

OHRNET

PESACH ISSUE: TZAV, SHEMINI, TAZRIA/METZORA, ACHAREI MOT/KEDOSHIM
• 6 NISSAN 5780 APRIL 4, 2020, • VOL. 27 NO. 21

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Tzav

Shoelaces

"And raise up the ash..." (6:3)

At first sight, some things in Judaism may appear somewhat weird.

I remember someone who wasn't religious discovering the halacha that you should tie your left shoelace before your right. He said to me, "I find it hard to believe that G-d cares about which shoe I tie first."

I could have explained to him that we tie the left shoe lace first as a gesture of respect to the leather strap of the *tefillin*, which is worn on the left arm. However, I decided that what was bothering him was something more fundamental.

Those of us who were born in the "West" may have grown up in a world where religion is a weekend activity. The role of the clergy is often no more than to "hatch, match, and dispatch." Religion is then compartmentalized, and, in this way, so too is G-d. This mindset is that if there is a G-d, He is limited to making guest appearances on the weekend. Any further intrusion into our lives is considered extremely irksome, as Lord Melbourne remarked in 1898 on hearing a sermon: "Things have come to a pretty pass when religion is allowed to invade the sphere of private life."

Judaism, however, doesn't see religion as a weekend leisure activity. It is not just one aspect of life. It is life itself.

Judaism views every single activity in life as an opportunity to bring ourselves closer to G-d. What we eat. What we think. What we say. What we do. What we don't do. Nothing in this world is devoid of the potential for spirituality. Nothing is neutral. If the whole purpose of the world is for us to recognize G-d, then everything in this world must be created to that end. The alternative would be that there are vast areas of this world which have no part in G-d's purpose, and that would be accusing the Master of the world of tremendous sloppiness in His creation.

In the above verse, the word for "ash" is *deshen*. *Deshen* can be read as an acronym for "*davar shelo nechshav*" — "something without importance." When the Torah says, "And raise up the ash," it is telling us to take everything, even those things that seem to us like ash, insignificant and without value, and place them next to the Altar. To raise up the little, unthought-of parts of our lives and to use them to serve G-d. There is nothing in this world that cannot be used to serve Him.

Even the humblest shoelace.

**OHR SOMAYACH WISHES YOU
A PESACH KASHER V'SAMEACH
-A KOSHER AND FESTIVE PESACH**

With Courage and Bravery

"I will be sanctified through those who are nearest Me." (10:3)

Once upon a time you could actually watch some movies. Sir Michael Balcon, the son of Jewish refugees from Latvia, was famous for giving Alfred Hitchcock his first directing opportunity and for making Ealing Studios the vanguard of the golden era of British Films in the 1950s. The "Ealing Comedies" were distinguished by the fact that they all had a moral: They were a kind of 90-minute black-and-white *mussar shmuz*.

I think my favorite was "A Last Holiday" starring Alec Guinness (*Obi Wan Kenobi* for you millennials). Guinness plays an unassuming and unmarried salesman. He goes to the doctor and he's told that he has a rare disease and he has precisely six weeks to live. So what does he do? He takes his life savings out of the bank and scoots to the ritziest hotel on the coast, where the glitterati of commerce, politics and entertainment hang out. Because he feels he has nothing to lose, he is completely candid and honest with everyone he meets. Everyone is drawn to him like a magnet. Nothing is as attractive as honesty. His advice is taken by politicians and moguls of industry. At the end of the film he finds out that his x-ray photos had been mistakenly swapped – and that he was never ill in the first place.

Ask yourself: If you knew that you had six weeks to live, how would you live your life? The way you're living it now? Would you waste your time arguing with your wife or your neighbors? I don't think so. Would you agonize over where you're going to take the kids on vacation or what color you should paint the living room?

I'm writing this towards the end of Adar, and right now no one has any idea what the next six weeks will bring. (Hashem should have mercy!) But our lives have come into focus in a way that they never were before. The only thing that is certain in life is death. And the only thing that matters is the way we leave this life. Will we leave trying to enjoy the last morsel of this world on our lips – or will we leave the world in self-sacrifice, with courage and bravery? That's really all that matters. May Hashem give us the courage to rise to the occasion and live our lives as though we only had six more weeks.

Tazria

Far Away

"The Kohen shall look, and behold! The affliction has covered his entire flesh – then he will declare the affliction to be pure." (13:13)

T*zara'at*, frequently mistranslated as leprosy, was a disease caused by spiritual defects, such as speaking *lashon hara* (slander). (Nowadays we are on such a low level spiritually that our bodies do not reflect the state of our spiritual health in this way.)

The verse here is puzzling, for if "the affliction has covered the entire flesh" of the person, this must mean that he is far from pure, and yet the Torah tells us that the *Kohen* shall "declare the affliction *pure*." How can he be pure if the affliction covers his whole body?

The answer is that he is so far from being cured, having ignored all the warnings to do *teshuva* (repentance), that the disease ceases to perform any further purpose. Therefore, the Torah specifically says *not* that the *Kohen* shall declare *him* pure, but rather that "the *affliction* is pure." But he, on the other hand, is as far from purity as is possible.

- Based on the *Ha'amek Davar* and Rabbi S. R. Hirsch

Metzora

Boomerang

"And he shall be brought to the Kohen." (14:3)

When a person speaks *lashon hara*, it indicates that he has no concept of the power of speech. He considers words to be insignificant in comparison to actions. As the nursery rhyme says, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me."

Nothing could be further from the truth. When a person speaks evil, he awakes a prosecutor in Heaven, not only against the target of his speech, but also against himself. An angel stands by the side of each of us recording our every word. In order to teach those who speak slander the power of just one word, the Torah instructs that the offender be brought to the *Kohen*. But, even as he is on his way to the *Kohen*, his body covered with *tzara'at* for all to see, and until the *Kohen* actually pronounces the word "Impure!" he is still considered totally pure. Similarly, once he is impure, he cannot return to his former status of purity, even though his disease has healed completely, until the *Kohen* pronounces him to be spiritually pure once more. From this, the speaker of *lashon hara* is taught to reflect on the power of each and every word. For, with one word he can be made an outcast, and with one word he can be redeemed.

- Based on *Ohel Yaakov*

Kedoshim

Being Normal

"You shall be holy..." (19:1)

It always struck me, that whenever I had the privilege to meet a great Torah Sage – how normal he seemed. It was, in fact, as if he defined the yardstick of normalcy. After meeting this person, others seemed somewhat less than normal.

The Alshich explains that G-d instructed Moshe to call all the people together when giving them the commandment to be holy in order that it would be clear that holiness is not something achievable by only the few. Every Jew has the potential to be holy, and thus it follows that if every Jew has the potential to be holy, holiness is not a voluntary affair, but an obligation.

Holiness does not consist of mortifying the flesh or of extreme abstinence. Holiness does not mean rolling in ice or lying on a bed of nails. Holiness means being more and more normal. Holy Jews live normal married lives. They eat normally. They breathe normally. However, everything they do is with consideration and within measure.

Holiness means being normal even under the most abnormal situations. It means never compromising with our lower desires, but at the same time recognizing that we are part physical beings. Being holy means resisting that extra, excessive spoonful of *cholent*, even if the *kashrut* is top-notch. Above all, holiness means going beyond the technical fulfillment of the mitzvahs. It means sanctifying that which is permitted. When something is outright forbidden, it is much easier to steer clear of it. There's no room for negotiation with our lower personas. However, when something is permitted, there is always the temptation to push the edge of the envelope. And even though technically one could stay within the letter of the law, the commandment to be holy tells us that there is more to mitzvah observance than the letter of the law. Observing the spirit of the law is itself a mitzvah. That's what it means to be normal.

