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PARSHIOT METZORA-ACHREI MOT-KEDOSHIM-EMOR · NISAN 5771 / 2011 · VOL. 18 NO. 31

NIGHT & DAY

By Rabbi Peretz Segal

“We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt...”

One of the most puzzling points of the structure of the Haggadah is the obligation to begin the retelling of the events of the Egyptian exodus by emphasizing the lowliness, the disdain, of the Jewish People. The story has to recount how our ancestors were idolators and lowly slaves. And when do we tell this “degrading” story? On the night when we are meant to be celebrating our status as a kingly nation, a people of princes. How seemingly inappropriate and bizarre! Why did the author of the Haggadah insist on these disparaging historical references?

The answer to this question brings to the fore a basic point of growth in Torah that is so vital for our modern times. It revolves around the understanding of the nature of the world we live in, this world — “*olam hazeh*”.

Our world was created as a world in which the light arose from the darkness: “and it was evening and it was morning” declares the verse. The night precedes the day. This is not just some type of quirk that the Jewish day begins at night; rather it is a

commentary on the very nature of this world and on mankind.

The way of our world is that nothing starts off in a state of completion. The starting point is always imperfection that moves towards a more perfect state. The process of learning a new skill, of growing physically, of acquiring wisdom has to be one of initial deficiency that shifts towards efficiency. From the lion cub to the tiny shrub, the young lack, yearn and strive for that which is beyond them. The movement is always from *their* darkness to light.

In other words, metaphorically our world is one that begins at night. The starting point is shrouded in darkness, uncertainty and inevitable failure. Yet ironically, as one gazes back at the many falls along the way, the very place at which he stumbles accentuates his later growth and elevates his present to a more perfected state.

Thus the Haggadah, in order to fully illustrate the majesty of the nation of Israel, *must* start the story at its low point — through the transition greatness is revealed, and through the failings the successes become meaningful.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Pesach Handbook, a special 20-page booklet with articles, features and information to help make your Pesach an even more unforgettable experience, is available free at <http://ohr.edu/pesachbook/>

Picking Up And Putting Down

“...metzora” (14:2)

In what seems about a hundred years ago in the late sixties, when all manner of New Age spirituality was taking off, some of us started to take an interest in the teachings of an arcane 19th century Russian mystic called Gurdjieff.

A friend of mine described how, as a young spiritual seeker, he joined a Gurdjieff group. (The leader of the group just happened to be Jewish, surprise, surprise). The group was ‘working on itself’ to try and internalize the principle that the biggest barrier to our psychological and spiritual awakening is the desire to put other people down. The study group’s maxim was “Don’t let a putdown pass your lips!”

At the tender age of 19, putdowns didn’t seem like such a big deal to him and he found it strange that the promised path to spiritual awakening should be something that seemed rather peripheral to life. However, my friend took it upon himself to uphold this principle.

After a few months of somewhat episodic performance of this maxim, my friend was intrigued to find that this single discipline had started to illuminate many hidden and sometimes uncomfortable feelings. This one piece of self-restraint was uncovering a deeper negativity that was self-directed.

Ultimately, my friend found his way back to Judaism, and when he started to learn this week’s Torah portion, he was amazed to find that the principles he had ascribed to a Russian mystic were, in fact, from a much older source.

The title of this week’s parsha is *Metzora*. *Metzora* can be read as an acrostic for *Motzei shem rah* – denigrating remarks about others. This week’s reading begins with the process that has to be undertaken by someone who has sullied the power of speech.

What is the secret power of positive speech? Why does what one says have such a great influence on one’s sense of spiritual well-being?

G-d created the world by speaking. “And G-d said, ‘Let there be light...’ “And G-d said...” “And G-d said...”

In Hebrew, the word for a “thing” – *davar* — and the word for “word” are identical. On a deeper level, every ‘thing’ in this world, the entire Creation and its continued existence, is nothing more than G-d speaking.

