



THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

UP TO THE BRIM

Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

If I try very hard I can still conjure up that childhood feeling of awe as my father began the lengthy job of filling up Elijah's Cup at our Seder table. Nearly a whole bottle of wine was used to fill up the oversized silver goblet and, in my childish eyes, it was by far the most impressive moment of the night. Imagine, almost a whole bottle – who was going to drink all that wine?

As a child I eagerly "drank up" my father's explanation that on Pesach night Elijah the Prophet goes from house to house and drinks up all the cups of wine from all the houses where a Seder is taking place. When I was younger I never really stopped to wonder what Elijah had to do with the Seder and why he had to drink all that wine. In fact, it never occurred to me that perhaps the wine wasn't drunk by Elijah at all. As I got older and I stayed up until the end of Seder I had a somewhat rude awakening (pun intended) when I saw the wine being poured back into the bottle – it transpired that Elijah didn't drink the wine after all.

And that got me thinking. What is the point of Elijah's Cup, what exactly is its function?

Pesach is the time of Redemption and the Rabbis describe Elijah as being the Angel of Redemption. We believe that in the same way that we were redeemed from Egypt, so too will we be redeemed from our present lengthy exile. Tradition teaches that it is Elijah who will announce the coming of the Mashiach, and the cup



is prepared as a sign of our desire that he should come as speedily as he can to do so. Our Sages tell of a certain Rabbi in Talmudic times who met Elijah and asked him when the Mashiach would come. Elijah told him that he would come immediately. When he didn't materialize the Rabbi was very upset and the next time he met Elijah he berated him for not having been accurate in his assessment. Elijah, after hearing him out, explained to him that he had meant every word. But, ultimately, it was entirely up to us whether the Mashiach comes or not. If we truly want him to come he will come without delay. And if we are not too enthusiastic about the idea, well, Elijah will have to wait until we change our minds.

So what can we do to change the state of affairs?

There is an anecdote that might help us attain a better perspective. Once the famed Chassidic Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, sent one of his followers to open the door after filling Elijah's Cup on Seder night. However the man was frozen to the spot and couldn't do it. When he was asked why, he said that he was scared stiff as he was absolutely certain that Elijah the Prophet must be waiting outside the door of such a pious and august person as the Rebbe, just waiting to be invited in. Answered Rabbi Menachem Mendel "You're wrong! Elijah the Prophet enters through the heart, not the door!"

And it is in exactly the same way that we can allow Elijah to appear and proclaim to everyone that the Mashiach is on his way. This Seder night, as we all fill up our cups for Elijah the Prophet let's fill them right up to the very top. Let's turn Elijah's Cup into the symbol of all our hopes and aspirations for the future – brimming over with optimism that this year we can make all the difference. Like the Rebbe from Kotzk let us open our hearts to allow Elijah to enter into our lives.

And, who knows? Perhaps if we do so there won't be any need to pour the wine back into the bottle this Pesach after the Seder.

And Next Year in Jerusalem will become a reality rather than just a song.

Picking Up And Putting Down

“...metzora” (14:2)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In Hebrew, the word for a “thing” — *davar* — and the word for “word” are identical. On a deeper level, every “thing” in this world is no more than G-d’s speech. G-d created the world with speech. “And G-d said, ‘Let there be light’... ‘And G-d said...’ ‘And G-d said...’ The entire Creation and its continued existence is nothing more than G-d speaking.

When our speech contains no putdowns, obscenity, or innuendo of obscenity; when our lips articulate the support of our fellow man and every word that leaves our mouths carries the stamp of kosher speech, it’s no wonder that we feel in touch with ourselves, for we are in touch with the essence of Creation itself.

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

• Based on a story by Mrs. Sarah Shapiro
in American Jewish Spirit

PARSHA Overview

Metzora

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

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

Achrei

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

seventh month, one must afflict oneself. We abstain from eating and drinking, anointing, wearing leather footwear, washing, and marital relations. Consumption of blood is prohibited. The blood of slaughtered birds and undomesticated beasts must be covered. The people are warned against engaging in the wicked practices that were common in Egypt. Incest is defined and prohibited. Marital relations are forbidden during a woman’s monthly cycle. Homosexuality, bestiality and child sacrifice are prohibited.

There Is No Switzerland

"He shall place the incense upon the fire before Hashem..."
(16:13)

Some thirty years ago, when Switzerland still had an untarnished reputation for neutrality, the great teacher Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner remarked, "Between the Jewish People and the Master of the World, there is no Switzerland." For a Jew there is no neutral territory in life. A Jew is on duty 24/7, 365 days a year. Judaism is not a religion of six off-duty days followed by a weekly visit to the house of worship and then it's back to business as usual. A Jew is always on duty.

No area of life is devoid of the potential for holiness. If you think about it, it couldn't really be otherwise. G-d's purpose in creating this entire world was that there should be a stage on which Man can exercise his free will to bring himself closer to his Creator. Thus, every aspect of the Creation must have a potential for holiness. Anything other than the raw material to facilitate that quest for *kedusha* is, by definition, redundant. In other words, if parts of creation have nothing to do with that sole purpose of creation — the striving for closeness to G-d — it means that Creator was a bit sloppy in His manufacture, which of course is impossible to say.

