

ב"ה Torah Tidbits

ISSUE 1656

UNITED
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APRIL 18TH 2026
א' אייר תשפ"ו

תזריע - מצורע
TAZRIA - METZORA

ROSH CHODESH IYAR | AVOT 2



Yom Ha'atzmaut and Thanksgiving
Shoshana Judelman
Page 68



The Fastest Emotional
Transition on Earth
Rabbi Leo Dee Page 62



OU Israel
wishes you
Yom Ha'atzmaut
Sameach

זה היום עשה ה' נגילה ונשמחה בו תפילת הלל

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT TAZRIA - METZORA ZMANIM

CANDLES 6:33 PM • EARLY 5:48 PM • HAVDALA 7:48 PM • RABBEINU TAM 8:27 PM



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A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

“And cedar wood and scarlet and hyssop” (14:4) - (יֵדִד) ועץ ארז ושני תולעת ואזב
Why specifically these ingredients?


Rashi points out that the plague of tzara'at results from haughtiness. Therefore, the appropriate remedy that he should be healed with is that he should lower himself from his pride just like a worm (To-la'at) and like hyssop. These species represent lowliness and humility.


Rabbi Avraham Bornsztain (Admor of Sochatchov 1838-1910) asks about this idea of Rashi. The afflicted individual has already repented. That is why he merited to be brought before the Kohen for the purifying ceremony. Why is there a need to further remind him of the need for humility by using modest and menial ingredients in the final procedure, it seems excessive?

One answer that he presents is that, true, the person afflicted with tzara'at must have repented and discarded his haughtiness, but that was due to his daily torment with this plague. There is a need to ensure that even after his body will recover, that he remains true to such a change in his behavior and nature. That is why, specifically, on “the day of his purification”, he lowers himself further to bring upon himself a bona fide change both in body and soul. - Shabbat Shalom

HELPFUL REMINDERS

 Rosh Chodesh Iyar is on Friday April 17th and Shabbat April 18th

 Yom Hazikaron is observed on Monday night April 20th and Tuesday April 21st

 Yom Haatzmaut is celebrated on Tuesday night April 21st and Wednesday April 22nd

 Earliest Kiddush Levana, 3 Days After Molad: 4 Iyar/ Mon. night April 20

7 Days After Molad: 9 Iyar/ Sat. night April 25

Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 14 Iyar/ Thurs. night April 30

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
April 15 - 25 | 28 Nisan - 8 Iyar

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Earliest Tallit and Tefillin | 5:18-5:06 |
| Sunrise | 6:11-6:00 |
| Sof Zman Kriat Shema | 9:25-9:18 |
| Magen Avraham | 8:47-8:40 |
| Sof Zman Tefila (According to the Gra and Baal HaTanya) | 10:29-10:24 |
| Chatzot (Halachic Noon) | 12:39-12:37 |
| Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha) | 1:11-1:10 |
| Plag Mincha | 5:46-5:51 |
| Sunset (Including Elevation) | 7:12-7:19 |



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| | Tazria - Metzora | | | Acharei Mot-Kedoshim | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-------|-------------|----------------------|-------|---------|
| | Candles | Early | Havdala | Candles | Early | Havdala |
| Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim | 6:33 | 5:48 | 7:48 | 6:38 | 5:51 | 7:54 |
| Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al) | 6:51 | 5:50 | 7:50 | 6:56 | 5:54 | 7:56 |
| Beit Shemesh/RBS | 6:52 | 5:49 | 7:49 | 6:57 | 5:52 | 7:54 |
| Gush Etzion | 6:49 | 5:48 | 7:48 | 6:54 | 5:52 | 7:54 |
| Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba | 6:51 | 5:50 | 7:50 | 6:56 | 5:53 | 7:56 |
| Modiin/Chashmonaim | 6:50 | 5:49 | 7:49 | 6:55 | 5:53 | 7:55 |
| Netanya | 6:51 | 5:50 | 7:51 | 6:56 | 5:54 | 7:56 |
| Be'er Sheva | 6:50 | 5:49 | 7:49 | 6:55 | 5:53 | 7:54 |
| Rehovot | 6:51 | 5:50 | 7:50 | 6:55 | 5:53 | 7:55 |
| Petach Tikva | 6:33 | 5:50 | 7:50 | 6:38 | 5:53 | 7:56 |
| Ginot Shomron | 6:50 | 5:49 | 7:49 | 6:55 | 5:52 | 7:55 |
| Haifa / Zichron | 6:41 | 5:50 | 7:51 | 6:46 | 5:54 | 7:57 |
| Gush Shiloh | 6:49 | 5:48 | 7:48 | 6:54 | 5:52 | 7:54 |
| Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel | 6:51 | 5:50 | 7:50 | 6:56 | 5:54 | 7:56 |
| Givat Zeev | 6:53 | 5:48 | 7:49 | 6:58 | 5:52 | 7:54 |
| Chevron / Kiryat Arba | 6:49 | 5:48 | 7:48 | 6:54 | 5:52 | 7:54 |
| Ashkelon | 6:51 | 5:51 | 7:51 | 6:56 | 5:54 | 7:56 |
| Yad Binyamin | 6:50 | 5:50 | 7:50 | 6:55 | 5:53 | 7:55 |
| Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden | 6:43 | 5:48 | 7:49 | 6:48 | 5:52 | 7:55 |
| Golan | 6:48 | 5:47 | 7:48 | 6:53 | 5:51 | 7:54 |
| Nahariya/Maalot | 6:40 | 5:50 | 7:51 | 6:45 | 5:53 | 7:56 |
| Afula | 6:50 | 5:48 | 7:49 | 6:55 | 5:52 | 7:55 |

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Tazria-Metzora - 8:27 PM • Acharei Mot-Kedoshim - 8:32 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities; 40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat, Nahariya, Maalot and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Menachos 97



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I was once waiting for a flight together with a distinguished *Rav* and *Rebbetzin*, who over the years have become dear friends to me. These are people with such warm hearts, constantly working on behalf of *Klal Yisrael* in so many different ways. As we sat waiting for our plane, the *Rebbetzin*, who cares deeply about the challenge of *shidduchim* in our generation, was working on a questionnaire for potential matches. She had a document of about four pages filled with questions that she wanted candidates to fill out, and she asked me to please review it and share my thoughts.

I sat there and read every single question. There were questions about everything: Do you wear a black hat? Do you wear a *kippa sruga*? Do you watch television? Are you *shomer negiah*? All sorts of questions about the background and lifestyle of the candidate. When I finished, she asked if I had anything to add.

I told her that I thought five questions were missing. She was intrigued and prepared to write them down. So I began: the first question is, *Nasata v'natata b'emuna*? Were you

honest in your business dealings? I could see her husband, who had been sitting and learning nearby, already smiling. He could see where I was going. The second question, I continued, is, *Kavata itim la'torah*? Did you make time to learn Torah? The third, *Tzipita liyeshua*? Did you await redemption? I continued with the questions, and explained that Chazal (*Shabbat* 31a) tell us that when a person dies, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* does not ask them if they wore this hat or that hat, what kind of phone they have or if they read the newspaper. He asks these questions: Were you honest? Did you value Torah? Did you hope for the *Mashiach* to come and the *Beit HaMikdash* rebuilt? These are the fundamental values that Jews should have.

When it comes to *shidduchim*, there is no doubt that understanding what people want and what they are looking for matters. There was certainly nothing wrong with the questionnaire or with the *Rebbetzin's* intentions, which were completely *l'shem shamayim*. My point was simply to recognize that some questions are much more valuable and far more significant than the minute details of our lives, and that sometimes, we lose the forest for the trees.

That said, there is one question on that list that I have always found particularly stirring: *Tzipita liyeshua*? Did you await the Messiah every single day? Were you waiting for the *Beit HaMikdash* to be rebuilt? We all say that we are *metzapim liyeshua*. We all believe in the 13 *Ikkarim* of the Rambam: "*Ani ma'amin*," I believe with complete faith in the

In loving memory of

Ernest Kamins ז"ל

**אשר אליעזר
בן אברהם לייב ז"ל**
on his 11th *yahrzeit*

*From his Wife,
Children, Grandchildren
and Great-Grandchildren*

coming of the Messiah. We say that we are constantly waiting for *Mashiach Tzidkeinu* to come every single day, and even if he tarries, we will wait.

But there are certain moments in life when that faith becomes so vivid it's almost tangible. Standing in *shul* on *Yom Kippur*, *davening* with all our heart and soul during *Neilah*, singing “*Tehei ha’sha’ah hazot sha’as rachamim*,” let this be a time of mercy for *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, looking around and seeing how many Jews are fasting and pouring out their hearts, tears in their eyes, *siddur* clutched so tightly in their hands... Or that moment when gathering with 100,000 Jews at the *Kotel* for *Birkat Kohanim*... Or if you’ve ever joined 12,000-15,000 Jews at a sunrise *tefillah*. All of these are moments when you think to yourself: this is a time when *Mashiach* could come. You feel it in your bones.

I believe that the period that we are currently living through has given all of us such a moment. This is not to discredit any suffering that has happened since the start of this war, there have been major losses to Am Yisrael. However, since *Shabbat Zachor*, when the military operation against Iran began and we were, *Baruch Hashem*, able to eliminate much of the horrific Iranian leadership, including Ayatollah Khamenei, and our brave soldiers together with the American military have been controlling the skies and doing what needs to be done to bring safety to the world, something remarkable has been happening in the hearts of the Jewish people. Hope is beginning to grow and grow.

I must have received from 30 or 40 people the incredible passage from the *Bnei*



Yissaschar about a war beginning on *Shabbat Zachor* and reaching its conclusion around *Pesach*. People were sharing all kinds of *simanim*, noting how fitting it was that on *Shabbat Zachor* we were able to strike at the enemies of the Jewish people, and on Purim to continue the battle against those who embody the spirit of *Amalek*. And then came *Pesach*, and precisely around the time of *Kriat Yam Suf* on *Shvi'i shel Pesach*, the deadline set by President Trump to the Iranians arrived, and we entered *chag*.

I spoke to many, many people before and throughout *Pesach*. The feeling was unmistakable. Something was in the air. I spoke to people in the *Chassidische* world and the *Litvishe* world, people who wear black hats and

**May the Torah learning
 from this Torah Tidbits
 be in loving memory of
 our dear mother**
EDITH ROSNER a”h
עטל בת ר' נחום יצחק ע"ה
 נלב"ע כ"ח ניסן תשנ"ב
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Elliot & Nechama Rosner

people who are *Dati Leumi*, secular Jews and traditional Jews. Everyone I spoke to, especially on *Erev Shvi'i shel Pesach*, had this sense that something extraordinary was about to happen. People were asking: when exactly did *Kriat Yam Suf* take place? Was it at *chatzot*? Was it at *ashmoret haboker*? And when would this great moment arrive for us?

There is no doubt that many people expected something truly extraordinary, not merely the signing of a ceasefire. People were waiting for *Mashiach*. People were waiting for great miracles. And the reality is that great miracles are happening, but people were waiting for something even greater as *Shvi'i shel Pesach* entered.

A friend of mine was in Eilat with his whole family for Pesach. I shared with him the emotions I had been feeling, and he told me something beautiful. He said that on *Leil Shvi'i shel Pesach*, as happens every year, people left the hotels and walked down to the shore of *Yam Suf* in order to recite *Az Yashir* at the very waters where the miracle took place. How fitting that at the place where *Bnei Yisrael* crossed the sea, Jews return every year to relive that experience. But this year, he said, the thousands upon thousands of people who came out were different. There was such a

tziptiyah, such a hope, that something great was going to happen right then and there. They stood at the edge of *Yam Suf* and sang to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, pleading: please bring us this miracle now.

When I heard this, I shared it with everyone in *shul* and said: we have to realize that this past *Shvi'i shel Pesach*, and perhaps even a few days before and after, gave all of us a gift. We can now look up to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and say with complete sincerity: *HaKadosh Baruch Hu, tzipinu liyeshua*. We waited. We hoped.

And now, after Pesach, we are not going to stop. Even if he carries we still wait. We do not know if *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* will bring the *geulah sheleimah* on *Yom HaZikaron*, on *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, on *Lag Ba'Omer*, on *Pesach Sheni*, on *Yom Yerushalayim*, on *Shavuot*, on *Tisha B'Av*, or some other day entirely. But one thing is certain: we have many peaks, many moments throughout the year, when we are actively, fervently waiting for *Mashiach* to come.