When our speech contains no putdowns, obscenity, nor innuendo of obscenity; when our lips articulate the support of our fellow man and every word that leaves our mouths carries the stamp of kosher speech, it’s no wonder that we feel in touch with ourselves, for we are in touch with the essence of Creation itself.

Whereas Gurdjieff-like disciplines focus on the benefits to the individual and society, the Torah is equally concerned with a wider agenda. For when our speech is correct and appropriate we become partners with G-d in the work of the Creation. Our words literally become things. Our speech metamorphoses into the fabric of existence itself.

• Source: Based on a story by Mrs Sarah Shapiro in *American Jewish Spirit*

Dedicated Followers of Fashion

“And he (Aaron) will place the incense on the fire in front of G-d”. (16:13)

A famous writer once quipped, “Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months.”

The width of trouser bottoms and their distance from the wearer’s navel fluctuates on a yearly basis, and the shape of the human foot seems to metamorphose inexorably. Fashion, however, doesn’t just begin and end with clothes.

“And he (Aaron) will place the incense on the fire in front of G-d”.

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 *Tzadukim* (Sadducees), who denied the authority of the Oral Torah, claimed that the incense first should 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 Torah verse as a proof to the contrary — that the incense should only

be placed on the fire “in front of G-d”.

In every generation, the Jewish People has its ‘*Tzadukim*’ — those dedicated followers of fashion who want to copy what they have seen ‘*outside*’ — to introduce ‘improvements’, ‘adjustments’ and ‘modernizations’ into our holy faith.

The Torah Sages of each 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 to express the Halachic view of all that pertains to the modern world.

That view, however, is always 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; rather it views the world through intrinsic principles enshrined in immutable criteria.

• Sources: Based on *Hadrash V’Ha’Iyun*

KEDOSHIM

Rain On My Parade

"You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge..." (19:18)

You wake up with a smile on your face. It's good to be alive. Another day. Another gift. As you leave your house you bump into your neighbor. "Good morning, Fred!" you beam at him. "What's good about it?" comes the dour reply. He gets into his car and drives off. You try out your smile again, but find that there's a little dent in it that wasn't there before.

You arrive at the office and manage to crowd into the elevator. It's a long haul to the eighteenth floor. Around the eleventh floor the elevator grinds to a halt. No amount of button pushing will encourage it to move one inch more. The doors open. Everyone grimaces at the thought of another eight big marble floors to climb, weighed down by the latest power briefcase and a sub-portable laptop that starts to eat into your shoulder after five minutes. You announce to the assembled throng, "Well, at least we won't need to go to the gym today!" If looks could kill, you have just been punctured by more arrows than General Custer at Little Big Horn.

The Torah prohibits a person from taking revenge. If you ask your neighbor to lend you his lawnmower and he

refuses, then the next week when he comes and asks if he can borrow your power drill you're not allowed to refuse him because he refused you. That's called taking revenge. Not only this, but you're not even allowed to say to him, "Of course, you can borrow my power drill. I'm not like you. I lend my things." The Torah categorically calls this bearing a grudge.

All well and good that I'm not allowed to take revenge by refusing to lend my power drill, but shouldn't the Torah also prohibit my 'friend' from refusing to lend me his lawnmower? After all, he started things, didn't he?

Someone who refuses to lend his possessions unreasonably has already proved himself to be terminally mean. The Torah isn't addressing him; he's already beyond admonition. What does concern the Torah, however, is that his meanness should not become infectious, that his bad character should not sour your generosity.

When your neighbor returns your friendly greeting with a look that could freeze a fire, don't let him control your life. You go on and smile and smile. Don't let other people's behavior dictate who you are.

• *Chizkuni as heard from Rabbi Moshe Zauderer*

EMOR

Bored With Breathing

"And you will bring a new mincha offering (meal offering) to G-d." (23:16)

Are you 'burned out'? You seem to hear that phrase a lot these days. I'm 'burned out' from this; I'm 'burned out' from that; I'm bored with this; It's just lost its excitement for me.

Why do people 'burn out'?

Take two people working hard. One self-employed, the other working for a salary. There's a big difference between them. Someone who works for a salary has no particular interest in the company, except that it provides him with a living. And his apathy only increases if the company doesn't do well and there is no bonus to look forward to.