In the time of the Second Beit Hamikdash, on Erev Yom Kippur, those who instructed the *kohen gadol* in his duties for that great day would finish their preparation by cautioning him not to alter any aspect of the Yom Kippur service. They would then take leave of one another amidst tears.

KEDOSHIM

I-Sight

"You shall not hate your brother in your heart." (19:17)

One of the most difficult emotions to deal with is resentment. Resentment can come from many different sources. It can result from someone genuinely wronging us. Or we may feel wronged by someone even though an objective third party would say that we were being over-sensitive. Resentment can come from plain old jealousy — someone who is brighter than us, or seems to have an easier life, or is more successful. Or resentment can come for no good reason at all. It may result from the way that someone speaks or dresses or expresses himself. As they say in the North of England "It's the way he hangs his face".

The spiritual masters teach that this is the worst kind of hatred. In Hebrew it is called *sinat chinam*, literally free hate. Hatred that has come from no injustice real or perceived but just the way someone is.

"You shall not hate your brother in your heart."

In this week's parsha the Torah categorically prohibits that gnawing worm called resentment.

Fine. The Torah says that we mustn't feel resentment. But isn't that more easily said than done? How are we supposed to put this into action?

First of all, we cannot work on our feelings until we understand them. This requires objectivity and the help of someone who is impartial to help us objectivize our emotions. Only when we can delineate our feelings will we have a chance of changing them.

If this analysis shows that we have been genuinely

The *kohen gadol* wept because they had suspected him, and they wept for being compelled to suspect him.

Why was there a suspicion that the *kohen gadol* might change the service? There was always a remote possibility that the *kohen gadol* might have been influenced by the apostate Tzadok, that he might be a secret Tzadoki (Sadducee). The Tzadokim offered the *ketoret* (incense) that was the highlight of the Yom Kippur service in a way that deviated from the Oral Law. They said that the incense should be lit before the *kohen gadol* entered the Holy of Holies, whereas the Oral Law dictates the lighting must be done only when the *kohen gadol* was inside the Holy of Holies and not before.

The custom of the Tzadokim mirrored their attitude to G-d's service in general. They held that it is not dignified "to prepare one's meal under the eyes of the Master." Just as a servant prepares his master's meal in the kitchen and only then brings it before his master, all the more so should the incense be prepared and lit outside the Holy of Holies, away from "the eyes of the Master." Only then should it be brought before Him. The Oral Law dictates, however, that even the most intimate detail of human behavior must be performed in the "Holy of Holies," for nothing escapes the scrutiny of the Almighty, wherever we may be.

Between us and the Master of the World, there is no "Switzerland".

Sources:

- *Talmud Bavli, Tractate Yoma; Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch*

wronged, the proper mode of conduct will depend on the circumstances: It may involve a direct confrontation, or a rebuke from a third party, or legal recourse in *Bet Din*. When we act to deal positively with our resentment in one of these ways, the poison of the resentment is very often vitiated or extinguished.

However, there may be circumstances where a genuine grievance has no outside recourse, and we may just have to forgive and forget. In this last scenario, (and in the others too) we should remember that it is G-d who runs the world and we should analyze why G-d has put us in our present situation.

As far as jealousy is concerned, we should remember that each of us is on our own separate monorail in life. The fact that someone else has something that I don't have, be it brains or money or looks, in no way means that they are taking away from me. The root of jealousy is a lack of trust in G-d's Providence. Each of us is born with unique capabilities with which to fulfill our potential in this world. If G-d hasn't given me something, it's because I don't need it to complete my mission on this earth.

And as far as *sinat chinam* is concerned, we should remind ourselves that we are all created in G-d's image. If there is something that I hate about my fellow for no objective reason whatever but just because it's the 'way he hangs his face' it means that I am despising the image of G-d Himself.

However, if we look carefully with a positive eye at those whom we resent and try to divorce our egos from our emotions, we might begin to see all kinds of positive traits that they possess. It all depends on our I-sight.

Holocaustland

“...I shall be sanctified among the B’nei Yisrael” (22:32)

The following is a quote from a recent press release by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. “A decade in the making, the new Holocaust History Museum combines the best of Yad Vashem’s expertise, resources and state-of-the-art exhibits to take Holocaust remembrance well into the 21st century.”

Brilliant! The Holocaust as a theme park!

The press release continues, “The new Holocaust History Museum occupies over 4,200 square meters, mainly underground. Both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary,” whatever that means, “it presents the story of the Shoah from a unique Jewish perspective...

Its 180 meters-long linear structure in the form of a spike cuts through the mountain with its uppermost edge – a skylight – protruding through the mountain ridge. Galleries portraying the complexity of the Jewish situation during those terrible years branch off this spike-like shaft, and the exit emerges dramatically out of the mountainside, affording a view of the valley below. Unique settings, spaces with varying heights, and different degrees of light accentuate focal points of the unfolding narrative...

...visitors will continue on to the epilogue and from there to the balcony opening to a panoramic view of Jerusalem.”

For many of our brothers and sisters, “Holocaust remembrance” is their last connection to Judaism. It’s a sad fact that many Jews feel most connected to Judaism by the fact that they too see themselves as Holocaust survivors.

In a recent poll, opposition to intermarriage was deemed racist by a full half of American Jews. Not a surprising statistic considering that more Jews in America now marry non-Jewish spouses than Jewish ones.