And I believe that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* looks at our younger generation with tremendous pride. The generation that is fighting for the future of the Jewish people. The wives who are holding down their homes and raising their children year after year while their husbands serve in the army. I see the burden that my own daughter-in-law carries, the sacrifice my children are making, and the emotions that my wife and I go through every day with our sons serving over enemy lines. We are so proud of them, and we look up to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* every single day and ask: please watch over our sons, watch over *Klal Yisrael*, watch over each and every one of our soldiers. Grant a *refuah sheleimah* to our wounded. And watch over them all.

May the Torah learned
in this Torah Tidbits be
לעילוי נשמה

שיינדל רחל בת שלמה
וקריינדל בלימא ע"ה
נלב"ע ג' אייר

In loving memory of
Lilly Manheim a"h
on her 10th yahrtzeit
3 Iyar, 5786

B'ezrat Hashem, we will experience an incredible moment, hopefully very soon, when *Klal Yisrael* is unified, when our people come together and stand up for the values of Torah and the values of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

And *b'ezrat Hashem*, together this week, we will all gather for the OU Israel *Yom Ha'atzmaut tefillah chagigit*. Every year we expect many thousands of people to attend, and *Baruch Hashem* they do. Last year, as many will remember, because of fires we had to move the event to the Ramada, which did an incredible job hosting us. Once again, due to the current situation we will be having the event at the Ramada. It is important that we are able to bring as many people together for this extraordinary event in the safest manner. I look forward to seeing each and every one of you there.

I know it will be yet another opportunity when we can look up to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and say: *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, now is another great time to bring *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*. We will hope and pray that it happens. But if, *chas v'shalom*, not yet, we will continue to hope and wait, every day for his arrival, *bimheira b'yameinu*

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel

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PARSHAT TAZRIA-METZORA

The double parsha of Tazria-Metzora is challenging.

The theme is simple: certain things make one tamei. One who is tamei may not enter the Mikdash. There is a process by which one returns to being tahor.

We began this theme last week with tuma from contact with dead animals. The tuma in our parsha is what is called tuma whose source is our own body: childbirth, Tzaraat (loosely translated as leprosy), and emissions from procreative organs. In addition, while describing Tzaraat, which is a blight on the skin, there is also blight on clothing and on one's home.

In each type of tuma, there is a ritual process including sacrifices to restore tahara or purity.

The challenge is in understanding all the details. Why do these particular people become tamei? And how is the tuma lifted by these particular procedures?

I will offer a modest suggestion to frame the idea of tuma, though this suggestion will be inadequate in explaining all the details.

The Torah begins with a dramatic proposition. G-d created man in His Image. Created like Him? That is no small thing! What a grand proposition.

That is the foundation of the entire Torah. Man is not a fancy animal. He is in His Image. Well, what exactly does the image of G-d mean? We will have to learn through the stories of the Torah in what way we are like Him and in what way not.

We procreate, creators as He is a Creator. We communicate, as He Communicates to us. We make distinctions between holy and non, as He made a distinction between day and night. We are generous as He. Kind as He.

But. Unlike Him, we have physical bodies. We are animal-like, needing food. Illness. Death. Aggression. Violence.

We are not animals. Well, we are animal-like in some things. But we are in His Image. Physical, yes. But majestic, lofty, grand.

Man is a partner to the Divine. The notion of finite man as partner to the Infinite is frightening and humbling. But it is also grand, magnificent. If G-d creates us in His Image – well, He must think of us as worthy. What a compliment to us! Man is His worthy partner? Wow. Man is majestic. Noble. Elevated. Distinguished. Unique. G-d invites majestic, noble man to the Mikdash.

However, this life that we live sometimes causes us to feel less than majestic. Not so noble. We sometimes feel beaten down, rather

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pedestrian, glorified animals. And in particular, we feel beaten down by those things that we share with animals: food, procreation, illness, death. When confronted by our limitations, the physicality we share with animals, our mortality, we can lose the nobility of our station. We can feel like glorious animals.

That may be the meaning of tuma. Perhaps *Tuma is the state of bruised nobility*. When man feels unconvinced that he is created in the image of G-d, when he doubts his part in a grand covenant, when he questions the nobility of the invitation to be His partner; perhaps that is what Tuma is. Bruised nobility.

These very earthy parts of our being can damage our sense of majesty, making us feel closer to animals than to angels.

Tuma is generated by those experiences that bruise our majesty. The rituals that remove tuma are perhaps designed to restore that majesty. The invitation to approach G-d in the Mikdash requires man in the fullness of his majesty. That invitation is suspended for the one whose nobility is bruised, one who doubts his lofty station. That person needs nobility restored before approaching G-d. The process of becoming Tahor is the restoration of our lofty station. Man in the fullness of his majesty is required for the Divine rendezvous.



1ST ALIYA (VAYIKRA 12:1-13:23)

Childbirth renders a woman tamei (tmeya). At the end of the tuma, 40 days for a male, 80 days for a female child, she brings an offering of an olah and a chatat. She may then enter the Mikdash. **Tzaraat** has different forms and different laws. It can be a white patch on the skin, with white hair, cover the entire body, or appear on a recovered inflammation. The kohen checks to determine if it is Tzaraat or if it is an innocuous skin condition. Some appearances are

unclear and require a 7-day interval to determine if Tzaraat or innocuous.

Childbirth is joyous; yet, the woman becomes tmeya, restricting her entry to the Mikdash. Along the theme mentioned above, experiences that we share with animals may damage our sense of the nobility of our station. Childbirth, though wonderful, is earthy. To recapture the higher nobility of humanity, the woman brings offerings, as a reboot, a reaffirmation of the higher calling in being human.

Tzaraat has many details. It appears as unusual colorations of the skin. The skin is the visible part of our bodies. The skin abnormalities of Tzaraat would make one self-conscious or embarrassed.

A unique aspect of humanity over animals is our social nature. Being self-conscious of our appearance would injure our social nature. This damage to our sense of nobility also demands a reboot in the form of a ceremony at the conclusion of the Tzaraat, outlined in the later aliyot.



2ND ALIYA (13:24-39)

Tzaraat can also be found on skin that suffered a burn or on the head or beard. The kohen assesses the nature of the discoloration determining whether it requires 7-day quarantine and reassessment to determine if tamei or tahor.

Human intellect is another distinguishing feature of man over animal. Perhaps this blight on our head is symbolic of misuse of the power of our intellect.

**Condolences to
Dr. Josh Daniel and family
on the passing of his brother**

Stewie ז"י

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים



3RD ALIYA (13:40-54)

Tzaraat can also appear on the head or beard, with hair loss and skin discoloration. When a person is declared to have Tzaraat, he rends his garments, lets his hair grow, covers himself to his lips and dwells outside of the camp. **Garments** displaying specific discoloration are deemed to have garment Tzaraat. The kohen assesses the color and shape, quarantining if necessary. If determined to have Tzaraat, the garment is burned.

After the detailed description of when a person has Tzaraat and when not, the consequence of Tzaraat is described. The person acts as a mourner would act: garment torn, hair grown, head covered (a practice we no longer generally observe as mourners). But more dramatically: he is sequestered out of the populated area.

This isolation is one of the things that prompts the midrashic comment that Tzaraat is for lashon hara – the punishment fits the transgression. If you can't treat people respectfully, then spend some time alone. Or, in line with the approach outlined above: the nobility of man is expressed in social interaction.

Tzaraat, an embarrassing discoloration that makes us feel self conscious, diminishes our sense of self. Isolation allows us to reflect on our self worth. Self worth has nothing to do with how we look to others, whether our skin looks good or whether our dress looks fine. Self worth is intrinsic; we have self worth simply because we are created in the image of G-d.

Clothing too is uniquely human. Clothing is an expression of human dignity. The tumah of a garment restricts the wearer from entry to the Mikdash, as human dignity is diminished by this oddly blemished garment.



4TH ALIYA (13:55-14:20)

The regulations of tuma of

garments are completed. The **process of becoming tahor** following Tzaraat of the body is outlined. When the kohen determines that the Tzaraat of the skin has subsided, the person with the Tzaraat may reenter the camp though for 7 additional days he may not enter the Mikdash. 2 birds are taken, one slaughtered, the other dipped into its blood, along with cedar wood, a red thread and hyssop. His hair is shaved. On the 8th day he brings offerings. Blood and oil are placed on his right ear, thumb and toe.

The details of the Tzaraat and the purification from it are numerous; too numerous to properly outline here. One detail though is worth mentioning. At the beginning of the return from quarantine of the person with Tzaraat, 2 birds are taken; one slaughtered, one sent free. This is not done in the Mikdash, as the person is out of the entire camp.

We have heard of the 2, one slaughtered, one not before. The 2 goats of Yom Kippur; one slaughtered, one sent to the wilderness.

In addition, the end of the Tzaraat process requires blood and oil placed on the right ear, thumb and toe. That echoes what was done to the kohanim in their inauguration – also on their 8th day.

Perhaps this is a nod to our human condition. The dominant mood of Yom Kippur is contrition, disappointment in our failings. But at the same time, we are angelic, a kingdom of kohanim, a holy nation. Hence the parallel; Yom Kippur and the inauguration of the kohen. The human condition of contrition and of grandeur.



5TH ALIYA (14:21-32)

If one is unable to afford the above offerings, a less expensive alternative is offered, including birds in place of one of the animal offerings. A similar process to the one with 2 animals is performed.

It makes perfect sense to have a sliding scale to accommodate the less wealthy people. After all, when our nobility is bruised in our external trappings – how we appear to others, how our clothing appears – our reintegration will emphasize not what we *have* but who we *are*. Animals for those who can afford, birds for those who can't. Not *what* you bring, but *that* you bring.



6TH ALIYA (14:33-15:15)

In the Land of Israel, **homes** will be subject to Tzaraat as well. The kohen will examine the marks. If declared Tzaraat, all that is in the home becomes tamei, hence all shall be removed before the kohen's declaration. If the marks spread over the next 7 days, the kohen shall order stones removed and replaced. If the spread persists, the kohen may order the home demolished. If the kohen declares the home tahor, 2 birds are taken, one slaughtered, the other dipped in its blood with cedar wood, a crimson thread and hyssop. The bird is set free. A **Zav**, a male, has a discharge from his organ of procreation that is unusual. He renders others tamei and requires a purification process of 2 bird offerings at the end of 7 days.

Continuing our theme that tuma is associated with those parts of our lives that may hinder our sense of dignity, our home can be the source not of diminished dignity but of excess, of hubris.

Oh, we moderns know all too well how the fantastic wealth of our times can inflate our sense of self-worth. Man's dignity lies not in the grandness of his home, but in the grandeur of his person. A pox on your house if the grandeur of your home inflates human dignity to become hubris.



7TH ALIYA (15:16-33)

A regular sexual discharge of a man renders a low level of tuma. A



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woman's regular menstrual bleeding renders her temeya for 7 days, transferring her tuma to others including through touch. A woman who has bleeding inconsistent with her regular period is a Zava, a similar Tuma to the male Zav. Offerings are brought following the cessation of this unusual bleeding.

Procreation may also lead to an inflated self image; creation is not just His, but is ours. He gives life. We give life. Healthy self image of our dignity and majesty can be damaged by our physicality in both directions; deflated and inflated. Too low a view, that we are nothing more than animals. Or too high, as creators, leaving less room for the Creator. ■

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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, EMERITUS

“Going At It Alone”

“No man is an island.” “It takes a village.” These are just some of the clichés that are used to convey the importance of social groups, of the realization that people cannot “go at it alone.”

But just as it is vital that each of us learns that we are ultimately limited in what we can accomplish by ourselves, it is equally vital that we learn of the benefits of occasional solitude and of the need to sometimes just be alone.

In this week’s double Torah portion, *Tazria-Metzora*, we read at length and in great detail about an individual who is afflicted by a condition known as *tzora’at*, often translated as leprosy. It is a condition which is characterized by specific discolorations of the skin and which is understood by our sages to be the consequence of immoral behavior, particularly malicious gossip.