- Based on the *Ramban*

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Shabbat 23-57

A Mother's Prayer

Rav Huna said, "One who is careful to have good light on Shabbat will merit having children who are Torah scholars; one who is careful in fulfilling the mitzvah of mezuzah will merit having a beautiful home; one who is careful in fulfilling the mitzvah of tzitzit will merit having beautiful clothing; one who careful in fulfilling the mitzvah of kiddush will merit many full barrels of wine (i.e. wealth)."

The halacha to have good light on Shabbat is codified in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 263. The Mishna Berurah explains that lighting candles for Shabbat is an obligation that is mainly to enhance fulfillment of the mitzvah of *oneg* Shabbat – enjoying Shabbat. He also cites our *gemara* that one

who is careful in this practice will merit children who are Torah scholars, as the Torah states, "For the lamp is a mitzvah and Torah is light." The Mishna Berurah adds that it is therefore fitting for a woman to pray to Hashem after she lights that He will grant her children who will light up the world with Torah.

• *Shabbat 23b*

The Entire Torah

Hillel answered, "Do not do to your fellow man that which is hateful to you... This is the entire Torah. The rest is elucidation. Now, go and learn it."

This is what the Sage Hillel told the person who came to convert to Judaism on condition that he would be taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot.

Hillel's teaching to "Do not do to your friend that which is hateful to you" is certainly a "rebranding" of the Torah

mitzvah to "Love one's fellow man as himself" (Vayikra 19:18). This teaching is a golden rule of thumb for fulfillment of every mitzvah of the Torah. It is a key principle to guide us in all that we do – not only for mitzvahs between one person and another, but also for mitzvahs between a person and Hashem (see Rashi's definition of "your friend").

▪ *Shabbat 31a*

Living in Israel

Rav Yehuda said, "Anyone who leaves Bavel to go up to Eretz Yisrael transgresses a positive mitzvah of the Torah, as it says, "They (the Jewish People) shall be brought to Babylon and there they shall be until I (Hashem) will take heed of them... and restore them to this place (Eretz Yisrael)."' (Yirmiyahu 27:22)

This teaching of Rav Yehuda is codified by the Rambam as halacha for all times: "Just as it is forbidden to leave the chosen land for the Diaspora, it is also forbidden to leave Babylon for other lands, as Yirmiyahu states, 'They (the Jewish People) shall be brought to Babylon and there they shall be until I

(Hashem) will take heed of them... and restore them to this place (Eretz Yisrael)."

Although the Rambam teaches that it is forbidden to leave Eretz Yisrael for the Diaspora (with a few exceptions, as he notes), he does not teach that it is mitzvah for a person to live in Eretz Yisrael. The

halachic matter of an obligation to live in Israel is a matter of well-known dispute between the Ramban and the Rambam.

The Torah states, “And you shall possess the Land and dwell in it, because I have given the Land to you as an inheritance.” (Bamidbar 33:53) The Ramban maintains that this verse teaches us that there is a mitzvah to settle in the Land of Israel, and that this mitzvah is applicable even in times of exile. “We have been commanded to inherit the Land that the Almighty One gave to our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov; not to leave it in the hands of other nations and not to leave it desolate. This is what G-d commanded them in the verse, “And you shall possess the Land...”

The Rambam, however, does not count this as a mitzvah in his listing of the 613 commandments, despite his statement in the Misneh Torah that “one should always dwell in the Land of Israel,” and despite his other numerous statements regarding the greatness and sanctity of the Land. (Hilchot Melachim 5:9-12.)

(For a thorough discussion of the various opinions regarding the proper understanding of the Rambam’s position – and how he understands the verse in Sefer Bamidbar – refer to Eretz Chamda by Rav Shaul Israeli.)

▪ *Shabbat 41a*

Mitzvah Protection

“Just as a dove is protected by its wings, so too is the Jewish nation protected by its mitzvahs.”

The *gemara* teaches that this comparison is alluded to in a verse of Tehillim (68:14) that describes the Jewish People and the mitzvahs as “the feathers of a dove covered with silver, and

its pinions with brilliant gold.” The Jewish nation is compared to a dove and the mitzvahs are compared to the dove’s feathers – which protect the dove from cold and from its enemies. (Rashi)

• *Shabbat 49a*

Not a Mind Reader

Rabbi Zeira said, “Even though they won’t accept your rebuke, you should nevertheless rebuke them.”

Prior to this, Rabbi Zeira had told Rabbi Simon to rebuke a certain group of transgressors. However, Rabbi Simon declined to do so, claiming that his rebuking them would not effect a change in their ways for the better. To this, Rabbi Zeira countered that “*Even though they won’t accept your rebuke, you should nevertheless rebuke them.*” His reasoning: “How do you know for sure that they won’t accept your rebuke and change their ways?” Rabbi Zeira brings a support for his position from a teaching of Rabbi Acha b’Rabbi Chanina, as is explained in detail in the *gemara*.

It would seem that Rabbi Zeira’s way of thinking is obviously correct. Why would Rabbi Simon have thought differently in the first place and not have initially agreed to rebuke? From the words of Tosefot on the *daf*, we have the answer to this question.

Tosefot explains that Rabbi Zeira’s argument to rebuke them was because there was a *doubt* that perhaps the rebuke would be successful and the transgressors would do *teshuva*. But if it was certain that the transgressors would not heed the words of rebuke, they should not be rebuked – “Better that the transgressors remain *shogeg* (unaware that they were transgressing), and not be considered *meizid* (aware of the transgression and intentionally transgressing). Therefore, Rabbi Simon reasoned that the transgressors should not be rebuked, since they would not listen and the rebuke would only serve to make their transgression more serious (*meizid*). Rabbi Zeira explained to him that although he thought they would not accept his rebuke, he could not be 100% certain. And if there is a shadow of a doubt that the rebuke might work, there is a mitzvah to try one’s best. Only Hashem knows if the transgressors will reject the rebuke – or accept it.

• *Shabbat 55a*

Tzav

Questions

1. What separated the kohen's skin from the priestly garments?
2. How often were the ashes removed from upon the mizbe'ach? How often were they completely removed from the mizbe'ach?
3. If someone extinguishes the fire on the mizbe'ach, how many Torah violations has he transgressed?
4. The portion of a flour-offering offered on the mizbe'ach may not be chametz. But is the kohen's portion allowed to be chametz?
5. When a kohen is inaugurated, what offering must he bring?
6. What three baking processes were used to prepare the korban of Aharon and his sons?
7. What is the difference between a minchat kohen and a minchat Yisrael?
8. When is a kohen disqualified from eating from a chatat?
9. What is the difference between a copper and earthenware vessel regarding removing absorbed tastes?
10. Can an animal dedicated as an asham be replaced with another animal?
11. How does an asham differ from all other korbanot?
12. Unlike all other korbanot, what part of the ram or sheep may be placed on the mizbe'ach?
13. What three types of kohanim may not eat from the asham?
14. In which four instances is a korban todah brought?
15. Until when may a todah be eaten according to the Torah? Until when according to Rabbinic decree?
16. How does a korban become pigul?
17. Who may eat from a shelamim?
18. What miracle happened at the entrance of the Ohel Moed?
19. Other than Yom Kippur, what other service requires that the kohen separate from his family?
20. What are the 5 categories of korbanot listed in this Parsha?

