

[CS – Friday night we will count 20 days of the Omer 2 weeks and 6 days.]

[CS – additional post

RIETS Bella and Harry Wexner Kollel Elyon Substack

Lashon Hara and Yom HaAtzmaut

RIETS Kollel Elyon

Apr 30, 2025

Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman

Lashon Hara, the subtext of this week's Torah reading of Tazria-Metzora, is a well-known and frequently emphasized concept in Judaism, and yet is a challenging one to understand. It is commonly taught (based on the writings of Maimonides and of the Chafetz Chaim) that Lashon Hara refers specifically to disparaging remarks that are true, in contrast with motzei shem ra, which is slander. However, if that is the case, it is difficult to understand why it is prohibited. What is wrong with telling the truth, if indeed that's what it is? Even if it leads to negative results for the subject, wouldn't they be appropriate and deserved?

There are many elements to draw upon to explain this, beginning with the postulate that the distinction between lashon hara and motzei shem ra is somewhat overstated. Lashon Hara may be factual in some sense, but that does not mean it is actually true, whether in its content or in the impact that it brings about.

The content may be misleading, or flatly wrong, for countless reasons that don't involve overt lying, including subjectivity, partial truth, faulty memories, and the myriad cognitive biases to which mortals are vulnerable.

Further, the impact can be false, in numerous other ways. The consequences are often disproportionate- and sometimes knowingly so. Often a sliver of negative truth will be seized as a pretext to justify mistreatment of the subject, a falsity and injustice in practice.

It is not only the subject that suffers from disproportionate negativity; society as a whole does as well. It is vitally important that a belief exists in the general decency and moral behavior of the average citizen; without that, the people live down to the perception of what they think the baseline is, a phenomenon detailed in Timothy Wilson's book "Redirect: The Surprising New Science of Psychological Change".

In fact, R. Yehoshua Leib Diskin understood that this is the reasoning behind the imperative to judge others favorably. Rather than a service extended to those others, he posits, it is a necessity for the one judging: he will feel no motivation to maintain a standard of behavior if he doesn't believe there is one.

The destructive impact of such attitudes is on display in the contemporary trend to try to tear down (figuratively and literally, in the case of statues) heroes of American and European history. This has been extended even to figures such as Winston Churchill, an effort which Douglas Murray writes about in his book "The War on the West":

"If what Churchill did in his life doesn't count for anything, then it is hard to see how any human action counts for anything. If Churchill's good points cannot outweigh any bad points, then no one can ever do enough good in their lives. In other words, if we cannot get Churchill right, and get him in a proper perspective, then there seems little point in trying to do so with anyone else. Finally, there seems little point in trying to do anything good ourselves. The attacks on Churchill make all human endeavor seem futile, because if even defeating the greatest evil in history will count as nothing, and you will not be lauded for it in your own country even half a century after your death, then what good deed could ever count for anything?"

The damage wrought by both types of unfair impact are on full display through the treatment too often directed at the State of Israel. It is no coincidence that Israel is also the subject of its own prohibition of disparagement, *dibat ha-aretz*, the sin of The Spies.

No human being is perfect; Israel, however, is the only nation that it is expected to be perfect so as to be entitled to exist. Any flaw, real or

imagined, is invoked to justify vilification not leveled at Earth's most despotic regimes.

Quite the contrary; in many circles, the most evil actors on the planet are held in higher regard. This complete moral absurdity is a natural result of the distorted lens directed at Israel: if the noble achievements and aspirations of this nation of heroism and benevolence can be dismissed, what moral standard can exist for humanity?

Yom HaAtzmaut is a time to acknowledge God's miraculous gifts of the past century; it is also a time to recall His charge of many centuries ago, when he chose Abraham to bear his message of "charity and justice" through his descendants, and promised him a Land from which to broadcast that message. The fact that, through His grace, human beings can once again bring their best efforts and intentions towards manifesting modern miracles on behalf of all of humanity is a cause for celebration. The stars in the sky are only seen in darkness, but are there all the time; the blue star against the white background shines as bright, even for those who can't see it.]