The Torah prescribes that such an individual rend his clothes and let his hair grow. He is considered ritually unclean, and “...he shall dwell apart; his dwelling shall be outside that camp.” (*Leviticus 13:46*)

Opinions vary as to why he must be removed from society. Some say simply that he is quarantined because his condition is contagious. Others insist that since his misdeeds caused harm to others, he must be punished by living apart from others.

I prefer, however, the view that believes that a period of solitude is imposed upon this individual to afford him an opportunity to think, to reconsider his actions, and to resolve to live a new moral lifestyle. He is afforded the social isolation necessary for thoroughgoing introspection, a chance to think for himself.

There is a lesson here about the benefits of solitude that is of renewed relevance in our day and age.

The Spring 2010 edition of *The American Scholar* carries an essay by William Deresiewicz which he delivered to the plebe class at the United States Military Academy at West Point in October of 2009. The essay is entitled “Solitude and Leadership.”

Mr. Deresiewicz eloquently conveys the message to these future military leaders that leadership demands a mindset which can only come about with frequent and sustained periods of solitude.

He emphasizes the importance of thinking and writes, “Thinking means concentrating on one thing long enough to develop an idea about it.”

He further emphasizes the importance of concentrating and writes that it means “gathering yourself together into a single point rather than letting yourself be dispersed everywhere into a cloud of electronic and social input.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson made Mr. Deresiewicz’s point long ago when he said, “He who should inspire and lead his race must be defended from traveling with the souls of other men, from living, breathing, reading, and

writing in the daily, time-worn yoke of their opinions.”

These opinions of a famous 19th century essayist and one of his contemporary counterparts stress and amplify a message implicit in this week’s Torah portion. The message is that time by oneself, reflecting and engaging in serious introspection, is an essential component of self improvement and a prerequisite not only for membership in society, but for leadership of society.

Jewish sources go much further than Emerson and Deresiewicz. The latter restrict their insightful comments to the importance of solitude in everyday, mundane affairs. Our tradition goes beyond that and teaches that solitude is necessary for spiritual growth and for religious leadership.

The sages of the Talmud insist upon the necessity of *cheshbon hanefesh*, self-reckoning. The Jewish ethical treatises of medieval times recommend that one regularly withdraw from society to engage in such self reckoning. *Chassidim*, and most particularly the followers of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, daily engage in periods of *hitbodedut*, solitary contemplation.

The secular writers quoted above are helpful in that they make it clear that solitude need not entail mystical practices or spiritual techniques. Rather, solitude provides an opportunity for thinking on one’s own and for concentrating deeply without the undue influences of one’s social surround.

I personally am convinced that occasional solitude would be a healthy antidote to the blind conformity which is imposed upon all of us by our contemporary world.

Once again, the Torah, in the midst of a passage which seems most out of tune with modernity, gives us a lesson essential for coping with modernity. ■

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Holiness and Childbirth

The sidrot of Tazria and Metzora contain laws which are among the most difficult to understand. They are about conditions of “impurity” arising from the fact that we are physical beings, embodied souls, and hence exposed to (in Hamlet’s words) “the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to.”

Though we have immortal longings, mortality is the condition of human existence, as it is of all embodied life.

Rambam explains:

We have already shown that, in accordance with the Divine wisdom, genesis can only take place through destruction, and without the destruction of the individual members of the species, the species themselves would not exist permanently... He who thinks that he can have flesh and bones without being subject to any external influence, or any of the accidents of matter, unconsciously wishes to reconcile two opposites, namely, to be at the same time subject and not subject to change. (Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, III:12)

Throughout history there have been two

distinct and opposing ways of relating to this fact: hedonism (living for physical pleasure) and asceticism (relinquishing physical pleasure). The former worships the physical while denying the spiritual, the latter enthrones the spiritual at the cost of the physical.

The Jewish way has always been different: to sanctify the physical – eating, drinking, sex and rest – making the life of the body a vehicle for the Divine Presence. The reason is simple. We believe with perfect faith that the God of redemption is also the God of creation. The physical world we inhabit is the one God made and pronounced “very good.” To be a hedonist is to deny God. To be an ascetic is to deny the goodness of God’s world. To be a Jew is to celebrate both creation and Creator. That is the principle that explains many otherwise incomprehensible features of Jewish life.

The laws with which the Parsha begins are striking examples of this:

When a woman conceives and gives birth to a boy, she shall be *teme'ah* for seven days, just as she is during the time of separation when she has her period... Then, for thirty-three additional days she shall have a waiting period during which her blood is ritually clean. Until this purification period is complete, she shall not touch anything holy and shall not enter the Sanctuary.

If she gives birth to a girl, she shall have for two weeks the same *teme'ah* status as during her menstrual period. Then, for sixty-six days after that, she shall have a waiting period during which her blood is ritually clean.

She then brings a burnt-offering and a sin-offering, after which she is restored to “ritual purity.” What is the meaning of these laws? Why does childbirth render the mother *teme'ah* (usually translated as “ritually impure”, better understood as “a condition which impedes or exempts from a direct encounter with holiness”)? And why is the period after giving birth to a girl twice that for a boy?

There is a temptation to see these laws as inherently beyond the reach of human understanding. Several rabbinic statements seem to say just this. In fact, it is not so, as Maimonides explains at length in the Guide. To be sure, we can never know – specifically with respect to laws that have to do with *kedushah* (holiness) and *teharah* (purity) – whether our understanding is correct. But we are not thereby forced to abandon our search for understanding, even though any explanation will be at best speculative and tentative.

The first principle essential to understanding the laws of ritual purity and impurity is that God is life. Judaism is a profound rejection of cults, ancient and modern, that glorify death. The great pyramids of Egypt were grandiose tombs. Arthur Koestler noted that without death “the cathedrals collapse, the pyramids vanish into the sand, the great organs become silent.” The English metaphysical poets turned to it constantly as a theme. As T. S. Eliot wrote:

Webster was much possessed by death
And saw the skull beneath the skin...
Donne, I suppose, was such another...



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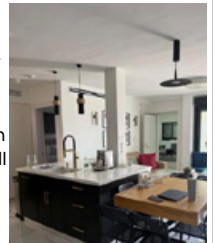
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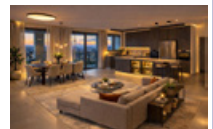


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He knew the anguish of the marrow
The ache of the skeleton... (*Whispers of Immortality*, T. S. Eliot)

Freud coined the word *thanatos* to describe the death-directed character of human life. Judaism is a protest against death-centred cultures. "It is not the dead who praise the Lord, nor those who go down into silence" (Psalm 114) "What profit is there in my death, if I go down into the pit? Can the dust acknowledge You? Can it proclaim your truth?" (Psalm 30). As we open a Sefer Torah we say: "All of you who hold fast to the Lord your God are alive today" (Deut 4:4). The Torah is a tree of life. God is the God of life. As Moses put it in two memorable words: "Choose life" (Deut. 30:19).

It follows that *kedushah* (holiness) – a point in time or space where we stand in the unmediated presence of God – involves a supreme consciousness of life. That is why the paradigm case of *tumah* is contact with a corpse. Other cases of *tumah* include diseases or bodily emissions that remind us of our mortality. God's domain is life. Therefore it may not be associated in any way with intimations of death.

This is how Judah Halevi explains the purity laws:

A dead body represents the highest degree of loss of life, and a leprous limb is as if it were dead. It is the same with the loss of seed, because it had been endowed with living power, capable of engendering a human being. Its loss therefore forms a contrast to the living and breathing. (*The Kuzari*, II:60)

The laws of purity apply exclusively to Israel, argues Halevi, precisely because Judaism is the supreme religion of life, and its adherents are therefore hyper-sensitive to even the most subtle distinctions between life and death.

A second principle, equally striking, is the

acute sensitivity Judaism shows to the birth of a child. Nothing is more "natural" than procreation. Every living thing engages in it. Sociobiologists go so far as to argue that a human being is a gene's way of creating another gene. By contrast, the Torah goes to great lengths to describe how many of the heroines of the Bible – among them Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah and the Shunamite woman – were infertile and had children only through a miracle.

Clearly the Torah intends a message here, and it is unmistakable. To be a Jew is to know that survival is not a matter of biology alone. What other cultures may take as natural is for us a miracle. Every Jewish child is a gift of God. No faith has taken children more seriously or devoted more of its efforts to raising the next generation. Childbirth is wondrous. To be a parent is the closest any of us come to God himself. That, incidentally, is why women are closer to God than men, because they, unlike men, know what it is to bring new life out of themselves, as God brings life out of himself. The idea is beautifully captured in the verse in which, leaving Eden, Adam turns to his wife and calls her Chava "for she is the mother of all life."


We can now speculate about the laws relating to childbirth. When a mother gives birth, she undergoes great risk. Throughout the centuries, childbirth has been a life-threatening danger to mother and baby alike, and even today there are ever-present risks for many. Furthermore, during the process of childbirth, a woman is separated from what until now had been part of her own body (a foetus, said the rabbis, "is like a limb of the mother") and which has now become an independent person. If that is so in the case of a boy, it is doubly so in the case of a girl – who, with God's help, will not merely live but may

herself in later years become a source of new life. At one level, therefore, the laws signal the detachment of life from life.

At another level, they surely suggest something more profound. There is a halachic principle: "One who is engaged in a mitzvah is exempt from other mitzvot." It is as if God were saying to the mother: for forty days in the case of a boy, and doubly so in the case of a girl (the mother-daughter bond is ontologically stronger than that between mother and son): I exempt you from coming before Me in the place of holiness because you are fully engaged in one of the holiest acts of all, nurturing and caring for your child. Unlike others you do not need to visit the Temple to be attached to life in all its sacred splendour. You are experiencing it yourself, directly and with every fibre of your being. Days, weeks, from now you will come and give thanks before Me (together with offerings for having come through a moment of danger). But for now, look upon your child with wonder. For you have been given a glimpse of the great secret, otherwise known only to God.

Childbirth exempts the new mother from attendance at the Temple because her bedside replicates the experience of the Temple. She now knows what it is for love to beget life, and -in the midst of mortality - to be touched by an intimation of immortality. ■

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BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER
FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER



“Reishit Tz’michat Ge’ulateinu”

On this special Shabbat, a day when we are privileged to read two parshot and to mark the Rosh Chodesh of Iyar, we find much material to discuss regarding both of the Torah portions and concerning the significance of the month. However, I have decided to “pass over” these opportunities, favoring, instead, the chance to focus on the holiday that is NEVER observed on Shabbat – but IS celebrated this week. It is for this reason, that I begin this article by sending the warmest “MAZAL TOV” wishes to all who will be rejoicing on the 78th Yom Ha’Atzma’ut of the State of Israel this coming week!!!

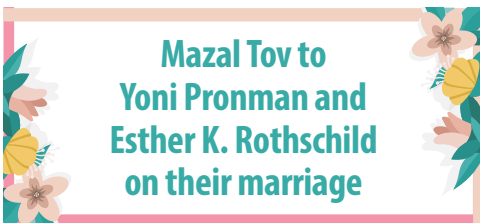
And it is for the same reason that my message this week will focus on the “non-Shabbat” haftarah, the haftarah of Yom Ha’Atzma’ut.

In 1949, the first year after the establishment of the State of Israel, the Rabbanut instituted the reading of the eleventh and twelfth p’rakim of Sefer Yishayahu for the haftarah

of Yom Ha’atzma’ut. They chose this specific selection, as its depiction of the Messianic Era is one that is unparalleled in all of Tanach. Clearly, the Rabbis of the last generation saw the establishment of a Jewish State as nothing less than “Reishit Tz’michat Ge’ulateinu” – “the first flowering of our redemption.”

Yeshayahu’s vision of an idyllic world that is portrayed in these p’rakim - its picture of a peaceful world realized through the leadership of a king from the Davidic dynasty - may not be yet reached, but throughout those years of struggle, Jews remained confident that G-d’s promise would, ultimately, be fulfilled. This prophetic vision includes the establishment of a just and righteous society, one inspired by a divine spirit of wisdom and understanding and by a leader who would judge the destitute with righteousness and who would strike down wickedness. And when Yishayahu paints the portrait of a world where natural enemies - the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid - would live in peace, we understood all too well that the ultimate goal and the ultimate blessing would be that of peace.

