enemies. Well, that was just fine! The Jews just hung a *mezuzah* on the door and called it home sweet home.

But *Hashem* promised their forefathers, that *He* would give the *Bne Yisrael*, "Houses filled with all good" (*Devarim* 6, 11) and not houses that are empty and cleaned out. That's why *Hashem* provided a means by which *Bne Yisrael* would find all the hidden treasures.

One day, Shmelkie the *Tzadik*, spots 'spots' on his house. He tries scrubbing the bricks, but it becomes all too obvious that his house has a case of *Tzara'at*! Shmelkie calls the local *kohain*. One brick is removed. Then two...then five. It's no use! Kuppie the *Kohain* calls in the *Bait Hamikdosh* bulldozers! All Shmelkie can think about is how will he rebuild the house he couldn't afford in the first place, and he didn't pay the *Nega'im* insurance premium because it was too expensive. (Of course, in his heart, Shmelkie knows that *Hashem* will help him).

Suddenly, as the walls come tumbling down, a secret brick panel is revealed! There, before everyone's eyes, is a chest of treasure - gold and silver, trinkets and jewels! Enough for this poor *tzadik* to rebuild his home and support his family for a lifetime. Now he can learn *Torah* full time!

See what I'm saying about this *Tzara'at*? It could also be a disease with a heart of gold!

Kid'z Korner (Revach)

The Sick Forester (Adapted from *Mishlei Yaakov*, pp. 225-226)

Jack was a simple forester, living alone in a primitive hut in a large forest.

One day Jack woke up with a raging fever. He was in a desperate situation. He was too weak and dizzy to move out of his bed, and there was no one in the area who could hear his cries for help.

Fortunately, a hunter happened to pass near the hut and heard Jack's cries. The hunter entered the hut and realized that Jack was in a bad way.

"I am not a doctor and cannot treat you", the hunter told him. "But I can take you to the nearest village. There people will see you and do the best they can to treat you."

Bringing out the Evil

Tzara'at (leprosy) is a wake-up call. It is meant to uncover spiritual illness within a person. The word "*metzora*" (leper) comes from the words "*motzi ra*" -- this disease

"brings out the evil." When an unusual discoloration appears on a one's skin, the person is made aware of his illness and will seek out a *kohen* to be treated. The process of purification is a lesson in *teshuvah* and spiritual repair.

Tzara'at works like the hunter in the parable, who brought the sick man out of the forest (where he was hidden) to the town, where others will notice him and treat him. Were it not for *tzara'at*, people would not be aware of their moral and spiritual failings.

The Midrash notes that it is the *kohen* who sees the *metzora* and diagnoses his condition. But in the future, G-d Himself will purify us, as it says, "I will sprinkle clean water over you and you will be purified" (Ezekiel 36:25). G-d will purify us, giving us a new heart and a new spirit, and elevate us to a totally new spiritual level.

Salty Tea With A Straight Face

R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin, z"tl, said a shiur to his students, and his shamash always brought him a cup of tea during the shiur since he was very weak. R' Diskin suffered from hypoglycemia, and the shamash always put a few heaping spoonfuls of sugar in the tea, in order to maintain R' Diskin's blood sugar.

One day, the students saw that Rebbetzin Diskin was extremely agitated, and they asked her what was wrong. She told them that she found a container of salt next to the hot water kettle instead of the sugar, and she realized that the shamash had put salt instead of sugar into R' Diskin's tea. She was nervous about the affect on the Rav's health, since he needed sugar at that time, and instead had received salt.

The students told her that they hadn't detected any change in the Rav's face when he drank the tea, and obviously the tea had really been sweetened with sugar. Later, however, they found out that the salt had really been added to the tea, as the Rebbetzin had suspected. All the students were amazed that there was no discernible sign of distress on the Rav's face as he drank the tea. Later, the students asked R' Diskin why he drank the tea since it was possible that it might have seriously endangered his health.

R' Diskin answered them by saying, "Isn't it a clear Gemara?" 'It is better for a man to throw himself into a burning furnace rather than embarrass his friend in public.' It's clear from here that it was forbidden for me to embarrass the shamash in public just because he made a mistake and used salt instead of sugar." (Shaal Avicha Vegadcha)

What Makes Rav Eliyahu Lopian's Blood Pressure Rise?

Rav Eliyahu Lopian, z'tl, once underwent a serious operation on his eye, and complications arose in the midst of the operation. Rav Lopian's blood pressure rose to dangerous levels and one eye burst. His life remained in danger for several weeks, and tefillohs were recited for him in all the yeshivohs in Eretz Yisrael. Eventually, with the help of Hashem, he recovered.

The eye surgeon who carried out the delicate operation said that he was surprised by the complications. The operation was going smoothly, when suddenly Rav Lopian's blood pressure rose dramatically without any apparent cause. The doctors were unable to discover what had prompted the problem.

Several years later, Rav Lopian underwent another operation, and this time no complications arose. A talmid visited him in the hospital after the operation, and Rav Lopian said to him, "I'm sure you remember when I had an operation on my eye, and my life was in danger. The reason this happened was because prior to the operation, I did a cheshbon hanefesh since it was a time of Heavenly judgment. I thought about all my past actions, and I can vividly remember every one of my actions from the time I was twelve years old until today. (Rav Lopian was over eighty at the time). My fear of judgment caused my blood pressure to rise. This time I decided not to think at all, and Baruch Hashem, the operation went well." (Recollections of Reb Eliyahu Lopian by his students - translated by Rabbi B.D Klein)

Once Bitten Twice Wise

Towards the end of the Six Day War, a talmid chacham met an acquaintance on the street in Yerushalayim. The talmid chacham had just flown in from overseas, and he asked the man, "How's the situation here?"

The man answered, "Everything is going to be fine."

The talmid chacham answered, "What do you mean everything will be fine!? I heard there are Russian jet planes which can shoot hundreds of bullets in one second!"

He answered, "Why only Russian jet planes? What about the British tanks? But when miracles occur, what's the difference if there are Russian planes or British tanks?"

The talmid chacham felt ashamed from the retort of this simple man, who was so full of emunah. As he continued on his way, he met R' Meir Chodosh, the Mashgiach of Chevron Yeshiva. He told him about his encounter, and how this simple man had put him to shame with his strong emunah.