Someone who is self-employed, on the other hand, puts his very soul into his work. He is the company. He enjoys the moments of triumph and he grieves over the disasters, but bored and burned out? Never.

Unlike the salaried employee whose remuneration is fixed from the beginning with only limited scope for profit participation, the self-employed person knows that the sky's the limit. The company's success is his success.

When we learn Torah we should think of it like it was our own business. In your own business, if things aren't going right, who is there to put them right? Only yourself. If it takes extra time at the office, we would certainly, and gladly, put in the extra hours.

When we sit down to learn, do we mentally 'punch in'? Are we waiting for the next coffee break? For the check at the end of the month? Or do we feel the exuberance and

challenge of our learning as though it was our own business?

How does the Torah refer to the monumental event of its being given at Sinai?

"And you will bring a new mincha offering to G-d."

Why is the reference so oblique? It's true that at the festival of Shavuot there is a command to bring a new *mincha* offering to G-d. But is that the most conspicuous aspect of Shavuot? How about the giving of the Torah? Wouldn't it have been more appropriate to spell out that on this day the Torah was given at Sinai? And yet it is with these few covert words that the Torah hints to the central event of Judaism.

Why?

The Torah doesn't specify the date of its giving because it doesn't want us to feel that it was given as a 'one-off' event. *Rather, it wants us to feel like it's being given to us every day*, and for us to receive it every day as though we were hearing it for the first time at Sinai.

The Torah is our life's breath. Even though a person breathes millions of times in the course of his life, *does anyone get tired of breathing?* Why not? Because we understand that our life depends on breathing, it's not a subject for boredom. Boredom can only set in when a person sees something as optional. Breathing isn't optional; it's obligatory.

This is the way we should feel about the Torah, for it is our life and the length of our days.

TALMUDigest

Menachot 30-36

- Rules of writing a Sefer Torah
- How the last eight passages of the Torah were written
- The problems in regard to writing and correcting the Holy Name
- The rulings of Rabbi Shimon Shezieri
- Writing of the mezuzah and properly placing it
- Where a mezuzah is required and the problem of unusual doorways
- The writing of the Torah chapters in *tefillin* and the making of the boxes containing them
- The straps and knot on the head *tefillin*
- The blessings made when putting on *tefillin*
- When *tefillin* should not be worn

The Hanging Mezuzah

A mezuzah must be placed on the doorpost and not hung in the doorway. Should someone suspend it from a stick in the doorway or behind the door he not only fails to perform the mitzvah

but also invites danger.

What is the nature of the danger?

Rashi's explanation is that since the home is not protected unless the mezuzah is in its proper place, there is a danger that harm may occur to the home.

Tosefot challenges this approach since the *gemara* should have simply stated that there is danger whenever the mezuzah is not placed according to the halacha. The danger, Tosefot suggests, is that one is likely to bang his head against a hanging mezuzah and hurt himself.

A mezuzah was carried by King Munbaz during his travels and hung in the doorways of the hostel where he spent the night during his travels. Since such a hostel was not a place of regular residence there was no obligation to put a mezuzah on its doorway and the mezuzah was hung there only as a reminder of the mitzvah of mezuzah.

• Menachot 32b

What the SAGES Say

“Come and see how G-d's ways are different than those of mortals. A mortal king sits inside his palace and his people stand outside to protect him. It is otherwise with G-d who stands guard (through the mezuzah) for the Jew who sits in his house.”

• Rabbi Chanina - Menachot 33b

“Beloved are Jews whom G-d surrounded with *mitzvot*: *tefillin* on their heads and arms, *tzitzit* on their garments and a mezuzah on their doorposts.”

• Beraita - Menachot 43b

“One who fulfills the mitzvah of *tefillin* will be rewarded with a long life.”

• Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish - Menachot 44a

“Why are the Jews compared to an olive? To teach us that just as the olive does not produce its oil until it is pressed, so too do Jews only repent through suffering.”