However..., the haftarah does NOT begin with the depiction of this idyllic world! It actually begins with the last three verses of the tenth perek, a chapter in which the navi relates the many misdeeds and failings that Israel committed during the era of the first Bet HaMikdash. In fact, these final verses that open the haftarah, begin, quite poetically, with a portrayal of Sancheriv’s victorious march through the Judean cities that he had



conquered!!!! The opening words, “Od hayom b’Nov la’amod”, describe the powerful Assyrian army standing at the outskirts of Yerushalayim (Nov), with her general contemptuously waving his hand over the Holy City and boasting of his inevitable victory!!!

Given this truth, why would our scholars celebrate the “Reishit Tz’michat Ge’ulateinu”, by opening Yeshayahu’s wonderful prophetic description of Y’mot HaMashiach with the frightening depiction of the enemy’s victory???

Actually, our Rabbis had good reason to do so.

The Rabbanut understood well that this portrayal clearly reflected the widespread attitude of the Arab enemy in 1948, boasting-contemptuously “waving their hand”- that they would soon push the outnumbered and ill-equipped Jews into the sea. Our scholars recognized how well the second and third verses of the haftarah reflected the miracles of 1948, in which Yishayahu prophesies how Hashem will bring down the haughty enemy and crush those who hoped to destroy G-d’s nation. It is for this reason, that the ancient Tana’itic scholars established the reading of this haftarah on the eighth day of Pesach – for they also saw this nevu’ah as a fitting message for the final day of Chag HaGe’ulah! And Israel’s Gedolei HaRabbanim of 1948-9 saw, too, the very same message.

The eighth day of Pesach is seen as a Chag HaGe’ulah for Jews in the Diaspora...but today, the fifth day of Iyar must be regarded as the Chag HaGe’ulah for ALL Jews around the world.

It is, after all, “Reishit Tz’michat Ge’ulateinu”! ■

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Sympathy Needs No Barometer

טַמָּא טַמָּא יְקָרָא

He calls out “Impure, impure” (Vayikra 13:45)

The individual inflicted with tzara’at calls out that he is impure. Rashi explains that he does so to inform others, so that they will stay away and avoid becoming impure themselves.

However, the Gemara suggests a more sensitive reason for this announcement. It teaches:

והתניא אילן שמשיר פירותיו סוקרו (וצובע אותו) בסיקרא וטוענו באבנים בשלמא טוענו באבנים כי היכי דליכחוש חיליה אלא סוקרו בסיקרא מאי רפואה קעביד כי היכי דליחזייה אינשי וליבעו עליה רחמי דתניא ויקרא יג, מה (וטמא טמא יקרא דצריך להודיע צערו לרבים ורבים יבקשו עליו רחמים).

“A tree that sheds its fruit prematurely is

painted and marked with stones. Loading it with stones weakens it physically—but why paint it red? So that people will see the tree and pray for its recovery. Similarly, the metzora calls out ‘Impure, impure.’ He must announce his suffering to the masses, so that they will pray for mercy on his behalf” (Shabbat 67a; Vayikra 13:45).

The Gemara draws a parallel: the red-painted tree is like the metzora. Both are marked so that others recognize their condition and respond with compassion and prayer.

At first glance, the comparison seems surprising. A metzora suffers tremendously: he is removed from all three camps, separated from family and work, and his life is turned upsidedown. The owner of a sick tree, by contrast, may have many orchards, and one unfruitful tree may barely impact him. How can Chazal equate these two situations—one human suffering, one agricultural—both requiring public recognition to elicit mercy?

Rav Chaim Friedlander (Sifte Chaim) offers a profound insight: **we are not to measure another’s suffering to determine whether it “deserves” our sympathy.** There is no barometer that gauges how much pain merits compassion. Every act of suffering, no matter how severe or how mild, is deserving of our care, attention, and prayer.

This principle is reflected in countless stories of the gedolim, who wept at the pain of others. The Chafetz Chaim, for example, is said to have cried when he heard of an ill person in another town whom he had never met. The intensity of the suffering was enough;

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he did not question whether it was “serious enough” to merit tears.

In recent years, many families have experienced loss, illness, or injury. We have witnessed firsthand the fragility of life and the weight of human suffering. The lesson from the metzora and the sick tree is clear: we are called to respond with empathy, to offer assistance, and to pray wholeheartedly for the recovery and healing of those in pain.

Perhaps the deepest teaching here is this: sympathy is not a privilege, but rather a responsibility.

Just as the red-painted tree signals the community to pray, and the metzora calls out to awaken compassion, so too every human in pain calls upon us—not with words, but with the reality of their suffering. We are charged to notice, to respond, and to act.

There is no threshold for empathy. No litmus test to determine who “deserves” our care. Every tear, every cry, every hidden wound matters. Every prayer we offer can help heal, every act of kindness can restore, and every moment we choose compassion can transform isolation into belonging.

May we merit to be people who see suffering and do not hesitate. Who respond, who pray, and who bring comfort—whether the pain is great or small. Just as Chazal teach, every life, every struggle, every “tree” in our midst deserves our heartfelt attention.

Let us open our hearts, extend our hands, and allow mercy to flow freely so that we can be living conduits of healing, hope, and love. ■

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Potent Prayer

“*Tamei hu badad yeishev mi’chutz lamachaneh moshavo*—He is unclean; he shall dwell isolated; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.” (*Vayikra*13;46) The *metzora* must call out “*Tamei tamei*—Unclean! Unclean!” to anyone who passes by. The Gemara Shabbat explains that this declaration was meant to inform people of his condition so that they could pray for him and his recovery. We can learn two primary lessons here, one that pertains to the leper, and one that is meant for those who are called upon to pray for him.

Rav Moshe Scheinerman in *Ohel Moshe* asks why is the tefillah of others so important here? Usually, we find that the tefillah of a sick person is preferable. Would it not be sufficient for the *metzora* to pray for himself? His answer is based on the *Zohar Hakadosh* that translates *metzora* as *mesugar*—closed off; his tefillot are closed, i.e., they are prevented from ascending upwards. As a result, the *metzora* is in need of the tefillot of others; he is not only distanced from others, but also from Above.

Rav Shimshon Pincus zt”l in *Tiferet Shimshon* emphasizes the importance of davening for other people. He notes that it is a natural reaction when seeing another in pain or in need of help to do what he can to ease his distress. Even if we don’t have the financial wherewithal to help others, we can always daven to Hashem on behalf of another. The Gemara teaches that one can ask for mercy on behalf

of his friend, and if he does not, he is called a sinner. This is so because either one doesn’t believe in the power of tefillah, or he is callous towards his friends. Rav Pincus notes that if one ever sees or hears a message of someone who is sick, it is appropriate to say a chapter of Tehillim even if the person is unknown to him.

We find an example that illustrates the power of tefillah in the case of the *Ir Miklat*. A person who accidentally kills another must dwell in the city of refuge until the Kohen Gadol dies. The *Levush* explains the reasoning behind this. Those living in this city will most likely pray for the Kohen Gadol’s death so they can go free. The Kohen Gadol is deserving of such tefillot against him, since he did not sufficiently pray that accidental murders would not take place. This mandate to daven for the Klal is placed on all those who are responsible for the welfare of others.

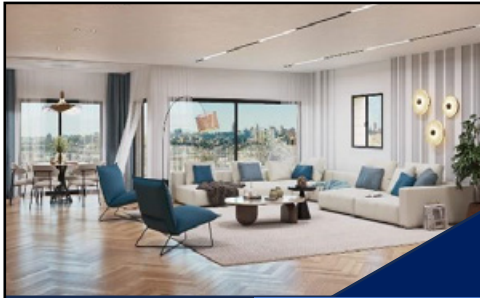
Rav Pincus adds that when one sees a handicapped person, or any other person who is in need it is appropriate to say a prayer for them. This includes those who need spiritual salvation as well.

The call of the *metzora* is a timeless one, reverberating throughout and awakening us to feel the pain of another. We can each respond to that pain by imploring Hashem for their salvation and do our part to ease the suffering and anguish of another. ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
OU ISRAEL

Just two weeks ago on the *Layl HaSeder*, we recalled- *Baruch Shomeir Havtachato L'Yisrael- Blessed is He who has kept his promise to the Jewish People.*

So much has happened in the days since we sat on the *Seder* night—so many trips to our safe spaces, much uncertainty—yet we have suddenly begun to attempt to return to our daily routines. How exactly are we to comprehend the dizzying transition from the stress of war to regular daily life? How might we appreciate this passage from the *Hagada*- that *Hashem* has kept His promise to the Jewish People?

The saintly Rabbi **Yissacher Shlomo Teichtel, zy'a hy'd**, in his incredible moving work *Eim HaBanim Smeicha*, wrote of the fulfillment of promises that have begun to unfold with the return of the Jewish People to *Eretz Yisrael*.

Rav Abba said. There is no clearer sign of Mashiach, than when the verse (Yechezkel 36:8) is fulfilled: Mountains of Israel will give forth their fruit to My People, Israel. (Sanhedrin 98a) Our Jewish brothers came to the land and built cities, villages, gardens and orchards. They transformed great expanses of disease infested swamps into fertile lush fields. They sacrificed themselves to build the land. This must be the work of Hashem and a sign that our salvation is soon to come! This is without doubt the beginning of redemption...

As we look ahead and begin to prepare to celebrate *Yom Ha'atzmaut* in the coming week, I thought it might be meaningful to share an insight from a great Torah

personality from the early years of *Medinat Yisrael*.

One of the great religious personalities of the pre-state *Yishuv* and early years of *Medinat Yisrael*, was the **Ohalei Yaakov of Tel Aviv, Rabbi Yaakov Friedman, zt'l, the Admor of Husiyatin zy'a**. The Rebbe of *Husiyatin*, was fortunate to make *aliya* from Poland, just ahead of the Nazi onslaught, settling in *Tel Aviv* in 1938, where he lived until his passing in 1954. Within the Rebbe's beautiful teachings we not only find depth and inspiration, but are often given a glimpse of this very challenging period in Jewish History.

One particularly poignant message that *Ohalei Yaakov* shared was a sermon for the *Shabbat of Parshat Ki Tavo* in 1952. The *sedra* opens with these words:

V'haya Ki Tavo El Haaretz-And it shall be when you arrive upon the Land...

The *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*, in his comments on this verse explains : *V'haya-Lashon Simcha*. Our arrival to the Land of Israel is something to celebrate and rejoice over!

The Rebbe of *Husiyatin*, asked regarding this insight of the *Ohr HaChaim*:

When we look at the reality and spiritual circumstances here in Eretz Yisrael today(in 1952), one can't help but ask-how are we to rejoice? Yes, indeed we have merited to receive the gift of Medinat Yisrael, and for the beginning of the ingathering of the Exiles, but how can we rejoice when we look at the lack of spirituality which seems rampant among us. I do not wish to pass judgment, Chas V'Shalom, rather our way is always to find merit and

see the good. There are three reasons for the spiritual malaise which is so worrisome and a cause for deep concern. 1. A portion of our people have received a poor education 2. A portion of our people live in difficult conditions and circumstances, abject poverty 3. The Shoah which nearly decimated our people, and left so many broken physically and despondent emotionally and spiritually, from which we have yet to recover.

However, there is no room for despair! The Torah has already promised us that indeed the Jewish People will return to the ways of Hakadosh Baruch Hu-V'Shavta Ad Hashem Elokecha.

This Spiritual Renewal will not come from any other place, except for here in Eretz Yisrael. The Spiritual Renewal of Am Yisrael will indeed come forth from this Center of Jewish Life we are building now here in Eretz Yisrael...."

Baruch Hashem, in the seventy four years since the Rebbe shared this powerful message, Torah learning and Jewish commitment, and ritual observance here in Eretz Yisrael has indeed grown exponentially. Baruch Shomeir Havtachato L'Yisrael- Blessed is He who has kept his promise to the Jewish People.

These past many months have been difficult, challenging and at times painful for the Jewish people. Rav Kook zy'a, offered a

beautiful insight which I think helps to contextualize this challenging period against the backdrop of the bigger picture here in Artzeinu Hakedosha.

All the bitter circumstances, physical and spiritual, which have affected the Holy Land will not overcome it. Just as no physical destruction can destroy our love for the beloved land, so can no spiritual desolation reduce our holy and profound love of that land of life. The deep connection between the soul of the Jew and Zion, with all that takes place there, stands firm forever.