[CS Additional post:

Alan Fisher <afisherads@yahoo.com>

Thu, May 1, 2025 at 10:11 PM

BS"D Note that Yom Ha'Atzmaut is 5 Iyar, which would be Shabbat -- but moved forward to Thursday (May 1) this year to avoid any activities celebrating the holiday on Shabbat.

"My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceitfully." -- beginning of meditation at the end of the Amidah prayer. Tazria and Metzora bring us almost to the very middle of the Torah. (The middle is in Acharei Mot, which we read next week.) In the weeks after Shemini, when Nadav and Avihu die because they bring and burn a "strange fire" by the Mishkan, the Torah presents the conditions that make a person tamei (ritually impure) or tahor (ritually pure). Only a Jew who is tahor may approach Hashem's presence, which resides above the Ark in the Mishkan. Because of the danger of approaching Hashem's presence, the Torah presents the rules of ritual purity and impurity in great detail.

Tazria and Metzora discuss tzaraat -- afflictions on a person's skin (or clothes or walls of a home), causes of these impurities, and their cures. While a common English translation of tzaraat is "leprosy," the English term is very misleading. According to the Internet, leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is a chronic bacterial infection caused by Mycobacterium leprae that primarily affect the skin, peripheral nerves, upper respiratory tract, and eyes. Tzaraat is not a disease, not bacterial, and does not spread through direct contact with another person who has the disease. Tzaraat, instead, is a sign that a person suffers from a spiritual disorder, must consult with a Kohen (not a physician), isolate, figure out his or her spiritual lackings, and perform teshuvah. While the classic cause of tzaraat is "lashon horah," or evil speech (such as slander), haughtiness is also an also important spiritual lacking associated with tzaraat. A person with tzaraat is called a "metzora." Tzaraat may also afflict a person's clothes or the walls of his home. Stinginess is a classic cause of tzaraat on the walls of a person's home.

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine explains that tzaraat is a gift of love from Hashem, a sign that a person has some significant spiritual shortcoming and must perform teshuvah. Hashem's gift is alerting a person to his spiritual shortcoming so he can reflect, understand his social shortcomings, and perform teshuvah. Once a metzora performs teshuvah and a Kohen validates his cure, the metzora undergoes a prescribed ritual and returns to society. Hashem's gift is informing the metzora of his spiritual problem and prescribing a path to full recovery. Neither the diagnosis nor the cure involves a physician or any medical intervention.

Rabbi David Fohrman explains that the ritual required for a cured metzora to return to society is very similar to the ritual of Korban Pesach. Both rituals involve two live clean birds, blood, cedar wood, crimson thread, and hyssop. Tzaraat gives the appearance of dead skin

on part of a person's body. Recovery from tzaraat is similar to recovering from a partial death or near death situation (as Aharon describes Miriam's appearance when she has tzaraat). The Korban Pesach comes right after B'Nai Yisrael survive the tenth plague – killing of the first born of Egypt. After the Korban Pesach, and after the ritual of a recovered metzora, the Jews involved join or rejoin B'Nai Yisrael. The individual who may have been isolated rejoins his communal part and connects to the Jewish people.