I can't help feeling that if a mere fraction of the money

that has been poured into Holocaust museums had been devoted to quality Jewish education, we would not now be looking at a generation so alienated from its roots.

Of course, the problem with education is that knowledge demands action. The Holocaust “theme park” creates a short-term and ultimately empty emotional experience that costs nothing in terms of commitment.

Natan Sharansky has called attention to the widespread apathy of Jewish students in American universities. Only 10% are involved in any type of Jewish activity, he estimated. “The problem is not that Jewish students lack the facts,” writes Shachar Yanai director of the student arm of WIZO, “it’s that they don’t care about them in the first place.”

The ancient Greeks, who knew a thing or two about drama, understood that one of the purposes of the genre of tragedy was *catharsis*. *Catharsis* means that by experiencing scenes of great sadness in the theater, the powerful emotions that surface are released in an environment that requires us to do nothing except watch and feel; thus, these emotions are rendered anodyne and harmless.

A Judaism that consists of experiencing Holocaust theme parks and a few homely platitudes that could have been culled from Reader’s Digest does not a committed Jew make.

Judaism is not a religion of the dead; it is a religion of the living.

“...I shall be sanctified among the B’nei Yisrael” — the history of our people is full of seemingly ordinary people who were prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice rather than deny G-d.

If you asked one of those holy martyrs which he would prefer as a memorial, someone sacrificing his ego and his time and his money to live the life of a committed Jew, or a Holocaustland of the Dead, I have a feeling that he just might choose the former.

PARSHA Overview

Kedoshim

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

and linen; harvesting a tree during its first three years; gluttony and intoxication; witchcraft; shaving the beard and sideburns; tattooing. *Positive:* Awe for parents and respect for the elderly; leaving part of the harvest for the poor; loving others (especially a convert); eating in Jerusalem the fruits from a tree’s fourth year; awe for the Temple; respect for Torah scholars, the blind and the deaf. Family life must be holy. We are warned again not to imitate gentile behavior, lest we lose the Land of Israel. We must observe *kashrut*, thus maintaining our unique and separate status.

Emor

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

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

TALMUDigest

Berachot 44 - 50

- Marvelous fruits of Etetz Yisrael
- The “Mini-Grace” after certain foods
- When there is no after-blessing
- Tips on nutrition
- Grace after a group meal
- Blessing the host
- Showing respect in seating, washing and traveling
- Rules regarding “Amen”
- Torah sources for blessings after eating
- Authors of the text and analysis
- Blessing on tragedy
- Mentioning special days
- How much bread requires Grace after eating?
- Text for group Grace
- Staying together and splitting up
- Respect for food

Perfect Timing

When Shaul, who unbeknownst to him had been designated by G-d to be the first king of the Jewish people, sought the aid of the Prophet Shmuel in finding the lost animals of his father, he asked

some maidens on their way to draw water where the Prophet could be found. Two passages (*Shmuel I*, 9:12-13) are dedicated to recording their exceptionally detailed response to such a simple question.

Several explanations are offered by our Sages as to why these maidens elaborated so much. While one approach is that this was simply an example of feminine loquaciousness, another ascribes their lengthy speech to a desire to gaze upon Shaul's outstanding attractiveness.

This latter approach, Maharsha points out, is rejected by Rabbi Yossi in the Midrash on the grounds that this paints Jewish maidens as being promiscuous. He therefore goes along with what Rabbi Yochanan states in our *gemara*. The A-mighty King of Kings has a sense of perfect timing and makes certain that a new ruler does not come to even a hair's-width of power before the term of his predecessor has come to an end. Shaul's encounter with Shmuel would result in his being anointed as the king of Israel to replace Shmuel as the leader of the people. Even if that moment had to be delayed by the time it took to speak two sentences, Heaven programmed it that those maidens should be on hand to provide that delay.

• Berachot 48b

Berachot 51 - 57

- Forgotten blessing before eating
- Cup of wine for group Grace after meal
- Order of blessings in Kiddush and Havdalah
- Debate of Beit Hillel & Beit Shammai in regard to meals
- The candle and fragrances of Havdalah
- Forgotten blessing after eating
- Blessing at special sites and special occasions
- Historical miracles
- Four who must offer thanksgiving sacrifices
- The long prayer and long meal
- When it's wrong to defer
- Heavenly designations
- Wisdom of Betzalel
- Good dreams and other ones
- Prayer as cure for bad dream
- Prediction of dreams and interpretation of them
- Some observations on nature and nutrition

The Colors of Fire

In our Havdalah prayer made at the conclusion of Shabbat we make a blessing on fire. Our Sages (*Pesachim* 54a) tell us that it was on Motzei Shabbat that Adam was granted by Heaven the intelligence to rub two stones together and bring forth the first spark of fire.

In regard to the text of the blessing we make in recog-

nition of the Divine creation of fire, there is a difference of opinion between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai. While the former contend that we refer to the fire as *meorei haeish* (the *lights* of the fire), the latter's position is that the text should be *meor haeish* (the *light* of the fire).

The explanation offered by Rabbi Yosef for these two positions is that Beit Shammai hold that there is only a single flame while Beit Hillel hold that there are several flames (red, white and blue-greenish – Rashi).