Rabbi Meir responded with a lengthy answer, which included miraculous stories that occurred to him in his lifetime. He said, "We think that the wondrous miracles we witnessed now during the war will be forgotten, but it's not true. The miracles, and the impressions they made on us will remain with us. Something of the nekudas emunah will remain in our hearts, and even in the hearts of those who are not religious."

"Listen to what happened to me tens of years ago in the days of the Russian Revolution. After Czar Nikolai was ousted from power, there was a period of total lawlessness, as one faction after another took control. The streets were filled with stealing, looting, violence, and murder. One of the factions that arose was headed by a man named Petlora; his followers were particularly ruthless, and especially preyed on Jews. Any Jew that ventured into the street was endangering his life, as these ruthless gangsters would murder anyone in cold blood without a second thought. Sadly, many Jews fell into their hands."

"One day, I had to take care of a pressing matter, and I had no choice but to leave the yeshivah. Shortly after I left, one of these murderers grabbed me, and I understood immediately that there was nothing left for me to do but say vidui. He held on to me and roughly dragged me to the police station. I managed to say vidui five times on the way. As soon as we entered the police station, he stood me next to the wall, and prepared to shoot me. He moved two meters backwards so he could aim his gun, but apparently I still was not standing in his line of vision. However, he did not want to move

again, and instead screamed at me that I should move and align myself opposite his gun. His screams were blood curdling, and I was truly wanted to listen to him since I had nothing to lose at this point anyway. I knew that these were my last moments on earth, and it made no difference to me if I had to move a few centimeters before my death. The only problem was that my limbs refused to obey me. I was paralyzed from fear, and despite my willingness, I could not manage to move even one centimeter. Meanwhile, the murderer continued to screech and curse at me. 'No way will I move! You move!'"

"During all this screaming, a small window suddenly opened from the next room, and an officer who sat there asked, 'Why are you screaming so much?' The murderer answered him, 'I brought here a Jew to shoot.' The officer shouted at him and said, 'Leave him alone, let him go!' Immediately, the gangster lowered the gun and said, 'Go!'"

"I went outside and I said to myself, 'Ribbono shel Olam, my life was given to me now as a present, like techiyas hameism; I'm like a new creation.' I immediately decided to accept something on myself, and I accepted on myself many resolutions. On my walk back to yeshivah, I already lost half the resolutions, and by time I reached yeshiva, only one of my resolutions remained. Two days later, I forgot even that resolution. As more time passed, I forgot everything, and returned to my normal routine."

"Seventeen years passed, and I was already in Eretz Yisrael. I was in Chevron Yeshivah in 1929, when the infamous pogrom took place. I was barricaded in a room with sixty other men, women and children. The murderers burst in the room, and were slashing heads, arms, and legs. The screams and moans of the murdered and the murderers together shook heaven and earth. I and my friend, R' Binyamin, shaking with fright, fell on the floor, and the korbanos, some of them still wavering between life and death, fell on top of us. Eventually, a huge pile of bodies lay on top of us."

"R' Binyamin whispered in my ear, 'Meir, we need to beg the murderers that they should at least grant us an easy death without torturing us; they shouldn't cut off our arms and legs, they should suffice with thrusting their knives directly in our hearts!' I whispered back to him, 'Why are

you speaking nonsense? Lie down and be quiet! Hope to Hashem! He heard me and lay silently, and we lay there until the murderers completed the slaughter and left the area."

"We stood up, looked at each other, burst into bitter crying, and hugged and kissed each other in our great emotion of having miraculously survived the slaughter. In the midst of our great horror and sadness intermingled with simcha and gratitude to Hashem on our survival, R' Binyamin turned to me and expressed his wonder, 'Meir, when I said that we should beg the murderers to grant us a swift death, I had ample reason to do so. Where did you glean such courage and bitachon to tell me to stop speaking nonsense, lie down and be quiet, and hope to Hashem?! How did you have the koach to say this? Are you truly on such a high madrega?'"

R' Chodosh continued his story, and told the talmid chacham that he answered him with same explanation he was elaborating on now. "I'm not on a high madrega, but I saw with my own eyes, and it was etched in my memory seventeen years ago, 'Even if a sharp sword is resting on a person's neck, he shouldn't refrain from begging for mercy.' Do you know where I learned this? I learned this from that incident with the Russian gangster! At the moment that I stood against the wall in front of that murderer, and he screeched at me that I should align myself with the gun, wasn't this a sharp sword against my neck? Hashem had rachamim on me, and that day, I truly absorbed the meaning of this passuk." (Shaal Avicha Vyigadcha)

PAR LA FRANCOPHONE

(Rav Itshak Nabet)

La Brit Mila

Dans la paracha de la semaine, Tazria, la paracha enseigne les lois de l'impureté causée par l'accouchement puis les lois du lépreux. Et, comme vous le savez, outre cette paracha, nous lirons dans le Maftir la paracha Ahodech Azé Lakhem. Notre section hebdomadaire s'ouvre sur les versets suivants : « *Dis aux enfants d'Israël de dire à*

leurs femmes : une femme, lorsqu'elle enfante un garçon, devient impure pendant sept jours. Le huitième jour, on coupera le prépuce du corps de l'enfant. Pendant trente trois jours, le sang de la femme ne sera pas impur, mais elle ne pourra pas aller au Temple ni manger des aliments consacrés...»

Le rav Yossef Ben Porat chlita pose la question suivante : pourquoi la Torah mentionne-t-elle la Mitsva de la Brit Mila ici ? Notre paracha enseigne les différentes lois d'impureté, alors pourquoi répéter ici cette Mitsva ?

