

O H R N E T

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

A Responsible FREEDOM

Adapted from the Lectures of Rabbi Uziel Milevsky *zt"l*

The Exodus was actually a four-fold event, as we see that G-d told Moshe, "I will *take you out* from under the burdens of Egypt, I shall *rescue you* from their servitude, I shall *redeem you* with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I shall *take you to Me* for a people..." (Exodus 6:6-7).

But, why in the above verse does the expression "I will take you out" appear before the expression "I will rescue you from their servitude"? These two statements seem to be chronologically out of order, for we know that the Jews were released from their labor a full six months before they actually left Egypt.

The Maharal of Prague explains that the expression "I will take you out" does not refer to the physical Exodus, but rather to the spiritual and intellectual redemption of the Jewish People. This spiritual Exodus was far more crucial to the continuing existence of the Jewish People than their physical Exodus. The Torah underscores this idea by writing "I will take you out" before "I will rescue you." This teaches that the Jewish People had first to be redeemed from their intellectual exile before they could be freed from the burden of their physical slavery.

The Maharal defines the term "intellectual exile" to mean that the Jewish People were convinced that they

were in Egypt to stay. Pharaoh had never given anyone permission to leave the country, and the Jews could not fathom trying to leave of their own accord. Furthermore, after living in Egypt for over two centuries, the Jews felt quite at home there and identified with the local culture. Despite all their hardships, they had no real desire to leave Egypt. All they wanted were civil rights and equality.

G-d "took them out" of this exile-mentality by sending Moshe to redeem them. At first they thought Moshe was out of his mind, but eventually he managed to convince the Jewish People that they really did not belong in Egypt. This was the crucial first step of the Exodus. It began to dawn on the Jews that Redemption was not just a legend to be passed on to one's children, but a very real Divine process that would soon begin to manifest itself. The Torah expresses this intellectual Exodus with the phrase, "I will take you out." Hence, we see that the first step of the Exodus was to make the Israelites realize that they

were not "Egyptians of the Abrahamitic Persuasion," but rather that they were a special nation with a unique role to play in history.

Freedom isn't a goal unto itself, but a means to an end. For while freedom enables one to carry out very important and worthwhile responsibilities, it can also be misused for destructive purposes, such as harming other individuals and society as a whole. When freedom is viewed as an end in itself and dispensed indiscriminately, it can bring about the demise of civilized society.

The positive potential of freedom outweighs the negative by a large margin, for freedom can breed that highest of human virtues — a true sense of responsibility. A slave cannot become responsible for his own actions because he has grown accustomed to leading his life according to the orders he receives from his master. Only the initiative that naturally emerges from a sense of personal freedom can lead one to become a truly responsible human being.



AS IS THE DARKNESS,

SO IS THE LIGHT

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

The elevator opened immediately onto a vast living room. He had knocked three penthouse apartments together, the entire top floor. As the doors of the elevator opened there was a breathtaking view of Central Park.

There he was, the lord of the manor. Slowly, he rose from the sofa and walked to his dressing room. There were enough suits in there to service a gentleman's outfitter on Fifth Avenue. He walked right down to the end of the dressing room and stopped. Taking a long pole with a hook on its end he stretched out his arm and hooked the very last suit on the rail. He brought it closer to him. It was covered in a protective suit-bag. He unzipped the bag and withdrew the suit, or what was left of the suit. For to call it a suit would have been gross flattery. With a seriousness that bespoke some atavistic rite, he clothed himself in the ancient plaid jacket and pants and left the dressing room. He walked back to the living room and caught his reflection in the vast picture-window of Manhattan. He was the king of Manhattan. But he had not always been a king. As he gazed in the half mirror of the window, he remembered a young kid who grew up on the Lower East Side whose week was filled

with more days than meals. It was a very long time ago. But every year on the anniversary of his first big sale, out would come the suit. He would put it on and sit for a while and remember every step up the ladder to the top of the tower.

If the sun never set at night, if we lived in a world that was perpetually day, not only would we have no word for "night," we would have no word for "day."

Man is a relative animal.

Our perceptions are finite and comparative. We understand light only to the extent that we have experienced darkness.

In the Haggada of Pesach, we start with a description of the baseness of the Jewish People. At the end of the Haggada we conclude with a list of attainments and blessings which G-d has bestowed on us. The Talmud debates whether the lowliness of the Jewish People in its beginning stage was a spiritual lowliness — that we worshipped idols — or whether it was a physical debasement, being slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.

However, one thing is clear. The Haggada's underlying two elements are that we begin in the gutter and we end amongst the stars.

But are these really *two* elements?

Slavery and freedom are not two separate realities that we commemorate on Pesach. Rather the savoring of our freedom comes from the remembrance of our slavery. We can only appreciate light when we come from the dark.

That's a message that each of us can take from Pesach. In our lives, we walk at some time or other through a dark valley; a valley of death, a valley of depression, a valley of problems. We must know, that even though we cannot take the wisdom of happiness into the despair of depression, that G-d never puts us anywhere that we're not supposed to be. That He is always with us. Even when the lights seem to have gone out all over our lives, we must know that when the morning finally comes our eyes will barely be able to withstand the great radiance that has been prepared for us in the darkness.

A Happy Pesach!

Source:

• Rabbi Noach Orlowick

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THE PRINCIPLES OF FAITH

Over 30 commandments in the Torah exhort us to remember the Exodus, and numerous other passages mention it as well. Every Shabbat and Festival we mention the Exodus in our prayers. Even our calendar is based on it, as we count the months from the month of Nissan in which it occurred. Why does Judaism place so much emphasis on this particular event?

Many significant events in our history do not have nearly as many commandments devoted to them. The giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai was certainly momentous, yet only one festival, Shavuot, marks it. The Jewish People's entry into the Land of Israel under Joshua's leadership was a milestone, yet no festival or command commemorates it.

So, again, what is so significant about the Exodus?

The first of the Ten Commandments begins: "I am Hashem, your G-d, Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery (*Exodus 20:1-2*). Rabbi Yehudah Halevi in "The Kuzari" cites the following Pagan King's question to the Rabbi: Why did G-d choose to introduce Himself as the one who "took you out of Egypt?" Why did He not introduce Himself by saying, "I am G-d who created heaven and earth, time, space, and all of reality itself?" Surely the latter is far more impressive than the Exodus, which is just an individual event pertaining to only one nation in all of history!?

To illustrate this question with an analogy, imagine meeting the architect who designed the Sydney Opera House. He introduces himself by saying, "Hi! I am Frank Lloyd Goldberg.

I am the architect who remodeled Arthur's basement!"

Had Mr. Goldberg wanted to impress us with his credentials as an architect, he could have done a much better job.

Rabbi Yehudah Halevi answers that G-d wanted to introduce Himself in a way that was relevant, verifiable and within the experience of the people to whom He was speaking.

No one was present at the world's creation. The human mind cannot grasp the events of creation, and therefore the creation event itself is inaccessible to the human. The Exodus, on the other hand, demonstrated G-d's omnipotence as clearly as creation, yet it was witnessed by the entire Jewish People and experienced by them.

How does experiencing the Exodus give us knowledge of creation and of the principles of Jewish belief?

The Ten Plagues and the miracles of the Exodus showed G-d's complete control over nature. They showed that He was able to contravene, "ignore," and change the laws of nature at will.

Each plague distinguished between Jew and Egyptian, between the oppressed and the oppressor, demonstrating the existence of reward and punishment and Divine Providence.

Moshe predicted each plague, verifying the reality of prophecy. In addition, the plagues began and ended in response to the prayers of Moshe, showing us the power and efficacy of prayer.

The plagues' main purpose was not to expedite the release from Egypt; that could have been accomplished without the sound and light

show. Their purpose was educational: They were what we would call today a "very high impact educational seminar." The plagues showed the Egyptians their mistakes, illustrating just how false their sense of superiority was, and punished them with the same suffering they had caused the Jews. The plagues impressed upon the Jewish People the basic principles of monotheism and Judaism, demonstrating that G-d's power was all-encompassing.

EXILE AS A UNIVERSAL THEME

Thus far, we've seen that the Exodus teaches the most basic ideas of Judaism. On a deeper level, the Egyptian Exile and the Exodus from it can be seen as the underlying theme of all creation:

Exile is a major theme in the Torah. Adam and Eve's exile from the Garden of Eden, Cain's exile, the varying degrees of exile the Patriarchs endured, the exile in Egypt and the four major exiles of Jewish history (Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome) are all central themes throughout *Tanach* (Bible).

According to the Midrash, exile is already mentioned in the second verse in the Torah (*Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 2:4*), where the verse "The earth was desolate and void and there was darkness over the depths" (*Genesis 1:2*) is seen as referring to the Babylonian ("desolate"), Persian ("void"), Greek ("darkness") and Roman ("over the vast depths") exiles.

How can we understand this centrality of exile, and its existence at the very dawn of creation?

The great Kabbalist, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria (*Arizal*), explained that every human being on the face

PASSOVER TODAY

by Rabbi David Orlofsky

For most Jewish families the highlight of Passover is the Seder. For that matter for most Jews the *only* part of Passover is the Seder. It seems that even as Jews have grown estranged from their religion, the Passover Seder beckons to them to return home. What is there about this special night that is different from all other nights (now where have I heard *that* before?).

It could be the opportunity to get together with family. But after studying the sociological interactions of the average Jewish family I know it can't be that. Uncle Harry has been feuding with Cousin Irving for twenty five years, neither one knows why. It seems it had something to do with High Holiday tickets back in the fifties. Grandma is going to force-feed everyone who isn't legally obese and the teenage faces that make you wonder how we survived for three thousand years. No, it's not family.

I doubt it's the food. If people really liked *matza* that much, they'd eat it during the year. Sometimes you can see someone happily munching away for a few minutes before they realize they're eating the cardboard box. Then there's the traditional chunk of horseradish root dipped in *charoset*. Those in the know scoop off and eat the *charoset*, but when an unsuspecting guest comes and actually takes a bite out of the horseradish itself and chokes and turns purple — that's fun. But no, I guess it's not the food.

I guess there is a sense of history — of connecting to something that stretches way beyond the living memory of anyone within living memory. An understanding that we Jews had an experience over 3300 years ago in Egypt that has stayed with us down to our own days. Yet it's curious that Jews who are jettisoning so much of Jewish tradition still cling to some form of a Passover Seder. Why has this ceremony remained more than everything else?

The Sages of the Talmud teach us that when Moshe came to take the Jews out of Egypt, they had by then sunk to the lowest possible level of spirituality. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying they weren't nice people. They maintained their original Hebrew names, they still spoke ancient Hebrew (known as

Yiddish) and wouldn't speak poorly about people. They also remained loyal to their spouses. In many ways they would seem to have been doing a lot better than many people today.

But they were only a few generations away from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They had contact with prophecy within their grandparents' lifetime. The power of spirituality, to sense G-d, was profound. That made their disconnectedness much more powerful. So when we are told that they were swept into the idolatrous cults of ancient Egypt, it meant that they would not be able to survive as Jews for much longer.