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander brings the Haftarah, about metzorim who save the Jews of Israel (northern kingdom) from starvation, to the present. We encounter many instances in Jewish history when God selects people of uncertain holiness to be His instruments of saving the Jewish people. The Haftarah focuses on Gehazi, Elisha's assistant who embarrassed the prophet by asking Na'aman, the Aramean general, for a tribute after Elisha cured his tzaraat. (Elisha had refused to accept any payment.) God punishes Gehazi by giving him and his three sons tzaraat for the rest of their lives. Gehazi and his sons are outside city walls because of their tzaraat. When they are near death from starvation and thirst, they go into the Aramean camp – and discover that the Arameans have abandoned their camps and left their food, water, and wealth. The metzorim eat, drink, and then go to the city to tell the Jews that it is safe to enter the Aramean camp for food and water. The man who sinned against Elisha saves the Jews from the Aramean siege. We find similar incidents in Jewish history. For example, Cyrus, a pagan ruler, sends Jews back from Persia to Jerusalem to help rebuild the second temple. Five hundred years later, Herod, a particularly sinful Roman, initiates a huge project to transform the poorly built second Temple into a magnificent structure. Rabbi Brander observes that the early Zionists in Israel are primarily secular Jews. Throughout much of the history of Israel in the past 77 years, the secular Jews have done most of the fighting and absorbed most of the injuries and deaths. In the past 18 months, since October 7, 2023, religious Jews have greatly increased their participation in the fighting and absorbed much greater losses compared to earlier in Israeli history. (The percentage of Haredi Jews involved in the fighting, however, remains much lower than the percentages for other parts of Israeli society.) During the week that includes Yom HaZikron and Yom Ha'atzmaut, Rabbi Brander reminds us that we must appreciate the contributions from all parts of the Israeli society.

Shabbat Shalom.

Hannah and Alan

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Moshe Aaron ben Leah Beilah (badly wounded in battle in Gaza but slowly recovering), Daniel Yitzchak Meir HaLevy ben Ruth; Ariah Ben Sarah, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Miriam Bat Leah; Yehudit Leah bas Hannah Feiga; Miriam bat Esha, Chana bat Sarah; Raizel bat Rut; Rena bat Ilsa, Riva Golda bat Leah, Sharon bat Sarah, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, and all our fellow Jews in danger in and near Israel. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom Hannah & Alan]

Home Weekly Parsha Tazria-Metzora

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

This week's double parsha presents to us a difficult set of rituals regarding a type of physical disease that evinced physical manifestations. The rabbis associated this disease with the sin of improper speech and personal slander. We no longer have any true knowledge of the disease, its true appearances and effects, its quarantine

period and the healing process that restored the person to one's community and society. The ritual laws of purity and impurity are no longer applicable in our post-Temple society and since there are no comments on these laws in a specific manner in the Babylonian Talmud these ritual laws are not subject to the usual intensive scholarship and study that pertain, for instance, to the laws of money and torts in the Talmud.

In the nineteenth century a great Chasidic rebbe and scholar composed a "Talmud" regarding the laws of purity and impurity. This feat of scholarship met with criticism from other scholars and has remained controversial and relatively ignored in the modern yeshiva and scholarly world. In effect the entire topic of this week's double parsha remains mysterious and unclear to us. After all the attempted explanations and reasons for these ritual laws of purity and impurity, they remain mysterious and relatively inexplicable to us. Especially when these two parshiyot occur together, as they do this year, and in most years, the question of their relevance becomes even more acute and perplexing. The Torah which always challenges us to understand it retains its inscrutability.

Perhaps this is the message of the Torah itself to us. There is a world that is beyond our earthly eyes and rational vision. Modern man always dreams about space aliens and different universes than the one we inhabit. There is an almost innate sense in us that there is more to creation than what we sense and feel. It fuels our individual drive to immortality, our dreams and imaginations, and it allows us to imagine and invent. There is a popular belief that necessity is the mother of invention. But in reality, I do not feel that this is accurate.

Imagination is the mother of invention. There was no real necessity for the unbelievable advances in technology that our past century has witnessed. But people lived in a world beyond our present real world and imagined the computer, the wireless phone and the internet. This capacity of human imagination and being able to deal with an unseen world that truly exists is one of the great traits of the human mind. The Torah indicates to us the existence of such a world, a world of purity and impurity, a special world of holiness and of the human quest for attachment to the Creator of all worlds.