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

Answers

1. 6:3 - Nothing.
2. 6:4 -a) Every day. b) Whenever there was a lot.
3. 6:6 - Two.
4. 6:10 - No.
5. 6:13 - A korban mincha – A tenth part of an ephah of flour.
6. 6:14 - Boiling, baking in an oven and frying in a pan.
7. 6:15 - The minchat kohen is burned completely. Only a handful of the minchat Yisrael is burned, and the remainder is eaten by the kohanim.
8. 6:19 - If he is tamei (spiritually impure) at the time of the sprinkling of the blood.
9. 6:21 - One can remove an absorbed taste from a copper vessel by scouring and rinsing, whereas such a taste can never be removed from an earthenware vessel.
10. 7:1 - No.
11. 7:3 - It can only be brought from a ram or sheep.
12. 7:3 - The tail.
13. 7:7 - A t'vul yom (a tamei kohen who immersed in a mikveh yet awaits sunset to become tahor); a mechusar kipurim (a tamei person who has gone to the mikveh but has yet to bring his required offering); an onan (a mourner on the day of death of a close relative).
14. 7:12 - Upon safe arrival from an ocean voyage; upon safe arrival from a desert journey; upon being freed from prison; upon recovering from illness.
15. 7:15 - a) Until the morning. b) Until midnight.
16. 7:18 - The person slaughters the animal with the intention that it be eaten after the prescribed time.
17. 7:19 - Any uncontaminated person (not only the owner).
18. 8:3 - The entire nation was able to fit in this very small area.
19. 8:34 - The burning of the Parah Adumah (red heifer).
20. Olah (6:2); mincha (6:7); chatat (6:18); asham (7:1); shelamim (7:11).

Shemini

Questions

1. What date was “yom hashemini”?
2. Which of Aharon’s korbanot atoned for the Golden Calf?
3. What korbanot did Aharon offer for the Jewish People?
4. What was unique about the chatat offered during the induction of the Mishkan?
5. When did Aharon bless the people with the Birkat Kohanim?
6. Why did Moshe go into the Ohel Mo’ed with Aharon?
7. Why did Nadav and Avihu die?
8. Aharon quietly accepted his sons’ death. What reward did he receive for this?
9. What prohibitions apply to a person who is intoxicated?
10. Name the three chatat goat offerings that were sacrificed on the day of the inauguration of the Mishkan.
11. Which he-goat chatat did Aharon burn completely and why?
12. Why did Moshe direct his harsh words at Aharon’s sons?
13. Moshe was upset that Aharon and his sons did not eat the chatat. Why?
14. Why did G-d choose Moshe, Aharon, Elazar and Itamar as His messengers to tell the Jewish People the laws of kashrut?
15. What are the signs of a kosher land animal?
16. How many non-kosher animals display only one sign of kashrut? What are they?
17. If a fish sheds its fins and scales when out of the water, is it kosher?
18. Why is a stork called chasida in Hebrew?
19. The chagav is a kosher insect. Why don’t we eat it?
20. What requirements must be met in order for water to maintain its status of purity?

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

Answers

1. 9:1 - First of Nissan.
2. 9:2 - The calf offered as a korban chatat.
3. 9:3,4 - A he-goat as a chatat, a calf and a lamb for an olah, an ox and a ram for shelamim, and a mincha.
4. 9:11 - It’s the only example of a chatat offered on the courtyard mizbe’ach that was burned.
5. 9:22 - When he finished offering the korbanot, before descending from the mizbe’ach.
6. 9:23 - For one of two reasons: Either to teach Aharon about the service of the incense, or to pray for the Shechina to dwell with Israel.
7. 10:2 - Rashi offers two reasons: Either because they gave a halachic ruling in Moshe’s presence, or because they entered the Mishkan after drinking intoxicating wine.
8. 10:3 - A portion of the Torah was given solely through Aharon.
9. 10:9-11 - He may not give a halachic ruling. Also, a kohen is forbidden to enter the Ohel Mo’ed, approach the mizbe’ach, or perform the avoda.
10. 10:16 - The goat offerings of the inauguration ceremony, of Rosh Chodesh, and of Nachshon ben Aminadav.
11. 10:16 - The Rosh Chodesh chatat: Either because it became tamei, or because the kohanim were forbidden to eat from it while in the state of aninut (mourning).
12. 10:16 - Out of respect for Aharon, Moshe directed his anger at his sons and not directly at Aharon.
13. 10:17 - Because only when the kohanim eat the chatat are the sins of the owners atoned.
14. 11:2 - Because they accepted the deaths of Nadav and Avihu in silence.
15. 11:3 - An animal whose hooves are completely split and who chews its cud.
16. 11:4-7 - Four: Camel, shafan, hare and pig.
17. 11:12 - Yes.
18. 11:19 - Because it acts with chesed (kindness) toward other storks.
19. 11:21 - We have lost the tradition and are not able to identify the kosher chagav.
20. 11:36 - It must be connected to the ground (i.e., a spring or a cistern.)

Tazria

Questions

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

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

Answers

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

Metzora

Questions

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 of 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?

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

Answers

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*.
 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*.
17. 15:11 - One who has not immersed in a *mikveh*.
18. 15:13 - After seven consecutive days without a flow.
19. 15:32 - He is *tamei* until evening.

Achrei Mot

Questions

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

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

Answers

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

Kedoshim

Questions

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

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

Answers

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

SEASONS –THEN AND NOW

Thanking Hashem for the Egyptian Exile?

by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh

We all know that Hashem runs the entire world and He is the cause for everything. We also know that no one has the power to go against Hashem's will. If so, we have to ask ourselves a very basic question: Why do we thank Hashem for taking us out of Egypt if He was the One Who put us there in the first place? This would seem to be like a doctor who intentionally breaks someone's leg – and then heals him. Does that deserve a thank you? (Birkas Hashir commentary on the Haggadah)

Let's begin by understanding a fundamental idea in Hashem's Divine Providence. Ultimately, everything that Hashem does is for our own good. As the Gemara says, everything that Hashem does is for the good (Berachot 60b). This even includes pain and suffering, as they too have many advantages. Firstly, the commentaries explain, suffering serves as a warning for one to improve his ways, and thus is a catalyst for *teshuva*. Furthermore, the pain itself purifies one from his sins (Shaarei Teshuva 2:1-6). According to some commentaries, suffering also increases one's reward in the World to Come by making one's test in this world harder. As the Mishna says, "According to the pain is the reward." (see Rashi on Berachot 5a "*yisurin shel ahava*" and Tzlach there; Shaarei Teshuva 2:1-6. But see the Ramban in Shaar Hagemul who disagrees).

Suffering also enables us to attain certain things that are acquired specifically through suffering. As the Gemara says, "Torah, *Olam HaBa*, and Eretz Yisrael are acquired through suffering (Berachot 5a, see commentaries there who explain why this is so). In all the ways mentioned above it is clear that: While suffering is certainly uncomfortable, it is still advantageous. It is, in fact, for this reason that the Gemara tells us to make the blessing that is recited on hearing so-called "bad news" with the same wholeheartedness and happiness as when saying the blessing on hearing "good news," because even that which seems bad is for our ultimate good (Berachot 60b and commentaries there).

Chazal tell us that the advantages of suffering exist even when it seems like someone else has control and is

causing the suffering. After all, if the suffering wasn't befitting us, Hashem wouldn't allow it. As the Gemara says, "One can not 'touch' that which is set and destined for someone else" (Yoma 38b). Furthermore, we are told that all this applies not only to an individual's suffering but also to an entire nation's suffering. Therefore, even when nations attack and torment us, Chazal always attribute it to a decree by Hashem that is ultimately for our good. Of course, even though it is all a decree from Hashem, the nations that instill the suffering on us are not innocent of guilt. They too will be punished for their evil acts (for the reason behind this, see Rambam, Hilchot Teshuva 6:5, Ramban on Bereishet 15:14 and Ohr HaChaim there).

The suffering that the Jewish People experienced in Egypt was no different. The commentaries tell us that it too was ultimately for our best. Firstly, it was atonement for previous sins. The deeper sources explain this using the idea of reincarnation. Simply put, when someone sins in one lifetime, he may be given the chance to fix his error by being brought back into this world in another body. These sources explain that the generation of Jews in Egypt was a reincarnation of the generation from the time of the flood, the generation that built the tower of Bavel, and the generation of Sedom – all of whom sinned against Hashem. Pharaoh's decrees – from the torturous labor to drowning baby boys in the Nile – were all "measure-for-measure" corrections for the sins committed in the generation's previous lifetime.