The Bible tells us that they left in haste, which the Sages explain means that much longer and they would not have been saved. You can only save something that still exists — once it's all gone, salvation becomes a moot point.

We read in the Passover Haggada, the booklet that tells us the story of the Exodus, that Ezekiel says "By your blood you shall live."

Ezekiel was referring to the blood of the Passover sacrifice and the blood of circumcision. It was almost as though G-d needed to give them a reason, some kind of spiritual identity, in order to assert their Jewishness and allow them to be redeemed. Perhaps the symbols involved blood in order to "get the blood flowing" again, in order to allow them to come back to life as Jews.

That experience of thousands of years ago is lodged in our collective subconscious. We remember how close we were to being lost as a people and what it took to bring us back to life. It's interesting that studies show that the two rituals that Jews as a whole observe the most are circumcision and the Passover Seder. That little voice inside of us saying "I want to connect to my people."

So despite the food, the family dynamics, the hours of preparation — millions of Jews will join together this Passover evening to relive the Passover Seder for the three thousand three hundred and twelfth time. And in the search for meaning there will be those who will feel their Jewish blood start to flow and they will look for a sense of personal redemption to carry them further up the ladder of spiritual growth. Happy Passover!



BECHAD MI YODAYA?³ Who Knows One?⁴

Everyone is familiar with the song traditionally sung at the conclusion of the Pesach Seder in which we describe the significance of every number from one to thirteen as they relate to Jewish life and thought. “Three are the Fore-fathers, Four are the Fore-Mothers... 11 are the stars of Josef’s dream, 12 are the Tribes of Israel...”

What about the next 13 numbers? And many more

numbers after those? What significance do they have in Jewish tradition? This week we challenge you to provide us with an answer to “Who Knows 14?”

Your answer can be based on dates, numbers (and even *gematriot*) in the Torah, Talmud or Siddur.

We’re waiting to hear your responses for possible publication in future issues! Write to info@ohr.org.il

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of the planet is indeed in exile (*Likutei Ha’arizal, Exodus*). Exile consists of three components:

- Being a stranger in a strange land
- Being enslaved to another
- Being separated from one’s source and one’s peers

These three components of physical exile are also present in the exile of the soul in this world. When the soul enters the physical world it experiences exile.

The soul, which is a spiritual entity, finds itself a “stranger in a strange land” in the world of time-space. It is subject to the limitations of the physical dimensions and its perception is no longer spiritual and therefore no longer unlimited.

The soul is also to a great degree a slave. It is enslaved to its host, the physical body. The body has to sleep, eat and engage in many other physical activities in order to survive. The whims and desires of the body, while not evil in and of themselves, are distracting and unnecessary burdens from the soul’s point of view. The physical necessities of life are, to the soul, “crushing labor.”

And the soul is lonely. It is separated from its source, G-d, by the concealment of the physical world, and it is separated from its kindred souls by the concealment of the body. Souls in this world are “scattered and separate.”

A person sensitive to the spiritual

side of the self will be aware of the exile of the soul; he will feel something lacking in a purely materialistic life.

What of the person who is less sensitive? How can he understand and empathize with the soul? The best way for the person to be able to relate to the exile of his soul is by experiencing exile personally. For one person it is sufficient to be a stranger in his own land to understand and identify with the suffering of the soul. A less sensitive person may need to be exiled to a foreign land. If he “gets the hint” then he can merit redemption. If not, the hint has to be made more explicit. He may have to experience separation from family and friends before he learns his lesson; he may even have to experience slavery, degradation and crushing labor before he understands what it means to be in exile.

Exile is not, then, punishment for sin; it is a method of teaching the person what his soul is experiencing. We are indeed all in our own “Egypt,” awaiting redemption.

In light of this, we can see a new dimension in the *mitzvot*, the commandments of the Torah: The *mitzvot* are the mechanism of redemption for the soul’s exile.

The *mitzvot* that sanctify time and space, such as Shabbat, the Festivals, the Temple and the Land of Israel, enable the soul to find infinity in the

finite and spirituality in the unfamiliar environment of the physical world.

The *mitzvot* that refine the body, transforming it into a willing partner of the soul, free the soul from the body’s “enslavement.” Dietary laws, family purity laws, and Torah study refine the body, the desires and the intellect. The body thus trained will not be a dominating master of its “slave,” the soul. Such a body will be perceptive of the spiritual, and its desires will be those of the soul. There will be no subjugation, only a harmonious and powerful synergy of the physical and the spiritual.

Other *mitzvot*, those classified as “between man and his friend,” cultivate and promote the unity of one soul with its companions. The *mitzvot* of love of a fellow Jew, *tzedakah, chesed*, and the like reunite the soul with other souls even though they are separated by the physical. Prayer, the Temple services, and *mitzvot* that unite us with our Creator solve the problem of the soul’s separation from its source.

The emphasis on the Exodus from Egypt in so many *mitzvot* stresses the idea that the world is one great, lengthy exile awaiting redemption. Each of us is in some form of “Egypt” until we experience our own personal Exodus. The entire world is in Exile until the coming of the Mashiach.

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Ketubot 4 - 45

Guard Your Ears

How careful we must be regarding what enters our ears is stressed in these two statements of Tannaim cited in our *gemara*:

“Why is the entire ear formed from firm matter while only the lobe is soft? In order that if one hears something improper he should be able to fold the lobe into the ear and block out the sound.”

“One should avoid allowing idle words to enter his ears because the ears are the first of all the parts of the body to become burned (they are the most susceptible to extreme temperature — Rashi).”

Maharsha thus explains the connection between these two statements:

After first being warned about hearing forbidden words, we are cautioned to avoid hearing even things that are not forbidden but which have no positive purpose for serving Hashem through *mitzvot*. In this matter the sense of hearing is radically different from the other senses. Although it is certainly forbidden to see things that are forbidden as they can provoke improper thoughts, there is no need to avoid seeing neutral things, even if such viewing serves no positive purpose in mitzvah performance.

The reason for this distinction is that hearing is the most susceptible of all the senses, as forbidden words are so prevalent in human affairs. It is therefore necessary to exercise special discipline regarding our ears by blocking out even those neutral words, lest they lead to receiving improper communications as well.

The ear was therefore created in a manner which will bring home this concept of susceptibility. Whether it is the unprotected ear turning a painful red in freezing weather, or tingling in an overheated room, we are constantly reminded of how sensitive that part of the body is to external influences. This serves to remind us that the sense of hearing rooted in that ear is also susceptible to external influences, and that special caution must be exercised regarding what we hear.

• Ketubot 5b

A Second Look at Seven Blessings

The “*sheva berachot*” (seven blessings), which are said at a wedding and at the feasts of celebration during the following week, contain something for everyone, from the parties getting married to the people helping them celebrate. We here offer the observations of Rashi in regard to a few of those *berachot*.

The first *beracha* (at the *chupah* itself this blessing comes after the *beracha* on wine) is the praise of Hashem “Who created everything for His glory.” This is not really a part of the ensuing order of *berachot* which deal with the institution of marriage itself. It is rather a tribute to those

who have gathered to do kindness with the *chatan* and *kallah* (groom and bride) by celebrating their *simcha*. This is a glorification of the Creator because it reflects the role that He played in the first wedding in history when He took care of every detail to unite the first man and woman as a couple.

The final two *berachot* seem to have similar climaxes, one praising Hashem for “bringing joy to the *chatan* and the *kallah*,” and the other for “bringing joy to the *chatan with the kallah*.” The first of these deals not with the joy of marriage itself but is rather a prayer for the success, prosperity and happiness of both the *chatan* and *kallah* for all their days. Since each of them is being blessed our climax is “and.” It is only in the final *beracha* that we praise Hashem for creating the special relationship of husband and wife through shared affection and joy. We therefore conclude this *beracha* with the term “*chatan with the kallah*” for it is this togetherness which Hashem has blessed with *simcha*.

• Ketubot 8a

Mystery of the Abandoned Child

An abandoned child is found in a city populated by Jews and Gentiles. What is his status? A *mishna* in *Mesechta Machshirin* is cited which rules that if Jews are the majority in that city the child is halachically considered (except in regard to marriage) a Jew. If the majority are Gentiles the child is considered a Gentile. If the population is evenly split between Jews and Gentiles the child is considered Jewish. The *gemara* points out that this designation of Jewishness when there is an even amount of Jews and Gentiles in the city is limited to a situation in which a damage claim is made against him in which his being Jewish would be to his advantage. Since the claim is being made to extract payment from him, the burden of proof that he is not Jewish is upon the one making the claim.

What about his religious obligations? Must he observe all of the *mitzvot* incumbent upon a Jew because he may be a Jew, or is he only required to observe the seven Noachide Laws commanded to all of mankind because he may not be Jewish? Although the *mishna* does not specifically deal with this question there is a clear indication from the ruling that only if there is a majority of Gentiles is he considered non-Jewish. The ramification of this ruling, says Rabbi Papa, is that we may feed him non-kosher food. The implication is that in a half and half situation we cannot give him such forbidden food because he must observe the dietary laws and all other *mitzvot* because he may indeed be a Jew.

The only problem that arises is in regard to observance of the Shabbat. While there is no problem in a non-Jew

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observing all other *mitzvot* in which he was not commanded, there is an injunction against him observing Shabbat (*Mesechta Sanhedrin 58b*). This person of doubtful status therefore faces a dilemma. If he performs creative labor on Shabbat he may be guilty of being a Jewish Shabbat violator. If he desists from such activity he may be guilty of being a non-Jew observing Shabbat.

This enigma is discussed by some commentaries in regard to how it was possible for the Patriarchs to observe the *mitzvot* of the Torah before they were commanded to their descendants. What did they do on Shabbat? Many ingenious solutions have been proposed to this puzzle which is a favorite subject of discussion in the world of Talmudists.

Rabbi Yaakov Ettlinger, in his “*Responsa Binyan Zion*” (126) suggests that the theoretical puzzle raised by these commentaries could have practical application in regard to the abandoned child. His own solution is based on his understanding that the ban on a non-Jew observing Shabbat relates only to refraining from the 39 categories of creative labor forbidden by the Torah to Jews alone. There are enough other forms of exertion which the abandoned child could do on Shabbat which would not be considered a violation by a Jew and which would still remove him from the category of a non-Jew observing Shabbat.

• *Ketubot 15b*

Keitzad Merakdin

“**K**eitzad merakdin lifnei hakallah?” “What does one sing when dancing before the bride at a wedding?” “*Kallah kemot shehi* — The bride as she is” — say Beit Shammai. “*Kallah na’ah vechasudah* — the bride is lovely and charming” — say Beit Hillel.

What if she is lame or blind, Beit Shammai challenge Beit Hillel. Can we then say that she is lovely and charming in violation of the Torah ban on lying?