Even though we do not quite relate to that world with our finite mentality, the Torah wishes us to realize that such a world does exist beyond our limited human vision. And that is a very important and essential lesson in life.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Holiness and Childbirth

Tazria, Metzora

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

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

Rambam explains:

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

Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed, III:12

Throughout history there have been two distinct and opposing ways of relating to this fact: hedonism (living for physical pleasure) and asceticism (relinquishing physical pleasure). The former worships the

physical while denying the spiritual, the latter enthrones the spiritual at the cost of the physical.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Webster was much possessed by death
And saw the skull beneath the skin . . .
Donne, I suppose, was such another . . .
He knew the anguish of the marrow
The ache of the skeleton . . .

Whispers of Immortality, T. S. Eliot

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

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

This is how Judah Halevi explains the purity laws:

A dead body represents the highest degree of loss of life, and a leprous limb is as if it were dead. It is the same with the loss of seed, because it

had been endowed with living power, capable of engendering a human being. Its loss therefore forms a contrast to the living and breathing.

The Kuzari, II:60

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

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

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

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

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

Parshat Tazria Metzora: Love, Marriage and Continuity

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founder and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone

“If a woman has conceived seed and born a male child, then she shall be unclean for seven days; as in the days of her menstrual sickness shall she be unclean. On the eighth day [the child’s] foreskin shall be circumcised. For thirty-three additional days, she shall sit on blood of purity....” (Leviticus 12:2–4)

The Torah reading of Tazria is difficult because of its subject matter: the ritual status of a woman after she gives birth in terms of the times when she is ritually impure and when she is ritually pure, as well as the ritual

impurity which devolves upon both men and women when semen or blood emerges from their bodies. The reading is further complicated by the very strange order of the verses and the chapters.

The first question arises from a verse which seemingly has no connection with what precedes or follows it: after the Bible has informed us that when a woman bears a male child she will be ritually impure for seven days (Lev. 12:1, 2), the following verse does not deal with the subsequent thirty-three days of ritual purity which she is allowed to enjoy no matter what her physical state may be – that comes two verses later (Lev. 12:4) – but rather the Bible informs us “That on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised” (Lev. 12:3). Why have the law of circumcision in the very midst of the laws of a woman’s status of purity upon her giving birth? It hardly seems to belong!

The second question deals with the order of the chapters. Chapter twelve deals with ritual purity and impurity as a result of childbirth, as we have seen. Chapter fifteen deals with the different kinds of seminal emissions which emerge from a male and the different kinds of blood emissions which emerge from a female; emissions which are also connected to reproduction as a result of a sexual act between the couple. In the midst of these two biblical discussions, which certainly involve ritual impurity and impurity surrounding reproduction, come two chapters – chapters thirteen and fourteen – which deal with tzara’at, usually translated as leprosy but which certainly refers to a discoloration and degeneration of the skin, which causes the individual to look like a walking corpse. Why bring tzara’at in the midst of a discussion on reproduction?

In Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik’s important work entitled *Family Redeemed*, my revered teacher interprets the opening chapters of Genesis as a crucial lesson to humanity concerning the spiritual potential as well as the destructive danger of the sexual act. Indeed, the classical commentator Rashi understands the fruit of knowledge of good and evil as having injected within human nature libido, eroticism and lust, rather than the expression of love and the reproductive powers which were initially embedded in human nature. Sigmund Freud sees the serpent as a phallic symbol, and eating is often found in the Bible as a metaphor for engaging in sex. From this perspective, the sin of having partaken of the forbidden fruit is the sin of sexual lust, which can often separate sex from the sacred institution of matrimony, a natural expression of affection between two individuals who are committed to a shared life and to the establishment of a family.

It is fascinating that the punishments for having eaten the fruit are related to reproduction: “And to the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your pain and travail in pregnancy and with pain shall you bring forth children....’” (Genesis 3:16).

Even more to the point, the most fundamental penalty for having tasted of the forbidden fruit is death, which plagues men and woman alike: “But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat; for on the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17).

The sexual act was meant to give not only unity and joy to the couple but also to bestow continued life through the gift of reproduction. Tragically the misuse of sex and its disengagement from love, marriage and family can lead to death-inducing diseases.