• Rabbi Yochanan - Menachot 53b

“There was a preference to bring the grain for the *omer* mincha from a place near Yerushalayim because it is improper to pass up the opportunity to do a mitzvah.”

• Gemara - Menachot 64b

TALMUDigest

Menachot 37-43

- Source for putting *tefillin* on left arm
- The halachic issues of a two-headed person
- When one of the *tzitzit* is missing
- The color and material of the *tzitzit*
- The relationship between *tzitzit* and *shatnez*
- Should one wear a four-cornered garment in order to fulfill the mitzvah of *tzitzit*
- Rules regarding the garment and the *tzitzit*
- Making a blessing on *tzitzit*, *tefillin* and other *mitzvot*
- From whom to purchase religious articles
- Women and *tzitzit*
- The power of *mitzvot* to prevent sinning

Women and Their Mitzvot

Are women obligated in the mitzvah of *tzitzit*? They are exempt, rules Rabbi Shimon, because the general rule is that women are not obligated in regard to positive commandments that are time-oriented, and the mitzvah of *tzitzit* does not apply at night.

The question arises as to why we do not consider *tzitzit* an exception to this rule as we do in regard to the *mitzvot* of kiddush on Shabbat and eating matza on Pesach, in which women are obligated despite the time orientation of those commandments.

In both of those cases we draw a parallel between the positive command and the prohibition that accompanies it. *Zachor*, 'remember the Shabbat day', which is the positive command to sanctify Shabbat with kiddush, was said at Sinai by G-d together with *Shamor*, 'observe the Shabbat by refraining from creative labor'. Just as women are prohibited from per-

forming such labor on Shabbat, as they are obligated in regard to all prohibitions, they are also obligated in the positive command of kiddush.

In regard to matza the Torah writes in one passage the prohibition against eating *chametz* on Pesach and the command to eat matza, which allows us to deduce that since women are prohibited from eating *chametz* they are obligated to eat matza despite the fact that this mitzvah is time-oriented.

When it comes to *tzitzit* we might also suggest drawing a parallel between the prohibition against wearing *shatnez* (*Devarim* 22:11) and the mitzvah of *tzitzit* in the next passage, and conclude that just as women are forbidden to wear *shatnez*, they are obligated to wear *tzitzit* on their four-cornered garments.

Tosefot points out that this is not so because in this case the two commandments were not issued simultaneously nor do they appear in the very same passage.

• *Menachot* 43a

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TALMUDigest

Menachot 44-50

- The *chalazon* which is the source of *techelet*
- How *tzitzit* saved a Jew from sinning and led to the conversion of an infamous woman
- A borrowed *tallit* and a rented home
- The meal offerings and wine libations on the altar
- The sacrifices offered for the inauguration of the Second *Beit Hamikdash*
- The relationship between the animal and bread sacrifices on Shavuot
- Are *kohanim* also obligated to contribute a half-shekel each year for purchase of sacrifice
- The relationship between the *todah* sacrifice and the accompanying loaves
- Learning the rules regarding one type of sacrifice from the rules regarding another type
- The relationship between the daily sacrifice and the additional ones
- The special daily mincha offering of the *kohen gadol*

Mezuzah and Eretz Yisrael

What difference is there between Eretz Yisrael and the Diaspora regarding the mitzvah of mezuzah? Since this is not a mitzvah related to agriculture, it is obvious that it applies wherever a Jew resides. Nevertheless there is a difference in regard to when this mitzvah must be performed by one who rents a home.

Outside of Eretz Yisrael the renter is not obligated to place a mezuzah on his doorway until he has established a degree of permanence by living there for thirty days. In Eretz Yisrael, however, it is the obligation of the renter to fulfill this mitzvah immediately upon entry.

The reason given by the *gemara* is that this will facilitate “*yishuv Eretz Yisrael*” – the settling of the Holy Land by Jews.