Yehi Ratzon, as we look ahead to Yom Ha'atzmaut, may we indeed merit to witness the fulfillment of Hashem's promise to the Jewish People, to see continued spiritual transformation taking root here in our sacred land, and may we experience in the days ahead, the redemption and transformation of the entire world, which will flow forth from Artzeinu HaKedosha.....

Moadim Lisimcha Legeula Shleima! ■

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Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt'l, the renowned *Mashgiach* and author of the classic *Alei Shur*, was one of the great educators, thinkers and Torah personalities of our generation.

A yeshiva student came to Rav Wolbe and asked for advice and guidance in dealing with the challenge of *shemiras ha-lashon* and refraining from *lashon hara*. The Gadol acknowledged him warmly, but remained immersed in his studies. A group of *talmidim* gathered around, awaiting his response, speculating on what it might be. Would the *Mashgiach* suggest that the student set an extra daily seder learning the laws of proper speech? Would he recommend adding a special *tefilah* prayer for success in that area, or perhaps advise him to refrain from speaking for a specific time period and conduct a *taanis dibbur*?

The wise *Mashgiach* finally lifted his head, and in the sweetest of tones, said, "Make sure to perform three acts of kindness, and to share a good word, a compliment or word

of encouragement with someone you meet, every day.'

Our sedra (*Tazria*) introduces the prohibition of *lashon hara*, the consequence of which would be *tzaraas*, a spiritual 'leprosy', resulting in exile from the community, being forced to leave the encampment of the Jewish People and remain outside, isolated and alone.


"And Hashem formed man, dust from the earth, ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים - He blew into him the soul of life," and man became a *nefesh chayah*, a "living spirit" (Bereishis 2:7). Targum Onkelos provides a literal translation of the Torah, here defining man as *ruach memalelah*, "a spirit that speaks". Speech expresses our Divine root, and enables us to connect with others and with Hashem. *Shemiras ha-lashon* in its fullest sense is fulfilling the deepest potential of the faculty of speech, and it is rooted in our awareness that we are all created *b'tzelem Elokim*, in the image of G-d.


Elevating our speech and speaking positively about others hinges on the *mitzvah* of *V'havta lereyacha kamocho*, the commandment to "love your fellow as yourself." When we express hurtful or damaging words, embarrassing or being dismissive of others, we act in a way which undermines the *tzelem Elokim*, their Divine soul, and ours as well.


A person who has contracted *tzaraas*, a *metzora*, was *motzi ra*, 'finding' or 'deriving' *ra*, the negative in someone else. He fell prey to the gravitational pull to point out what is lacking in his vision of another.


Rav Matisyahu Solomon zt'l, the *Mashgiach*


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of Beis Medrash Gavoha in Lakewood, points out, “We have all heard a thousand times that the Temple was destroyed because of *sinas chinam*, baseless hatred, and we have received countless reminders through the words of the Chafetz Chaim, that if we would stop speaking *lashon hara* we would be redeemed. And yet, somehow, we have failed to internalize the message!” In *Sefer Matnas Chayim*, Rav Solomon reveals the root of our failure to maintain holy, elevated speech: a lack of faith in ourselves. Faith in ourselves is essential, because when we feel good about ourselves and are confident with our own stature, we can recognize the value and good in others as well.

To strongly harness the power of speech, however, we still must realize that our words leave a mark in this world and in the world Above. We have an awesome potential to build or destroy, to draw close or *chalilah*, create distance. The gift of speech represents the infinite trust that Hashem has in us, and in creating us in His image. Knowing that every word we speak actualizes the *nishmas chayim* that we were imbued with in our creation is a powerful starting point for maintaining dignified speech.

Perhaps this is the underlying message in Rav Wolbe’s advice: *Acharei ha-peulos nimshach ha-levavos*, “One’s heart is drawn after their actions.” By doing good, we imbue our internal



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experience with goodness, and we feel positivity toward those whom we assist. More and more do we trust the fact that we are generous, kind and capable of benefiting others, and this in turn influences us to see others as generous, kind and capable. We reveal to ourselves our own *tzelem Elokim*, and that of others, and begin to live in a Divine, redeemed world.

May we grab the opportunity and internalize the inner message of our sedra, and commit ourselves to add even just three deliberate acts of kindness or encouraging words to those around us. Someone out there on our contacts list - or someone at home we’ve been spending lots of time with over the Yamim Tovim - is waiting for a good word. Virtually, on the phone or in writing, there is always a way to share something positive, loving and human.

And may the promise of the Chofetz Chayim be fulfilled in our time. ■



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This Week's Inspiration

**SUNDAY
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7:30 PM

Men's Safrut (The Bais)

Rabbi Tzvi Maurer

7 Hartum Street,
2nd Floor

SPECIAL EVENT:

9:15 AM -1:00 PM

Beit Shemesh Rosh Chodesh
Iyar Women's Seminar
at Kehillat Menorat Hamaor

**MONDAY
APR 20**

8:30 PM

The Bais (for Men)

Semichat Chaver Program

Rav Elyada Goldwicht

@ **Bet Knesset Ohel Yitzchak**

Keren Hayesod St.

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**TUESDAY
APR 21**

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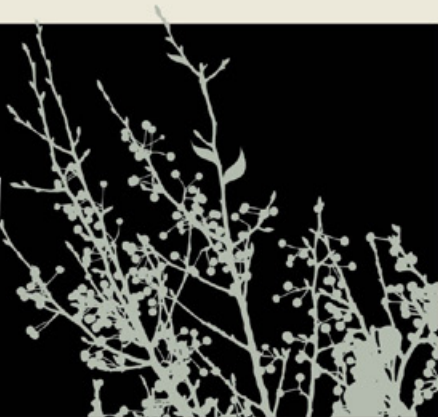
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APR 22**

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No Classes



**THURSDAY
APR 23**

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11 Rechov Leib Yaffe, Arnona

9:15 AM

Parshat HaShavua Rabbi Ari Kahn

10:30AM

Parshat HaShavua
Rabbi Baruch Taub

11:25 AM

Trailblazing the Text of Tanach
Rabbi Neil Winkler

12:20 PM

Modern Masters Rabbi Sam Shor

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Halachic Controversies
(the Bais) Rabbi Aschi Dick

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Yom Ha'atzmaut: Recognizing Redemption

Chazal understood that redemption does not arrive all at once. It unfolds in stages. To describe this, they, in the Yerushalmi (Yoma), compared geulah to sunrise. At the first light of dawn, the world is still dark. A faint streak appears on the horizon. Slowly, the light expands. Darkness begins to recede. Only later does the full day arrive. Sunrise does not happen all at once, and neither does geulah.

In 1947, when the United Nations voted to grant a foothold in Eretz Yisrael to the Jewish people, many Rabbanim opposed it. This fell far short of the redemptive vision we carry. It did not resemble the geulah we had imagined.

The Gerer Rebbe responded by citing this Yerushalmi, which compares redemption to sunrise and teaches that it unfolds קימא קימא, slowly and gradually.

CONSTRUCTION

Chazal offered a second metaphor to describe the slow, staged nature of redemption. They compared geulah to a construction project, which unfolds over time and is never completed in a single moment.

This image of a construction process reinforces the gradual nature of redemption already implicit in the sunrise metaphor. However, it reminds us of something additional. A sunrise doesn't build one stage upon the

next. It is a naturally occurring event which just takes time. A construction project is different. Each row of bricks which is laid serves as the foundation for future laying of bricks. It isn't just gradual but incremental. One row forms the foundation for the next row. One moment serves as the platform for the next, which may come several months or even years into the future.

This framework helps us read our current moment. We have been involved in a grueling war over the past two and a half years since our enemies attacked us on October 7th. There have been periods of intense fighting followed by interludes of relative calm. During the latest round of the war with Iran, our home front was severely challenged by a completely disrupted routine. Schools and workplaces shut down as the entire country ground to a halt for six weeks. As I write this, there is a ceasefire, and many are left wondering whether we have emerged victorious. Instead of searching for definitive victories, it is important to remember that we are still involved in a very long process with multiple stages and layers.

Jewish history has unfolded this way before. It took numerous rounds for Ezra and the Jewish people to finally return after our first exile of 70 years. It is difficult to determine how

long it will take for us to fully return after an exile of close to 2000 years.

THE LONG HORIZON

Seen within that larger process, as we celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut, think back to how much we have accomplished since 5 Iyar 1948. Think of how we stabilized our nation against existential threats, how we emerged as a country with economic, military and diplomatic strength, and how Israel transformed from an experiment in the desert into the epicenter of Jewish life and the anchor of Jewish identity across the world.

Do not allow the complex war of the past three years to narrow our vision and ignore the immeasurable and spectacular gains of the past 78 years.

THE LANGUAGE OF 1948

As much as the past two and a half years are a continuation of 1948, they are significantly different. Religious Jews see redemption even when events do not appear to be religiously driven or oriented toward redemption. We know that sometimes redemption comes masked in geopolitics, just as it did in Mitzrayim.

Our redemption in 1948 advanced under the mask of secular movements. The state was founded by secular Jews deeply influenced by a Marxist socialist agenda of creating an economically egalitarian society. Moreover, they advanced an anti-religious mission to rid Jews of their religious past and of the helplessness which had characterized the terrible years of exile. Out of this new state would be born a new Jew, powerful and brave, able to till his own land, create a democratic socialist society, and able to defend our sovereign homeland. The choices of 1948 weren't patently religious. Religious people are able to listen to the subtext, and we all knew that this

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was a harbinger of redemption. The door to redemption had begun to crack open, even if the echoes didn't feel religious.

Not only was the founding of the state driven by largely secular goals, but our opposition did not present itself in religious tones. The Arab world, fevered with Arab nationalism, sought to establish a pan-Arab state stretching from Turkey all the way south to the African continent and east to the Gulf states. The Jewish state of Israel was seen as a thorn inserted into the pan-Arab dream. The founding fathers of the State of Israel didn't speak in religious terms, and neither did our sworn enemies.

THE LANGUAGE OF 2026

Much has changed in the 78 years since. The State of Israel isn't yet fully religious in a halachically observant manner. We still wait and hope for that day. However, the country has become deeply spiritual and deeply committed to the prophetic destiny Hashem promised us in the Land. Likewise, our enemies are primarily Islamic fundamentalists who speak in the name of an angry god who doesn't exist. It is clearer now than in 1948 that the battle isn't geopolitical or territorial or a war of rival nationalities. It is a religious war between the people to whom this Land was promised and those who cannot stand to allow Hashem into this world. It is a battle over the presence of Hashem in this world.

It is a struggle between a culture which celebrates death and suffering and a culture which cherishes life and the dignity of the human condition. It is much easier now than in 1948 to pick up the whiff of redemption.

CULTURE WARS

That religious dimension does not remain confined to the battlefield. Something else has emerged over the past two and a half years. The struggle over our ancient homeland, over the land of Hashem, has been fused with the general culture wars which have been swirling across Western society for the past few decades. It is jarring to witness hyper-liberal movements dedicated to the fall of Western institutions also be so adamantly and violently opposed to the Jewish state. This strange alliance can be explained through many socio-political theories, but for religious people this tethering comes as no surprise. Yerushalayim is at the heart of human experience, and our history drives human history. If general culture is broken, it is obvious that the solution must come from Yerushalayim.

THE BATTLE FOR TRUTH

Beyond any particular values, at the heart of this culture war is a battle to protect truth in our world. As always, truth has been warped and weaponized, as the Jewish state and Jews around the world have been accused of every crime imaginable to modern man.



This isn't new, as libels and discrimination have always cast us as the root of all evil.

The recent wars with Iran highlighted even more how much this battle isn't only about land, but about truth and the presence of an absolute truth as reflected by our Creator. Civilization has developed exquisite tools to exchange information. It has also begun to use those tools to distort truth. Social media has empowered individuals or minority actors to simulate broad public opinion through bots which mimic human voices. As we surge into the era of AI, we are more delicately hanging on the precipice between truth and falsehood. AI can generate images and videos that are fabricated. This will become a major cultural challenge for our future, to learn to discern truth from falsehood.