Pour répondre à cette question, nous allons essayer de comprendre une Michna dans les Maximes des pères, chapitre 5, première Michna : « Hachem créa le monde avec dix paroles (dans la paracha Béréchit, il est écrit plusieurs fois « Hachem dit que la lumière soit et la lumière fut...») pourquoi ne le créa-t-Il pas avec une seule parole? Pour punir les impies qui détruisent le monde et pour récompenser les tsadikim qui le maintiennent, Hachem créa le monde en dix paroles. »

Le Maharal de Prague zal s'étonne face à cette Michna. Hachem symbolise la Miséricorde par excellence: est-il donc possible qu'Il ne fabrique ce monde avec dix paroles que pour punir les impies? Alors il explique que la question de la Michna n'est pas : " pourquoi Hachem ne créa-t-Il pas le monde en une parole?" mais plutôt : " puisque la Torah n'a pour but que de nous apprendre à vivre et à faire Sa volonté, que devons- nous apprendre des dix paroles qu'Hachem prononça pour créer le monde ?"

Alors le Maharal explique que la parole représente ce qui lie deux individus. Ainsi, chaque parole d'Hachem fabrique un lien entre Lui et la matière, qui ancre une sainteté dans ce monde. S'Il avait tout fait en une seule parole, la sainteté de notre monde aurait été beaucoup plus faible. La Torah nous enseigne donc, dans la paracha Béréchit, que Dieu élaborait la Création avec dix paroles pour nous apprendre que même si ce monde semble être matériel, il contient en réalité une très grande sainteté. Chaque minéral, végétal, animal... possède des particules divines. Et c'est pour cela que nous avons une très grande

responsabilité. Celui qui utilise ce monde pour accomplir la Volonté divine dévoile le potentiel spirituel qui se cache dans cette nature, élève le matériel en spirituel et parachève la création du monde. En revanche, celui qui se sert de la Création pour fauter abîme la sainteté qui se trouve dans cette nature et mérite donc une plus grande sanction.

Nous retrouvons cette idée dans la paracha Béréchit. Après avoir créé chaque élément, Hachem témoigna que cette création fut « bonne ». Mais après avoir fabriqué l'homme, Il dit que cette création fut « très bonne ». Car seul l'humain peut élever la matière et compléter la création. Ainsi, le but de l'homme sur Terre est de se parfaire et de parfaire la création. Lorsqu'une personne mange pour accomplir le service divin, elle élève l'acte de manger et lui permet d'accomplir le but de la Création, idem lorsqu'elle utilise les végétaux pour se faire des vêtements, ou des minéraux pour se fabriquer des maisons...En cela, seul l'homme peut élever ou détruire la création.

La Mitsva qui représente cette mission de l'homme de se parfaire est la Mitsva de Brit Mila. En effet, même si Hachem aurait pu fabriquer l'homme déjà circoncis, sans prépuce, Hachem désira nous prendre, comme associés de la création, pour nous récompenser. Il créa ainsi l'être humain avec cette imperfection pour nous apprendre que notre but est de nous parfaire. Ainsi, notre paracha répète la Mitsva de la Brit Mila tout de suite après l'accouche-ment. Pour nous enseigner qu'un homme ne vient sur Terre que pour s'améliorer. En outre, de même que nous venons sur Terre avec ce défaut physique, nous possédons tous un grand nombre de défauts psychiques. Certains sont égoïstes, orgueilleux, fainéants, indifférents, coléreux, jaloux... Grâce à l'accomplissement des Mitsvot et l'étude de la Torah, un homme peut couper ses prépuces spirituels et arriver à s'améliorer. Cependant, si cela ne prend qu'une seconde de faire une Brit Mila, c'est le travail de toute une vie que de devenir meilleur. Alors, qu'Hachem nous donne la force de nous améliorer et qu'Il nous montre la voie pour

nous rapprocher de Lui, amen ken Yehi ratson.

Prier les uns pour les Autres

Dans la paracha de la semaine Tazriya, la Torah énonce les lois concernant le lépreux. A l'époque du Temple, il existait une maladie spirituelle qui frappait celui qui fautait et qui médissait en pratiquant le Lachon Ara. La personne contaminée devait faire Téchouva afin d'être soignée. Mais si elle s'obstinait dans son erreur, des pustules blanches se développaient sur tout son corps. Le lépreux devait alors quitter sa maison, déchirer ses vêtements et proclamer dans les rues: "Impur! Impur!" Si cet avertissement servait essentiellement à protéger les gens d'une transmission d'impureté, nos sages ont cependant expliqué dans le traité chabat (67, a) que le lépreux criait afin de demander aux passants de prier pour lui.

Ainsi, à travers cette paracha, la Torah nous montre l'importance de prier les uns pour les autres. Nous savons que chaque juif est prêt à tout pour son prochain. S'il croise une de ses connaissances agonisantes dans la rue, nous pouvons être sûrs qu'il fera le nécessaire pour appeler les urgences et veiller aux besoins du malade. De même que s'il apprend qu'un de ses amis souffre financièrement, il essaiera de l'aider personnellement et demandera à des donateurs un soutien actif. Pourtant, nous oublions très souvent que nous connaissons un ami fidèle, un père miséricordieux qui peut sortir n'importe quel problème. A la condition, bien entendu, de le lui demander. C'est pourquoi nous devons prendre l'habitude de faire une petite prière dans notre langue lorsque nous voyons des amis en détresse. Et encore plus, de nos jours, lorsque nous entendons aux informations que nos frères sont sur le front ou lorsque nous recevons des textos afin de prier pour tel juif...

Nous devons tous nous sentir concernés et demander miséricorde au Tout Puissant. En outre, la guémara dans le traité Brakhot (12, b) déclare que celui qui peut prier pour son

ami et qui ne le fait pas est appelé fauteur. Car en s'abstenant de prier, il prouve qu'il ne croit pas vraiment que ses prières peuvent être écoutées. Or ce lien qui nous attache à notre créateur par l'intermédiaire des prières représente une des composantes essentielles de notre judaïsme. Comme il est écrit dans Dévarim(4,7) "Car quelle grande nation possède un Dieu proche d'elle, comme l'est Hachem notre Dieu qui répond à tous nos appels?" Ainsi, un juif se définit par sa proximité permanente avec Hachem. Comme il écrit à propos de Yossef atsadik "Et son maître (Potifar) vit qu'Hachem était avec lui". Le midrach explique que Yossef atsadik faisait précéder chaque démarche d'une petite prière. Par exemple lorsqu'il apportait un verre à son maître, il disait "Que ce soit Ta volonté, ô Tout Puissant, que cette boisson plaise à mon maître"...Ainsi notre ancêtre resta attaché à Hachem pendant toutes ces années d'esclavage. Et, grâce à ses prières, il réussissait tout ce qu'il entreprenait.