While it is certainly beyond the scope of this article to fully expand on this, the commentaries delve into and explain how everything was measure-for-measure. On a very basic level, one example of how the punishments were measure-for-measure: The very souls that sinned by working so hard to make bricks for the tower of Bavel were now forced to toil to make bricks and buildings for Pharaoh. Everything was exact – and everything was meant to bring their souls to their ultimate perfection (based on Rav Chaim Vital's Shaar Hapesukim, *parshat Shemot*).

There are other sources that attribute the suffering in Egypt to previous sins. One source attributes it to the sin of the brothers selling Yosef, which ultimately caused them to go down to Egypt (see Shabbat 10b and Abarbanel on *parshat Lech Lecha*). Another source points to a minute lack of faith on Avraham Avinu's part, which manifested itself in his descendants and had to be rectified (see Nedarim 32a, Maharsha there, and Gevurot Hashem *perek* 9). Other sources attribute the cause of going down to Egypt not specifically to sins but to other reasons. For example, the Ran explains that it was needed to instill in the Jewish People the character trait of submission, thus preparing them for a life of submission to the Torah. Furthermore, the miracles that enabled them to leave Egypt instilled in them the idea that Hashem runs all of nature, and thereby removed any doubt they had about Hashem. In these ways and more, the experience in Egypt was ultimately for our good.

There are obviously many questions that can be asked on each of the reasons above. It is beyond the scope of this short article to analyze each of the reasons in depth. The reader is encouraged to see the Abarbanel on *parshat Lech Lecha*, the Alshich on the beginning of *parshat Shemot* and the Maharal's *Gevurot Hashem perek* 9 for

a summary and analysis of all the reasons given by Chazal and the commentaries for the exile in Egypt.

Going back to the question with which we began, it is clear that we cannot compare Hashem's putting us in Egypt to a doctor breaking someone's leg. When Hashem put us into Egypt, He was essentially healing us, and it was a form of kindness from Him. We should therefore thank Him, not only for taking us out of Egypt, but for bringing us there in the first place.

According to the above, we can understand a seemingly puzzling part of the Haggadah. Immediately following the statement that Yaakov and his sons went down to Egypt, ultimately setting the stage for the exile, we praise Hashem. The commentaries point out the obvious question: Why is the praising of Hashem placed immediately after describing how we ended up going down to Egypt? Based on the above, Rashi explains that we are essentially praising Hashem for putting us in Egypt. This is our way of thanking Hashem for what is seemingly bad in the same way we thank Hashem for the good – because, ultimately, even the Egyptian exile was for our best (Ritva on the Haggadah in the name of Rashi).

AN UPSIDE-DOWN WORLD AND THE CORONOVIRUS

by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

The world has been flipped on its head. Life as we knew it has changed. The plague known as the coronavirus has disrupted travel between countries, cities, towns, neighborhoods – and even between neighbors. The “shrinking world” is now expanding. Schools are closed, as are places of worship. Workplaces are in lockdown or on skeleton crews. Professional sports leagues have suspended their seasons. “Social distancing,” whether mandated by government or merely suggested, has become a fact of life. The world's economy has been eviscerated. Neighbors, while no doubt caring about each other, are also often wary of each other. We have been forced to become hermits. None of us has experienced anything like this in our lifetimes. The closest comparison is probably the Bubonic Plagues, which periodically swept the world centuries ago. And since medical knowledge in those times wasn't aware of germs and the communicability of disease, isolation wasn't practiced.

We Jews have a very long history and a very long memory. We recount it daily in our prayers and celebrate its milestones in our holidays. The main lesson taught by this history is that nothing happens without its being the will of the Creator. He is always looking out for our good – even if it takes us a long time to recognize it.

So, what lesson can be derived from the present calamity? The obvious one is that Hashem is showing the world that He is in control. He introduced an “invisible enemy,” which mankind, for all its seeming domination of nature, lacks the tools to swiftly deal with. The expectation that our material life, based on our talents and value to society, will continue uninterrupted until we mess up, retire or die, is now gone. We now know that Hashem is the real source of our *parnassa* and well-being. As our Sages teach, “Everything is in the Hands of Heaven except for the fear of Heaven.” (*Berachot* 33b)

The only thing under our control is what we choose to believe. This is the obvious lesson.

A less obvious lesson is “the power of one.” Each individual person has the ability to influence the entire world. To the best of our knowledge, this pandemic began in Wuhan, China, with one man eating a wild animal purchased in a “wet market,” where animals are sold alive for consumption. One of the seven commandments given to all mankind is to refrain from eating *ever min hachai* – the limb of a live animal. And although this was not the first time this prohibition has been breached, it may be the last. That “patient zero” in Wuhan contracted COVID-19, which had previously been found only in certain animals and had never passed to the species of *Homo sapiens*. Patient zero then passed it on to others – and now the entire world is besieged.

The same is true for the power of good. One person can change the entire world for the better – not only for his generation, but for all generations to come. The holiday of Purim celebrates our victory over our ruthless enemy, Haman the Amalekite. The Purim story, as told in Megillat Esther, unfolds over many years: from the feast of Achashverosh and Vashti to the victory over Haman, his sons and the innumerable hordes of anti-Semites in 127 countries that comprised the Persian and Medean kingdom. Mordechai, the leading rabbi of his generation, was a lonely voice in a sea of complacency and compliance with the empire that had exiled the Jewish People. He berated his fellow Jews, urging them to hold true to their G-d and not participate in the unholy celebration hosted by the king and queen. The royal feast was meant to show what the king viewed as the failure of the fulfillment of the prophecy that the Jews would return to their land and rebuild their Temple after 70 years of Babylonian exile. Mordechai knew their calculation to be incorrect, and his devotion to Hashem and his concern for the Jewish People was contagious.

His purity of heart and devotion to Hashem entered the heart of every Jew, until they all did *teshuva* and were saved. His spiritual accomplishments live on within every Jew until today.

The holiday of Chanukah celebrates the victory of the “few over the many.” The “few” wasn’t the Jewish People – it was the family of Matitiyahu, which consisted of thirteen men. The vast majority of the Jews were complacent, willing to enjoy the Greek culture while still keeping kosher and Shabbat. Those “fanatics” changed the course of history and defeated one of the most powerful armies on earth. But that wasn’t their crowning glory. It was that they persuaded their brethren to rededicate and purify themselves to Hashem as they rededicated the Holy Temple and cleansed it of its impurities. Their achievements live on within us.

We today have been given the opportunity to use the lessons of this pandemic to uplift the world by our *teshuva* and by our recognition of Hashem’s control of the world and His interest in our welfare. Each one of us has the power to infect the rest of the world with a “change of heart” needed to bring about the end of this plague, and to bring about our salvation with the coming of the *mashiah*!

As we approach the holiday of Pesach – the celebration of our progression from the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of our body and soul and our becoming a nation with the Torah as our Constitution – we should keep in mind the lessons that are taught by plagues. Hashem rained down on the Egyptians ten of them over the course of a year. If all He wanted to accomplish was to free the Jews from their bondage, He could have accomplished that in one fell swoop. But each plague brought with it a new and different lesson. Each plague showed Hashem’s absolute control over a different aspect of life. May we learn from this modern-day plague, the coronavirus, that despite what we may have thought, we are not in control of the world. In reality, Hashem is in control and each one of us has the ability to convince the world of this Truth.

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

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Love of the Land, written by RAV MENDEL WEINBACH, ז”ל • General Editor: RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN • Design: RABBI ELIEZER SHAPIRO ז”ל / DANIEL FREEDMAN

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LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman

Tzav

Pure Freedom

In various places, Rav Hirsch defines the concepts of *tumah* and *taharah* – concepts that are a centerpiece of the laws relating to the Temple.