Beit Hillel’s response is to compare the situation to that of how we relate to one who has purchased something. Do we speak highly of his purchase or criticize it? From this approach the Sages learned that one must always strive to get along well with other people.

What is meant by Beit Shammai’s formula for bringing joy to the groom and bride? If she has a blemish does he still recommend that she be described “the bride as she is?”

Tosefot explains that in such a case Beit Shammai suggest either refraining from any description or focusing on her praiseworthy features while still avoiding the general description of Beit Hillel which smacks of untruth. Beit Hillel disdain this approach because anything short of general praise will be interpreted as an insult.

Maharsha suggests an alternative explanation of the two views.

Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel both advocate a general description of the bride, and differ only in regard to its text. Beit Shammai is in favor of singing the praise of every bride with the words “the bride as she is” which implies that no matter what shortcoming there is, she has found favor in the eyes of her groom. Beit Hillel, however, insist on being more explicit in stressing the idea that to her groom “the bride is lovely and charming.”

• *Ketubot 17a*

The Limits of Martyrdom

Two witnesses who verify their signatures on a document but add that the loan or sale never really took place and that they signed under duress are sometimes believed and sometimes not. If there was no other source but them for certifying the document on the basis of their signatures, we assume they are telling the truth because if they were interested in falsely discrediting the document they could simply have remained silent and refrained from verifying their signatures. Should there be another source for verification, such as other witnesses who recognize their signatures, we do not accept their claim that the document is false and that they signed under duress.

Even in the case where they are believed, it is only if they say they were threatened with their lives. Should they state, however, that they signed the false document because of financial inducement, we do not accept their testimony because it is self-incriminating and “a man is not believed to testify that he is wicked.”

This is the position of the majority of the Sages. Rabbi Meir, however, goes one step further by declaring that we do not accept their testimony even when they say they signed a lie in order to save their lives. When Rabbi Chisda explained Rabbi Meir’s position based on an approach that witnesses faced by the threat of death must choose martyrdom rather than bear false witness (and that their testimony is therefore self-incriminating and invalid) he is challenged by the Sage Rava with the halachic ruling (*Mesechta Sanhedrin 74a*) that the only sins for which a Jew must sacrifice his life are idolatry, sexual immorality and murder.

Rabbi Chisda’s explanation is the subject of much discussion by the leading commentaries. A number of approaches are proposed, including one that Rabbi Meir actually adds theft (which false witnesses are guilty of) to the list of the aforementioned three cardinal sins. The solution to this problem proposed by Ran and Ritva is that we do not consider witnesses who signed out of fear for their lives as sinners, and their testimony to that effect

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would indeed not be self-incriminating. Since, however, testifying falsely is such a disgusting crime in the eyes of people we assume that these witnesses would have chosen to die rather than sign on a lie, and we therefore do not believe them when they say they submitted to pressure. Rava, nevertheless, dismisses this explanation of Rabbi Chisda. Had these witnesses asked a rabbinical court whether to sign or to die, he points out, they would have been instructed to sign in order to save their lives. How then can we assume that they, on their own initiative, would have chosen martyrdom? Rava therefore proposes an alternative explanation of Rabbi Meir's position.

• Ketubot 18b

The Dishonest Document

“If there is a lie in your possession distance it from yourself and do not retain a dishonesty in your household.” (Iyov 11:14)

This warning about a dishonesty in your household is given varying interpretations by the Sages. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says that it refers to a creditor holding on to a loan note after it has already been paid. Rabbi Cahana states that it means a note testifying to a loan which has not yet taken place but is in the creditor's possession with the potential borrower's consent so that it will be handy when a quick loan is needed.

The common denominator of both approaches is that there is a potential for dishonesty on the part of the note holder who can demand payment not due him. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, says the *gemara*, will certainly hold that it is a dishonesty to hold on to a note testifying to a loan that has not taken place since this is even worse than a note which has already been paid which once had an element of truth. But what will Rabbi Cahana's position be in regard to a note that has been paid?

This, says the *gemara*, will not be considered a dishonesty in the view of Rabbi Cahana because there may be a justification for retaining a paid note. The expense of hiring a scribe to write a loan note is incumbent on the borrower. Sometimes the borrower is so short of funds that he cannot afford to make this payment. The creditor then has the option of laying out the money for the scribe's services, reserving the right to hold on to the note even after the loan is paid until he receives repayment of the writing expenses as well. Since he has a legitimate right to hold on to the paid-up note it cannot be labeled a dishonesty.

What is Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's view of this right?

Tosefot and Rosh contend that even he will agree that the creditor may retain the paid-up note until he collects the money he laid out for its writing. The dishonesty

enters the scene only when he continues to hold on to the note even after receiving that additional money and thus exposes himself to the danger of forgetting the loan payment and unjustly demanding payment once again. This is in contrast to Rabbi Cahana who holds that since this later forgetting to return the note was the result of an initial legitimate retention of the note it cannot be termed “dishonesty.”

Rabbeinu Nissim (Ran), whose view is the only one cited by the Shulchan Aruch (*Choshen Mishpat 57:1*), contends that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's opinion is that there is a “dishonesty” in retaining a paid-up note, even if the motive is to collect expenses laid out for its writing, because of the danger that he may forget the loan payment and dishonestly demand payment once again.

• Ketubot 19b

Second Look at Missing Brother Mystery

A surface reading of a *gemara* often reveals only the tip of the iceberg and we must rely on the commentaries for the whole picture. Let us illustrate this truth so familiar to Talmudists with an examples from our *gemara*.

Mori bar Issak was visited by a man from Bei Chozoah who claimed that he was his brother and demanded a share in the inheritance from his dead father. When Mori declared that he did not recognize him as his brother the case was brought before the court of Rabbi Chisda. “He may be honestly stating that he does not recognize you,” said Rabbi Chisda to the visitor, “just as Yosef recognized his brothers when they came to Egypt but they failed to recognize him. When he left them they already had beards so that their appearance had not significantly changed. He, however, was then without a beard so that they did not recognize him now with a beard.”

To clarify matters Rabbi Chisda asked the visitor to produce witnesses to testify that he was Mori's brother. “I have such witnesses,” he responded, “but they are afraid to testify against so violent a man as Mori.” Rabbi Chisda then turned to Mori and asked him to produce witnesses that the visitor was not his brother, reversing the normal rule that the burden of proof is on the claimant, because of Mori's violent reputation. To the *gemara's* question that we cannot believe witnesses which Mori brings because they may be intimidated by him to lie on his behalf, the answer is given that we only suspect that witnesses will *refrain* from testifying against him, but not that they will actually lie on his behalf.

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Now let us retell this story based on the commentary of Tosefot.

The visitor was born in the community where Mori lived and went abroad as a youngster together with his father. When he returned and made his claim to the inheritance, Mori did not categorically deny that he was his brother but rather claimed that he did not recognize him. This would seem rather suspect for someone not to be able to recognize his own brother if not for Rabbi Chisda's comparing it to the honest failure of Yosef's brothers to recognize him. When the claimant produced witnesses to testify that he was Mori's brother, they declared that they would not testify. This was sufficient grounds for Rabbi Chisda to accept the charge by the claimant that they were afraid to testify against Mori because of his violent reputation. He then challenged Mori to get those very witnesses to testify either that the claimant was not his brother or that they did not recognize him as being his brother. Why will we believe them asks the *gemara*, if we suspect that they are intimidated by Mori? To which the *gemara* replies that intimidation is presumed only as a cause for the witnesses to refrain from testifying, but not as a cause for them to actually lie in Mori's behalf.

• Ketubot 27b

When the Heat is On

Everything is from Heaven, say our Sages, except cold and heat. Tosefot explains that in regard to all threats to a person's security or comfort which Heaven directs against him he is helpless to prevent them. In regard to cold and heat, however, he has been given the ability to protect himself against their effect.

A challenge to this seems to emerge from a Midrash (*Vayikra Rabbah* 16:8, not *Bereishet Rabbah* as mistakenly appears in our text):

The Roman Emperor Antoninus asked Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi (Rebbie) to bless him. "May Hashem protect you from the cold," said the Sage. "For this I need your blessing?" countered Antoninus who pointed out that all he needed to do to avoid the effects of cold was to add another blanket. "May Hashem protect you from the heat," came the new blessing of Rebbie. "This is indeed a blessing," replies the grateful emperor, "for it is written (*Tehillim* 19:7) 'Nothing is safe from its (the sun's) heat.'"

This Midrash would seem to indicate that man lacks the power to defend himself against the effects of extreme heat, and it was necessary for Rebbie to pray for such protection for the ruler who so befriended him.

Tosefot responds to this challenge by pointing out the difference between a person's ability to protect himself against heat while he is at home and when he is on the

road or involved in battle. While at home, he can cool off in a stone house or basement (the ancient version of fans and air conditioning!), an arrangement not available when he is away. As the ruler of a mighty empire, Antoninus had to do a considerable amount of traveling and conducting wars. He realized that in those situations he would be unable to find refuge from the extreme heat of the sun to which he would often be exposed. He therefore appreciated the blessing of his friend, the Jewish Sage, that he receive special Divine protection from such discomfort.

• Ketubot 30a

A Fate Worse Than Death

A punishment worse than death? Yes, says the Sage Rav. Chanania, Mishael and Azariah were the three Jewish heroes who defied the order of the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnetzar to bow to the statue he had erected even though it meant being cast into a fiery furnace. "We shall not serve your god nor bow to the golden statue which you have erected," they boldly declared before being thrown to a flaming death from which they were miraculously saved (*Daniel* 3:18). Had these same three heroes been subjected to the torture of beatings, says Rav, they would have bowed to the statue.

Our *gemara* cites this statement of Rav as a challenge to the assumption that the punishment of death meted out by a court is worse than the punishment of lashes. This challenge is summarily dismissed by distinguishing between the fixed amount of lashes given by the court and the endless beatings inflicted by an enemy bent on breaking his prisoner.

But Rav's statement about the limited heroism of Chanania, Mishael and Azariah comes under close analysis by Tosefot. The *gemara's* account of Rabbi Akiva's martyrdom (*Mesechta Berachot*) seems to suggest that where martyrdom is required it is even in the face of torture. When the Romans ripped his flesh with iron rakes, he told his disciples that he finally had an opportunity to realize his lifelong ambition to fulfill the Torah command to love Hashem "with all your soul" which means even giving up your life. If Rabbi Akiva considered himself bound to retain his faith in the face of torture worse than lashes, why does Rav conclude that those three heroes would have succumbed to idol worship for fear of lashes?

Tosefot cites the explanation of Rabbeinu Tam that the statue of Nebuchadnetzar was not really an idol to be worshipped, only an instrument for paying homage to the king. This is indicated in the aforementioned declaration of the three heroes which distinguishes between serving the king's god and bowing to his statue. There was therefore no obligation for martyrdom. They were willing to

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give up their lives, however, because there was an element of “*kiddush Hashem*” — sanctification of Hashem’s Name — in their action. For this, however, they would not have endured endless beatings.