Chaque juif doit donc essayer de vivre avec Hachem à chaque moment. Pour cela, il nous suffit de l'impliquer dans toutes nos actions. Il ne faut pas s'empêcher de prier pour des petites choses en français, par exemple, pour trouver une place pour se garer, pour que son bus arrive, pour ne pas faire la queue au supermarché...Car celui qui agit ainsi ressent à quel point Hachem est proche de nous et nous écoute. Nous vivons hélas des temps très difficiles. Chaque jour, des terribles nouvelles arrivent à nos oreilles. Nos familles sont menacées par les missiles de nos ennemis, par les maladies...

La Torah cette semaine nous enseigne comment réagir face à cette situation. Nous devons multiplier les supplications et implorer le Seigneur pour qu'Il nous protège, qu'Il nous ramène à la Téchouva et soigne tous nos frères et nos sœurs. Et nous devons nous rapprocher d'Hachem à chaque moment libre par l'intermédiaire de la prière. Qu'Hachem exauce nos demandes et nous envoie la délivrance que nous espérons tous les jours. Amen ken yéhi ratson.

Ce dvar Torah a été traduit de plusieurs enseignements du Rav Pinkous zrouto yagen alénu.

Apprendre à Garder sa Langue

Un jour, deux religieux entrèrent dans une auberge pour y passer la nuit. A l'heure du souper, ils interrogèrent le propriétaire sur la cacherooute du repas, sur le boucher qui avait procédé à l'abattage rituel...Après une série de questions, ils acceptèrent de prendre leur dîner. Alors qu'ils attendaient attablés, les deux compagnons se mirent à discuter d'une connaissance commune. L'aubergiste qui entendait tout le mal déversé sur cette personne se tourna vers eux et leur dit: "Comment pouvez-vous faire si attention à ce qui entre dans votre bouche et être si peu vigilants à ce qui en sort?"

Cette histoire connue exprime le lien entre la paracha de Chémini que nous avons lue la semaine dernière, et qui traitait des animaux permis et interdits, et les parachiots Tazria et Metsora qui détaillent les maux et les punitions qui frappent celui qui fait du Lachon Ara par ses propos médisants. Comme nous le savons, la Torah interdit de nombreuses paroles. La première catégorie se nomme le Lachon Ara. Ce terme, nous enseigne le Hafetz Haïm, s'applique à tout propos péjoratif mais véridique qui ne possède pas de but constructif. Ainsi, lorsqu'une personne raconte le comportement incorrect ou les traits de caractère un peu grossiers d'un tiers, elle transgresse l'interdiction de la Torah de dire du Lachon Ara, même si ses propos n'entraînent aucun préjudice à la victime de ses dires et même si elle parle d'une personne qu'elle aime beaucoup. La seconde sorte de Lachon Ara est constituée de toute parole qui cause un dommage financier, matériel ou moral, même si celui-ci n'est pas péjoratif. Il existe aussi dans les propos interdits la Rékhiloute qui consiste à dire des choses qui font naître de la haine entre deux personnes. Et enfin le Motsi Chem Ra, l'interdiction de dire des paroles fausses au sujet d'un juif.

Ce qui est le plus étonnant, lorsque que l'on étudie les interdictions liées à la parole, c'est la gravité de cette faute. La guémara, dans le traité de Arkhin (15, b) enseigne au nom de Rabi Ischmaël que la faute du Lachon Ara est équivalente aux trois fautes les plus graves: le meurtre, l'idolâtrie et l'inceste. Rabi Yohanan apprend que celui qui tient ces propos agit comme s'il niait la présence de Di-u. Rech Lakich, lui, disait que sa faute monte jusqu'au ciel. Rav Hisda affirme que celui qui profère continuellement du Lachon Ara mérite la lapidation...Nous allons essayer de comprendre pourquoi la Torah est aussi sévère avec celui qui transgresse ces lois.

Le rav Pinkous zal explique que les scientifiques, les philosophes et les penseurs ont toujours eu du mal à définir le statut de l'homme face au reste de la création. Est-ce un animal qui parle? Ou une bête qui travaille? La Torah donne une définition précise dès sa création: l'homme est un être doué de parole, afin de prier et d'étudier la Torah explique le Zohar. Ainsi l'homme se différencie-t-il des autres créatures dans la mesure où il peut se lier à Di-u. Cependant, lorsqu'une personne dit

du Lachon Ara, elle salit sa bouche, son outil pour se rapprocher d'Hachem. Ses prières ne sont plus écoutées et son étude perd de sa qualité. Cette personne, à cause de ses mauvaises paroles, perd sa chance de s'élever et, à l'image du serpent, elle s'éloigne définitivement du Créateur.

Le Hafetz Haïm donne de nombreuses explications sur la gravité de cette faute. L'une d'entre elles est que la Torah exige deux témoins pour punir un acte. Ainsi, lorsque le Satan veut accuser un fauteur, sa parole n'est pas prise en compte tant qu'il ne possède pas un autre témoignage. C'est pourquoi tant que personne ne révèle la faute de son prochain, celui-ci ne peut être ni accusé ni puni pour ses pêchés. Mais si malheureusement une personne raconte ses actes, le Satan s'associe à elle pour condamner le fauteur et le lui faire payer.

Désormais, nous pouvons comprendre pourquoi nos sages nous ont tellement mis en garde de ne pas dire du mal d'autrui, car chaque parole péjorative représente une flèche tirée vers nos amis. A la lumière de ces enseignements, nous pouvons comprendre pourquoi, depuis quelques années, la liste des malades, des malheurs et des souffrances spirituelles et matérielles ne cesse de s'allonger. A cause des nouveaux moyens de communication, la parole est devenue presque incontrôlable. A chaque minute, une personne peut salir sa bouche et condamner son frère. Notre seule solution pour arrêter ce fléau est de faire attention à nos paroles, d'étudier les lois concernant ces interdits et de prier Hachem qui nous protège des fautes. Alors retenons les leçons de cette paracha et essayons de nous perfectionner dans cette Mitsva, amen ken yéhi ratson.