How this will achieve that lofty goal is thus explained by Rashi:

Since it is improper for a Jew to remove a mezuzah when he leaves his home (*Baba Metzia* 102a), the renter will be reluctant to move out and incur the need to acquire another mezuzah. Even if he nevertheless moves, that home will soon attract another Jewish renter because it already has a mezuzah. In this manner Eretz Yisrael will be quickly settled by Jews.

• *Menachot 45a*

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

Wheat – The Food of Knowledge

In the debate among the Talmudic Sages (*Sanhedrin* 70b) as to what exactly was the food of the Tree of Knowledge from which Adam ate, it is the position of Rabbi Yehuda that it was wheat. This is a sharp departure from the positions of his colleagues who identify that tree as one which bore grapes or figs.

The basis of Rabbi Yehuda’s compulsion to identify this sinful food as wheat, despite the obvious difficulty of connecting wheat with a tree, is the fact that this tree is described by the Torah as one whose food imparts knowledge. A baby, he points out, does not



have the understanding to say the words “father” and “mother” until it eats wheat. It is logical, therefore, to assume that only food which imparts such understanding in a child could be considered the food which gave man the knowledge to distinguish good from evil.

Wheat was the principal ingredient of the flour offerings in the *Beit Hamikdash*. It, and its subspecies spelt, are mentioned (*Pesachim* 35a) as ingredients which qualify for use in the matza we eat on Pesach to fulfill our mitzvah.

TALMUDigest

Menachot 51 - 57

- How and when the *minchat chavitin* was prepared
- If the *kohen hagdol* dies before completing the offering of the *minchat chavitin*
- The libations of a sacrifice of a non-Jew or a convert who dies without heirs
- Which *menachot* contain chametz and how are they prepared
- The homiletics of the Sage with a proud genealogy
- Comparing the Jewish People to an olive
- The changing dimension of meat in regard to impurity and sacrificial laws
- Avoiding chametz in mincha offerings and their remainders
- A violation atop another violation
- Anointment of sacred vessels

Might Meets Might

“They sank like lead” is how our ancestors described the drowning of their Egyptian pursuers in their Song of the Sea. While this part of the passage (*Shmot* 15:10) is clearly understood, there is room for misinterpretation in the ensuing description of who drowned where.

Reference is made to “in the water” and to “the mighty”. Although the order of the words gives the impression that it is the water that is described as mighty, the truth is that “the mighty” refers to the Egyptians who drowned in the water. This is why our halachic authorities caution us to be careful in our daily recital of the Song of the Sea to pause between the words “water” and “mighty” in order to stress that the latter term is a reference to the Egyptians rather than to the water.

This understanding is based on our *gemara* in which Rabbi Ezra picks up on the word “mighty” which his host, Rabbi Preida, used and states the following poetical description of G-d’s declaration at the time of the splitting of the sea.

“Let the mighty (G-d) take revenge for the mighty (the Israelites) from the mighty (the Egyptians) through the mighty (the water). A passage is cited to show that each of the forces mentioned are called mighty, and the one showing that the Egyptians were called mighty is the one found in the Song of the Sea describing their drowning.

• *Menachot* 53a

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Sanhedrin 58 - 64

- The ban on leavening and honey as sacrifices
- When oil and frankincense accompany a mincha
- Which mincha must be brought to altar before *kemitzah* and which must be waved
- The mincha of the suspected adulteress and that of a sinner
- The waving performed by a *kohen* and by the owner of the sacrifice
- The spiritual impact of the waving here and in regard to four species
- The *machvat* and *marcheshet* mincha offerings
- The oven-baked mincha and its preparation
- Preparation of the *omer* mincha offered on Pesach
- When the *omer* material was brought from far away

The Poor Man's Atonement

Marcheshet is the name of one of the voluntary mincha offerings. According to Rabbi Yoseph HaGalili it differs from the *machvat* mincha in that it is prepared in a covered vessel, while the *machvat* is prepared in an open one.

The conclusion of the *gemara's* analysis of the names of these meal offerings is that it was thus handed down from Sinai that one is in a covered vessel and the other is not. There was, however, an attempt to define *marcheshet* on the basis of the word *rachash*, which we find in the passage (*Tehillim* 45:1): "My heart whispers a good thing." Whispering of the heart, Rashi explains, means the thoughts of sin for which this mincha atones.