I would argue that this is precisely why tzara’at, or the living death which it symbolizes, appears in the Bible in the midst of its discussion of reproduction and the normative processes of seminal emissions and menstrual blood, which are necessary by-products of the glory of reproduction. Tragically the life-force which is granted by God through the sexual organs can often degenerate into decay and death when those very sexual organs are misused.

I will also submit that this is precisely why the commandment of circumcision comes right before the biblical establishment of a large number of days of purity (thirty-three after the birth of a male and sixty-six after the birth of a female), no matter what blood may emerge from the woman’s body. The much larger number of days of purity attest to the great miracle of childbirth – which is always a heartbeat away from death for every anxious parent until the healthy baby emerges and emits its first cry (and this accounts for the initial days of ritual impurity), but

which results in new life and the continuation of the family line, giving the greatest degree of satisfaction that a human being can ever experience. Such glories of reproduction are only possible if the male will learn to limit his sexual activity to within the institution of marriage and will recognize the sanctity of sex as well as its pleasures. Placing the divine mark upon the male sexual organ with the performance of the commandment of circumcision establishes this ideal of sanctity. The sacredness of the woman’s body is similarly expressed when she immerses herself in a mikveh prior to resuming sexual relations with her husband each month and even makes a blessing to God while still unclothed within the ritual waters, which symbolize life and birth and future.

Hence, the most meaningful blessing which I know is intoned during the marriage ceremony: “Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who sanctifies his nation Israel by means of the nuptial canopy and the sanctity of marriage.”

Shabbat Shalom

The Thirteen Midos of Rabbi Yishmael

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Reasoning

Can we restore a lost mesorah on the basis of logic?

Question #2: Kal vachomer

If an opening is large enough for a football tackle to rush through unimpeded, shouldn’t a healthy ten-year-old be able to walk through it?

Question #3: Gezeirah shavah

What is meant that something is an “equal decree”?

Foreword:

Immediately prior to the kaddish derabbanan recited at the end of the korbanos section of our davening, we recite a beraisa in which we enumerate the thirteen “midos” of Rabbi Yishmael, a listing of methods whereby the laws of the Torah shebe’al peh are derived from the written Torah. This beraisa is the beginning of the introduction to the Sifra (also called the *Toras Kohanim*), the halachic midrash of the book of Vayikra.

The goal of this article is to explain the beraisa of Rabbi Yishmael, but I must first explain what halachic midrash is. Halachic midrash is the method whereby the laws of the Torah shebe’al peh can be derived from the Written Torah. When Moshe Rabbeinu spent forty days on Har Sinai, Hashem taught him all the laws of the Oral Torah. Moshe then taught these laws to the Bnei Yisrael in a method that is described in the Gemara (Eruvin 54b) such that each adult male Jew would hear the laws four different times. Each person kept his own private notes to help him remember the laws of the Torah shebe’al peh.

The system was not perfect. When Moshe Rabbeinu passed on, the Jewish people realized collectively that they could not recall clearly thousands of laws that Moshe had taught them. The Gemara teaches that Asniel ben Kenaz was able to restore these laws to the collective memory by figuring them out *bepilpulo*, by use of dialectic reasoning.

To quote the passage of Gemara (Temurah 16a):

Immediately prior to his passing on to Gan Eden, Moshe Rabbeinu said to Yehoshua,

“Ask of me every doubt that you have!” Yehoshua answered, “Rebbe, have I left you for a moment and gone somewhere else? Did you not write about me that ‘his assistant, Yehoshua bin Nun, never left the ohel mo’eid’” (Shemos 33:11)? At that moment, Yehoshua weakened (as a punishment for the lack of humility implicit in his answer [Maharsha; cf. Rashi]): he forgot three hundred halachos and also now had seven hundred uncertainties (which were discovered after Moshe passed away). The entire people of Israel rose up against Yehoshua, planning to kill him... The beraisa taught: seventeen hundred cases of kal vachomer, gezeirah shavah, and derived halachic details were forgotten during the mourning period for Moshe. Rabbi Avahu responded that they were “retrieved by Asniel ben Kenaz with his dialectic reasoning.”