For us, truth is not only factual. It is divine. Hashem is the ultimate truth, and the propagation of falsehood pushes Him from this world.

This war was fought between countries committed to truth and fact and those which fabricated facts to create false narratives of success. As Iran was suffering battering defeats across many fronts, they continued to publish fake images and videos depicting destruction in Israel. They shut off the internet to control information and to shape the narrative. Aside from the strategic and logistical issues behind this manipulation, it reflects a society committed to false narratives rather than to transparency and truth.

At its core, this is a further effort to silence Hashem from this world. As Dovid HaMelech writes in Tehilim (פרק ט"ו), only those who speak truth can encounter Hashem:

ה' מי יגור באהלך ומי ישכון בהר קדשך
הולך תמים ופועל צדק ודובר אמת בלבבו
"Hashem, who may dwell in Your tent, who

may reside on Your holy mountain? One who walks with integrity, acts with righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart.” (Tehilim 15)

We are trying to bring the full presence of Hashem into this world. When Hashem appears, all brokers of falsehood and lies will fade, and the truth of Hashem’s presence will turn hearts back to truth, back to morality, and back to appreciating and clarifying the role of the people of Hashem who are meant to reside in Yerushalayim. ■



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Navigating The Spiritual Bends

YESHAYAHU 66:1-24

After a month at spiritual heights, we may feel something like the “spiritual bends.” Re-entry can be challenging post-Chag.

Nissan lifts us - with ימים טובים, with heightened tefillah, with days that are structured and full. And then, almost abruptly, we return to weekday life. The matzah is put away. The intensity softens. We step into Iyar.

How do we reorient ourselves without the same clearly defined spiritual anchors?

The closing vision of this week’s haftorah offers direction: מְדִי חֵדֶשׁ בְּחֹדֶשׁוֹ וּמְדִי שָׁבַת בְּשָׁבַתוֹ, month by month, Shabbat by Shabbat - these words capture the rhythm that carries us forward.

The Me’am Loez understands the

“pilgrimage” of the new month as a reference to Nissan, the month of miracles, while Shabbat reflects creation, the steady awareness of Hashem within the natural order. We are presented with two modes of connection: revelation, and continuity. The Radak frames this vision as one of ongoing return where each appointed time becomes an opportunity to come before Hashem anew.

Nissan may be behind us, but we are not stepping away from it. We are carrying it forward. Iyar, through Sefirat HaOmer, replaces peaks with progression. Day by day. Step by step. מְדִי... מְדִי - again and again.

This is the avodah of these weeks: to take the clarity of Nissan and translate it into continuity, to bring Hashem into the rhythm of our days until יבוא כל בשר להשתחוות לפני, *until all humankind will come to prostrate themselves before Me, says Hashem.* ■

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Hillel's Humility and Love

Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot 2:5

Hillel says: “Do not separate yourself from the community, do not trust in yourself until the day of your death, do not judge your fellow until you reach his place...”
(*Pirkei Avot* 2:5)

Rav Chaim Volozhin, the famed founder of the Volozhin Yeshiva, interpreted each phrase of this Mishna in the context of Torah study. When one engages in learning with many in the community one will find those who can serve as teachers, others who will serve as colleagues, and others who they will relate to as students. All three relationships have a unique quality as is emphasized by the Talmud's statement: “I learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues, and the most from my students” (*Makkot* 10a). (*Ruach Chaim*, 2:5)

The second statement of the Mishna: “Do not trust in yourself” is also a warning concerning the way one studies Torah. Rav Chaim Volozhin comments: “Never feel so confident of your abilities that you may assume you can study alone without making an error in judgment” (Ibid).

The next statement in the Mishna: “Do not judge your fellow” is interpreted by Rav Chaim Volzhin once again to refer to an interaction in the context of Torah study. When studying with a partner, do not automatically reject the other's logic or perspective. Think carefully about his approach. Often there is wisdom and insight to be gained from an opposing view. (Ibid)

Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, an eminent student of the Volozhin Yeshiva who undoubtedly imbibed the teachings of the Yeshiva's founder, echoes this approach in many of his own teachings. One of Rav Kook's well known comments is his teaching on the talmudic passage which is recited daily at the end of the morning prayers: “The Sages increase peace in the world” (*Berachot* 64a). Rav Kook



Rav Abraham Isaac Kook zt"l

writes: “Some mistakenly think that world peace will come about only through uniformity of opinions and characteristics...in truth this is not so. True peace cannot come to the world other than by diversification. There must be made visible all the sides and opinions, and it must be clarified how all have

their place.” (*Olat Reiyah*, vol.1, pp. 330-331)

Thus, the Sages increase peace in the world when broadening and expanding upon their concepts, they arrive at greater clarity and understanding. The variety of positions enables one to see that each perspective has its time and place. Peace stems more from multiplicity than from sameness.

The statement of Hillel in the Mishna cited above, was not merely a teaching stated by Hillel but rather was truly emblematic of his own character. The Talmud tells the story in which two people made a wager to see if they could arouse Hillel’s anger by asking preposterous questions of him. The perpetrator waited until the hours right before Shabbat, when it is generally more hectic and stressful, to knock on Hillel’s door. When Hillel answers the door he asks the following question:

“Why are the heads of Babylonians round?” Hillel responded: “My son, you have asked a great question. It is because they do not have skilled midwives.” The Talmud tells us that this fellow persisted another two times. Each time Hillel responded with patience and offered an insightful answer. At that point the fellow gives up and admits to Hillel that he went through this charade only to see if he could cause Hillel to lose his temper. (Shabbat 30b-31a)

Rav Kook comments that this tale conveys the humility of Hillel. Not only does Hillel express his humbleness by not getting angry - but in general arrogance can get in the way of intellectual pursuits. The arrogant person is often quick to dismiss a question as nonsense. Hillel’s humility enabled him to think seriously about the questions and find an answer that was thoughtful and meaningful. Humility enables more sympathetic

interactions with others, as well as the ability to analyze ideas more successfully. (*Ain Aya, Shabbat* 119a)

Rav Kook embodied this exemplary trait in his interactions with others. A beautiful story is told in regard to Rav Kook’s celebrated trip to many of the secular settlements in northern Israel in 1914. Led by Rav Kook, an illustrious group of rabbis traveled to various new communities to share words of inspiration and to meet the young pioneers who were working to build the Land.

When the eminent entourage of rabbis pulled up to the gate of one of the new settlements, members met them at the entrance. They turned to Rav Kook and told him that they preferred that they not enter because they were not interested in being lectured about Jewish traditions and mitzvah observance. Rav Kook smiled and answered warmly, “We didn’t come here in order to teach you. We came here because we are sincerely interested in learning from you.”

The first Mishna of Pirkei Avot states, “Moshe received the Torah from Sinai.” The wording of the Mishna seems perplexing. Did Moshe receive the Torah “from” Sinai? Mount Sinai was the *place* where he received the Torah. It was given to him by Hashem, not by Mount Sinai! The Baal Shem Tov explains: The Mishna is teaching us *how* Moshe merited

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to receive the Torah. He merited it because of his humility. Thus, Moshe received the Torah from Mount Sinai, i.e., from the humbleness that he learned from the mountain. Hashem chose to give the Torah on Mount Sinai, a small mountain, to serve as a lesson for the Jewish people, to teach them that they should be humble, as was Mount Sinai. (Beis Halevi on Ahavas Yisrael, Sutton, p.51)

Humility is not merely a noble character trait but an essential attribute which allows a person to be more open-hearted and accepting of others which helps bring greater understanding and peace between people and ultimately to the world. ■



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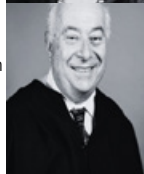


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Reusing a Grave

Question: I, a relatively new rabbi, was looking through the records of my community's cemetery and learned that some of the places that I thought were "available" for use have actually been used for corpses that were later removed, to be buried in *Eretz Yisrael* or a cemetery the family requested. May we use these plots, and if so, are there any conditions that must be met?

Answer: The *gemara* (Sanhedrin 47b) discusses the permissibility of using a grave and/or the material it was made of, for other purposes. In that context, the *gemara* distinguishes between a "grave that was built," which becomes forbidden, and a "grave of earth itself," which remains permitted, because one cannot make the ground forbidden. The Tur cites a *machloket* on the parameters of a built grave. R. Yeshaya reasons that since, generally, material that was detached from the ground and then becomes attached keeps the status of a detached object, the earth that was dug up and then placed back to form the grave is forbidden. The Rosh points out that the *gemara* implies that a standard grave, which is dug up from the ground, does not become forbidden, and he therefore reasons that the problem is

only for mausoleum-type burial. One could understand that according to R. Yeshaya, it would be forbidden to reuse the gravesite, since much of it is soil was removed and returned, whereas the Rosh would permit it. It is not fully clear which opinion is primary as practical *halacha* (see Shulchan Aruch and Rama, Yoreh Deah 364:1; *ibid.* 363:3, 5; Da'at Kohen 207).

However, there are other grounds for leniency. The Rashba (Shut I:537) says that the prohibition on grave-related matters is on the benefit of those who are living, who are obligated in *mitzvot*, and that live people do not halachically benefit from the burial of the deceased. While the burial itself is not benefit for live people, as the fulfillment of *mitzvot* (i.e., to bury a deceased) is not halachically considered forbidden benefit, *Acharonim* wrestle with the fact that money is usually involved in the process. Some see it as a problem for the cemetery owners to sell the used grave, and thereby receive money for it (see Gesher Hachayim II, 4:3). Rav Kook (Da'at Kohen 202) recommends having the sellers stipulate that they are selling the part of the land that was not dug up and returned, but it is not unanimous that this works (see Gesher Hachayim *ibid.*). Shevet Sofer (YD 104) says that in a situation in which the inheritors would have had to pay for a burial spot, if they would receive the already used grave for free, this saving of money would be forbidden benefit.

The above complications apply only to things that were brought from elsewhere (like bricks and boards), and perhaps even

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the earth that was taken off and returned (see Rama ibid.). Therefore, it is best not to reuse these materials when using the plot (i.e., that which is beneath and to the sides of the coffin) (Bemareh Habazak III:71).

The matter is arguably more lenient when those who were exhumed were buried there with the intention that this would occur, as then the burial might not cause permanent prohibitions after the deceased is removed (see Pitchei Teshuva, YD 363:6). However, the *gemara* (Sanhedrin 48a) implies that if preparations were made for the use of the deceased [after his death – Bemareh Habazak ibid.] then even if the burial itself was done with the intention for him to remain temporarily, the prohibition continues after the exhumation (see Shulchan Aruch, YD 364:1). Since it appears that you do know about the history of the burials, we will not get into further details on the matter.

There is also a monetary or quasi-monetary matter of making sure that the first “owner” of the grave has no outstanding issues with the cemetery. Gesher Hachayim (ibid.) demonstrates why the inheritors of the deceased have halachic authority to agree to end any claims to the ground that could cause a problem. ■

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The Fastest Emotional Transition on Earth

About a year after my wife, Lucy, and daughters, Maia and Rina, were murdered, I began dating again. That sentence still feels improbable even as I write it. Grief does not come with a timetable. But eventually there comes a moment when you realize that staying still is also a choice, and not always the right one.

So, I sat one evening in a restaurant with a thoughtful woman who, like many of those who generously agreed to meet me that year, seemed less interested in my personality than in comparing traumas.

She told me she was still struggling deeply with the effects of a divorce that had taken place ten years earlier. She was in therapy, she explained, and had been for a long time.

“What kind of therapy?” I asked.

“Eastern therapy,” she said. “They teach you to live only in the present. There is no past

and no future.”

It sounded peaceful. It sounded wise. It also sounded impossible.

I told her that I had stopped my own therapy after ten sessions. It wasn't that it had no value, but its focus on repeatedly revisiting the details of my loss had caused me additional trauma as I approached each weekly session. Only months later did I begin to understand why. I heard a shiur by Rabbi YY Jacobson in which he quoted the Lubavitcher Rebbe saying something that sounded almost paradoxical: “There is no present - only the past and the future.”

Think about it for a moment. If I describe what is happening now, that “now” is already in the past. If I describe what is about to happen, that belongs to the future. The present, in truth, is almost non-existent—a thin line, a precipice between memory and possibility.