Maharsha raises the question that it is the *olah* animal sacrifice that atones for thoughts of sin, in contrast to the *chatat* and *asham* sacrifices which atone for actual sins. Why then was there a consideration that the *marcheshet* mincha should have a role as atonement for sinful thought?

The answer he gives is that not everyone could afford an animal or even a bird as an atonement for his sinful thoughts. The simple mincha offering was the poor man's opportunity for such atonement.

• *Menachot* 63a



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Month of Redemption

From: Carla

*Dear Rabbi,
If G-d told Abraham that his descendents would be enslaved in Egypt but would be redeemed, then why did He exile them there in the first place?*

Dear Carla,

This question is related to the essence of the month of the redemption itself, Nisan.

One who experiences redemption has emerged from darkness to light. One who has never suffered the oppression of bondage will not fully appreciate redemption. The very essence of redemption is the freedom which has its source in the bondage itself. Had Israel not been enslaved, they would have never experienced true freedom. Once they were enslaved, that very enslavement gave rise to their redemption. From the depth of that darkness light burst forth. Our Sages taught: "Israel said to G-d, Master of the Universe, when will you redeem us? G-d answered, When you descend to the lowest level, at that moment I shall redeem you".

This occurred in the month of Nisan, which marks the end of winter's cold darkness and heralds the light and warmth of spring. The name "Nisan", which literally relates to miracles, also implies the bursting force of the rising sun or the blossoming forth of a flower. It is apropos, then, that the miraculous redemption took place in the month waxing light and burgeoning rebirth.

Removing Chametz

From: Moshe

*Dear Rabbi,
Is it not enough to refrain from eating bread on Passover? Why do we make such an effort to remove bread products from our homes?*

Dear Moshe,

Even if one fulfills all the *mitzvot* associated with Pesach like eating matza and bitter herbs, telling the story of the Exodus in the Haggada, refraining from eating chametz, observing the laws of Yom Tov etc., but he maintained ownership of chametz, he would have transgressed very significant laws of Pesach. For this reason, one must take very seriously and make every effort to remove chametz from his ownership before the holiday commences.

The Torah states two separate prohibitions about chametz: "You shall not see it" (Ex. 13:7) and "You shall not possess it" (Ex. 12:19). This is in addition to the requirement, "By the first day, all chametz shall be removed" (Ex. 12:15). Hence, by midday of the 14th of

Nisan, every Jew is required to dispose or relinquish ownership of all chametz in his property as well as that which he owns but is located in others' domains. If he does not do so, at every moment of the festival he is transgressing these three commandments. In addition, any chametz that should have been disowned and wasn't is prohibited indefinitely even after Pesach.

Seder Order

From: Joshua

*Dear Rabbi,
I understand "Seder" means order, but I must admit, I find it very difficult to understand the order of the Seder. Could you please outline what it's all about?*

Dear Joshua,

Sure, you're not the only one. In fact, the first part of the Seder includes an "outline" for people just like you and me. This is a list of 15 terms that refer to the main parts of the Seder as it progresses. Here's the list with a brief description of each:

- *Kadesh*: Recital of the Kiddush and the drinking of the first cup
- *U'rchatz*: Washing of the hands without a blessing for the eating of the vegetable dipped in salt water
- *Karpas*: The dipping of the vegetable in salt water
- *Yachatz*: The breaking of the middle of the three *matzot*, half of which is hidden for the afikomen
- *Maggid*: The recital of the Haggadah, which is the primary mitzvah of the Seder retelling the story of the Exodus; it includes the second cup
- *Rachtzah*: Washing of the hands with the blessing for eating bread
- *Motzi*: The recital of the blessing for bread
- *Matza*: The recital of the special blessing for eating matza.
- *Maror*: The special blessing over, and partaking of, the bitter herbs dipped in charoset
- *Korech*: The "Hillel Sandwich" commemorating the Pascal roasted lamb sacrifice that was eaten with matza and maror
- *Shulchan orech*: The table is set and the festive meal is served
- *Tzafun*: The presenting and eating of the hidden afikomen matza
- *Barech*: The Grace after Meals concluded with the third cup.
- *Hallel*: The special praise and thanksgiving Psalms and prayers recited over the fourth cup
- *Nirtzah*: Concluding songs such as "Chad gadya" and "Echad mi yodea".