Tumah, impurity, signifies lack of freedom. Man is destined to live in moral freedom, but whenever a living organism succumbs to *compelling* physical forces, this is liable to give rise to the notion that man lacks freedom. Impurity – *tumah* – results from encounters which threaten our awareness of the moral freedom of man. There is nothing that fosters this notion more than a dead body, which has succumbed to the inescapable forces of nature. For this reason, one who touches a dead body is rendered impure. Indeed, this resultant impurity is classified as the most stringent form of impurity.

Rav Hirsch ties the etymology of the word *tameh* to words that denote an object's loss of independence, its sinking and assimilating into something else. Hence, an object loses its own freedom and independent existence. In the symbolic sense, this signifies a loss of moral freedom and independence.

The word *tahor*, pure, by contrast, is related to the word *tur*, meaning “row.” It denotes a state in which the connection between constituent parts is fixed according to their own qualities – they are joined not by external constraints, but rather by a sole governing principle. Hence, it refers to an object which is free of external constraint and develops in freedom under its own governing principle. Symbolically, this signifies a state of moral freedom, unfettered by external restraint.

Rav Hirsch expounds upon these principles, elucidating many details of the laws regarding purity and impurity. One of these involves the legal assumptions regarding objects which have an uncertain status. In a case of doubtful impurity concerning an object devoid of reasoning – e.g. a piece of meat lies near an impure insect, and it is not clear whether they came in contact – the meat is deemed pure. However, in a case of doubtful impurity concerning the state or actions of a *person, endowed with reasoning* – e.g. there is a doubt whether an adult came in contact with a dead body – the individual is deemed impure.

This is so for two reasons. First, it disabuses us of the notion that impurity is some actual, magical and invisible influence that may be exerted on an object. If that were the case, every scenario that raised a doubt would be treated stringently. Second, relatedly, the law seeks to emphasize the importance of man's *consciousness*. The laws of impurity in their entirety seek to imbue the message of man's moral freedom and autonomous nature. Heightened consciousness is demanded for this calling.

Hence, forgetfulness, negligence and unawareness are treated stringently. Man's moral freedom must be absolutely clear to him in order for him to retain it. An object that is devoid of cognition, however, does not have autonomy, and therefore is rendered pure in the case of doubt.

- Source: Commentary, Vayikra 7:19-21

Shemini

You Are What You Eat

We are told not to eat non-kosher animals “because they are impure to you.” Purity and impurity are purely in the spiritual realm. The dietary laws do not hinge on nutritional considerations. The forbidden foods are antithetical to a mission of holiness. We have previously (Ohrnet, Vayikra) explained how *tumah*,

impurity, signifies lack of freedom, and how *taharah*, purity, signifies man's moral freedom.

Man's lack of freedom is most apparent when his base desires – his internal compulsions of nature – control him. And he reclaims his freedom when he tames those forces.

Animal flesh is pure for eating and fit to be absorbed by the body only if it does not tend to dull sensitivity and arouse base desire and does not heighten sensuality and thus diminish spirituality.

Thus, animals are kosher only if they are receptive to human influence and they submit to man by their nature, without requiring taming; they serve his purposes, and beastliness and passion do not overwhelmingly predominate them. Thus, the nature and character of the animal are the causes of its being forbidden. The chewing of the cud and the cleft hoof are mere symptoms. In and of themselves they do not cause permissibility, and their absence does not cause prohibition. One sign is that the animal chews its cud. The food consumed passes through two compartments of the stomach, is driven up the gullet again and chewed for the second time. Thus, these animals spend a great deal of time in the absorption of food. The cloven hooves of the permitted animals also seem to have been created more for the purpose of standing than for being used as weapons or

tools. Together, these signs indicate the presence of a tame, domesticated character.

Similarly, the signs for kosher a kosher fish also indicate a peaceful nature. Fish that have fins and scales are by and large more peaceful in nature than fish without them. Birds of prey are similarly prohibited. The more aggressive animals and fowl are prohibited. The more passive and pliant are permitted.

The Torah guards our precious human potential to strive toward holiness in many ways. But so many of them can be missed by the untrained eye or heart. Reflecting on the purposeful selection of what may be absorbed by our bodies should propel us to preserve and cultivate the great moral autonomy that earns man his nobility.

- Sources: Commentary: Vayikra 11:3, Bereishet 7:2

Tazria

A Social Health Danger

For centuries, people have erroneously associated *tzaraa't* with leprosy. Clearly, this contention must have been held only by those not knowledgeable in the laws of *tzara'at*. The possibility of *tzara'at* being an infectious disease, requiring quarantine and treatment by the priestly “public health physicians,” is belied by nearly every detail of the laws.

For example, the Kohen is commanded to have everything removed from the individual's residence prior to examination, so that the contents of the house will not become impure. This law is intended to save the afflicted from monetary loss. But if the purpose was to disinfect his home, surely, we would want to destroy the items. Instead, we go to great lengths to spare them. Furthermore, the Kohen is supposed to examine liberally, a policy that is senseless if indeed meant to address a public health danger. Even more compelling is the fact that all examinations were suspended during the holidays, when masses of people would congregate in Jerusalem. Surely, a policy of treating and curbing infectious disease would not be held in abeyance during the time of greatest vulnerability and exposure! The list of laws undermining this notion is long. (See Commentary, Vayikra 13:59, in full).

The purpose of these laws was not to impose sanitary regulation, but rather to promote preservation of the dignity of man in the social sphere. The Torah instructs that

tzara'at is to remind the one afflicted of the experience of Miriam, who was similarly afflicted after speaking slanderous words about Moshe. Her punishment was confinement, and is described as the equivalent of a father spitting in his daughter's face – the confinement was meant to induce feelings of shame. From Miriam's experience we learn that afflictions of *tzara'at* are regarded as punishment for social wrongdoing, and the required confinement is meant to instill in the afflicted an awareness of his unworthiness.

Tzara'at is a punishment not just for slander but for other cardinal social sins as well, including haughtiness, deceit, bloodshed, rabble-rousing, perjury, sexual immorality, robbery and stinginess. (*Arachin 16a; Vaykira Rabbah, Metzora*) One who discovers a *tzara'at* mark (*nega*) understands that he has been “touched” by the finger of G-d (*nega* means touch). He understands that his social behavior provoked G-d's anger. On account of his foul social behavior, he is removed from the community. Because he incited unrest among his brethren, he is separated from everyone.

Jewish law thus provides corrective measures even for those social sins – arrogance, falsehood, slander – that are beyond the jurisdiction of human tribunals.

- Commentary, Vayikra 13:59

Kedoshim

Prerequisite for Sanctity

Parshat Kedoshim opens with the general directive to be “holy.” The first pillar of this sanctification is expressed in the first of many mitzvahs in this Torah portion: reverence for one’s mother and father. The essence of this reverence is obedience – subordinating one’s will to the will of the other.

Parents have a prominent place in the Torah. The command to honor them appears in the Ten Commandments. Parents convey to their children not only physical existence, but also the Jewish mission. They transmit to the next generation Jewish History and Torah. It is not the good that parents do for their children, but the mission given to the parents concerning their children that is the basis of the mitzvah of honoring them. By honoring the parents who have transmitted to us this mission, we honor G-d.

Where sanctity is the goal in Parshat Kedoshim, the mitzvah focuses on *reverence* instead of honor. Subordination of the child’s will to the parent’s will – nullification of the child’s will because of his parent’s will – is the first training toward self-control. Only by learning the art of self-control can a person become free of the fetters of his baser instincts, and

master the impulses of his will. The imperative to become holy consists of our ability to subordinate our desires, out of our own free will, to the dictates of a higher authority. The more willing and complete this subordination, the more we approach holiness. The more mastery and self-discipline, the easier it is to do good even though our physical desires may resist, and the easier it is to avoid evil even though it tempts our senses.