Thus, the opening question to our article: “How can we restore a lost mesorah on the basis of logic?”

The answer is that, alongside the Torah shebe’al peh and the written Torah, there is a mesorah of rules whereby the laws of the Torah

shebe'al peh are derived from the written Torah. These laws were all part of the original Oral Torah, as were the rules, which provide a backup whereby the laws may be retrieved should they be forgotten.

The rules for deriving the laws fall into two categories:

Extra words -- yalfusa

1. Some halachos are derived on the basis of extra words or parts of words in the Torah. An example of this is that, when the Torah provides lengthy instructions for offering the various korbanos each day of Sukkos, a discerning reader will notice that the template reading of the different days is not identical. While the wine libations on these days are identical, the word used to describe those libations varies, twice with a נ added and once with a ו added. These extra letters spell the word נמים, water, whence we derive that, on Sukkos, there is a unique service called nisuch hamayim, pouring of water on the mizbei'ach. This law is not mentioned anywhere else in the Written Torah, but is expounded upon in the Oral Torah, the Torah shebe'al peh.

Clearly understanding the pesukim of the Torah provides the sources for these halachos, and this is a common way that these laws are derived by the Gemara and by the halachic midrashim. Understanding the grammar as Chazal understood the pesukim of the Torah is an essential way towards deriving these laws. The absolute master in explaining these rules is the Malbim, in his work entitled Ayeles Hashachar, usually printed as an introduction to his commentary to Vayikra. The Malbim writes that he had originally planned to provide a thorough explanation of the halachic exegesis process as a running commentary to the Sifra. However, after writing the commentary to just two pesukim, he discovered that the results of this work would be the length of a multi-volume encyclopedia. As a result, he wrote instead an introductory work, Ayeles Hashachar, elucidating the grammatical principles whereby Chazal derived the words of the Torah as a source for the laws of Torah shebe'al peh. Throughout his commentary to Vayikra, the Malbim refers to the Ayeles Hashachar to explain how Chazal understood each pasuk and arrived at their conclusion.

Midos

2. Other halachos are derived on the basis of hermeneutic rules, called midos, that are methods whereby halachos not obviously mentioned in the written Torah are taught. In other words, these halachos were included in the Torah shebe'al peh, but, again, as a backup, they could also be derived on the basis of the rules of Torah shebe'al peh. The thirteen rules that we recite in our davening is Rabbi Yishmael's version of these rules. There are slight discrepancies or differences of opinion among tanna'im concerning some of the rules used to derive these laws, meaning that the details of how these rules work were occasionally disputed. That is why the midos are referred to as the thirteen rules of Rabbi Yishmael. This article will not address the disputes.

These are the thirteen rules that are mentioned in the beraisa of Rabbi Yishmael, as understood by the Ra'avad and most late commentators:

1. Kal vachomer
2. Gezeirah shavah
3. Binyan av
4. Klal ufrat
5. Prat uchlal
6. Klal ufrat uchlal
7. Klal shehu tzarich lefrat
8. Davar shehayah bichlal viyatza lelamid
9. Davar shehayah bichlal viyatza ke'inyano
10. Davar shehayah bichlal viyatza shelo ke'inyano
11. Davar shehayah bichlal viyatza bedavar chodosh
12. Davar halameid mei'inyano
13. Shnei kesuvim hamach'chishin.

Those familiar with the beraisa of Rabbi Yishmael will immediately note that I have omitted significant sections of the beraisa.

A. In some instances, the beraisa provides two variations of a rule, such as, it presents two types of binyan av. I will explain why there are two types, but they are both manifestations of the same hermeneutic principle.