In order to understand the position of Beit Shammai which seems to run counter to what we observe when we see the multicolored flame, the Gaon of Vilna distinguishes between the fundamental source of fire created by G-d and the fire which we produce by human effort. While the primeval fire was of a single color, the one we produce is of several colors. Beit Shammai contend that our blessing is on the creation of fire and it is for this reason that they insist that the blessing begin with the word *bora* – He created. Beit Hillel, on the other hand, contend that the blessing must pay tribute to our ability to constantly produce fire which has many colors. For this same reason the text they insist on for the beginning of the blessing is *borei* – a term referring to both the past and present creation of fire.

• Berachot 52b

TALMUDigest

Berachot 58 - 64

- Collective blessings and curses
- Why everyone is needed
- Blessings on wisdom and on royalty
- Miraculous rescue of a Sage
- Great houses of Israel
- Blessings in the cemetery and on strange creatures
- Blessings on comets, earthquakes, lightning, thunder, rainbow and other natural wonders
- Blessing made once every 28 years
- Blessings on acquiring and experiencing good things
- Praying for a son
- Prayers and blessings related to bodily functions
- Prayers before retiring and upon waking
- Blessing on bad tidings
- All that the Merciful One does is for the good
- Creation of man and woman
- Ladies first?
- Forces within man
- Rabbi Akiva's martyrdom and his fable of the fish
- Respect for the Beit Hamikdash
- Modesty in relieving oneself
- King David's fateful encounters
- Respect for the Synagogue
- A time for action
- A clash with a dissenter
- Honor for Torah scholars
- Taking leave of the living and the dead
- Peace through Torah study

All for the Best

“**W**hatever the Merciful One does is only for the good.” This was the motto of Rabbi Akiva which he suggested to everyone for use in their own lives.

The example of his own application mentioned in our

gemara deals with the time this traveling Sage was unable to find lodging in a town and was compelled to spend the night in the field. A wind blew out the candle he used for light, a cat killed the rooster he expected to wake him in the morning, and a lion devoured the donkey he used for transportation. In response to all these apparent tragedies Rabbi Akiva merely said, “Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good.” Upon entering the town the next morning he learned that it had been ransacked by bandits. It then became clear that the light of his candle, the crowing of his rooster or the braying of his donkey would have exposed him as well to these marauders and his faith in Heavenly kindness was vindicated.

There is another version of this idea in the Jerusalem Talmud concerning a philanthropic Jew named Abba Yehuda who always contributed generously to the Sages collecting for the poor. When he faced difficult times and could only give them half of his last remaining field, they blessed him that he would regain his wealth. While plowing this last plot of land his cow fell into a hole and broke its leg. Descending into the hole to retrieve her, Abba Yehuda discovered a gold mine and exclaimed, “It was for my good that my cow’s leg was broken!”

A modern version of this concept is the monument to the boll weevil in Enterprise, Alabama. The insect thus honored was the scourge of the cotton crop which was the main source of income in that southern American state. When the entire crop was destroyed, the initial panic gave way to developing alternatives such as growing peanuts and raising livestock. Even when a solution was eventually found for the boll weevil problem, the Alabamans realized that this insect had actually been a blessing for them by forcing them to diversify their economy and they actually erected a monument in its honor.

• Berachot 60b

What the SAGES Say

“The Jewish People are compared to a dove. Just as the dove is saved from its pursuers by its wings (which help it escape or do battle – Rashi) so is Israel saved from its enemies only through its mitzvot.”

Rabbi Rabba bar Chana
Berachot 53b

“A man should strive to come early to the synagogue for services so that he should be among the first ten (that make up a quorum) for if even a hundred others arrive, he will get as much credit as all of them together.”

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi
Berachot 47b

“Torah scholars increase peace in the world. The Prophet Yeshayahu stated that ‘All your sons shall be students of G-d and there will be much peace through your *banayich* (your sons).’ This final word should be read as *bonayich* (your builders) of peace in the world.”

Rabbi Elazar in the name of Rabbi Chanina
Berachot 64a

TALMUDigest

Shabbat 2 - 8

- Forbidden carrying - When two do it
- Public and private domains
- Status of the outstretched hand
- Minor sin to prevent major one
- Throwing from one domain to another
- Third and fourth categories of domain
- Atonement for Shabbat violation
- When a house is not a private domain
- A pole in the street

A Question of Order

Why does this *mesechta* concerning what is forbidden on Shabbat begin with the laws of carrying from one domain to another?

This is a question posed by the Tosefotists who argue that it would seem to be more logical to present the forbidden activities in the chronological order of when they are likely to take place in the time-frame of Shabbat. First should have come those things that are forbidden to initiate before the sunset of Erev Shabbat and only afterwards

progress to the activities which take place on Shabbat itself.

The answer put forth by Rabbeinu Tam is that the order of the *mesechta* is based on the frequency of the activities rather than on their chronological order. Carrying on Shabbat from one domain to another is far more common than the other forbidden activities discussed later in this *mesechta*. He cites two examples of places in the Talmud where such an order was employed. One is *Bava Kama* where the *mesechta* begins with a mention of the damages done by an ox (*Shmot* 22:5) even though the damage done by digging a pit in the public domain (*Shmot* 21:33) is mentioned earlier.