As I told my date that evening, the present is simply the moment in which we choose whether to live in the past or the future. I suggested that if pain exists only in the present, then it has nowhere to go. You can sit and meditate for three hours and numb it temporarily, but eventually it returns. It stays where you are.

But if you understand that the “Now” is a bridge between what has already happened and what can still be built, then pain can be

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placed where it belongs - in the past. Once it is there, you are free to choose your future. That, I told her, was the choice I intended to make (and incidentally why I quit therapy). It turned out to be our last date.

As Yom Ha'atzmaut approaches, I revisit that conversation because the Jewish calendar seems to carry this same insight.

On the evening of Yom Ha'atzmaut, we move directly out of Yom HaZikaron. We turn away from the graves of our loved ones to celebrate our national day.

One moment we are remembering those who gave their lives so that we could live here. Moments later, we watch our children sing Hatikvah, our national anthem about hope.

It is one of the most dramatic transitions in the Jewish year. And perhaps one of the most profound. Because the movement from Yom HaZikaron to Yom Ha'atzmaut is not a contradiction. It is a decision. We remember the past with gratitude and reverence. But we refuse to live inside it.

There is, however, one extraordinary moment in between. When the siren ends and the flag rises from half-mast to full-mast, something subtle but powerful happens. That is the instant in which a nation chooses. Not to forget its past, but not to remain there either. That is the moment we step into the future.

And that, perhaps, is the real meaning of Yom Ha'atzmaut.

Its joy is not limited to barbecues or ceremonies. Its joy lives in every ordinary miracle we see around us every day: fields being planted, roads being paved, businesses opening, families growing, our children chatting in a language that once existed only in prayer.

We are living inside a national decision to choose the future.

The Jewish people is not a nation that forgot its past. No nation remembers its past more carefully than we do. But we are also not trapped by it.

We carry memories as we build our tomorrow.

Perhaps that is why Yom Ha'atzmaut begins where Yom HaZikaron ends. Because independence is not simply a political achievement. It is a spiritual choice. It is the decision to stand at the boundary between what was and what can be, and to move forward.

Yom Ha'atzmaut Sameach. ■

Rabbi Leo Dee is an educator living in Efrat. His book "The Seven Facets of Healing" is dedicated in memory of his wife Lucy who, together with his daughters Maia and Rina, was murdered by terrorists in April 2023. It is available from Amazon.com at: <https://www.amazon.com/Seven-Facets-Healing-Leo-Dee/dp/9659329105> and in Israel from <https://bookpod.co.il/product/the-seven-facets-of-healing/>

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Faith in Fire

Just one year ago, on Yom HaZikaron, we stood on Har Herzl, hearts heavy, honoring those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our people and our Land. It was a moment suspended between grief and gratitude - the kind that defines what it means to live here. And then, as if the weight of the day itself wasn't enough, fires began raging across the hills of Jerusalem.

By the time we made it home, ready to host friends - Binyamin's friends, neighbors, and loved ones who had planned to gather, to share stories, to remember together - the roads were closing. One by one, messages came in: "We're stuck." "We can't get through." Entire routes were blocked by flames. The hills burned, the skies darkened, and the air itself carried a sense of devastation.

I remember feeling shattered. How could this be? How could Hashem allow His beautiful Land to burn - trees reduced to ash, homes destroyed? It felt like a drawn-out Tisha b'Av, two days of mourning layered on top of each other because Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations were cancelled everywhere. A day we - personally and nationally - had been so desperate to embrace and celebrate was taken from us.

I tried to comfort myself with the only thought I could hold onto: it is sticks and stones, homes and trees - not His people.

Fast forward one year.

Now, we find ourselves in a place we never imagined - feeling not only gratitude, but even joy, when it is "only homes" and not people who are destroyed. (Compared to the anticipated mass destruction and devastation)

Forty days of war with Iran that began on Shabbat Zachor and concluded on the seventh day of Pesach. Forty days. A number associated with spiritual formation and transformation. Forty days in which we witnessed miracles and salvation in ways that are almost impossible to articulate. Missiles fell between buildings. Rockets struck structures yet failed to detonate. Towers remained standing when they should have collapsed. Ballistic missiles landed in "open areas" mere meters from residences. And time and again, people walked away - shaken, yes - but for the most part, with only minor injuries.

Our Air Force pilots flew missions that defy logic - four hours each way, deep into enemy territory - and returned home safely. Again and again.

And we know this is only a fraction of the story. Only a glimpse of the successful missions and the greater miracles that took place behind the scenes. No Hollywood movie could capture our reality - it would be dismissed as completely unrealistic. I have even been told that many of the army's accomplishments were simply impossible. Except - they happened.

It feels as though we have lived an entire cycle of Jewish history and holidays within these forty days.

We have lived the "v'nahafoch hu" of Purim - the complete overturning of fate. Even in

moments where Hashem's name feels hidden, His presence has been unmistakable. Enemies who sought our destruction were dismantled with breathtaking precision, while the world watched the strength, resilience, and strategic upper hand of our nation.

We have felt the miracles and redemption of Pesach - pursued by missiles, drones, and threats from all sides, with nowhere to turn but upward. And just as we sing in Az Yashir, we have watched our enemies fall again and again, swallowed before they could reach us.

There has been a spiritual awakening across the nation. A return toward Torah, toward mitzvot, toward something deeper. Like Shavuot, there is a renewed acceptance - not through coercion, but through recognition, inspiration, and clarity.

And we are living Sukkot in real time. The ענני הכבוד that once surrounded us in the desert now take the form of Iron Dome, Arrow systems, the IAF, and countless layers of protection we have come to take for granted. We speak about these systems as if they are purely technological, but deep down, we know: This is Hashem's protection manifesting through human hands.

And then there is Chanukah. We have been living the story of the Chashmonaim - a small nation standing against overwhelming "mighty" powers. But even that comparison falls short, because we are not facing one front, but many. And still, we defeated and stand.

Yes, there is a cost.

We have lost precious lives. Families have been shattered. Hospitals continue to care for the wounded. And the effects of these forty days have seeped into every home: children out of school for weeks, rising fear and anxiety, financial strain, overextended parents, and fathers once again called up to fight in

Lebanon and beyond.

The exhaustion is real. The pain is deep.

But we are here. Alive. Connected. Proud. Growing stronger.

And perhaps most profoundly - we can almost taste it. The excitement, the anticipation of a greater redemption that feels closer than ever before. As if we are standing at the edge of something immense, something historic, something incredibly holy.

This is life in Israel.

This is what I want to celebrate this Yom Ha'atzmaut: Living in a Land where the connection between a people and their Land, between a nation and their Creator is so undeniable. ארץ אשר ה' אלוֹקֵיךָ דוֹרֵשׁ אוֹתָהּ, תִּמְדַּע עֵינֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בָּהּ.

I will never have enough words to thank Hashem for the privilege of living in ארץ הקודש. Not just living - but living now, in this moment in history. To call this country my home. To know that my house is not just where I live, but part of something infinitely larger.

And yes, I admit - I am running out of patience. I long for the complete picture and I want it now! For the בית in Yerushalayim radiating with Hashem's Presence. For the day when the story is whole.

But until then,

אחכה לו. בכל שניה שיבוא

Because here, in this land, our story is still being written and we are living it in real time. And in this Land, the pain and the miracles are not contradictory- they are chapters of the same unfolding Geulah. ■

The **Airleys** have built **Beit Binyamin**, a retreat center in Tzfat for those directly affected by the war. Soldiers, Zaka members, security forces, bereaved families and widows can come for respite, relaxation and rejuvenation. For more information and to donate, visit Beitbinyamin.org

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SHOSHANA JUDELMAN

TORAH TIDBITS CONTRIBUTOR



Yom Ha'atzmaut and Thanksgiving

I loved Thanksgiving when I was growing up. Each year we would get together with family and friends and share a beautiful meal. Invariably someone would suggest that we go around the table and share what we were grateful for that year. And, even though I thought it was corny at the time, I can still remember how articulating our gratitude changed the energy of the meal.

A feast of gratitude is not an American invention, obviously. The Torah lists the Korban Todah, the thanksgiving offering, amongst the various korbanot in Parashat Tzav. A person would bring a Korban Todah for being saved from a life-threatening situation such as traveling through the desert or overseas, being imprisoned, or facing a grave illness. The korban was a large animal accompanied by 40 loaves of bread and matzah and it would be shared with family, friends and community. It was a huge public event. A celebration of Hashem's kindness with songs of praise and words of Torah.

Today, there is a beautiful custom of making a thanksgiving meal, a Seudat Hodaya, after being saved from one of those same dangers as an echo of the Korban Todah.

In Tishrei of this year, our world went into a tailspin when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was revealed, by G-d's Grace, through a routine mammogram at an early

stage and my treatment included surgery, radiation and medicine.

Right after receiving the diagnosis, someone blessed me by saying that they looked forward to celebrating at a Seudas Hodaya with us when I would be fully recovered.

At the time, it seemed so far off. Something I would reach for with my heart and mind as we waited to hear about lab results and treatments. An idea I would hold onto as I went in for tests, surgery and, eventually, radiation.

A few weeks ago, thank G-d, we made the Seudah. And it was exactly what I hoped it would be. An evening of gratitude and celebration. An evening where we could express our thanks to our family, our community and Hashem for having held us and carried us through this year. Speaking the words of gratitude helped engrave them onto our hearts.

As Yom Ha'atzmaut approaches, I feel like our Seudat Hodaya has presented us with a new model for this awesome day. Ever since we made Aliyah in 2013, we have been looking for ways to make our Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration more personal and meaningful. Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael is awe-inspiring. An important piece of Geulah, even if we are not yet fully there. The BBQ's, hikes, and picnics we tried over the years were all very nice, but I see now what was missing. I thought it was an Olim problem- that we didn't have

childhood friends or old snif or army buddies to get together with. It wasn't that. It was not understanding that the core of the day must be filled with gratitude to Hashem.

This year, I bless us with a day that more closely resembles a Seudat Hodaya. A day that recognizes the incredible reality of where we are and what is available to us. A day where we feel the wheels of history turning towards the Ultimate Redemption. And a day, like the Thanksgivings of my youth, in which we voice our gratitude to Hashem for the privilege of being part of Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael. ■

Shoshana Judelman is passionate about learning and growing through Chassidus. She gives shiurim to women in many communities around Israel, including Efrat, Elazar, Raanana and Jerusalem as well as at Midreshet Rachel V'Chaya. Shoshana also guides groups at Yad Vashem and leads journeys to Poland and other countries around Europe for JRoots.



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RABBI IAN SHAFFER

FACULTY MEMBER, OU MEN'S KOLLEL IN MODIIN

GUEST DVAR TORAH

Yom Ha'atzmaut and the Missing Haftara

Having spent most of my life in *Chutz La'aretz*, I was always excited when it came to the eighth day of Pesach. The Haftara from Isaiah, Chapters 10 and 11, is a wonderful vision of the remnant of Israel as they separated from their life in exile and returned to Israel. When we came on Aliya four years ago, I discovered that this Haftara is not read in Israel on Pesach. However, I was relieved to find that the official Machzor for Yom Ha'atzmaut has the Haftara as part of the liturgy of the day. The concept of Havdalah - 'separation' is a very important idea in our world and I will show that there is a great link between the words of Isaiah and the prayer and concept of *Havdalah*.

At the end of the Parshat Kedoshim (20:25) the rationale for the laws of *Tuma and Tahara* (ritual separation), is expressed in the following way.

כה והבדלתם בין-הבהמה הטהרה, לטמאה,
ובין-העוף הטהא, לטהר; ולא-תשקצו את-נפשותיכם
בבהמה ובעוף, ובכל אשר תרמש האדמה, אשר-
הבדלתי לכם, לטמא.

'So you shall set apart the pure animal from the impure, the impure bird from the pure. You shall not draw abomination upon yourselves through that which I have set apart for you to treat as impure[whether] animal or bird or anything with which the ground is alive.'

In this *Pssuk* we see something curious. When the Torah distinguishes between the 'clean' and 'unclean' animals, it mentions the 'clean' animals first. In discussing the birds, the reverse takes place and the 'unclean' birds are mentioned before the 'clean' ones. Why does the Torah reverse the order for birds from the order mentioning animals?