Although Tosefot does not clarify why there was a “*kiddush Hashem*” involved in their action, we do find an explanation in the words of Nimukei Yosef at the end of Mesechta Sanhedrin. Although it is wrong for an ordinary Jew to be a martyr where it is not required by law, it is proper for a pious leader to do so when he feels that he will thus strengthen his generation. Since most Jews mistakenly assumed that the statue was an idol and thus became weakened in their abhorrence of idolatry, it was a “*kiddush Hashem*” for the three heroes to sacrifice their lives in order to counteract this trend.

• Ketubot 33b

The Price of Meat

A man borrows a cow and dies before returning it. His children, assuming that the cow belonged to their father and passed on to them as an inheritance, slaughter the cow and eat its flesh. When they discover their error, are they required to pay for the loss they caused to the cow’s owner?

Yes, says the Sage Rava, but not the total value of the meat — only as much as they would have paid to purchase meat at a cheap price.

This ruling of Rava is difficult to understand. If we consider the children responsible for damage caused even without intention, then why should they not be required to pay the full value of the cow? If lack of intention exempts them from responsibility, why should they be compelled to pay anything?

This ruling of Rava is cited by Tosefot (*Bava Kama 27b*) as proof that although the Torah made a person responsible for damage he causes without any intent, there is no responsibility when the matter is completely beyond his control. Another example is that cited in the above *gemara* of a man breaking the vessel of another while walking in the street in the darkness of night.

Since we cannot hold these children responsible for the damage caused in circumstances totally beyond their control, the only claim the cow’s owner can have to them is that they derived benefit from his animal. This benefit, says the *gemara* (*Bava Batra 146b*) is calculated at only two thirds of the value of the meat they ate. The logic for this, explains Rashbam (*ibid.*), is that we assume that had they been aware that they would be required to pay for the meat, they would have refrained from indulging in this pleasure. But if they would have been

able to purchase such meat at a reduction of one third, we assume that they would have been glad to do so, and this is the sum which is therefore considered the benefit they derived and which they are required to repay.

Rashi adds one footnote to the payment responsibility of these innocent heirs: If the skin of the animal is still around they must return it in its entirety to the original owner.

• Ketubot 34b

Sinai and Mountain Mover

A halachic issue troubled the two leading sages of Babylon, Rabbah and Rabbi Yosef, for 22 years. Only after Rabbah passed away and was succeeded by Rabbi Yosef as Rosh Hayeshiva was the problem finally resolved.

The background for this incident is provided by Rashi. At one point both Rabbah and Rabbi Yosef were candidates for the position of Rosh Hayeshiva and each had his own special qualification. Rabbi Yosef was known as “Sinai” because of his encyclopedic knowledge while Rabbah was reputed as “a mover of mountains who grinds them together” because of his sharp analytic powers. The Babylonian community turned for guidance to the Sages in *Eretz Yisrael*, who advised appointing Rabbi Yosef because “everyone is dependant on the supplier of the wheat,” a reference to that sage’s store of information.

Despite the fact that he was offered this prestigious position, Rabbi Yosef declined to accept it. He had earlier learned from astrologers that he was destined to serve as Rosh Hayeshiva for two years and he reckoned that if he accepted the position, his life would come to an end in a couple of years. He therefore chose to wait for 22 years during which he completely deferred to the leadership of Rabbah and began his own term of leadership after Rabbah’s passing. It was only then that the 22-year-old problem was solved.

How was it that a problem whose solution eluded both of these sages for so many years was suddenly solved by the new Rosh Hayeshiva?

This, concludes Rashi, was an act of heavenly intervention. Since Rabbi Yosef was not as distinguished for the brilliance of his analysis as was his predecessor, there was a danger that he would not command the same respect of the Torah scholars. He was therefore provided with Heavenly assistance in solving the problem so that the “Sinai” would also be revered as a “mountain mover.”

• Ketubot 42b

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Hold That Tiger!

An animal which does damage in an unusual manner obligates its owner to pay a penalty equal to half the value of the damage. This includes the classic case of an ox goring the first three times or the parallel of a dog eating sheep. This is considered a penalty rather than payment because the owner was not expected to be aware of the wild nature of his animal. But because it is only a penalty imposed by the Torah to make people more careful in guarding their animals, only a court of judges with *semicha* such as existed in *Eretz Yisrael* had the jurisdiction to impose it upon the offender. In Babylon in Talmudic times, and everywhere today, a rabbinical court cannot force the owner of such an animal to pay the aforementioned penalty.

If, however, the victim confiscates property of the animal's owner in order to cover the cost of this penalty, the court will not take it away from him. What exactly constitutes legal confiscation is the subject of a major dispute amongst the commentaries.

Tosefot cites the view of Rabbeinu Tam that only if the victim seizes the offending animal itself do we allow him to keep it in order to cover the penalty. Should he seize other property it will be removed from him. His reasoning is that if we allow him to confiscate other items, he may seize property worth much more than the sum due him and the court will not be able to remove from him the extra amount because it has no jurisdiction to get involved in litigation concerning penalties.

This view is sharply contested by Rabbeinu Asher (Rosh) and others who contend that confiscation of any property is effective. Should the value of the property confiscated exceed the amount of the penalty the court will compel the confiscator to return the difference. This is not considered judging a case of penalty because that facet of the case has already been concluded with the initial confiscation, and the court is merely dealing with the reclamation of the extra money.

Rabbeinu Tam's approach is the subject of much discussion by later commentaries. Although in our *gemara* he is quoted only as limiting confiscation to the offending animal, another condition is added in Tosefot Bava Kama (15b): The confiscation must take place at the time of the damage. Some commentaries interpret this as confiscation before the animal returns to the home of its owner, drawing a parallel to a later *gemara* (Ketubot 84b) which distinguishes between confiscation of property for debt payment before it enters the domain of the heirs or afterwards. Another view is that Rabbeinu Tam limited confiscation to the very time of damage. The logic of this is that this was a special rabbinic dispensation for the victim who cannot be expected to restrain himself from seizing the offending animal at that moment of anger. This approach may also serve to answer the challenge of the Rashash that even according to Rabbeinu Tam there is the problem of the offending animal being worth more than the penalty and requiring court action to reclaim the difference.

• Ketubot 41b

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

A student who had spent the day learning in our yeshiva in Israel, returned to his old yeshiva in a nearby city, saying that he'd think over the possibility of transferring to ours. His decision was in the affirmative, and after about a week he arrived to begin his studies with us.

The first morning in his new yeshiva did not look very promising, however, when he appeared about two hours late for the morning seder. From this it seemed that he was sorely lacking in the motivation and discipline necessary to success in the formidable challenge of learning *gemara*.

I was already mentally assigning him to the ranks of the well-meaning but under-motivated, when I heard someone say that our new friend was still suffering from jet lag after returning from the States. It seems that the week's delay in transferring to us was due to a quick trip home. So it was not laziness, but travel fatigue, that was the cause of his lateness. Fortunately, I now had the opportunity to revise my overly hasty assessment of this new student, and to give him the fair chance he deserved.

• An Ohrnet reader,
Zichron Yaakov

FiFi's Nose Tweezers

"If a tzara'at affliction will be in a person..." (13:9)

While flying from Detroit to Chicago a couple of weeks ago, I happened to pick up the in-flight buying guide from the pocket of the seat in front of me. What I saw there astounded me. I was amazed at the entrepreneurial skills of the advertisers. Here were solutions to problems that I didn't even realize that I had: Tweezers to remove unsightly hairs from the nostrils of your pet poodle. A digitized sound generator that replicates the sound of a gurgling brook to soothe a depressed goldfish. A set of dentures fixed in a permanent smile to guarantee that at your next job interview you create a positive vibe.

Okay. I'm exaggerating. But not much.

Advertising and consumerism have turned us into a nation of "needers." I need therefore I am. From the moment we turn on our TV in the morning, from the moment we pick up our morning papers, on the subway, at the movies, we are reminded that we are lacking. There are things out there that any self-respecting person ought to have. And we don't have them. We need. We need so much. Although this may have an amusing side, its implications are rather more disturbing.

If I were to ask you to sum up the difference between a child and an adult in one sentence, what would it be?

I would like to suggest that the difference is that a child sees himself as the center of the world, whereas an adult sees G-d as the center of the world.

A child is prepared to wake up a continent if he has a tickle in the back of his throat. An adult understands that he is not the center of creation. Things don't revolve around me, around my self-gratification, around my self-fulfillment. An adult realizes that life is no more than a series of opportunities to give; life is no more than one scenario after another in which I can connect to the Ultimate Giver, by being like Him. According to this definition, most of us are still toddlers.

This is what the Torah means when it says that we are created "in the image of G-d." It doesn't mean that G-d has a face, arms or a white beard. When the Torah speaks anthropomorphically, it does so because it wants to "speak in our language." On a deeper level, however, when it says that man is created "in the image of G-d," it means that just like G-d is the Giver, man is created to be a giver, and not a needer.

In this week's Torah portion, we learn of a malady called *tzara'at*. For centuries, *tzara'at* has been translated erroneously as "leprosy". Even a cursory glance at this week's portion shows the inaccuracy of such a translation. Leprosy is a highly contagious disease. However, if something that looked like *tzara'at* broke out on a newlywed, or if it afflicted someone

during a festival, the Talmud tells us that the *kohen* (the only person capable of establishing the nature of the affliction) should delay his examination so that the joy of the wedding festivities or of the holiday should proceed without impediment. If *tzara'at* really meant leprosy, allowing someone with this disease to roam loose, rubbing shoulders with all and sundry at a wedding feast or a Jewish holiday, would be criminal negligence.

Tzara'at was not a physical disease but a malaise of the spirit. It was merely the physical symptom of a chronic spiritual illness. If we do not see such a disease today, it is because our bodies have become so desensitized to our spiritual state that they can no longer act as a barometer to our spiritual well-being.

One of the causes of *tzara'at* was chronic selfishness.

From the Jewish perspective, society does not exist for its own sake, nor does it exist so that we may fulfill our own needs, it exists so that we may become givers, so that we may exercise our kindness and his caring. When someone fails in this fundamental area, he demonstrates that he has failed to understand the purpose of society itself. Thus he has no place in society until he can cure himself of this failing. Therefore the Torah prescribes that he must dwell "outside of the camp" until he ceases being a chronic "needer" and returns to being a reflection of G-d Himself — the Ultimate Giver.

The Torah commands a woman to bring a *korban* after the birth of a child. A son is to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. The Torah introduces the phenomenon of *tzara'at* (often mistranslated as leprosy) — a miraculous disease that attacks people, clothing and buildings to awaken a person to spiritual failures. A *kohen* must be consulted to determine whether a particular mark is *tara'at* or not. The *kohen* isolates the sufferer

for a week. If the disease remains unchanged, confinement continues for a second week, after which the *kohen* decides the person's status. The Torah describes the different forms of *tzara'at*. One whose *tzara'at* is confirmed wears torn clothing, does not cut his hair, and must alert others that he is ritually impure. He may not have normal contact with people. The phenomenon of *tzara'at* on clothing is described in detail.