REFLEXION SEMANAL

(Rav Yonatan Gefen)

Comenzar de Nuevo

La parashá Metzará describe el proceso de purificación para una persona afectada por *tzaraat* ⁽¹⁾. Una de las etapas esenciales de este proceso es la *tevilá* (inmersión) en una mikve. El *Sefer Hajinuj* sugiere una razón para explicar la importancia de la *tevilá* y porqué juega un rol fundamental en el proceso de arrepentimiento que el *metzará* debe atravesar; él explica que el mundo estaba

lleno de agua antes de que el hombre fuera creado y que, por lo tanto, sumergirse en la mikve simboliza un retorno al comienzo de la creación. Es un gesto que demuestra la intención de dejar atrás los errores pasados para comenzar de nuevo ⁽²⁾.

Cuando alguien peca y luego reconoce su falta, hay una tendencia natural a sentirse culpable y abatido. Esta tendencia puede ser canalizada positivamente, motivando a la persona a evitar ese pecado en el futuro. Sin

embargo, a menudo tiene un efecto indeseable que causa que la persona caiga en un espiral descendiente de fracaso espiritual.

Cuando una persona se siente mal por algo que ha hecho, puede desconcertarse y perder la fortaleza para continuar en su *avodat Hashem* (servicio Divino); en este aspecto, las secuelas de un pecado pueden ser mucho más nocivas que el pecado mismo. La inmersión en una mikve después de un pecado simboliza que la persona afirma no estar atada a sus errores pasados y que no dejará que estos la hagan caer aún más.

Rav Jaim Shmulevitz zt"l nota que hay muchos ejemplos en el Tanaj (Torá, Profetas y Escritos) en los que una persona pecó en un área y, como resultado, sufrió un gran declive que destruyó su nivel espiritual.

Un caso sorprendente es el de Orpá, la nuera de Naomi. Cuando Naomi estaba volviendo a la tierra de Israel, tanto Rut como Orpá estaban decididas a quedarse con ella y convertirse al judaísmo. En este punto, Orpá estaba en el mismo nivel elevado de la grandiosa Rut, y estaba igualmente deseosa que ella de dejar su tierra patria para unirse al pueblo judío.

Sin embargo, después de las súplicas de Naomí para que volvieran, ella no pudo superar la prueba y volvió a Moav. Lo lógico hubiese sido que después de este lapso, Orpá hubiera continuado en un nivel espiritual alto, casi en el mismo nivel espiritual de Rut. No obstante, el Midrash nos dice que, en la misma noche en que se separó de Naomí, Orpá se hundió en los peores niveles de depravación ⁽³⁾.

¿Cómo puede ser que ella haya caído tan dramáticamente en tan sólo una noche? Rav Shmulevitz explica que cuando ella vio que había fallado en la gran prueba de unirse al pueblo judío, entonces, no pudo dejar su pecado atrás y comenzar de nuevo. Se vio sumamente afectada por su incapacidad para ponerse a la altura de los desafíos y en consecuencia, perdió todo sentido de balance y cayó ante los poderes del *iétzer hará* (inclinación negativa) ⁽⁴⁾.

Rav Shmulevitz cita otro incidente del Tanaj en el cual un grandioso hombre falló en un desafío, pero logró advertir que estaba en peligro de caer en la trampa y de ser embaucado por el *iétzer hará*. El profeta Shmuel le instruyó al Rey Shaúl que destruyera a Amalek, pero Shaúl dejó vivos a algunos animales y a Agag, el rey de Amalek. Shmuel lo confrontó y le dijo que, con su pecado, había perdido el derecho al reinado. Después de no lograr excusarse, Shaúl admitió su culpa e inmediatamente le hizo un pedido muy extraño a Shmuel. "Por favor hónrame ahora frente a los sabios de mi pueblo y al pueblo de Israel..." ⁽⁵⁾. ¿Cuál era el objetivo de esta petición? Claramente no era sólo un intento de Shaúl para sentirse mejor consigo mismo. Es más, Shmuel hizo lo que le pidió, lo cual prueba la validez de dicha petición.

Rav Shmulevitz explica que Shaúl no buscaba meramente recibir honor, sino que dado que sabía que estaba en riesgo de sufrir una gran caída advirtió que necesitaba fortalecerse de inmediato para que su pecado no lo afectase negativamente. Entonces, en medio de esta gran caída espiritual, Shaúl le pidió a Shmuel que lo honrase, ayudándolo así a mantener el equilibrio y a comenzar de nuevo ⁽⁶⁾. Shmuel, a pesar de su descontento con Shaúl, consintió a su pedido porque reconoció la importancia del mismo.

También aprendemos de las acciones de Shaúl una estrategia para evitar que el fracaso tenga un efecto desastroso. Cuando una persona cae, lo normal es que se sienta mal consigo mismo y que pierda el respeto por sí mismo. Cuando una persona siente que es un fracaso puede terminar dándose por vencida y dejándose caer libremente; para evitarlo, debe conservar su dignidad después de la caída y reconocer que, a pesar de haberse equivocado, puede arrepentirse y comenzar de nuevo.

El Rey Shlomó explica esta idea en Mishlei cuando escribe: "*Un hombre recto (tzadik) cae siete veces y se levanta*" ⁽⁷⁾.

El Malbim y Metsudat David explican que, a pesar de las caídas, un tzadik se vuelve a levantar. De hecho, gran parte de lo que

convierte a la persona en *tzadik* es su capacidad para recuperarse de sus fracasos o errores. La *tevilá* del *metzorá* nos enseña la misma lección: a pesar de haber pecado, él no está destinado a una caída eterna; si puede dejar atrás el pecado, entonces podrá comenzar de nuevo.

Notas: (1) Esta es una afección espiritual descrita equivocadamente como lepra; Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsh prueba extensamente que *tzaraat* y lepra no son lo mismo. (2) Sefer Hajinuj, Mitzvá 173. Parece que el simbolismo de un nuevo comienzo aplica a otros procesos que requieren *tevilá*. Un ejemplo es la conversión, en donde se considera que una persona nace de nuevo. (3) Rut Rabá 2:20. (4) Sijot Musar, Maamar 55, p. 236. (5) Shmuel 1, 15:28-30. (6) Ibíd. p. 237-8. (7) Mishlei 24:16.