A child is born with no control over these desires, the newborn’s cry means either “I want” or “I don’t want.” The infant “wants” what gives him momentary pleasure and “doesn’t want” anything that gives him discomfort. These “wants” and “don’t wants” increase in intensity with time, and these babies grow into toddlers with demands, which, when unchecked, can leave a parent at his mercy. But when a parent disciplines, he accomplishes far more than smoother home management – the parent trains a child for the task of holiness. Only by training in obedience to a higher parental authority – by learning that there is a “no” to physical desires and a “yes” despite discomfort – can a child ultimately learn the art of self-control. Hence, the imperative to *revere* one’s mother and father is the very first step towards holiness.

- Source: Commentary, Vayikra 19:3

PARSHA OVERVIEW

TZAV

The Torah addresses Aharon and his sons to teach them additional laws relating to their service. The ashes of the *korban olah* – the offering burned on the altar throughout the night – are to be removed from the area by the *kohen* after he changes his special linen clothing. The *olah* is brought by someone who forgot to perform a positive commandment of the Torah. The *kohen* retains the skin. The fire on the altar must be kept constantly ablaze. The *korban mincha* is a meal offering of flour, oil and spices. a handful is burned on the altar and a *kohen* eats the remainder before it becomes leaven. The Parsha describes the special *korbanot* to be offered by the *Kohen Gadol* each day, and by Aharon’s sons and future descendants on the day of their inauguration. The *chatat*, the *korban* brought after an accidental transgression, is described, as are the laws of slaughtering and sprinkling the blood of the *asham* guilt-*korban*. The details of *shelamim*, various peace *korbanot*, are described, including the prohibition against leaving uneaten until morning the remains of the *todah*, the thanks-*korban*. All sacrifices must be burned after they may no longer be eaten. No sacrifice may be eaten if it was slaughtered with the intention of eating it too late. Once they have become ritually impure, *korbanot* may not be eaten and should be burned. One may not eat a *korban* when he is ritually impure. blood and *chelev*, forbidden animal fats, are prohibited to be eaten. Aharon and his sons are granted the breast and shank of every *korban shelamim*. The inauguration ceremony for Aharon, his sons, the *mishkan* and all of its vessels is detailed.

On the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan, Aharon, his sons, and the entire nation bring various *korbanot* (offerings) as commanded by Moshe. Aharon and Moshe bless the nation. G-d allows the Jewish People to sense His Presence after they complete the Mishkan. Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, innovate an offering not commanded by G-d. A fire comes from before G-d and consumes them, stressing the need to perform the commandments only as Moshe directs. Moshe consoles Aharon, who grieves in silence. Moshe directs the *kohanim* as to their behavior during the mourning period, and warns them that they must not drink intoxicating beverages before serving in the Mishkan. The Torah lists the two characteristics of a kosher animal: It has split hooves, and it chews, regurgitates, and re-chews its food. The Torah specifies by name those non-kosher animals which have only one of these two signs. A kosher fish has fins and easily removable scales. All birds not included in the list of forbidden families are permitted. The Torah forbids all types of insects except for four species of locusts. Details are given of the purification process after coming in contact with ritually-impure species. *Bnei Yisrael* are commanded to be separate and holy – like G-d.

TAZRIA

The Torah commands a woman to bring *korbanot* after the birth of a child. A son is to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. The Torah introduces the phenomenon of *tzara'at* (often mistranslated as leprosy) – a miraculous affliction that attacks people, clothing and buildings to awaken a person to spiritual failures. A *kohen* must be consulted to determine whether a particular mark is *tzara'at* or not. The *kohen* isolates the sufferer for a week. If the malady remains unchanged, confinement continues for a second week, after which the *kohen* decides the person's status. The Torah describes the different forms of *tzara'at*. One whose *tzara'at* is confirmed wears torn clothing, does not cut his hair, and must alert others that he is ritually impure. He may not have normal contact with people. The phenomenon of *tzara'at* on clothing is described in detail

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.

ACHAREI MOT

G-d instructs the *kohanim* to exercise extreme care when they enter the Mishkan. On Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol is to approach the holiest part of the Mishkan after special preparations and wearing special clothing. He brings offerings unique to Yom Kippur, including two identical goats that are designated by lottery. One is "for G-d" and is offered in the Temple, while the other is "for Azazel" in the desert. The Torah states the individual's obligations on Yom Kippur: On the 10th day of the seventh month, one must afflict oneself. We abstain from eating and drinking, anointing, wearing leather footwear, washing, and marital relations.

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

KEDOSHIM

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

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

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language
by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

PESACH: Sing and Song

Dedicated in honor of my favorite song: Shira Yael Klein

The American historian Cyrus Gordon (1908-2001) wrote, "Our contemporaries have split the atom, reached the moon, and brought color TV to the common man. The ancients... were not less talented than today's population, but they often expressed their intelligence in different ways. They manipulated language so deftly that it often takes the modern scholars a long time to grasp the presence, let alone all the subtleties, of ancient riddles." One poignant example of such ancient nuances in language is the existence of two Hebrew terms for "song": *shir/shirah* and *zemer/zimrah*. In this essay we will explore the differences between this pair of synonyms, and, in doing so we too will become attuned to the intricacies of the Hebrew language.

The simplest way of differentiating between *shirah* and *zimrah* is that *shirah* denotes verbal song, while *zimrah* refers to instrumental music. This understanding is proffered by a bevy of authorities, including Ibn Ezra (to Ps. 105:2), Radak (to I Chron. 16:9), Sforno (to Ps. 105:2), the Vilna Gaon (cited in his son's *Be'er Avraham* to Ps. 27:6), Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Ps. 33:2), and Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer. In fact, the Yiddish word *klezmer* (roughly, "Jewish Music") is actually a portmanteau of *klei* ("instruments") and *zemer* ("music").

The Malbim explains that *zimrah* (plural: *zmirot*) is somehow a higher, more intense form of song than *shirah*. He writes that this is why whenever the two terms appear in tandem, *shirah* is always first and *zemer* is always second.

In what is possibly a separate explanation, the Malbim writes that *shirah* is a more general term which can refer to "song" both in a religious sense and in a secular sense, while *zimrah* refers specifically to a religious song which speaks of G-d's praises. Similarly, Rabbi Yehuda Leib Edel (1760-1828) writes that *shirah* is simply an expression of one's happiness without necessarily tying it back to the source of the happiness (i.e. G-d), while *zimrah* is always a means of acknowledging G-d's role in bringing happiness and thanking Him for it.

Similarly, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) explains that *shir* refers to the lyrics of poetic verse sans the tune, while *zimrah* refers to the tune or melody sung in a song or played by a music instrument.

Chop Them Down

The root ZAYIN-MEM-REISH, from which *zemer* and *zimrah* are derived, appears in the verb form as *zomer* ("cutting down") and is actually the name of one of the 39 forbidden labors on Shabbat. What does this meaning have to do with "singing"?

Judaism's concept of G-d is comprised of two almost paradoxically-opposed descriptions: On the one hand, He is transcendent and thus totally beyond our reach and comprehension; but on the other hand, He is immanent and thus ever-present for us to connect to. Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner (1906-1980) explains that the difference between *shirah* and *zimrah* reflects the tension between these two ways of approaching G-d. Both terms are expressions of "praise," but *shirah* denotes praising G-d from a position of rapture and attachment to Him, while *zimrah* denotes praising G-d as an appreciation of G-d's transcendence and how far away He is from man.

In explaining the latter assertion, Rabbi Hutner notes that *zimrah* not only means "song" but is also a verb for "cutting." When a person recognizes G-d's awesome transcendence and how He is so unapproachable, a person is essentially "cutting off" his own existence due to the recognition that his own existence pales in comparison to G-d's infinite greatness.

Rabbi Yacov Haber relates that he heard from a certain Hassidic Rebbe in the name of the *Chasam Sofer* that the word *shirah* is related to the word *shirayim* ("leftovers"), because "song" is the leftovers of the soul, meaning that it remains one of the only ways the soul can express itself in a world dominated by materialism. Interestingly, in many of the songs/poems recorded in the Bible, the speaker refers to himself in third person (for example, Gen. 49:2, Num. 24:3, Jud. 5:12), instead of in the expected first person. Rabbi Immanuel Frances (1618-1703) explains that this is because true song is like an out-of-body experience, such that the one singing sees himself as a separate entity.