1. When does a woman who has given birth to a son go to the *mikveh*?
2. After a woman gives birth, she is required to offer two types of offerings. Which are they?
3. What animal does the woman offer as a *chatat*?
4. Which of these offerings makes her *tahor* (ritual purity)?
5. Which of the sacrifices does the woman offer first, the *olah* or the *chatat*?
6. Who determines whether a person is a *metzora tamei* (person with ritually impure *tzara'at*) or is *tahor*?
7. If the *kohen* sees that the *tzara'at* has spread after one week, how does he rule?
8. What disqualifies a *kohen* from being able to give a ruling in a case of *tzara'at*?
9. Why is the appearance of *tzara'at* on the tip of one of the 24 "limbs" that project from the body usually unable to be examined?
10. On which days is a *kohen* not permitted to give a ruling on *tzara'at*?
11. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow (e.g., the head or beard), what color hair is indicative of ritual impurity?
12. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow, what color hair is indicative of purity?
13. If the *kohen* intentionally or unintentionally pronounces a *tamei* person "*tahor*," what is that person's status?
14. What signs of mourning must a *metzora* display?
15. Why must a *metzora* call out, "*Tamei! Tamei!*"?
16. Where must a *metzora* dwell?
17. Why is a *metzora* commanded to dwell in isolation?
18. What sign denotes *tzara'at* in a garment?
19. What must be done to a garment that has *tzara'at*?
20. If after washing a garment the signs of *tzara'at* disappear entirely, how is the garment purified?

Answers to Tazria's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 12:2 - At the end of seven days.
2. 12:6 - An *olah* and a *chatat*.
3. 12:6 - A *tor* (turtle dove) or a *ben yona* (young pigeon).
4. 12:7 - The *chatat*.
5. 12:8 - The *chatat*.
6. 13:2 - A *kohen*.
7. 13:5 - The person is *tamei*.
8. 13:12 - Poor vision.
9. 13:14 - The *tzara'at* as a whole must be seen at one time. Since these parts are angular, they cannot be seen at one time.
10. 13:14 - During the festivals; and ruling on a groom during the seven days of feasting after the marriage.
11. 13:29 - Golden.
12. 13:37 - Any color other than golden.
13. 13:37 - He remains *tamei*.
14. 13:45 - He must tear his garments, let his hair grow wild, and cover his lips with his garment.
15. 13:45 - So people will know to keep away from him.
16. 13:46 - Outside the camp in isolation.
17. 13:46 - Since *tzara'at* is a punishment for *lashon hara* (evil speech), which creates a rift between people, the Torah punishes measure for measure by placing a division between him and others.
18. 13:49 - A dark green or dark red discoloration.
19. 13:52 - It must be burned
20. 13:58 - Through immersion in a *mikveh*.

I Didn't Know That

Tzara'at cannot afflict houses in Jerusalem.

• Yoma 12a

Bonus Q&A

Q. Why do people no longer contract *tzara'at*?

A. When a person commits certain sins, a spiritual impurity occurs. There is a spark of holiness within the person that cannot tolerate sin. At one time, the holiness within the person would reject this impurity by pushing it to the surface and the skin eruption of *tzara'at* appeared. As time went on, the level of holiness among people decreased, so that a person no longer has the power to reject the spiritual impurities caused by sin, and *tzara'at* ceased.

• Alshich

PARSHAT METZORA

Sticks and Stones

“And he shall be brought to the kohen.” (14:3)

When a person speaks *lashon hara*, it indicates that he has no concept of the power of speech. It shows that he considers words to be insignificant in comparison to actions: As the nursery rhyme says, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me.” Nothing could be further from the truth. When a person speaks evil he awakes a prosecutor in Heaven not only against the target of his *lashon hara*, but also against himself. An angel with a “tape-recorder” stands by the side of each one of us recording our every word.

In order to teach those who speak *lashon hara* the power of just one word, the Torah instructs that the offender be brought to the *kohen*. But, even as he is on his way to the *kohen*, his body covered with *tzara'at* for all to see, until the *kohen* actually pronounces the word “Impure” he is still considered totally pure. Similarly, he cannot regain his former status, even though his disease has healed completely, until the *kohen* again pronounces him to be spiritually pure. From this the speaker of *lashon hara* is taught to reflect on the power of each and every word. *For with one word, he can be made an outcast, and with one word he can be redeemed.*

• Based on *Ohel Yaakov*

HAFTARAH

Shabbat Hagadol: Malachi 3:4-24

The Shabbat immediately before Pesach is called *Shabbat Hagadol* — the Great Shabbat. It commemorates the day in Egypt that the Jews each took a sheep, the Egyptian deity, and tied it to their bedposts, informing the Egyptians that their god was about to become an offering to Hashem. In spite of their fury, the Egyptians were powerless to act, although the Jews did not know this at the time. Rather, they acted out of trust of Hashem and Moshe, His prophet. Thus the Shabbat immediately before the first redemption was a day when the faith of the Jewish People was rewarded with Hashem’s protection.

“Behold! I send you Eliyahu the prophet before the great and awesome day of Hashem.” (7:3)

The night of Pesach is called “A night of guardings,” when the Jewish People are guarded from their enemies. “A night of guardings” also implies that this night, the night of Pesach, is “guarded” — set aside for all time — as a night on which the final redemption can come. Every year, the night of Pesach has in it the power of redemption, it has the ability to bring forth the actual from the potential. Shabbat also has this ability to express and crystallize the latent power of the week that follows it. Therefore, every *Shabbat Hagadol* contains the power of the redemption from Egypt, already awakened in this Shabbat is the force of “the great and awesome day of Hashem.”

• *Maharal*

METZORA

PARSHA Overview

The Torah describes the procedure for a *metzora* (a person afflicted with *tzara'at*) upon conclusion of his isolation. This process extends for a week, and involves offerings and immersions in the *mikveh*. Then, a *kohen* must pronounce the *metzora* pure. A *metzora* of limited financial means may substitute lesser offerings for the more expensive animals. Before a *kohen* diagnoses that a house has *tzara'at*, household

possessions are removed to prevent them from also being declared ritually impure. The *tzara'at* is removed by smashing and rebuilding that section of the house; if it reappears, the entire building must be razed. The Torah details those bodily secretions that render a person spiritually impure, thereby preventing his contact with holy items, and how one regains a state of ritual purity.

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1. When may a *metzora* not be pronounced *tahor*?
2. In the *midbar*, where did a *metzora* dwell while he was *tamei*?
3. Why does the *metzora* require birds in the purification process?
4. In the purification process of a *metzora*, what does the cedar wood symbolize?
5. During the purification process, the *metzora* is required to shave his hair. Which hair must he shave?
6. What is unique about the *chatat* and the *asham* offered by the *metzora*?
7. In the *Beit Hamikdash*, when the *metzora* was presented “before Hashem” (14:11), where did he stand?
8. Where was the *asham* of the *metzora* slaughtered?
9. How was having *tzara’at* in one’s house sometimes advantageous?
10. When a house is suspected as having *tzara’at*, what is its status prior to the inspection by a *kohen*?
11. What happens to the vessels that are in a house found to have *tzara’at*?
12. Which type of vessels cannot be made *tahor* after they become *tamei*?
13. Where were stones afflicted with *tzara’at* discarded?
14. When a house is suspected of having *tzara’at*, a *kohen* commands that the affected stones be replaced and the house plastered. What is the law if the *tzara’at*: a) returns and spreads; b) does not return; c) returns, but does not spread?
15. When a person enters a house that has *tzara’at*, when do his clothes become *tamei*?
16. What is the status of a man who is *zav* (sees a flow): a) two times or two consecutive days; b) three times or three consecutive days?
17. A *zav* sat or slept on the following: a) a bed; b) a plank; c) a chair; d) a rock. If a *tahor* person touches these things what is his status?
18. What does the Torah mean when it refers to a *zav* who “has not washed his hands”?
19. When may a *zav* immerse in a *mikveh* to purify himself?
20. What is the status of someone who experiences a one time flow?

Answers to Metzora’s Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 14:2 - At night.
2. 14:3 - Outside the three camps.
3. 14:4 - *Tzara’at* comes as a punishment for *lashon hara*. Therefore, the Torah requires the *metzora* to offer birds, who chatter constantly, to atone for his sin of chattering.
4. 14:4 - The cedar is a lofty tree. It alludes to the fact that *tzara’at* comes as a punishment for haughtiness.
5. 14:9 - Any visible collection of hair on the body.
6. 14:10 - They require *n’sachim* (drink offerings).
7. 14:11 - At the gate of Nikanor.
8. 14:13 - On the northern side of the *mizbe’ach*.
9. 14:34 - The Amorites concealed treasures in the walls of their houses. After the conquest of the Land, *tzara’at* would afflict these houses. The Jewish owner would tear down the house and find the treasures.
10. 14:36 - It is *tahor*.
11. 14:36 - They become *tamei*.
12. 14:36 - Earthenware vessels.
13. 14:40 - In places where *tahor* objects were not handled.
14. a) 14:44-45 - It is called “*tzara’at mam’eret*,” and the house must be demolished; b) 14:48 - the house is pronounced *tahor*; c) 14:44 - The house must be demolished.
15. 14:46 - When he remains in the house long enough to eat a small meal.
16. 15:2 - a) He is *tamei*; b) he is *tamei* and is also required to bring a *korban*.
17. 15:4-5 - Only a type of object that one usually lies or sits upon becomes a transmitter of *tumah* when a *zav* sits or lies on it. A *tahor* person who subsequently touches the object becomes *tamei* and the clothes he is wearing are also *tmei’im*. Therefore: a) *tamei*; b) *tahor*; c) *tamei*; d) *tahor*.
18. 15:11 - One who has not immersed in a *mikveh*.
19. 15:13 - After seven consecutive days without a flow.
20. 15:32 - He is *tamei* until evening.

I Didn’t Know That

“**And he (the *metzora*) shall offer it as an *asham* (guilt offering)...” (14:12)** An *asham* is offered when one has misused holy possessions. The *metzora* brings an *asham* because he misused his faculty of speech.

• Sforno

Bonus Q&A

Q. Since the signs of a *tzara’at* are easily recognized, why is the person’s status dependent only upon the word and declaration of the *kohen*?

A. *Tzara’at* is the punishment for *lashon hara*. A person who speaks *lashon hara* doesn’t realize the power of speech. The Torah teaches this to the *metzora* by giving the *kohen* the ability to declare, with a single word, that the person is *tamei*.

• Ohel Yaakov

Cliffhanger

“Do not imitate the practices of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled...” (18:3)

A group of people live on a mountain-top which ends in a sheer cliff and a drop of several thousand feet. One civic-minded fellow, on his own initiative, builds a safety fence to prevent anyone from venturing too close to the edge of the cliff and inadvertently falling off. Would anyone complain that the fence limited his freedom of movement by making it less likely that he plummet off the mountain to his death?