Purificando el Habla

La parashá de esta semana habla extensamente sobre el malestar espiritual llamado *tzaraat*, el cual causa manchas blancas en la piel de la persona. Para superar esta aflicción, la persona debe someterse a un período de aislamiento y luego a uno de purificación.

El Talmud nos dice que *tzaraat* viene a causa de los pecados de la persona, particularmente por el pecado de hablar *lashón hará* (habla negativa) ⁽¹⁾. El proceso de recuperación tiene como objetivo demostrarle al *metzorá* el poder destructivo de su pecado y enseñarle cómo mejorar en el futuro para evitar volver a pecar de esa manera.

Pareciera que hay dos lecciones que la persona que habló *lashón hará* debe aprender durante su período de *tzaraat*. Primero, el Talmud nos dice que esta persona “*causó separación entre el hombre y su amigo [por medio de su lashón hará] y por lo tanto, la Torá dice que debe estar solo*” ⁽²⁾. Hablar mal sobre otras personas genera inevitablemente que se disuelvan amistades y que las personas se distancien unas de otras. Consecuentemente, medida por medida, la Torá obliga a quien habla *lashón hará* a vivir en soledad durante un lapso de tiempo, completamente separado del resto. Esto le enseña el dolor que causó al romper relaciones. Segundo, las manchas mismas

sirven como una poderosa demostración del daño que el *lashón hará* causó en su *neshamá* (alma).

Tzaraat no es una enfermedad física normal, sino que es la manifestación física de un malestar espiritual que le otorga al pecador evidencia irrefutable del daño que se ha causado a sí mismo en el plano espiritual, y de que necesita desesperadamente una mejora ⁽³⁾.

Hoy en día no hay *tzaraat*, y esto podría considerarse superficialmente como algo bueno. Sin embargo, los comentaristas señalan que lo opuesto es cierto: *tzaraat* era un acto de bondad de Di-s, por medio del cual le comunicaba claramente al pecador sobre su transgresión y la necesidad de *teshuvá* (arrepentimiento). Sin este regalo, es mucho más difícil para la persona reconocer cuándo ha pecado.

Sin embargo, el pecado de *lashón hará* sigue siendo claramente uno de los más difíciles de evitar. De hecho el Talmud establece que sólo una minoría de las personas tropieza en áreas relacionadas a la inmoralidad y una mayoría en ciertas formas de robo, sin embargo, *todos [tropiezan] en avak lashón hará* ⁽⁴⁾. Dada la aparentemente generalizada transgresión de *lashón hará*, ¿qué reemplazo hay para el *tzaraat*? ¿Cómo puede reconocer la persona el daño espiritual que se causa a sí misma cuando habla *lashón hará* y cuál es el alcance del daño que pueden tener las palabras negativas en los demás?

Rav Alexander Moshé Lapidus responde esta pregunta en su trabajo *Dibrei Emet* ⁽⁵⁾. Él señala que una persona afectada por *tzaraat* debía acudir donde un *kohén* (sacerdote), quien lo guiaría en el proceso de *teshuvá*. Hoy en día continúa habiendo un *kohén* que nos guía continuamente para rectificar el pecado de *lashón hará*: el Jafetz Jaim (Rav Israel Meir Kagan), cuyos libros sobre el tema ⁽⁶⁾ son la autoridad suprema en cuanto a las leyes y a la perspectiva de la Torá sobre el cuidado del habla. Sus libros le enseñan a la persona sobre el daño que causa en los demás el hablar *lashón hará* y le describen detalladamente el daño que se hace a sí misma.

El Jafetz Jaim escribe en nombre del Maharshá que cuando la Guemará dice: *todos [tropiezan] en avak lashón hará*, se refiere a **todos los que no hacen un esfuerzo consciente para mejorar su habla** ⁽⁷⁾. Sin embargo, si una persona aprende las leyes y la filosofía sobre cuidar el habla, podrá evitar este pernicioso pecado.

Pese a que nadie en esta generación se ve afligido por la enfermedad de *tzaraat*, es obvio que quien no se esfuerza en esta área inevitablemente terminará hablando, al menos, *avak lashón hará*. El consejo del *Dibrei Emet* nos enseña que es muy importante que una persona estudie las leyes de *lashón hará* de los libros del Jafetz Jaim para disminuir su habla negativa.

Uno todavía podría preguntar por qué es necesario estudiar las leyes de *lashón hará*, ¿no bastaría con estudiar los aspectos filosóficos del daño que provoca para desarrollar de esta manera un nivel suficiente de temor al Cielo como para evitar hablar *lashón hará*?

El Jafetz Jaim se refiere a esta idea en la introducción de su libro de musar ⁽⁸⁾, *Shemirat halashón*, donde dice que no alcanza con estudiar este libro, sino que uno también tiene que estudiar su libro de leyes, *Jafetz Jaim: "De qué sirve todo el musar del mundo que habla sobre la severidad de las prohibiciones de lashón hará y rejilut* ⁽⁹⁾, *si la persona se ha permitido a sí misma decir que tal cosa no está incluida en lashón hará o que la Torá no prohibió hablar lashón hará sobre cierto tipo de gente. Por lo tanto, uno debe saber qué cosas caen en la categoría de lashón hará y qué cosas no"* ⁽¹⁰⁾. Así, el Jafetz Jaim enseña que sin saber las leyes de *lashón hará* una persona tropezará inevitablemente ya que no sabrá qué constituye un habla prohibida.

Dada la constante prueba que enfrentamos respecto al tema de *lashón hará* y dada la afirmación de la Guemará sobre que nadie

está libre de este pecado, pareciera que la única forma de mejorar en esta área es por medio del estudio constante de las leyes y la filosofía (*hashkafá*) del cuidado del habla. Con este objetivo, Rav Yehuda Zev Segal, Rosh Yeshivá de Manchester, desarrolló un calendario diario para el estudio de estos dos libros y, poco antes de su muerte, le pidió a la *Fundación Jafetz Jaim* que publicaran el libro *Un compañero diario*, el cual incluye una breve sección diaria de *halajá y hashkafá* ⁽¹¹⁾.