Rabbi Frances further explains that the word *shir* denotes the singer's ability to mesmerize his listeners and captivate their attention as if he rules over them. In this sense, he explains that *shir* is connected to other words which connote "strength," like *sharir* ("strongly-established"), *shur* ("wall"), and *sherarah* ("authority").

By contrast, Rabbi Frances explains that the word *zemer* highlights other aspects of song/poetry: When Yaakov sent his sons to Egypt to buy food during a famine, he sent with them the *zimrah* of the Land of Canaan (Gen. 43:11), which is taken to mean *the best*. Rashi connects the word *zimrat* with *zemer* by explaining that it refers to the choicest produce over which people would "sing."

Alternatively, Rabbi Frances explains that the act of pruning a vineyard from unnecessary shoots is called *zomer* (Lev. 25:3), and this relates to the art of creating music – the artist must expunge any unnecessary elements from his song in order for it to be wholly good.

Rabbeinu Efrayim ben Shimshon (to Gen. 43:11) explains that the *zimrat ha'aretz* that Yaakov's sons brought to Egypt consisted of fine wine, which is called *zimrat* because drinking wine makes one happy (Ps. 104:15), and when people are happy they "sing" (*zemer*). Interestingly, Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (1772-1810) writes that the *zimrah* of the Holy Land refers to a special *niggun* ("melody") of Eretz Yisrael which Yaakov sent the Egyptian leader.

Rabbi Eliemelech of Lizhensk in *Noam Elimelech* (to Gen. 47:28, Ex. 19:1) explains that *zimrah* refers to "cutting" away those outer distractions which impede a person's ability to properly serve G-d. Both he and the *Chasam Sofer* similarly explain that *Pesukei d'Zimra* (literally, "Verses of Hymns" recited daily in the beginning of the morning prayers) are meant to "cut down" the *kliptot* ("husks" or "peels") in preparation for our complete rapture with G-d.

The Circle of Song

The Maharal of Prague (1520-1609) explains that the word *shirah* denotes something whose beginning is attached to its end. For example, the Bible uses the word *sher* to refer to a type of bracelet (Isa. 3:19), and the Mishnah (*Shabbat* 5:1) mentions a collar worn by animals around their neck called a *sher*. Similarly, the Talmud (*Bava Metzia* 25a) discusses if one found coins arranged like a *sher* (ring or bracelet), whether that formation is assumed to have been made deliberately or not. How does this connect to the word *shirah* as a "song"?

The Maharal explains that the idea behind *shirah* is that when one reaches the completion of a certain phase or task, then one offers a "song" of thanks to G-d for allowing it to happen. Song is best associated with happiness, because happiness comes through completion and fulfillment – such that when one reaches a stage of happiness, it is more appropriate for him to offer song. As Rabbi Moshe Shapiro (1935-2017) explains, when one reaches a stage of completion, he can look back and recognize how G-d had guided the situation the entire time and brought it to its conclusion. Only with such hindsight – where the beginning can be attached to the end – is song appropriate. Not beforehand.

Rabbi Shapiro further notes that the entire Torah is called a *shirah* (Deut. 31:19), because the song of *Haazinu* is a microcosm of the entire Torah and, by extension, a microcosm of the entire history of the world. In this way, the history of the world is a circle

because at the end, Man will return to his former place of glory, as if Adam's sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge never happened.

Interestingly, the word *yashar* seems to actually mean the opposite of *shirah*, because *yashar* denotes a line that continuously goes straight, while *shirah* represents a circle, a “curved line,” whose end leads into its beginning. Nonetheless, Rabbi Shapiro notes that in rabbinic literature there is clearly a connection between the two: When the Bible tells the story of the cows that returned the Ark captured by the Philistines, it says that the cows walked straight to Bet Shemesh (I Sam. 6:12) – using the word *vayisharnah*, a cognate of *yashar*. The Talmud (*Avodah Zarah* 24b) exegetically explains that *vayisharnah* means that the cows sang while transporting the Ark.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) actually connects the word *shir* to the word *yashar* (“straight”), explaining that a song follows a straight path in focusing on a specific theme without deviating off-topic. In this way, the beginning of the song and the end of the song are linked, because they are just variations on the same theme. By contrast, he explains, the term *zimrah* refers to the best segment from an entire song. He understands that *zomer*, in terms of “cutting” or “pruning,” is a way of discarding the ruff and leaving just the best. In that sense, Rabbi Pappenheim argues that *zimrah* refers to the choicest part of a song, as if the rest of the song was “cut out.”

Similarly, Rabbi Shimon Dov Ber Analak of Siedlce (1848-1907) explains that *shirah* is related to the word *shur* (“wall”), because just as a wall is comprised of multiple bricks carefully arranged together, so is a song or poem composed of multiple lines carefully arranged. Just as if one brick is removed, the entire edifice may fall, so is it true that if one line or verse of a song is misplaced, the entire structure loses its impact. He explains that this is also why a *sher* refers to a circular article of jewelry. Something round must also be fully intact in order complete the circle – otherwise it is not whole. On the other hand, the word *zimrah* does not imply the entire edifice, but one small part of it, and so *zimrah* can refer to one segment of an entire song as independent or cut off from the rest of the song.

Mizmor Shir vs. Shir Mizmor

With all of this information, we can now begin to understand why sometimes songs in Psalms begin with the words *shir mizmor* and sometimes they begin with *mizmor shir*. Ibn Ezra (to Ps. 48:1) writes that there is no difference between *mizmor shir* and *shir mizmor*. However, I have found two credible authorities who beg to differ.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim explains that when used side-by-side the terms *mizmor* and *shir* assume specific meanings: *shir* denotes the words/lyrics of a song, while *mizmor* denotes the tune/melody of the song. Based on this, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that within a specific song, sometimes the words begin before the tune, and sometimes the tune is played before the words start. In the former case the expression used for that song is *shir mizmor*, because the *shir* element precedes the *mizmor* element, while in the second case the converse is true.

Similarly, Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (1944-2001) in *Shabbat Malketa* explains that *shir* refers to the story told by a song, while *mizmor* refers to the tune within which that story is told. When one uses words to form a narrative that expresses his happiness and thanksgiving, this is called *shir*. But when one's elation is so emotionally intense that it cannot be logically expressed in words and can only be expressed by a wordless melody, this is called *mizmor*. Accordingly, the recital of some chapters of Psalms begins with worded phrase (*shir*), and then, as the experience becomes more intense, can only be continued with a wordless melody (*mizmor*). Those chapters are introduced with the phrase *shir mizmor*. On the flip side, other chapters of Psalms begin with the intense experience of a *mizmor*, and only once that intensity subsides can the word of the *shir* begin. Such chapters open with the words *mizmor shir*.

- For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at rclein@ohr.edu

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Parents with Bread

Question: I am living with my parents now and they do not keep mitzvahs, Shabbat or the holidays. They are respectful, but they just don't know and can't be bothered to learn. Pesach is coming up. My parents may or may not want to clean up, and even if we try to, I'm convinced they will bring chametz in at some point (knowingly or not). What should I do?

The Rabbi answers: The Torah prohibits owning chametz on Pesach. This is derived from the verse "Nothing leavened may be seen in your possession." This prohibition applies only to chametz which you own. It does not apply to someone else's chametz even if it's in your house. If we can assume that your parents own or rent the house, and assume that all the chametz in the house belongs to them, it is their responsibility to get rid of the chametz – not yours.

Of course, chametz that you personally own, you have to get rid of before Pesach. Also, any of your personal belongings in which you might put chametz require a pre-Pesach search. For example, pockets and knapsacks should be checked for forgotten candy bars or half-eaten sandwiches. But since you are a "guest" in your parents home i.e., you have no ownership or legal rights over your room, you wouldn't say the blessing when searching for chametz.