• Sources:

The Book of Our Heritage, Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov

PARSHA Q&A

METZORA

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 G-d” (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 *tamei*. 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.

PARSHA Q&A

ACHREI

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 *karat*?
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 Achrei'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.

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PARSHA Q&A

KEDOSHIM

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 G-d to observe Shabbat. Parents deserve great honor, but not at the 'expense' of G-d's honor.
5. 19:9 - "*Leket*" is one or two stalks of grain that are accidentally dropped while harvesting. They must be 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 and the sale is not beneficial to him.
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 bad about taking charity.
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 designated seat of an elderly person, and by not contradicting his statement.
15. 20:3 - "*Karet*" — the entire Jewish People will never be "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.

PARSHA Q&A

EMOR

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 G-d?
12. Apart from Shabbat, 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 Emor’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 Nisan.
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).
20. 24:21 - Death.

PARSHA Overview

Metzora

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 *korbanot* 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 the Torah defines how one regains a state of ritual purity.

Achrei

G-d 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 G-d" 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.

Kedoshim

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 others; taking 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; 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 fourth 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.

Emor

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 of even 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 G-d 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 G-d and is executed as prescribed in the Torah.

ISRAEL Forever

Month of Miracles

Rosh Chodashim – the head of the months – is the special title which the Creator gave to the Month of Nisan.

This honor was accorded to Nisan because it was in that month that our ancestors were freed from Egyptian bondage. This was so important an event in the history of the world that when G-d introduced Himself to His chosen people at Sinai, He did not identify Himself as the Creator of the universe, but as the liberator from the house of bondage in the land of Egypt.

But is this more important than Creation?

The obvious answer is that although we have absolute faith that G-d created the world, a belief solidly rooted in logic as well, there were no witnesses to this event. Millions of our ancestors, however, were front-line witnesses to all the miracles that took place in Egypt. Even if news of the

ten plagues did not reach the rest of the world, the splitting of the sea was felt everywhere.

The miracles of Nisan itself served as a fitting climax to the miracles of the plagues. On the tenth day of that month our ancestors tied sheep, worshipped by the Egyptians, to their beds in preparation for slaughtering them as sacrifices on the eve of their departure. The miracle of the inability of their outraged masters to halt them is celebrated each year as *Shabbat Hagadol*. Then came the sacrifices on the fourteenth of the month, the departure the next day in broad daylight from a land from which no slave had ever escaped, and the splitting of the sea a week later. We relate and relive all of these events as we read the Haggadah at the Seder table in fulfillment of the Talmudic dictate that we must imagine as if we ourselves experienced the Exodus.

What's the Right Thing to Do?

Eating Out on Pesach

Question: I have some very close friends who I would like to invite for a holiday meal. I have the feeling, however, that they are very reluctant to eat in our home on Pesach despite the fact that we keep an extremely kosher home and they would have no qualms about eating by us any other time of the year. How should I relate to this situation?

Answer: There are different customs in different communities and one must respect them. Customs vary most when it comes to Pesach. Ashkenazic Jews avoid eating rice, beans and anything else which comes under the classification of *kitniyot*, while Sephardic Jews use them. Some families eat only hand-baked *matzot* while others use machine-baked ones as well. In some communities *matzot*

or matza meal soaked in a liquid (*shruya* in Hebrew and *gebrotzt* in Yiddish) are avoided, while in others matza-ball *kneidllich* form a popular Pesach dish.