Rabbi Isaac Bernstein z"l suggested the following answer. In the third Perek of Chullin, the Talmud discusses the different types of animals and birds in the world. The Talmud tells us that there are many more unclean animals than clean ones, whereas with birds, the opposite is true. There are many more clean birds than unclean birds in the world.

Based on this observation, the following suggestion is made. The idea of *'havdalah* – 'separation' is to be understood as separating the smaller group from the larger group. This is why 'clean' animals are mentioned first, as they are a smaller group, whereas with birds, the smaller group is the 'unclean' birds and therefore mentioned first in the Pasuk above.

This now gives a whole new layer of meaning to the Havdalah prayer that we say every Motza'ei Shabbat. There are four recognizable sections:

"Who divides between holiness and the profane' thereby indicating that there is more

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‘profane’ in the world than holiness.

“Who divides between light and darkness” meaning that there is much more darkness in the world than light.

“Who divides between Israel and the Nations”, for as we know we are in a minority in comparison to the rest of the world community. (Rabbi Sacks z”l once pointed out, that in China, where the census has a leeway of error of 15 million, we would not feature at all)

“Who divides between the 7th day and the other 6 days of creation” - Shabbat is a fraction of the weeks’ time frame.

In all four phrases, this beautiful prayer is extolling us to go into the coming week and bring more spiritual holiness and light, that is limited in a very dark world.

We can also add that this prayer impresses upon us to bring to the world the material contributions (‘light’) which we, as Jews have made and will continue to make. This is especially true for the State of Israel, which is in the forefront of so much technological progress in our modern world.

This is a beautiful message as we approach the 78th anniversary of the birth of the State of Israel. This concept of ‘*havdalah*’ teaches us how much we have contributed and continue to do so to the world around us. We ask G-d for the wisdom to continue to do this every week, when we say *Havdalah*, as Shabbat

ends. The achievements of the State of Israel are nothing short of miraculous and it is a gift for the whole world, which we must cherish. Future generations of Jews will hopefully be able to take even more pride in our contributions to the world and in our unique narrative, as represented by the history of the Jewish people and the existence of *Medinat Yisrael* for 78 years.

I believe that Isaiah would have been overwhelmed by our innovations in the world today and the ‘separation’ from the *Golah* back to Israel would have been so inspirational for him to witness. Let us hope that many more Jews around the world will also be inspired to join us in this incredible miracle, which we are experiencing in our homeland. Chag Ha’atzmaut Sameach. ■

Rabbi Ian Shaffer came on Aliya with his wife in 2022 after teaching in Stern College in Manhattan for 22 years. Originally from London, UK where he was Deputy Head of Judaic Studies at Immanuel College. He lives in Modiin and gives weekly shiurim in the OU Men’s Kollel as well as a bi-weekly shiur in the community for men and women. He recently published his first Sefer on Shmuel Aleph & Bet – A Companion Volume.



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When There Are Too Many Good Options: How Do You Choose Wisely?

לעילוי נשמת
מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

Chaim asks:

I'm going through resumes for my candidate, and Baruch Hashem there are a LOT of women who could be great for him. What's the best way to sift through and find the most compatible one?

Aleeza answers:

The first thing I would tell you is: stop trying to find "the most compatible." That mindset creates paralysis. Instead, look for *strong alignment in the areas that actually sustain a marriage*.

Start with three categories:

1. CORE VALUES

Do they want the same kind of home? Similar religious direction? Similar priorities around family, growth, and lifestyle? Differences in hobbies don't break marriages. Differences in values do.

2. EMOTIONAL TONE

Does her personality complement his from what you can tell? If he's intense, can she

ground him? If he's quieter, does she bring warmth? You're looking for a dynamic that feels balanced, not dramatic.

3. LIFE VISION AND PACE

Are they moving in a similar direction? Similar ambition level? Similar expectations about roles, finances, and community?

Sometimes you may not be able to discern these things from first glance but a conversation with their ambassador can provide more clarity.

All is being equal if you still aren't sure then I would choose based on location and who it is and can get on a first date easily.

I see shadchanim and ambassadors get stuck trying to optimize. "But maybe someone slightly taller... slightly more outgoing... slightly more financially stable." At some point we need to say, I found someone relevant and make a suggestion. Real compatibility shows up in communication, in how they handle differences, in whether there's ease and respect.

If it's a match, we will find out soon enough if it's not you have other options to pursue.

And remember: your job isn't to predict the marriage. Your job is to identify who deserves a first conversation.

We're not looking for the "best resume." We're looking for someone he can build a bayit ne'eman with steady, respectful, aligned, and growing in a similar direction.

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And that can't be measured in bullet points.
 May you choose wisely and get him to a first date, then let him decide who is the one.

Blessings,
 Aleeza ■

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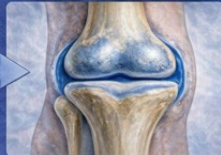
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AND SO THE TWISTER PLUCKED DOROTHY'S HOUSE FROM THE EARTH
AND HURLED IT HIGH INTO THE SKY...



...WHERE IT LANDED WITH A THUMP IN
THE RATHER DISCONCERTINGLY-
COLOURFUL MUNCHKINLAND.



OH, TOTO...
I DON'T THINK WE'RE
IN RECHAVYA ANYMORE...



RECHAVYA?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE
FROM KANSAS?

OH, WE WERE, BUT
WE MADE ALIYA THROUGH
NEFESH B'NEFESH!

I GO TO ULPAN NOW,
AND KNOW HOW TO SAY
"ESHKOLIT"!
THAT MEANS "GRAPEFRUIT"
Y'KNOW...



FASCINATING.
NOW, CAN YOU
PLEASE GET THIS
HOUSE OFF
ME?

OH, MY, WHAT
SHINY, SPARKLY
SHOES YOU HAVE...

ALL THE BETTER
TO KICK YOU WITH, MY DEAR...



THAT IS A WICKED THING TO
SAY.
HAVE YOU SEEN "WICKED"?

ARE YOU THE WICKED WITCH OF
THE EAST?

CALL ME
NESSA...



ANY RELATION TO
NESSIE, FROM LOCH NESS...?

OR THE NUSSBAUMS
FROM NESS TZIYONA?

LOOK, I DON'T HAVE
TIME FOR YOUR
"JEWISH GEOGRAPHY".

PLEASE GET THIS
HOUSE OFFA ME,
OR I'LL...

WELL, I'M SORRY, BUT YOU REALLY
ONLY HAVE YOURSELF TO BLAME...



EXCUSE
ME?

A HOUSE FALLS
OUT OF THE SKY AND
LANDS ON MY HEAD,
WHAT WAS I
SUPPOSED TO DO?

WELL, IF YOU'D PAY
ATTENTION TO THE
"PIKUD HA-OREF"
WARNINGS, AND GO
INTO AN
AUTHORISED
SHELTER...

YOU'RE BEING RATHER
INSENSITIVE TO MY
PLIGHT, Y'KNOW...

I'M
SORRY.



NOW THAT I THINK OF IT, I HAD A NEIGHBOUR IN
KANSAS, HE HAD SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH... HE WAS
FROM DOWN THE ROAD, IN SMALLVILLE...

BUT I'M PRETTY SURE
EVEN HE WOULD THINK
TWICE BEFORE TRYING TO LIFT
THIS HOUSE OFF YOU...

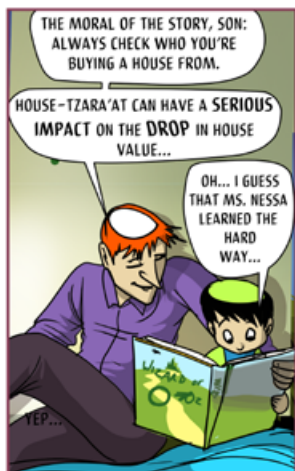
AND WHY,
PRAY TELL,
IS THAT?

IT'S GOT
TZARA'AT...

IT'S GOT
WHAT?!!



NOTE: IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT, TRAGICALLY, THERE HAVE BEEN TERRIBLE DIRECT HITS TO PROPER SHELTERS AS WELL, AND TO PEOPLE WHO COULDN'T REACH THEIR SHELTERS IN TIME. G-D FORBID, I WOULD NEVER EVER IMPLY THAT THIS WAS ANYONE'S FAULT. THIS WAS MEANT AS SOME FUN DIALOGUE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE WITCH, NOT CHAS Y'SHALOM, MEANT AT THE TERRIBLE SUFFERING THAT MANY OF OUR BELOVED PEOPLE HAVE SUFFERED RECENTLY.





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ELIAV SABAN
JERUSALEM CHAPTER DIRECTOR

RECONCILING WITH OUR NATIONAL צרעת

We open up מצורע מצורע, פרשת תזריע-מצורע, which discusses different forms of טומאה and טהרה. One of them is צרעת, a spiritual affliction that appears on a person's skin, clothing, or house. חז"ל explain that it is not a medical illness, but rather a response to spiritual failing, most famously הרע הרע. לשון הרע מצורע is sent outside the camp-מחוז למחנה-and lives in isolation until healing occurs.

חז"ל describe the מצורע in extremely strong terms. He is compared to someone who is almost like a "dead person" (נדרים סד ע"ב), as אהרן הכהן says about his sister: (מרים) do not let her נא תהי כמות: be like one who is dead. Of all forms of, צרעת, טומאה צרעת is uniquely connected to this idea of death, even though the person is physically alive. The pain is not only physical, but deeply social and emotional: "יָשָׁב, מֵחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה מוֹשְׁבֹו" - separation from community and belonging.

This creates a powerful idea: the deepest suffering in the תורה is not only illness, but isolation from others-a kind of social death.

On יום העצמאות, we celebrate the opposite reality. After centuries of exile and fragmentation, עם ישראל has returned to a state of national wholeness in ישראל. We are no longer scattered and distant from our land and from each other in the same way. We live as a people with sovereignty, language, and collective life.

In a sense, צרעת represents disconnection, while יום העצמאות represents reconnection. The מצורע leaves the camp; עם ישראל has returned to its camp.

Even if we do not experience צרעת today, the emotional truth remains: separation hurts, and belonging heals. On יום העצמאות, we thank הקב"ה for the ultimate form of healing: bringing His people back home - ה'הנה מֵה - "הנה מֵה טוב וימה נעים שְׁכַת אֲחִים גַּם יָחִיד."



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FROM OUTSIDE OUR CAMP, TO WITHIN

Parshat Tazria and Yom Ha'atzmaut are deeply connected through the idea of exile and return. The Torah says of the metzora, "יָשָׁב, מֵחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה מוֹשְׁבֹו" - "He shall dwell alone; outside the camp shall be his dwelling" (Vayikra 13:46). Chazal explain in ערכין ט"ז that the metzora is sent outside the camp because lashon hara creates division between people. Since he damaged relationships and caused separation within the community, he is punished by being separated from the community himself.

This idea speaks powerfully to Yom Ha'atzmaut. After thousands of years of exile, Am Yisrael has returned to its homeland and rebuilt a Jewish state. But the parsha reminds us that simply being back in the land is not enough. The real challenge is whether we know how to live together inside the camp. A state cannot survive purely through strength,

technology, or military power; it also depends on the people's unity within. When Jews speak destructively about one another, it weakens the nation from within.

The tikkun of the metzora is not just physical healing; it is about changing how he speaks and how he connects to others around him. Rashi on Vayikra 14:4 explains that the purification process points to inner change and humility. He writes, "מה תקנתו ויתרפא" "שפיל עצמו" - that the way for the metzora to truly be healed is to humble himself.

That may be one of the most important messages of Yom Ha'atzmaut, especially during a time of war. If lashon hara can send a person into exile from the camp, then ahavat Yisrael, responsibility, and unity are what allow a people to build and sustain a state in their land. Having our own state is a gift. Whether it is deserved depends on how we treat one another. ■

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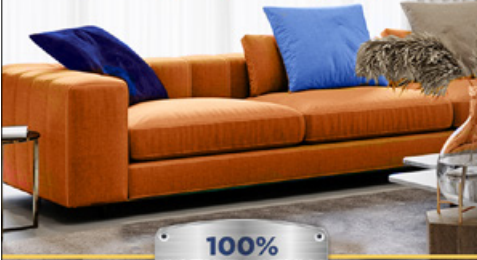


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