I once spoke to Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg about this issue, and he said that a child may stay at his parents' home for Pesach even if they haven't removed their chametz. The best scenario would be if you could agree with your parents to keep the house chametz-free. That way, your parents will be doing a mitzvah, and also, neither you nor your parents will accidentally eat any chametz. But this *must* all be done in a way that causes no friction between you and your parents and conveys no disrespect to them whatsoever.

- Sources: Exodus 13:17, Tractate Pesachim 5b; Chayei Adam 119:18; Chok Yaakov Orach Chaim 436; After the Return, Rabbi Mordechai Becher and Rabbi Moshe Newman, p. 80

The Riddle in the Middle

Question: Why is the afikomen taken from the middle matza during the Seder rather than from the top or bottom matza?

The Rabbi answers: On the first night of Pesach, we say two blessings over the matzah. The first blessing, *hamotzi*, is the usual blessing we say when eating bread. Since this blessing is always best to say on a whole "loaf," we therefore put an unbroken matzah on top of the stack.

The second blessing, *al achilat matza*, is the special blessing we say for the commandment to eat matzah on this night. This blessing applies especially to the broken matzah, because this matzah symbolizes our broken, impoverished state as slaves in Egypt. Since this blessing is the second one, the broken matzah is second in the stack.

The third matzah is included in order to complete *lechem mishneh* – the requirement on Shabbat and festivals to use two whole loaves instead of one – and it goes on the bottom. According to widespread custom, this bottom matzah is let to slip from the hands before the second blessing is said.

- Sources: Mishnah Berurah 473:57, 475:2

What's *Not* In a Name?

Question: Why is Moses' name not mentioned in the Haggadah?

The Rabbi answers: The Torah attests, "Moses was the most humble person on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). It should be no surprise, then, that the name of the world's humblest person is omitted from the story, and, instead, all the credit is given to G-d.

Your question raises an interesting point. After a full year in the desert, the Jewish People celebrated the Pesach festival. They offered the paschal lamb and ate matzah and *maror* (bitter herbs). But when it came time to tell the Pesach story, who did they tell it to? To whom did they relate the plagues and miracles, the Strong Hand and Outstretched Arm? Everybody was there! Everyone saw it with their own eyes!

Only one person had children who did not personally experience the going out of Egypt – Moses! Moses' two sons were in Midian during the Exodus. Moses, therefore, was the first person in history to relate the Pesach story to children who didn't know it first-hand.

by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

Binyamin Gordon (25)
Johannesburg, South Africa
Born: Port Harcourt, Nigeria
University of South Africa (UNISA) Law
Center Program 2019 - present

Binyamin's story could be titled "Out of Africa." And that would be appropriate, because shortly, on the holiday of Passover, we will be recounting our own "out of Africa" story. But his is slightly different.

Binyamin grew up in a staunchly Christian home. He's the oldest of three children. His father, Samuel Gordon, was a very popular Pentecostal minister. The church that he founded would regularly draw over 1,000 people on a Sunday.

In 2003 and 2004 his father attended a Christian conference held in South Africa. While there, he felt a calling to move to South Africa and open a church. And he did. After establishing his church in Roodepoort, a suburb west of Johannesburg, he sent for his family. Soon he was drawing large crowds or 500-600 a week and opened a branch in Soweto, a large black township nearby, where he was also very successful. He had soon opened branches in Ghana and in a number of cities in the United States.



In 2011, Samuel had a dream, which he confided to his family. In it he was wrestling with a man who kept yelling at him, "It's time for Israel. Think Israel." Until that point, Israel and the Jews had not been topics of discussion in the church or in the Gordon household, but that dream changed his perspective. After a few weeks, he began to introduce the idea of supporting Israel into his sermons. Soon afterwards he organized rallies in support of Israel and began to bring groups of Africans to Israel. He also started an organization called "Africa-Israel Initiative." The Israeli government took note of his support and sent representatives to his rallies. The South African Zionist Organization also invited his father to speak at their plenums. Binyamin, still in his teens, was the Vice President of the Youth Division of the Organization.

On one of his return flights from Israel, Binyamin's father noticed an Orthodox Jewish man reading a Jewish book. He asked him what the book was about and where he might get a copy. The book was a popular Breslov title, "The Garden of Faith." The man told him the name of a bookstore in Johannesburg that carried it. His father bought it, read it and returned to the store to buy many more books. He discussed what he read with his wife and with Binyamin. He was beginning to see the Truth of Judaism and started moving away from Christian ideology. Binyamin, alongside his siblings, were all drawn to this new pool of wisdom.

His father slowly started introducing changes in the church. His sermons were now primarily about the need to support Israel and the Jews as the "Priests to the nations." This emphasis on Jews and Israel irritated many and they dropped out of the church. As his world started crumbling before him, Binyamin felt the need to get clarity as to his own beliefs. He began a serious study of the history of Christianity.

At about the same time, his father instructed Binyamin, who was the church's music director, to substitute the name of the Christian deity for the name of G-d in all the songs that were sung at the services. Needless to say, this created a huge rift in the church.

Changes were also afoot at home. One of his father's Jewish friends invited the Gordon family to come to his home for Shabbat. Binyamin and his father went to shul on Friday night for the first time. It was an extremely emotional and spiritual experience for both of them. The structure of the prayers, the silent Shmoneh Esrei, the tunes and the Shabbat atmosphere were intoxicating. The delicious meal that followed with its *zmirot* and *divrei Torah* were nothing like they had ever experienced. The whole family was touched beyond words.

Soon afterwards, the Gordon family started to observe Shabbat and *kashrut* to the best of their understanding. That meant not leaving home on the Sabbath, having family meals and not watching TV. Their knowledge of keeping kosher came from the Written Law. Not living in a Jewish community, they weren't aware at first of kosher butcher shops, and so, armed with a book on kosher slaughtering, Binyamin and his father went out to farms, bought animals and *shechted* them for food. Not being used to killing animals, that exercise was short-lived, and resulted in their eating a lot of fish.

The Gordon family was forced to live a double life – closet “Jew-ish” people for 6 days a week, and church leaders on Sunday. They lived like this for over a year, but it couldn't last. One Sunday, his father, in the middle of his sermon, announced that he and his family had decided to convert and that he was disbanding the church. He urged those who wished to follow him to become Noahides and he converted the church into a Noahide worship center. He was still their spiritual leader; however, he and his family decided to go all the way, and they convinced the Beit Din in Johannesburg of their sincerity. After two years, which ended this past summer, the family moved to Glenhazel, a Jewish enclave in Johannesburg and converted. His father is now learning full-time in Yeshiva Gedolah Johannesburg.

With the encouragement of his Rabbis, Binyamin came to the Center Program in December of 2019. His sister is in Neve Yerushalayim and his brother is in high school. Of his experience here, Binyamin says, “I wanted a Yeshiva that would prepare me for authentic Jewish life. Ohr Somayach is absolutely amazing. It is exactly what I wanted.”

LOVE OF THE LAND

Plenty of Room

We pray daily for the return of all Jews to *Eretz Yisrael*. Is there really room in this country for so many people?

The same question was put to Rabbi Chanina by a heathen skeptic who scoffed at the claim made by the Sages that millions of Jews once lived in just a portion of the Holy Land that appeared to him too small to hold so many. *Eretz Yisrael*, explained the Sage, is compared by the Prophet Yirmiyahu to a deer. When the skin of a deer is removed from its carcass it is impossible to once again have it envelop the deer's flesh. Similarly, when Jews live in *Eretz Yisrael* the land expands to absorb them, but when they are in exile it contracts.

The answer then is yes, there is room in *Eretz Yisrael* for every Jew.

**We wish a complete and speedy
recovery to anyone needing it, and
that the healthy remain healthy.
Happy Passover!**