Another example is in *Mesechta Berachot* (54b) where the *gemara* lists the four types of people who are obligated to offer a thanksgiving sacrifice for surviving danger in a different order than how they are mentioned in *Tehillim* 107 which is the source for this obligation. There too the order chosen was based on which experience is most common. The order which appears in *Tehillim*, on the other hand, is based on the degree of danger which faced each of the four types.

Shabbat 9 - 15

- Status of the doorway
- Activities forbidden before Mincha
- Proper dress and posture for prayer
- Schedule of the court
- Times of meals
- Prayer in the bathhouse
- Shabbat and other gifts
- Danger of favoritism
- Where to live
- Synagogue height
- Observations on health, authority and fasting
- Activities forbidden to safeguard Shabbat observance
- Searching for lice and killing them
- Visiting sick and consoling mourners
- Reading by lamplight
- Safeguarding family purity
- The 18 decrees
- Megillat Ta'anit - a history of troubles
- Communication of spiritual impurity
- Disputes of Hillel and Shammai

What the SAGES Say

"How can we ask one Jew to commit a sin — even a minor one — in order to save another Jew from being guilty of a major one?"

Rabbi Sheishet- *Shabbat 4a*

The Purpose of a Gift

Shabbat is a precious gift which the Creator gave to the Jewish People. In order to let them know that this gift was an expression of His love for them, He instructed Moshe to relay to them the great reward they would receive for properly observing Shabbat. This is how our Sages understood the meaning of what G-d said to Moshe about the gift of Shabbat "that they shall know that I, G-d, sanctify them." (*Shmot* 31:13)

The Sage Rav extended this concept of informing the recipient of the gift of the identity of the giver to gifts given from one human to another. Rashi explains that the purpose of such revelation is that it creates affectionate relationships by expressing the honor one shows to another. Even if one gives some food to another's child, adds Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, he should inform the parent that he did so for the same reason.

Letting the recipient know who his benefactor is, notes Tosefot, is limited to gifts. In regard to charity, where there is a danger that the needy recipient will be ashamed if he is aware who is helping him, it is preferable for the benefactor to hide his identity in the spirit of what King Shlomo taught us — "a secret gift subdues the wrath of Heaven". (*Mishlei* 21:14)

• *Shabbat 10b*

ASK! the Jewish Information Service

Choose Your Idiom

From: Gloria in Chicago

Dear Rabbi,

I remember as a child sitting at my family's Seder and not being able to understand a word of what was going on because the Haggada was read in what sounded like Hebrew or Yiddish or both. Now that I am college, I want to make a Seder with my friends, but some of them (who read and understand Hebrew) say it has to be read in the original and that the translations are only to help people understand what they are reading in Hebrew. Is that true? It seems that the main thing is that the meaning be conveyed from generation to generation. How can that be if people don't understand and therefore don't enjoy the experience?

Dear Gloria,

First of all, I'm sure you are grateful to your parents (and their parents and their parents...) for having had a Seder even in a language you didn't understand. For that reason you know that you are a Jew, and that Jews make a Seder, and that as a Jew you want to understand the Seder that you'll make. When you call your family to wish them a happy Passover, may I suggest you thank them for imparting to you an appreciation of Judaism, nostalgically recall with them the special times you've had together on Passover in the past, and tell them that you'll miss them this year on Passover.

As far as reading the Haggada in Hebrew is concerned, whenever possible, it is very nice to include the original flavor of the Holy tongue to the Seder and other ceremonies. Grappling with reading and comprehending Hebrew can serve as a challenge to spur our Jewish learning and help us appreciate that, Jewishly, there is still very much for us to learn. This might also serve as an impetus to invest time in preparing for the Seder beforehand to become familiar with what we'll be doing.

That being said, you are certainly correct that the purpose of the Haggada is to pass the message of Passover from generation to generation – *haggada* means to relate and publicize. Therefore it can (and should) be said in any language in order for the participants to understand what's being 'passed on'. This is particularly true regarding children. The Haggada should be said not only in a language they understand, but in a way they can relate to – with challenging questions, songs, drama and suspense.

Many people try to find a workable balance between reading the Hebrew vs. comprehension. Each section can be read and translated; some can be read in the original while others not; or most can be in another language while central parts are recited or sung in Hebrew – like the Four Questions. Here it is important not only to understand the questions but to hear the answer. At the Seder, surprise your friends who know how to read the questions in Hebrew by asking them if they know the answer to the questions even in English.

Do your homework!

WHAT'S the Right Thing TO DO?

Post-Purim Amends

Question: In accordance with the spirit(s) of the day, I got a little high this past Purim. After sobering up I learned that I had gotten a little out of hand in the home of a friend and may have caused some damage to his furniture and to his honor. What is the right thing to do in making amends?

Answer: In regard to damages caused as a result of getting high in fulfillment of the mitzvah to drink on Purim, the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 695:2 in the *Rama*) rules that there is no responsibility for compensation unless

there was intent to do damage. There is a difference of opinion amongst the halachic authorities whether this applies as well to bodily damage. The ruling of the *Mishneh Berura* (*ibid.* 13) is that both in regard to material and physical damages it all depends on the degree of the damage.