Often we hear those who do not understand the true nature of rabbinic legislation complain that the Rabbis restricted our lives with unnecessary and complicated extra laws and prohibitions. But one who appreciates the seriousness of transgressing a Torah law — the devastating effects that such transgressions have on the *neshama*, one’s eternal life, and the world in gen-

eral — feels much more secure knowing that safety fences have been erected to prevent him from plummeting into a spiritual oblivion.

• Adapted from Rabbi Zev Leff’s *Outlooks and Insights*

From the Inside Out

“And he (Aharon) will place the incense on the fire in front of Hashem.” (16:13)

In the first part of the service of Yom Kippur in the *Beit Hamikdash*, the *kohen gadol* would burn incense in the Holy-of-Holies. The *Tzedukim* (Sadducees), who denied the authority of the Oral Torah, claimed that the incense should first be placed on the fire in a fire-pan outside the Holy-of-Holies, and only then the *kohen gadol* should carry it inside. The Talmud (*Yoma* 53) cites the above verse as a proof to the contrary: That the incense should only be placed on the fire “in front of Hashem.” In every generation, the Jewish People has its “*Tzedukim*” — those who wish to introduce novelty

into Judaism from what they have seen “outside”. To ape the secular world and introduce “improvements,” “adjustments” and “modernizations” into the sanctity of Israel. The Torah sages of every generation fight a constant and bitter battle against these “improvements”. Which is *not* to say that the Torah is stuck in a bygone age. On the contrary, the Torah speaks to each generation on every aspect of life; sometimes involving itself in the finest minutiae of science, in order to express how the Halacha views all that pertains to the modern world. But that view is extrapolated from the inward essence of the Torah outward, not grafted on from the outside. The Torah addresses the modern world, not in terms of compromise or appeasement, not through pandering to the ideology of the hour, nor to the dictates of the fashions of the world at large. Rather it views the world through intrinsic principles enshrined in immutable criteria.

• Based on *Hadrash V’Ha’lyun*

Haftara Amos 9.7-15 Down on the Farm

“Behold, days are coming, the words of Hashem, when the plower will encounter the reaper...” (9:13)

A “townie,” who had never been out of the city, once found himself in the country, watching a farmer plowing up the earth and sowing seed in the furrows. He thought to himself that here was certainly someone who needed urgent psychiatric help: Someone burying perfectly good grain in the earth so that it would rot! He left, and went back to town shortly afterward. Had the “townie” stayed in the country longer, he would have witnessed how each rotting seed had given bloom to many heavy sheaves of wheat which had been harvested and its grain gathered in sufficien-

cy for the whole year. Had he stayed, he would certainly have understood that the plowing and sowing were only to achieve this end, and there would have been no question in his mind that the farmer was a lunatic. However, since he returned to the city, he had no idea as to the true purpose of the farmer.

In our days, we look around us at the world, and we see the wicked prosper and the righteous in dire adversity. However, we only see the beginning of the process, not its purpose and completion. In the time-to-come, when there will be a complete revelation of Hashem’s providential guidance in the world, we will understand the purpose of every single event, however seemingly illogical or unfair: The “plowing” will be seen through the perspective of the “harvesting” — “when the plower will encounter the reaper...”

• Based on the *Dubna Maggid*

PARSHA Overview

Hashem instructs the *kohanim* to exercise extreme care when they enter the *Mishkan*. On Yom Kippur, the *kohen gadol* is to approach the holiest part of the *Mishkan* after special preparations and wearing special clothing. He brings offerings unique to Yom Kippur, including two identical goats that are designated by lottery. One is “for Hashem” and is offered in the Temple, while the other is “for Azazel” in the desert. The Torah states the individual’s obligations on Yom Kippur: On the 10th day of the seventh month,

one must afflict oneself. We abstain from eating and drinking, anointing, wearing leather footwear, washing, and marital relations.

Consumption of blood is prohibited. The blood of slaughtered birds and undomesticated beasts must be covered. The people are warned against engaging in the wicked practices that were common in Egypt. Incest is defined and prohibited. Marital relations are forbidden during a woman’s monthly cycle. Homosexuality, bestiality and child sacrifice are prohibited.

1. Why does the Torah emphasize that *Parshat Acharei Mot* was taught after the death of Aharon's sons?
2. What is the punishment for a *kohen gadol* who inappropriately enters the *kodesh kodashim*?
3. How long did the first *Beit Hamikdash* stand?
4. What did the *kohen gadol* wear when he entered the *kodesh kodashim*?
5. How many times did the *kohen gadol* change his clothing and immerse in the *mikveh* on Yom Kippur?
6. How many times did he wash his hands and feet from the *kiyor* (copper laver)?
7. The *kohen gadol* offered a bull *chatat* to atone for himself and his household. Who paid for it?
8. One of the goats that was chosen by lot went to *azazel*. What is *azazel*?
9. Who is included in the "household" of the *kohen gadol*?
10. For what sin does the goat *chatat* atone?
11. After the Yom Kippur service, what is done with the four linen garments worn by the *kohen gadol*?
12. Where were the fats of the *chatat* burned?
13. Who is solely responsible for attaining atonement for the Jewish People on Yom Kippur?
14. From one point in history, installation of the *kohen gadol* through anointing was no longer used but was conducted by donning the special garments of that office. From when and why?
15. What is the penalty of *karet*?
16. Which categories of animals must have their blood covered when they are slaughtered?
17. When a person eats a kosher bird that was improperly slaughtered (a *neveilah*), at what point does he contract *tumah*?
18. The Torah commands the Jewish People not to follow the *chukim* of the Canaanites. What are the forbidden "*chukim*"?
19. What is the difference between a *mishpat* and a *chok*?
20. May a man marry his wife's sister?

Answers to Acharei Mot's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 16:1 - To strengthen the warning not to enter the *kodesh kodashim* except on Yom Kippur.
2. 16:2 - Death.
3. 16:3 - 410 years.
4. 16:4 - Only the four linen garments worn by an ordinary *kohen*.
5. 16:4 - Five times.
6. 16:4 - Ten times.
7. 16:6 - The *kohen gadol*.
8. 16:8 - A jagged cliff.
9. 16:11 - All the *kohanim*.
10. 16:16 - For unknowingly entering the *Beit Hamikdash* in the state of *tumah*.
11. 16:23 - They must be put into *geniza* and not be used again.
12. 16:25 - On the outer *mizbe'ach*.
13. 16:32 - The *kohen gadol*.
14. 16:32 - Anointing ceased during the kingship of Yoshiahu. At that time, the oil of anointing was hidden away.
15. 17:9 - One's offspring die and one's own life is shortened.
16. 17:13 - Non-domesticated kosher animals and all species of kosher birds.
17. 17:15 - When the food enters the esophagus.
18. 18:3 - Their social customs.
19. 18:4 - A *mishpat* conforms to the human sense of justice. A *chok* is a law whose reason is not given to us and can only be understood as a decree from Hashem.
20. 18:18 - Yes, but not during the lifetime of his wife.

I Didn't Know That

In preparation for Yom Kippur, a second *kohen* was inducted as *kohen gadol* in case the first *kohen gadol* became ineligible.

• Ramban

Kasha

Q: Verses 18:1-29 list the prohibitions against immorality. Why do we read this section during the *minchah* of Yom Kippur?

A: To teach that even during the holiest day of the year, one must be careful to guard oneself against even the most base abominations.

• Mayana Shel Torah

You and Me

“Love your neighbor as yourself — I am Hashem.” (19:18)

Rabbi Akiva states that this is the fundamental principal of all the Torah. But, in truth, how is it possible to love another person as one loves oneself? A person’s whole view of the world tends to be ego-centric, and even when he behaves altruistically it is usually based on the desire to feel good about himself — that’s not loving as yourself, that’s called *loving yourself!* The answer is at the end of the verse *“I am Hashem.”* When a person puts himself at the center of the universe instead of Hashem, then necessarily every other creation is light-years away from him. But when he acknowledges that Hashem is G-d, then as a creation of Hashem he sees himself as linked to his fellow man. In

essence there becomes no difference between “me” and “you”. As we are all expressions of the will of the Creator, as much as I can love myself, I can love my neighbor.

• Heard from Rabbi Mordechai Perlman

Faces of Holiness

“Speak to all of the congregation of the Children of Israel and tell them: ‘You must be Holy.’” (19:2)

We often think of holiness as something that only a few exceptional individuals can aspire to. However, the fact that Hashem gave this mitzvah to Moshe in the form of “Speak to all the congregation” teaches us that not only the exceptional among us is capable of holiness, but every one of us is *commanded* to be Holy. When the Torah was given on Mount Sinai, the *Midrash*, commenting on the verse *“And all the people saw*

the voices” tells us *“The voice came out and was divided into many many different voices, and everyone heard according to his strength.”* In other words, when one person heard *“You shall not murder,”* he understood it to mean *“Don’t pick up your ax and murder!”* While another understood *“You shall not murder”* to mean that if a dead body is found close to the outskirts of your town, you will be held responsible for not giving him sufficient protection, food and escort, as though you’d killed him. To yet another it meant don’t embarrass someone in public, because when the blood drains from his face and he turns white, it is as though you had killed him. Each person heard the voice according to his own strength and unique talents, and similarly every Jew is expected to be holy on his level because he is an individual spark of the holiness of G-d.

• Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin

Haftara Yeshaya 66:1-66:24

Shabbat Rosh Chodesh (New Month)

The Haftara for Parshat Kedoshim is the special one we read when *Rosh Chodesh* falls on Shabbat. The last verses relate to both *Rosh Chodesh* and Shabbat as times when in the future, the people will visit the Sanctuary to worship G-d.

Yeshaya proclaims that G-d, who created the whole universe, does not need the Sanctuary nor our worship. He commanded the Sanctuary worship for our benefit, as a way for us to express our gratitude and respect; but internal virtue is the main idea. When that is lacking, all the rest is meaningless.

Yeshaya narrates the future redemption which will be miraculously fast and unprecedented, after which all the nations will come to Jerusalem to the *Beit Hamikdash* to worship the one true G-d.

River of Peace

“Like a river do I lead peace unto her...” (66:12)

G-d declares that in the future, He will bring peace to the Jewish nation like a river. The Talmud (*Berachot 56b*) derives from the above verse that one who dreams of a river will enjoy peace. The Talmud cites two other verses by which it derives that dreaming of a bird or a pot also indicates peace. How is this to be understood?

Peace ensues when opposites live in harmony. A pot symbolizes peace, as a pot enables fire and water to coexist. A bird symbolizes the peaceful coexistence of the physical and ethereal, as a bird flies in the sky and also walks on the ground. And a river is a place where both rain from heaven and water from underground collect, and conducts the water to inhabited areas for the use of mankind.

Thus in the future redemption, both physical wealth and spiritual abundance will be present in one location, and the righteous will be also the prosperous.