B. Some of these rules are mentioned by the beraisa without any explanation as to how they work or what they mean. For example, four of the first five rules, kal vachomer, gezeira shavah, klal uprat and prat uchlal are not at all explained. On the other hand, the method of derivation of most of the other rules is mentioned in the beraisa, although they are never fully explained. Iy"H, I will be explaining these rules.

Frequency

We should also be aware that some of these rules have thousands of applications, whereas others of them appear very few times in all of Talmudic literature.

Kal vachomer

At this point, I will explain the first of Rabbi Yishmael's midos, which is perhaps the most obvious rule in terms of logic: the kal vachomer. Among the thirteen rules, this one is unique, because it actually appears several times in the Chumash itself as part of someone's logical argument. For example, to prove that they are innocent of stealing Yosef's goblet, the brothers rally a kal vachomer. "If we returned the money that we found in our sacks, how could we possibly have considered taking something that is not ours?" (Bereishis 44:8).

Very simply put, a kal vachomer means that if something is true in a more obvious situation, it should certainly hold true in a less obvious situation. A simple application is as follows: If a burly, 6' 10" football tackle weighing 350 pounds can race through a passageway unhindered, a 100-pound, 5' person with no ambulatory difficulties should certainly be able to enter via the same opening.

Ein onshin min hadin

There are a few instances in which a kal vachomer cannot teach a halacha. Although a kal vachomer can prove that something is prohibited, it cannot be used to establish punishment, a principle called ein onshin min hadin. When the Torah imposes a penalty or punishment for violating a law, we cannot derive by means of a kal vachomer that this penalty or punishment applies to a newly derived law.

Why not?

We find two different reasons why ein onshin min hadin. One is that, although the punishment described by the Torah may be appropriate for a lesser crime, someone violating a more serious infraction should perhaps be punished in a harsher way. In other words, kal vachomer can teach that if the Torah prohibited a lesser sin, it certainly prohibited a more serious infraction. However, the more serious crime might require a more severe punishment than what the Torah meted out for the lesser offense.

Another reason explains that ein onshin min hadin is based on possible human logical fallibility. In general, we are obligated to apply our G-d-given intelligence when studying mitzvos, and kal vachomer is an example of this. However, prior to meting out judgment on the basis of a kal vachomer, we must recognize that there might be a reason why what appears as a kal vachomer is actually not. According to this approach, the Torah's precept not to punish someone until and unless we are absolutely certain of his guilt requires that he not be punished on the basis of a kal vachomer.

These two approaches are not mutually exclusive; both factors might be true. We cannot punish someone on the basis of a kal vachomer because the kal vachomer itself may not be fully accurate; or the kal vachomer may be correct, and precisely because this act is a more serious crime its perpetrator should not be punished this way.

Dayo

There is another instance whereby someone might think he can apply a kal vachomer, but he cannot. This is referred to as a case of dayo laba min hadin li'heyos kanidon, which means that you cannot derive with a kal vachomer more than the original source teaches, regardless as to how compelling the kal vachomer might appear. The Sifra picks an example of this from a pasuk in Chumash. When Miriam complained to Aharon about Moshe's behavior regarding his wife Tziporah, Miriam was guilty of saying loshon hora at that moment and turned white as a metzora. The pasuk then states, "Had her father spat in her face, would she not not have been ashamed for seven days" (Bamidbar 12:14). The Sifra

completes the thought of the pasuk: for violating what Hashem has taught, she should be punished for fourteen days. Yet the Torah continues that her punishment is for seven days! Since the Torah concludes that she should be punished for no longer than she would have had her father censured her, any longer cannot be attributed to the kal vachomer.

Gezeirah shavah

The second principle of Rabbi Yishmael's list is gezeirah shavah, which is a legal analogy based on the use of the same term in two separate cases. To explain this, we first need to translate and explain the words. Most people familiar with the concept of gezeirah shavah are not aware of the origin of the term. The word gezeirah in this context means "word structure;" the word shavah means "similarity." Therefore, the term means "a similarity of words."