While you may have to consult your rabbi as to what constitutes substantial damage, it is a good idea in any case to ask the forgiveness of your victim for any harm you did to his feelings, his body or his property, even if you didn't mean to cause it.

Who is the Master?

On Pesach we sing the praises of the Hallel prayer in appreciation of G-d's having redeemed us from Egyptian bondage.

It would seem logical, our Talmudic Sages point out, for us to say Hallel on Purim, for if we are grateful for being rescued from slavery, should we not be even more appreciative of being rescued from the genocide of Haman?

One of the resolutions presented to the dilemma of no Hallel on Purim is that the Hallel prayer begins with the words "Sing praise you servants of G-d". On Pesach this is appropriate because we can truly declare that we became servants of G-d and that our servitude to Pharaoh ended forever. On Purim, however, although we were saved

from death, we remained servants of the Persian ruler Achashveirosh.

While it is true that Achashveirosh is long gone, and with him scores of rulers to whom we were subservient, there still persists the feeling that we are not yet as completely free as we were after the Exodus from Egypt. If foreign powers can so influence the policies of the government of the Jewish State, it is a reminder that we are still in Galut.

May our celebration of the Pesach Festival with all of its laws and customs make us worthy of an Exodus from this Galut for a people who are true "servants of G-d" in a truly independent Israel forever.

The HUMAN SIDE of the Story

A Hair-Raising Miracle

Give me back my sister immediately!" This is what 16-year old Yitzchak Slutzky shouted as he frantically dashed into the Nazi headquarters of the occupied village where he and his younger sister had been hiding for several months. They were the only survivors of their Polish Jewish family and Yitzchak had made it his mission to protect his sister from any harm. Returning one day from his foraging for food, he learned that their bunker had been discovered and his sister taken away to the Nazi headquarters which he now entered in a fury.

The Nazi guards drew their guns but before they fired an order came from their commander to let the youngster enter his office. When Yitzchak repeated his demand to this Nazi officer, he received a taunting response.

"If you can show me hair growing on the palm of your hand," he said with a cynical smile, "I will give you back your sister."

Yitzchak urged him to repeat his promise and then

stuck out his hand. The Nazi, product of a German *kultur* that the devil has hair on the palm of his hand, almost fainted. He kept his promise and Yitzchak and his sister succeeded in surviving the Holocaust and reaching Eretz Yisrael.

Yitzchak often told friends that story of his miracle and explained the background. As a boy of seven he enjoyed walking through his father's large bakery and looking at the various machines. One day he stuck his hand into a mixer and some of the skin of his hand was torn away. A primitive job of grafting was done at the hospital with the doctor taking skin from a part of his body on which grew hair. This disfigurement troubled Yitzchak and his family and he was forced to keep his hair-bearing hand in his pocket when he was outside.

Only after that dramatic encounter with a Nazi officer trying to have some sadistic fun at his expense did he realize that his accident was Heavenly devised to save his life and that of his sister.

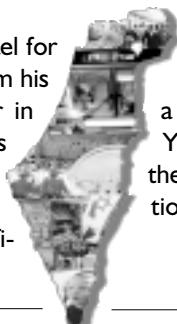
LOVE OF THE LAND

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

Building A City

Omri was the ruler of the Kingdom of Israel for seven years. What distinguished him from his predecessors was not only the manner in which he ascended the throne but the fact that his successors were his own son and grandson.

He came to power as the General of the Army which crushed the rebellion of a junior offi-



cer named Zimri who usurped the throne. During his reign Omri purchased a hill in Shomron and built a new city on it. In the merit of adding a city to Eretz Yisrael, say our Sages (*Sanhedrin 102b*), he merited that the scepter of royalty passed on to two more generations in his family (*Maharsha ibid.*).

PARSHA Q&A

Metzora

1. When may a *metzora* not be pronounced *tahor*?
2. In the *midbar*, where did a *metzora* dwell while he was *tamei*?
3. Why does the *metzora* require birds in the purification process?
4. In the purification process of a *metzora*, what does the cedar wood symbolize?
5. During the purification process, the *metzora* is required to shave his hair. Which hair must he shave?
6. What is unique about the *chatat* and the *asham* offered by the *metzora*?
7. In the *Beit Hamikdash*, when the *metzora* was presented “before G-d” (14:11), where did he stand?
8. Where was the *asham* of the *metzora* slaughtered?
9. How was having *tzara’at* in one’s house sometimes advantageous?
10. When a house is suspected as having *tzara’at*, what is its status prior to the inspection by a *kohen*?
11. What happens to the vessels that are in a house found to have *tzara’at*?

12. Which type of vessels cannot be made *tahor* after they become *tamei*?
13. Where were stones afflicted with *tzara’at* discarded?
14. When a house is suspected of having *tzara’at*, a *kohen* commands that the affected stones be replaced and the house plastered. What is the law if the *tzara’at*: a) returns and spreads; b) does not return; c) returns, but does not spread?
15. When a person enters a house that has *tzara’at*, when do his clothes become *tamei*?
16. What is the status of a man who is *zav* (sees a flow): a) two times or two consecutive days; b) three times or three consecutive days?
17. A *zav* sat or slept on the following: a) a bed; b) a plank; c) a chair; d) a rock. If a *tahor* person touches these things what is his status?
18. What does the Torah mean when it refers to a *zav* who “has not washed his hands”?
19. When may a *zav* immerse in a *mikveh* to purify himself?
20. What is the status of someone who experiences a one time flow?