PARSHA Overview

The nation is enjoined to be holy. Many prohibitions and positive commandments are taught:

Prohibitions: Idolatry; eating offerings after their time-limit; theft and robbery; denial of theft; false oaths; retention of someone’s property; delaying payment to an employee; hating or cursing a fellow Jew (especially one’s parents); gossip; placing physical and spiritual stumbling blocks; perversion of justice; inaction when others are in danger; embarrassing; revenge; bearing a grudge; cross-breeding; wearing a garment of wool and linen; harvesting

a tree during its first three years; gluttony and intoxication; witchcraft; shaving the beard and sideburns; and tattooing.

Positive: Awe for parents and respect for the elderly; leaving part of the harvest for the poor; loving others (especially a convert); eating in Jerusalem the fruits from a tree’s 4th year; awe for the Temple; respect for Torah scholars, the blind and the deaf. Family life must be holy. We are warned again not to imitate gentile behavior, lest we lose the Land of Israel. We must observe kashrut, thus maintaining our unique and separate status.

1. Why was *Parshat Kedoshim* said in front of all the Jewish People?
2. Why does the Torah mention the duty to honor one's father before it mentions the duty to honor one's mother?
3. Why is the command to fear one's parents followed by the command to keep Shabbat?
4. Why does Shabbat observance supersede honoring parents?
5. What is "*leket*?"
6. In *Shemot* 20:13, the Torah commands "Do not steal." What does the Torah add when it commands in *Vayikra* 19:11 "Do not steal?"
7. "Do not do wrong to your neighbor" (19:13). To what "wrong" is the Torah referring?
8. By when must you pay someone who worked for you during the day?
9. How does Rashi explain the prohibition "Don't put a stumbling block before a sightless person?"
10. In a monetary case involving a poor person and a rich person, a judge is likely to wrongly favor the poor person. What rationale does Rashi give for this?
11. When rebuking someone, what sin must one be careful to avoid?
12. It's forbidden to bear a grudge. What example does Rashi give of this?
13. The Torah forbids tattooing. How is a tattoo made?
14. How does one fulfill the mitzvah of "*hadarta p'nei zaken*?"
15. What punishment will never come to the entire Jewish People?
16. What penalty does the Torah state for cursing one's parents?
17. When the Torah states a death penalty but doesn't define it precisely, to which penalty is it referring?
18. What will result if the Jewish People ignore the laws of forbidden relationships?
19. Which of the forbidden relationships listed in this week's Parsha were practiced by the Canaanites?
20. Is it proper for a Jew to say "I would enjoy eating ham?"

Answers to Kedoshim's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 19:2 - Because the fundamental teachings of the Torah are contained in this Parsha.
2. 19:3 - Since it is more natural to honor one's mother, the Torah stresses the obligation to honor one's father.
3. 19:3 - To teach that one must not violate Torah law even at the command of one's parents.
4. 19:3 - Because the parents are also commanded by Hashem to observe Shabbat. Parents deserve great honor, but not at the "expense" of Hashem's honor.
5. 19:9 - "*Leket*" is one or two stalks of grain accidentally dropped while harvesting. They are left for the poor.
6. 19:11 - The Torah in *Vayikra* prohibits monetary theft. In *Shemot* it prohibits kidnapping.
7. 19:13 - Withholding wages from a worker.
8. 19:13 - Before the following dawn.
9. 19:13 - Don't give improper advice to a person who is unaware in a matter. For example, don't advise someone to sell his field, when in reality you yourself wish to buy it.
10. 19:15 - The judge might think: "This rich person is obligated to give charity to this poor person regardless of the outcome of this court case. Therefore, I'll rule in favor of the poor person. That way, he'll receive the financial support he needs without feeling shame.
11. 19:17 - Causing public embarrassment.
12. 19:18 - Person A asks person B: "Can I borrow your shovel?" Person B says: "No." The next day, B says to A: "Can I borrow your scythe?" A replies: "Sure, I'm not stingy like you are."
13. 19:28 - Ink is injected into the skin with a needle.
14. 19:32 - By not sitting in the seat of elderly people, and by not contradicting their statements.
15. 20:3 - "*Karet*" — being spiritually "cut off."
16. 20:9 - Death by stoning.
17. 20:10 - *Chenek* (strangulation).
18. 20:22 - The land of Israel will "spit them out."
19. 20:23 - All of them.
20. 20:26 - Yes.

I Didn't Know That

"You shall surely rebuke your fellow Jew" (19:17) Any love not accompanied by rebuke is not true love.

• *Bereishet Rabbah*

Kasha

Q. "Keep my *Shabbatot*." (19:30) Why is the word "*Shabbatot*" in the plural?

A. The festivals, such as Pesach and Shavuot are also called "*Shabbatot*" because they are days when we refrain from creative actions. "*Shabbatot*" is plural because it refers to both the seventh day and to the festivals.

• *Tractate Shavuot*

The Eternal Flame

“Command the Children of Israel ... to kindle a continual lamp.” (24:2)

Go into any Synagogue when it’s dark and you will see a small lamp shining above the Holy Ark. It’s called the *ner tamid* — the eternal flame.

That lamp is a memorial of the *ner ma’aravi* (western lamp) of the menorah which the *kohanim* lit in the *Beit Hamikdash*. The *ner ma’aravi* burned miraculously. It never went out. Every evening, when the *kohen* came to kindle the flames he would find the *ner ma’aravi* still alight from the previous evening. He would remove the still-burning wick and oil, clean out its receptacle and then put back the burning wick and the oil. Then he would kindle all the other lamps with the western lamp.

However, when the Romans destroyed the *Beit Hamikdash* it seemed that the little solitary flame had been put out forever.

In Rome, there stands a triumphal arch built by the Emperor Titus. One of its *bas-reliefs* depicts the menorah being carried through

the streets of Rome as part of the booty pillaged from the *Beit Hamikdash*. All its lamps are dark. It looks like some expensive antique, soon to languish under the dust of ages in some Vatican vault.

But did Titus really extinguish that eternal flame?

The *Beit Hamikdash* is a macrocosm of the human body. If you look at a plan of the sanctuary in the *Beit Hamikdash*, you will notice that the placement of the various vessels — the altar, the table, the menorah — corresponds to the location of the vital organs in the human body. Each of the Temple’s vessels represents a human organ.

The menorah corresponds to the heart.

Why is it that so many young people today are choosing to return to the beliefs and practices that their parents had forgotten, and their grandparents despaired of seeing continued? It is as though some mystical force is transmitted in the spiritual genes of every Jew. A light burning on the menorah of the Jewish heart across the millennia. A light which can never be extinguished, which burns miracu-

lously, even without replenishment of the oil or wicks of mitzvah observance.

So, in a mystical sense, the light Titus tried to put out continues to burn in the menorah of the Jewish heart. But there’s more.

It would come as a great disappointment to Titus, but the menorah that is collecting dust in the Vatican is not the original menorah. It is a copy. The original menorah was hidden away (together with the other vessels) in the caves and tunnels under the Temple Mount.

If while the Temple was standing the western lamp of the menorah burned miraculously without human assistance, so why shouldn’t it go on burning even after it was buried?

That western lamp continues to “burn” under the Temple Mount throughout the long dark night of exile. It continues to “burn” to this day. And it will continue to “burn” until *Mashiach* comes. Then, the light of the menorah of the Jewish heart will be revealed as identical to the light of the menorah in the Holy *Beit Hamikdash*.

Sources:

• *Sfat Emet, Rabbi Akiva Tatz*

PARSHA Overview

The *kohanim* are commanded to avoid contact with corpses in order to maintain a high standard of ritual purity. They may attend the funeral of only their seven closest relatives: Father, mother, wife, son, daughter, brother, and unmarried sister. The *kohen gadol* (High Priest) may not attend the funeral even of his closest relatives. Certain marital restrictions are placed on the *kohanim*. The nation is required to honor the *kohanim*. The physical irregularities that invalidate a *kohen* from serving in the Temple are listed. *Terumah*, a produce tithe given to the *kohanim*, may be eaten only by *kohanim* and their household. An animal may be sacrificed in the Temple after it is eight days old

and is free from any physical defects. The nation is commanded to sanctify the Name of Hashem by insuring that their behavior is always exemplary, and by being prepared to surrender their lives rather than murder, engage in licentious relations or worship idols. The special characteristics of the holidays are described, and the nation is reminded not to do certain types of creative work during these holidays. New grain may not be eaten until the *omer* of barley is offered in the Temple. The Parsha explains the laws of preparing the oil for the menorah and baking the *lechem hapanim* in the Temple. A man blasphemes Hashem and is executed as prescribed in the Torah.

HAFTARA

Yechezkel 44:15-31

This prophecy relates to the future Sanctuary and narrates many of the special laws of the priests and the sanctuary worship. This corresponds to the numerous priestly laws in Parashat Emor.

Blood and Fat

The parts of the sacrifices mentioned in the Haftara as including the whole concept of sacrifice are blood and fat (44:15). Sprinkling the blood on the corners of the altar and burning certain

fats are the major obligation in all sacrifices.

The evil inclination is a combination of two types of passion, that of physical enjoyment and that of non-physical desires like honor and pride. Fat symbolizes the physical gain of gluttony and other materialistic pleasures, while blood represents the dynamic greed for glory and the endless pursuit of honor, which is often associated with bloodshed — the destruction of a fellow human. The idea of sacrifices is for us to connect our cerebral, abstract repentance with a physical action; we therefore offer up to G-d tangible entities corresponding to the two parts of our evil inclination we wish to overcome in order to refine ourselves and come closer to G-d.

*The
Ohr Somayach Family
Wishes You a
Chag Kasher v'Somayach.*

חג כשר ושמח

1. Which male descendants of Aharon are exempt from the prohibition against contacting a dead body?
2. Does a *kohen* have an option regarding becoming ritually defiled when his unmarried sister passes away?
3. How does one honor a *kohen*?
4. How does the Torah restrict the *kohen gadol* with regard to mourning?
5. The Torah states in verse 22:3 that one who “approaches holy objects” while in a state of *tumah* (impurity) is penalized with excision. What does the Torah mean by “approaches”?
6. What is the smallest piece of a corpse that is able to transmit *tumah*?
7. Who in the household of a *kohen* may eat *terumah*?
8. If the daughter of a *kohen* marries a “zar” she may no longer eat *terumah*. What is a *zar*?
9. What is the difference between a *neder* and a *nedavah*?
10. May a person slaughter an animal and its father on the same day?
11. How does the Torah define “profaning” the Name of Hashem?
12. Apart from Shabbos, how many days are there during the year about which the Torah says that work is forbidden?
13. How big is an *omer*?
14. On what day do we begin to “count the *omer*”?
15. Why do we begin counting the *omer* at night?
16. How does the *omer* differ from other *minchah* offerings?
17. The blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is called a “*zichron teruah*” (sound of remembrance). For what is it a reminder?
18. What is unusual about the wood of the *etrog* tree?
19. Who was the father of the blasphemer?
20. What is the penalty for intentionally wounding one’s parent?