Because of these varying customs and the different standards families may have in their adherence to the strict laws of Pesach, there are communities that have adopted the practice of not eating outside of the home on Pesach. You should therefore not view the reluctance of your friend to accept your invitation as a put-down of your kashrut observance, but rather as his loyal adherence to his community's customs. At the same time you must not look askance at those Jews who do eat in the homes of others or spend their Pesach in a hotel with reliable kashrut supervision.

Have a Happy and Kosher Pesach!

The HUMAN SIDE of the Story

A Letter to the President

On the occasion of the first Yahrzeit of his mother, a renowned Torah scholar in Jerusalem, American-born Rabbi Yisrael Berle, published a distinguished commentary on prayer. In his introduction he includes the following story about his mother:

More than half a century ago U.S. President Harry S. Truman decided to give a series of weekly radio talks to the nation in imitation of the famed "fireside chats" of his predecessor. The time chosen was Friday evening. Fearful that some Jews would be so anxious to hear the President that

they would put aside observance of Shabbat in order to do so, Mrs. Berle dashed off a letter to the President calling his attention to the fact that Jewish Sabbath observers would be denied the privilege of hearing him if the broadcast were on the Sabbath eve.

Her efforts were rewarded with success. A letter from the President's secretary informed her that her letter was being given serious attention. Ten days later an announcement was made that the President's talks would be switched from Friday night to Tuesday.

Pesach Q&A

Q

1. What is the holiday of Pesach called in the Torah?
2. Why did our ancestors carry dough when they left Egypt?
3. Where is there a hint in the Torah to the four cups of wine we drink at the Seder?
4. What do we do on Pesach Eve to remember the Korban Pesach?
5. What do these numbers represent – 10, 50 / 40, 200 / 50, 250?
6. How many mornings on Pesach do we say the entire Hallel?
7. How do we refer to Pesach in our *kiddush* and in our *tefillot*?
8. What are the three prohibitions regarding *chametz*?
9. When is the eating of matza obligatory according to the Torah?
10. What was the date of the crossing of Yam Suf?
11. How many days of Chol Hamo'ed are there in Eretz Israel and elsewhere?
12. Is there any limit to what may be done during Chol Hamo'ed?
13. How many times do we wash our hands during the Seder?
14. What cannot be done after eating the *afikomen*?
15. Why do we recline when drinking wine and eating matza?
16. What unusual thing do we do to stimulate children to ask questions?
17. What is the meaning of *datzach*, *adash*, *beachav*?
18. Who are the four sons alluded to in the Torah as requiring us to inform them regarding Pesach?
19. What is the meaning of *Dayenu* that we sing?
20. What is the Torah term on which the word Haggadah is based?

A

1. *Chag Hamatzot* (The Festival of Matzot).
2. They left in such a hurry that there was no time for the dough to rise.
3. The four expressions of redemption found in *Shemot* / Exodus 6:6-7.
4. Place a shankbone or other piece of meat on the Seder plate.
5. The number of plagues with which the Egyptians were smitten in Egypt and at the Sea according to three different Sages.
6. One morning in Eretz Israel and two everywhere else.
7. *Zman Cheiruteinu* (The Season of Our Freedom).
8. To eat, to benefit from and to possess.
9. On the first night of the holiday at the Seder.
10. The seventh day of Pesach – the 21st day of the month of Nisan.
11. In Eretz Israel 5 days and elsewhere only 4.
12. Definitely! Study the laws or consult a rabbi.
13. Twice - once before dipping *karpas* into salt water and once before eating matza. (A third time is *mayim achronim* before saying *birkat hamazon* – Grace after meals.)
14. We cannot eat nor drink wine.
15. In order to express our sense of nobility as free men.
16. We dip a vegetable in salt water before saying the Haggadah.
17. These are acronyms formed by the first letters of the ten plagues.
18. The wise son, the wicked one, the simple one and the one who does not know how to ask.
19. "It would have sufficed for us" – a reference to all the stages of benevolence which G-d granted us.
20. "*Vehegadeta levincha* – And you shall relate to your child" (*Shemot* 13:8).

The Ohr Somayach family wishes
you a Chag Kasher v'Somayach.

נַעֲמֵי יָסֵד עֵן