Answers to Metzora’s Questions

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

1. 14:2 - At night.
2. 14:3 - Outside the three camps.
3. 14:4 - *Tzara’at* comes as a punishment for *lashon hara*. Therefore, the Torah requires the *metzora* to offer birds, who chatter constantly, to atone for his sin of chattering.
4. 14:4 - The cedar is a lofty tree. It alludes to the fact that *tzara’at* comes as a punishment for haughtiness.
5. 14:9 - Any visible collection of hair on the body.
6. 14:10 - They require *n’sachim* (drink offerings).
7. 14:11 - At the gate of Nikanor.
8. 14:13 - On the northern side of the *mizbe’ach*.
9. 14:34 - The Amorites concealed treasures in the walls of their houses. After the conquest of the Land, *tzara’at* would afflict these houses. The Jewish owner would tear down the house and find the treasures.
10. 14:36 - It is *tahor*.
11. 14:36 - They become *tamei*.

12. 14:36 - Earthenware vessels.
13. 14:40 - In places where *tahor* objects were not handled.
14. a) 14:44-45 - It is called “*tzara’at mam’eret*,” and the house must be demolished; b) 14:48 - the house is pronounced *tahor*; c) 14:44 - The house must be demolished.
15. 14:46 - When he remains in the house long enough to eat a small meal.
16. 15:2 - a) He is *tamei*; b) he is *tamei* and is also required to bring a *korban*.
17. 15:4-5 - Only a type of object that one usually lies or sits upon becomes a transmitter of *tumah* when a *zav* sits or lies on it. A *tahor* person who subsequently touches the object becomes *tamei* and the clothes he is wearing are also *tamei’im*. Therefore: a) *tamei*; b) *tahor*; c) *tamei*; d) *tahor*.
18. 15:11 - One who has not immersed in a *mikveh*.
19. 15:13 - After seven consecutive days without a flow.
20. 15:32 - He is *tamei* until evening.

PARSHA Q&A

ACHREI

1. Why does the Torah emphasize that *Parshat Acharei Mot* was taught after the death of Aharon's sons?
2. How long did the first *Beit Hamikdash* stand?
3. What did the *kohen gadol* wear when he entered the Holy of Holies?
4. How many times did the *kohen gadol* change his clothing and immerse in the *mikveh* on Yom Kippur?
5. One of the goats that was chosen by lot went to *azazel*. What is *azazel*?
6. After the Yom Kippur service, what is done with the four linen garments worn by the *kohen gadol*?
7. What is the penalty of *karet*?
8. Which categories of animals must have their blood covered when they are slaughtered?
9. What is the difference between "*mishpat*" and "*chok*"?
10. May a man marry his wife's sister?

KEDOSHIM

1. Why was *Parshat Kedoshim* said in front of all the

Jewish People?

2. Why does the Torah mention the duty to honor one's father before it mentions the duty to honor one's mother?
3. Why is the command to fear one's parents followed by the command to keep Shabbat?
4. The Torah obligates one to leave the "leket" for the poor. What is "leket"?
5. In *Shemot* 20:13, the Torah commands, "Do not steal." What does the Torah add when it commands in *Vayikra* 19:11 "Do not steal"?
6. In verse 19:13, the Torah commands, "Do not wrong your neighbor." To what "wrong" is the Torah referring?
7. When rebuking someone, what sin must one be careful to avoid?
8. How does one fulfill the command "v'hadarta p'nei zakein"?
9. What punishment will never come to the entire Jewish People?
10. When the Torah states a death penalty but doesn't define it precisely, to which type of death penalty is it referring?

Answers to Achrei & Kedoshim's Questions

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

ACHREI

1. 16:1 - To strengthen the warning not to enter the Holy of Holies except on Yom Kippur.
2. 16:3 - 410 years.
3. 16:4 - Only the four linen garments worn by an ordinary *kohen*.
4. 16:4 - Five times.
5. 16:8 - A jagged cliff.
6. 16:23 - They must be put into *geniza* and not be used again.
7. 17:9 - The person's life is shortened and his offspring die.
8. 17:13 - Non-domestic kosher animals and all species of kosher birds.
9. 18:4 - A "*mishpat*" conforms to the human sense of justice. A "*chok*" is a law whose reason is not given to us and can only be understood as Hashem's decree.
10. 18:18 - Not during his wife's lifetime.

KEDOSHIM

1. 19:2 - Because it contains the fundamental teachings of the Torah.
2. 19:3 - Since it is more natural to honor one's mother, the Torah stresses the obligation to honor one's father.
3. 19:3 - To teach that one must not violate Torah law even at the command of one's parents.
4. 19:9 - "Leket" is one or two stalks of grain that are accidentally dropped while harvesting.
5. 19:11 - The Torah in *Vayikra* prohibits monetary theft. In *Shemot* it prohibits kidnapping.
6. 19:13 - Withholding wages from a worker.
7. 19:17 - Causing embarrassment.
8. 19:32 - By not sitting in their seat nor contradicting them.
9. 20:3 - "*Karet*" — the entire Jewish People will never be "cut off."
10. 20:10 - "*Chenek*" (strangulation).