En el pasado, quien hablaba *lashón hará* sufría de *tzaraat* y el *kohén* lo guiaba en su proceso de *teshuvá*. Hoy en día no tenemos la bendición de recibir un mensaje tan claro y, por lo tanto, debemos recurrir a las palabras del gran *kohén*, el Jafetz Jaim, para guiarnos sobre cómo mejorar en esta área a través del estudio constante de sus grandiosos trabajos. Les deseo que todos seamos bendecidos con la capacidad de evitar todas las formas de habla negativa.

Notas: (1) Arajín 15b, 16a. (2) Arajín 16b. (3) Ver Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsh zt"l, quien prueba extensamente que *tzaraat* no es lo mismo que la enfermedad física lepra. (4) Baba Batra 165a. *Avak* significa literalmente polvo. *Avak lashón hará* es conocido como el *polvo de lashón hará* porque no constituye el tipo de *lashón hará* prohibido por la Torá pero representa muchas formas de habla que están prohibidas por nuestros sabios ya sea por su parecido a *lashón hará* o por la probabilidad de que lleven a alguien a hablar el tipo de *lashón hará* que sí está prohibido por la Torá. Ver *Jafetz Jaim, Hiljot Lashón Hará*, Clal 9 para una explicación profunda de *avak lashón hará*. (5) Citado en *Lékaj Tov*, Parashat Tazría, p.107. (6) El libro *Jafetz Jaim* discute las leyes de *lashón hará* y el libro *Shemirat halashón* explica la perspectiva de la Torá sobre *lashón hará*. (7) *Shemirat halashón* Cap. 15. (8) La palabra *musar* usualmente es traducida como 'crecimiento', a pesar de que su raíz viene de la misma raíz que *isurim*, que significa sufrimiento. Esto enseña que el proceso de crecimiento personal puede ser doloroso. (9) *Rejilut* es otra forma de habla negativa, en la que Reubén le informa a Shimón que Leví habló mal de Shimón, causando así un gran daño a su relación. (10) Introducción a *Shemirat halashón*, p.17. (11) Como se puede ver en el comienzo de *Un compañero diario*.

NAHALOT

Nahala of the "Rif" Zt"l
Thursday the 10th of Iyar

Rav Yitzchak Alfasi (RiF), codifier of the Gemara, author of Sefer Hahalachot (1013-1103). The period of the Geonim began in 589 and ended in 1038 with the petira of Rav Hai Gaon. Rav Chananel's father, Rav Chushiel Gaon, had set out from Bavel to collect funds for a needy bride and was seized by pirates. He was sold as a slave in Africa but was later redeemed by the members of its Jewish communities. From Africa, he headed to Kairuan, where he became a rosh yeshiva. His son, Chananel, was born in Kairuan. A young student from the Algerian city of Kal'a asked to be admitted to Rav Chananel's yeshiva. His name was Yitzchak Hakohen. As Rav Yitzchak advanced in his studies, he became keenly aware of the fact that

many people were unable to elucidate the halacha from the Gemara due to the vast amount of material it contains. As a result, he conceived of the idea of compiling a comprehensive and extensive halachic work that would present all of the halachos and the practical conclusions of the Gemara in a clear, definitive manner. To achieve this goal, he retreated to his father-in-law's attic, where he worked on his sefer for 10 consecutive years. During this period, however, a Moslem tyrant gained control of Tunisia, and persecuted all those who did not accept his faith, especially the Jews of Kairuan. As a result, all of the city's Jewish residents fled to places controlled by the Elmuvides, who were more tolerant of the Jews. Among the fugitives was Rav Yitzchak who, with his wife and two children, moved to the Moroccan city of Fez. Rav Yitzchak remained in Fez for 40 years, during which time he completed his Sefer Ha'halachot, which is considered the first fundamental work in halachic literature. Eventually, he became known as Rav Yitzchak Alfasi, or the Rif. Rav Yitzchak was niftar at the age of 90 in 1103. He was succeeded by the Ri mi'Gaash. [some say 11 Iyar]

Why Rabbi Akiva is My Hero

(By Rabbi Dovid Rosenfeld)

10 life lessons from an accessible giant.

The period of counting the Omer is also a time of national mourning. The Talmud (Yevamot 62b) recounts that Rabbi Akiva, one of the greatest scholars of the Mishna, lost 24,000 students to plague during this time of year. The world was "desolate" until he raised five new students – who were able to restore the Torah to its full glory in that dark period.

Rabbi Akiva's life is a fascinating tale of inspiration, of a man of humble origins who overcame it all to achieve greatness. I would like to outline some of the highlights of his life story – and demonstrate why I feel he serves as a personal role model to us all.

1. He was of Humble Origins

Rabbi Akiva began his life as a shepherd. He was entirely unlearned until his middle years. He likewise had no Jewish lineage to speak of (Talmud Brachot 27b). He descended from converts. And as he rose to greatness in his later years, he never forgot who he was or where he came from. His favorite principle was "Love your fellow as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). Rich or poor, simple or scholarly, tall or short, strong or weak: We are all G-d's children. G-d and His Torah are not the monopoly of the wise or the well-pedigreed. We are all precious to G-d.

2. He Saw Inspiration and Acted on it

The Midrash (Avot d'Rav Natan 6:2) records the turning point of Rabbi Akiva's life. One day, at the age of 40, Akiva passed a well. He saw a rock with a hole carved into it. He inquired who shaped the rock, and was told it was caused by the slow but constant dripping of water on top of it.

Akiva then reasoned: If a substance soft as water can penetrate a rock with slow, persistent motion, so too the Torah, which is hard as iron, can slowly but surely penetrate my heart. And this was Akiva's turning point. He promptly set off to study Torah – for an uninterrupted 24 years.

So many times in our lives are we moved by inspiring words or events. We know they are speaking to us, that G-d has a message for us. Yet the inspiration fades before we do anything about it – and life moves on. Not R. Akiva. He

saw his moment – and he changed his life right then and there.