Answers to this Week’s Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 21:1 - *Challalim* — those disqualified from the priesthood because they are descended from a relationship forbidden to a *kohen*.
2. 21:3 - No, he is required to do so.
3. 21:8 - He is first in all matters of holiness. For example, a *kohen* reads from the Torah first, and is usually the one to lead the blessings before and after meals.
4. 21:10-12 - He may not allow his hair to grow long, nor attend to his close relatives if they die, nor accompany a funeral procession.
5. 22:3 - Eats.
6. 22:5 - A piece the size of an olive.
7. 22:11 - He, his wife, his sons, his unmarried daughters and his non-Jewish slaves.
8. 22:12 - A non-*kohen*.
9. 22:18 - A *neder* is an obligation upon a person; a *nedavah* is an obligation placed upon an object.
10. 22:28 - Yes. The Torah only prohibits slaughtering an animal and its mother on the same day.
11. 22:32 - Willfully transgressing the commandments.
12. 23:7-36 - Seven.
13. 23:10 - One tenth of an *eipha*.
14. 23:15 - On the 16th of Nissan.
15. 23:15 - The Torah requires counting seven complete weeks. If we begin counting in the daytime, the seven weeks would not be complete, because according to the Torah a day starts at nightfall.
16. 23:16 - It was made from barley.
17. 23:24 - The *akeidat* (binding of) Yitzchak.
18. 23:40 - It has the same taste as the fruit.
19. 24:10 - The Egyptian killed by Moshe (*Shemot* 2:12).
- 24:21 - Death.

I Didn’t Know That

“The son of the Israelite woman cursed Hashem...his mother’s name was Shlomit bat Divri...”(24:11) The Midrash says: “Why was she called ‘bat Divri?’ Because she brought *dever* (disease) upon her son.” (*Vayikra Rabbah* 32)

The blasphemer was executed by stoning. Why, then, does the above Midrash say that his mother brought “*dever*” — disease — upon him?

One of the ten plagues was cattle disease. The commen-

taries explain that although no cattle belonging to the Children of Israel died, there was one apparently Jewish person whose cattle did die. Who was this person? The son of Shlomit bat Divri. His cattle died because his father was an Egyptian taskmaster; he was therefore not one of the “Children of Israel,” such that his cattle would enjoy miraculous protection. Hence, by bearing a son from an Egyptian man, his mother caused her son to suffer from the plague of “*dever*.”

• Heard from Rabbi Sholem Fishbane

Bonus Q&A

“And you shall count from the day after Pesach, from the day you bring the *omer* offering, seven complete weeks...” (23:15)

Q. Starting the day after Pesach, Jews worldwide begin the *mitzvah* of “counting

the *omer*,” counting the 49 days until the Festival of Shavuot. Why don’t we say a *shehechyanu* blessing when we begin this *mitzvah*, as we do when fulfilling other *mitzvahs* that come around once a year? For example, we say *shehechyanu* when we shake the lulav and read the Megillah.

A. The *omer* was an offering brought on the day after Pesach in Temple times. We only say *shehechyanu* on a *mitzvah* which brings us joy. Counting the *omer*, on the other hand, reminds us of the pain that we are presently unable to bring the Temple offerings.

• *Rashba*, cited in *Aruch Hashulchan* 489:5

ASK the RABBI

Sea-ing Red

From: Stephen Tenzer in Germantown, MD
<tenny222@aol.com>

Dear Rabbi,

I recently read a book which claimed that the Israelites did not cross the Red Sea, as is commonly believed, but rather crossed the Sea of Reeds. "Red Sea," according to the author, is a mistranslation. This was news to me. My English translation of the Bible refers to the Red Sea, while the Hebrew refers to "yam suf." I remember from Hebrew School that "yam" means "sea." What does "suf" mean? Did the Israelites cross the Red Sea, the Sea of Reeds, or some other sea?

Dear Stephen Tenzer,

"Soof" means "reeds." The Jews crossed the "Yam Soof" which means the "Sea of Reeds."

There are several views in our commentaries as to what the Yam Suf is. It may have been the Gulf of Suez, which branches up from what is today called the Red Sea. Others identify it with the large delta at the mouth of the Nile in the North of Egypt; interestingly, in ancient Egyptian, the swampy Delta districts were called "sufi."

Sources:

- "The Living Torah" by Rabbi A. Kaplan, Exodus 10:19, 13:18
- Artscroll Chumash Stone Edition, Exodus 13:18

Four at the Fore

From: Laurie in Toronto, Ontario
<lauriein@yahoo.com>

Dear Rabbi,

I am responsible for answering questions at Pesach, but one that was asked of me I can't answer. Why is there so much significance to the number four in the Haggada: For example: Four questions, four sons, four glasses of wine.

Dear Laurie,

The "four" concept relates to the four promises G-d made to Moses in

the verse: "I will take you out of the forced labor in Egypt, and free you from their slavery; I will liberate you ... and I will take you to be My own nation." (Exodus 6:6-8). Each of the four phrases in this verse describes a unique stage of redemption.

Four represents exile, being scattered to the "four corners of the earth." Correspondingly there are four levels of redemption from exile.

Four also represents growth, spreading out in all four directions. Pesach is the time of the birth of the Jewish nation, who are to fulfill G-d's blessing to Yaakov to "spread out to the west, east, north and south." (Genesis 28:14) Pesach is also in the spring, a time when G-d's blessings are seen to increase in the world.

Drops of Wine

From: Myron Chaitovsky In Teaneck, NJ
<mchait@brooklaw.edu>

Dear Rabbi,

While mentioning the ten plagues, we spill out a drop of wine for each plague. In looking through various haggadot, I see that most say to refill the wine cups after this. I have heard that some do not replenish their cups at this time. What's at work here? Why do some people (including my family) not refill their wine cups at this time? We seem to be in a distinct minority.

Dear Myron Chaitovsky,

When my brother was a little boy, and I was even littler, our dad asked us: "Why do we spill out drops of wine when we mention each of the ten plagues?"

"Because blood was spilled," my brother answered, and my dad approved.

While we rejoice at our salvation, we nonetheless retain our sensitivities to the suffering of the Egyptians by diminishing our joy, if only in the mildest extent. This may be why some people don't refill the cup, in order to drink a bit less wine, and

thus reduce the enjoyment by that amount.

On the other hand, there is reason to refill the cup so that it should be full to the brim when we say the blessing over it. The prevailing custom is that the cup is refilled.

Baffle Wacs Hold Fib

From: Lequida Jennings in Sulphur Springs, TX
<jethro@koyote.com>

Dear Rabbi,

Is there an easy way to teach kids to memorize the ten plagues?

Dear Lequida Jennings,

An easy way to memorize the ten plagues is to make a song out of it. That's how they teach it to kids in my community. Perhaps use the tune "Ten Little Indians."

In the Haggada we read the night of Passover, there is an acrostic, the first letters of the plagues in Hebrew: Datzach Adash B'achav. You could do the same in English: For example, in the nonsense phrase **BaFLE WaCS HoLD FiB**, the capital letters represent the plagues, in order: Blood, Frogs, Lice, Wild animals, Cattle disease, Skin disease (boils), Hail, Locusts, Darkness, First Born (slaying of).

Flour Power

From: Debbie in Canada

Dear Rabbi,

A woman in synagogue told me that I need to give "kimcha d'pische" (or something like that). Rabbi, would you tell me what she was talking about? Thanks a million!

Dear Debbie,

Kimcha D'pische means "flour for Pesach." In other words "Kosher for Passover Flour." This refers to the age-old custom of giving charity before Pesach to the city's poor so

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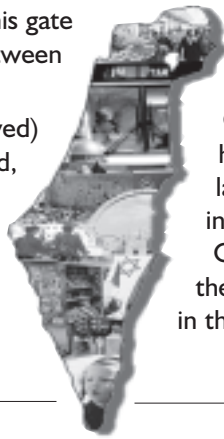
LOVE_{OF THE} LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

Jaffa Gate (Sha'ar Yaffo)

Built in 1538 by Suleiman the Magnificent, this gate serves as one of the main connections between the Old City and the rest of Jerusalem.

The Arabs call it Bab el-Halil (Gate of the Beloved) as a reference to Abraham, the Beloved of G-d, who is buried in Hebron, since the road to that southern city leaves from here. But it is the westerly orientation of the gate which has endowed it with the name indicating that the road to Jaffa begins here.



In 1898 the Turks breached the Old City wall and paved a road over the moat so that their visiting ally, Kaiser Wilhelm II of German would not have to dismount from his royal carriage. A quarter of a century later, with the Turks and Germans vanquished in World War One, the victorious British General Allenby and his staff dismounted from their horses and entered the Holy City on foot in the traditional manner of pilgrims.

ASK *the* RABBI

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they will be able to afford all their Passover needs.

This custom is ancient, first mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud. The idea behind it is that it was hard to find "Kosher for Passover" flour to buy during the holiday. So poor people who live on a day to day basis would not have food to eat on Pesach, because there would be no flour to buy to bake *matzot* with. Hence began the custom to distribute flour before Pesach.

Today, most people don't bake their own *matzot*, so *kimcha d'pische* has been adjusted to meet the needs of the poor people of today. All over the world Jewish communities give money to the needy before the holiday so they can prepare. In many communities food supplies are distributed for free or at great discount. In my community, charity organizations give money to the supermarket to credit the accounts of needy families, in addition to food distribution and cash donations.

It is said that before Pesach there are two types of people: Those who

give *kimcha d'pische* and those who get. In other words, anyone who can is obligated to help the needy meet their holiday expenses.

You should make a donation to the *kimcha d'pische* organization, in your community if possible. If there are no needy in your city, or no existing organization, you can choose to help out the poor of Jerusalem by sending a donation via Ohr Somayach, POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180 Israel.

There is a wonderful story about how charity money is distributed before Pesach. A woman once approached the Rabbi of the city of Brisk, Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, with a strange question. She wanted to know if one could use milk instead of wine for the four cups of the Seder. She explained that she could not afford wine. He answered her by giving her a large amount of money. Asked the Rabbi's wife, "I understand you gave her money because she can't afford the wine, but why so much?"

Answered the Rabbi, "If she wants

to drink milk at the Seder, it is obvious she has no meat for Pesach (as there is a prohibition to eat meat and milk at the same meal). So I gave her enough to buy wine and meat for the entire Holiday."

Stocks and Buns

From: Email@Withheld

Dear Rabbi,

Is there any problem owning chametz stocks on Pesach, i.e., with regards to (leavened products)? Must one include in the "document of sale of chametz" to include chametz in the stock that is owned? And regarding chametz, may one buy and sell stocks during Pesach?

Dear Email@Withheld,

Stocks and shares should be included in the "document of sale of chametz" and sold with all the chametz before Pesach. I asked Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, *shlita*, whether it is permissible to deal in stocks over Pesach and he said that one should not.