PARSHA Q&A

EMOR

1. Which male descendants of Aharon are exempt from the prohibition against contacting a dead body?
2. Does a *kohen* have an option regarding becoming ritually defiled when his unmarried sister passes away?
3. How does one honor a *kohen*?
4. How does the Torah restrict the *kohen gadol* with regard to mourning?
5. The Torah states in verse 22:3 that one who “approaches holy objects” while in a state of *tumah* (impurity) is penalized with excision. What does the Torah mean by “approaches”?
6. What is the smallest piece of a corpse that is able to transmit *tumah*?
7. Who in the household of a *kohen* may eat *terumah*?
8. If the daughter of a *kohen* marries a “*zar*” she may no longer eat *terumah*. What is a *zar*?
9. What is the difference between a *neder* and a

nedavah?

10. May a person slaughter an animal and its father on the same day?
11. How does the Torah define “profaning” the Name of Hashem?
12. Apart from Shabbat, how many days are there during the year about which the Torah says that work is forbidden?
13. How big is an *omer*?
14. On what day do we begin to “count the *omer*”?
15. Why do we begin counting the *omer* at night?
16. How does the *omer* differ from other *minchah* offerings?
17. The blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is called a “*zichron teruah*” (sound of remembrance). For what is it a reminder?
18. What is unusual about the wood of the *etrog* tree?
19. Who was the father of the blasphemer?
20. What is the penalty for intentionally wounding one’s parent?

Answers to Emor's Questions

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

1. 21:1 - *Challalim* — those disqualified from the priesthood because they are descended from a relationship forbidden to a *kohen*.
2. 21:3 - No, he is required to do so.
3. 21:8 - He is first in all matters of holiness. For example, a *kohen* reads from the Torah first, and is usually the one to lead the blessings before and after meals.
4. 21:10-12 - He may not allow his hair to grow long, nor attend to his close relatives if they die, nor accompany a funeral procession.
5. 22:3 - Eats.
6. 22:5 - A piece the size of an olive.
7. 22:11 - He, his wife, his sons, his unmarried daughters and his non-Jewish slaves.
8. 22:12 - A non-*kohen*.
9. 22:18 - A *neder* is an obligation upon a person; a *nedavah* is an obligation placed upon an object.

10. 22:28 - Yes. The Torah only prohibits slaughtering an animal and its mother on the same day.
11. 22:32 - Willfully transgressing the commandments.
12. 23:7-36 - Seven.
13. 23:10 - One tenth of an *eipha*.
14. 23:15 - On the 16th of Nissan.
15. 23:15 - The Torah requires counting seven complete weeks. If we begin counting in the daytime, the seven weeks would not be complete, because according to the Torah a day starts at nightfall.
16. 23:16 - It was made from barley.
17. 23:24 - The *akeidat* (binding of) Yitzchak.
18. 23:40 - It has the same taste as the fruit.
19. 24:10 - The Egyptian killed by Moshe (*Shemot* 2:12).
20. 24:21 - Death.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous Ohrnet features

Re: Ohrnet Purim Special Feature and How Mordechai Knew

The reason I learned that Mordechai knew things were going to go well was from a Midrash which said that he met three boys coming back from school. Mordechai asked them what they had learned that day. Each quoted a verse which some of us recite immediately after Aleinu: "Don't fear from sudden frightening events... I will bear it and escape!"

• Barry F.

Ohrnet in London

Being a former Ohr Somayach student and now a regular in the JLE in London, I have discussed the following matter with one of your rabbis here and was advised to contact you directly.

I teach in London (South Hampstead Synagogue, part of a community now being reached by the JLE) and have been thinking about distributing a newsletter occasionally, I hope to put one out for Pesach. This will give the possibility of the parents also learning, in tandem to their kids. Since our photocopy facilities could not make 170 copies of the OHRNET, and for other reasons, I hope you will permit me to take an article here and there and quote them verbatim, including the Ohr Somayach logo, address, etc. and perhaps they would go online to Ohr.edu to find out more for themselves.

•

D.

What's the Right Thing to Do With Taxis

I want to comment on "What's the Right Thing to Do?" (Parshat Pekudei).

The question was about cab drivers who didn't want to take a passenger whose health condition caused him to have a bad odor. The drivers were afraid that the smell remaining behind would prevent them from taking other passengers afterward. The advice given was that a driver should agree to take the passenger on condition that he compensate him for his expected loss of income.

I'm sorry, but, with all due respect to the rav who gave that advice, I find it unacceptable. Saying this to the would-be passenger is just as hurtful to his feelings as refusing to take him at all. It's still saying, "You're repulsive. I don't want you. I'll take you only if you do something for me that normal people don't have to do." It seems to me that cab drivers often take passengers who are drunk or who reek of garlic or stale cigarettes, without demanding extra payment.

I firmly believe that a person has to make his best effort to earn a living and not think that he can rely on miracles, but we have to remember that all of a person's livelihood is miraculous — as great as splitting of the Sea, Chazal say. A driver can have a fresh-smelling cab and not get passengers, and he can have a cab that doesn't smell good, and Hashem will send him passengers who need his services and don't mind the smell.

• A Friend from Maaleh Adumim

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

nachar zehor d'nn