3. He Patiently Started from the Bottom

When Akiva went to study, he did not exactly hire a private tutor or join an adult study program. Nor did he sign up for an anonymous on-line course. The Midrash describes how he, together with his young son, went to *cheder* to learn the alef-bet together with the youngest children. And his past humility showed. He wasn't fazed by the awkwardness; he didn't care for his own dignity. He set right down to work.

4. He was No Super-Genius

It is not as if Rabbi Akiva really had an IQ of 180 all along but was just withering on the vine during his years as a shepherd. He had to work – and work hard – to become who he was.

The Talmud (Yevamot 16a) records a meeting R. Akiva had with a monumental scholar, to discuss a debate they had about a touchy subject in Jewish law. The other scholar was the raving genius type. No one could keep up with him in an argument – not even R. Akiva, by then the acknowledged leader of his generation.

The other scholar, after R. Akiva failed to convince him, had nothing but snide remarks for the supposed leading scholar of the generation. But as the Talmud continues, it didn't faze Akiva in the slightest. He was still the shepherd-turned-scholar. He had no airs about him whatsoever.

5. He Asked All the Tough Questions

Rabbi Akiva, in spite of his late start, had a distinct advantage over his colleagues. Unlike they who began their study as small children, he came to it as an adult. And as a result, he approached the Torah with mature eyes. Nothing was taken for granted or viewed as, "Well, that's just the way things are." R. Akiva probed every aspect of Judaism – and discovered truths where others failed even to look.

R. Akiva discovered truths where others failed even to look.

We thus find Rabbi Akiva posing some of the most profound questions of life. In Pirkei Avot (3:19) he grapples with the contradiction between man's free will and God's knowledge of the future. If God already knows what I will do tomorrow, do I really have the free will to decide? He likewise discusses (3:20) how God's governs and judges the world. The Midrash (Avot d'Rav Natan 6:2) describes R. Akiva as a persistent student, leaving no issue unexplored and unexplained. His colleague characterized him with the comment – "Matters hidden from people, R. Akiva has brought to light."

6. It was All Because of His Wife – and He Knew it

So much of R. Akiva's greatness was on account of his devoted wife Rachel. She "discovered" him. He served as shepherd for one of the wealthiest men of his time, Kalba Savua. Kalba's daughter took a liking to the humble shepherd, whom she saw as modest and refined. She proposed to him – on condition that he agree to study Torah. He agreed and they married secretly. Kalba promptly disowned his daughter and for years the young couple lived in abject poverty (Talmud Ketuvot 62b).

If not for Rachel, Akiva would have no doubt remained an anonymous shepherd with little future. But she believed in him. Rachel left a life of fabulous wealth to make home for Akiva – because she knew he could become great – and she had the faith and the patience to see it happen. And when he was ready, she encouraged him to leave home to study – which he did for an uninterrupted 12 years.

But that was only half of it. The Talmud (Ketuvot 62-3) records that on his return, already an accomplished scholar, R. Akiva was about to enter his home. Just then he overhears a conversation. An elderly man challenges Rachel: "How long will you live as a widow with your husband alive?" She responds, "If [my husband] would listen to me, he would remain for *another* 12 years in yeshiva!" On that providential note, R. Akiva returns for another 12 years of study.

At last, after 24 years, R. Akiva returns to his hometown, now the leading scholar of the

generation, escorted by an entourage of 24,000 students. His wife, still dressed in her simple house clothes, goes out to greet him. She falls before his feet. It creates a scene – an elderly woman thrusting herself before great rabbi surrounded by scores of devoted students. They move to push her away. But R. Akiva stops them, uttering a line which has since become famous: “Leave her. What is mine and what is yours is hers.”

7. He Never Forgot His Origins

R. Akiva “made it” in every sense of the word. By the end of his life he was the acknowledged spiritual leader of world Jewry. He became wealthy. He was revered and admired by all. His opinion was sought and regarded on all matters Jewish. Yet he never forgot where he came from. He was still one of the masses. He knew what it was like to be poor, to be unknown, and to be unlearned.

And his love for humanity showed. His favorite verse was Leviticus 19:18: “Love your fellow as yourself” (Sifra 4:12). In Pirkei Avot (3:18), he states, “Beloved is man for he was created in the image [of God],” as well as, “Beloved are the Children of Israel for they are called children of the Lord.” We are all precious to God. There is no favoritism in Heaven.

R. Akiva in fact well remembered his past *hatred* for Torah scholars (Talmud Pesachim 49b). He knew what it was like to be coarse and ignorant. And he remembered the resentment – and the *hatred* – felt by the underprivileged classes. He had love and patience for all – because he was one of them himself, and he realized how difficult it is to outgrow one’s past mindset.

8. He Lost All – and Kept Going

After achieving fame, R. Akiva became teacher and spiritual mentor to an astounding 24,000 students. As the Talmud (Yevamot 62b) recounts, every one of them died in an exceedingly brief period of time – during the several week period between Passover and Shavuot – due to epidemic. And as the Talmud puts it, the world was desolate. The human tragedy was devastating, the loss to the Torah world unimaginable.

But apart from all of that, R. Akiva personally witnessed his entire lifeworks go down the drain. Years of training the greatest minds of the next generation were lost to R. Akiva, with nothing remaining to show for himself.

If there were anyone in this world who could be forgiven for spending his remaining years wasting away feeling sorry for himself, it was R. Akiva. Could there have been a clearer sign from heaven that God was not interested in R. Akiva’s works, that his precious legacy was just not meant to be? How could a human being *not* become paralyzed from misery and indecision at that point?

But R. Akiva picked himself up and started again. As the Talmud continues, he found 5 new students – *five* to replaced 24,000. Rather than attempting to amass students without number, he focused on 5 precious souls, who would between them restore the Torah to its past glory.

He didn't let his inability to explain stand in the way of achievement.

No doubt R. Akiva never recovered from the pain of the loss. As we saw, his way was to ponder the most difficult questions of life. Yet he didn’t let his inability to explain stand in the way of his life’s mission. We all have questions in life we cannot answer. Even with his great intellect – or perhaps because of it – R. Akiva was no exception. But questions and doubts did not stop him. The rabbi’s intellect was far from assuaged, but he kept on going – and ultimately persevered.

To Be Continued...