Here is an example of a gezeirah shavah: through the use of the same term regarding the mitzvos of eating matzoh on Seder night and on sitting in the sukkah on Sukkos we derive that, although on the rest of the seven days of Sukkos a person may avoid eating bread and other foods that require him to eat in the sukkah, on the first night of Sukkos he is, indeed, required to eat a meal in the sukkah.

Please note that the halacha requiring that we eat in the sukkah on the first night was taught as a mesorah from Sinai. The gezeirah shavah is a means for making certain that this law would not be forgotten.

At this point, we can answer another of our opening questions: What is meant that something is an "equal decree"?

The answer is that this is a complete mistranslation and misunderstanding of the words gezeirah shavah, just as a "helicopter mom" does not require a pilot's license. The word gezeirah shavah means "a similarity of words."

Same meaning

Those who are familiar with studying the concept of gezeirah shavah as it surfaces in the Gemara know that sometimes a gezeirah shavah is the exact same word, other times it is the same root, but not the exact same word, and at other times it can even be two words or terms that mean the same thing but are completely different words. One example of this last case is a gezeirah shavah that the Gemara derives from the words shav and ba in the laws of metzora (which is cited by Rashi on Chumash, Vayikra 14:39). Another example is where the words shachat and zavach are used as a gezeirah shavah (Chullin 85a). The two words both mean to slaughter.

There are many rules governing how a gezeirah shavah may be used to derive laws, depending on such issues as whether the word is repeated in both instances of its application, the exact word is used in both places, and are there other places in which a more obvious comparison may exist. We will not study these differences in our article.

Most people do not realize how many gezeiros shavos actually exist. I am in possession of a lengthy manuscript that explains many of the usages and rules applying to gezeirah shavah, and includes an extensive list of every case of gezeirah shavah that its author identified -- over four hundred instances of gezeirah shavah and thousands of applications.

Gezeirah shavah is unlike any of the other thirteen midos in one very important way: regarding every other midah, a general mesorah exists to use the midah to derive halachos. Gezeirah shavah, on the other hand, requires that there is also a mesorah via Moshe at Har Sinai that the specific words are a gezeirah shavah. Otherwise, ein adam dan gezeirah shavah mei'atzmo, someone cannot declare that certain terms or words are a gezeirah shavah on the basis of his own personal authority.

Exception

Based on a passage of Talmud Yerushalmi (Pesachim 6:1), we know that there is one exception to this rule. The Yerushalmi notes that, in an instance when we have a mesorah from an earlier source that a specific law is true, but we no longer know the hermeneutic origin for this law, someone may suggest a comparable word association, a gezeirah shavah that might be the hermeneutic source for this law.

However, in this instance, we cannot derive any new rulings with the gezeirah shavah. All we can do is suggest that perhaps the hermeneutic source of this law is the gezeirah shavah. (According to many rishonim,

including Rashi, a similar concept exists relative to Halacha leMoshe miSinai. When we know that a halacha is true, but we are unaware that it has a hermeneutic source, we can suggest that its origin is a Halacha leMoshe miSinai [see Rashi, Bava Kama 3b].)

Be'eizras Hashem, we will continue this topic of analyzing the thirteen midos taught by Rabbi Yishmael in a future week.

Conclusion

When the Gemara teaches that the teachings of the rabbonim are dearer to Hashem than the laws of the Torah, it certainly includes the vast halachic literature devoted to understanding the thirteen midos. The Gemara expresses this notion by saying that what is derived from a drasha is more cherished even than the Written Torah (Yevamos 2b; 3a; see also Ritva and Aruch Laneir, Makkos 13a; Maharam Lublin, Bava Kamma 17b). To quote Rav Chaggai in the name of Rav Shmuel bar Nachman: "The Torah refers to that which is taught in the Oral Torah and that which is taught in the Written Torah, yet we do not know which is more cherished. When the pasuk states, 'according to these words I sealed the treaty with you and with Yisrael' (Yirmiyahu 33:25), this teaches us that the Oral Torah is more dear" (Yerushalmi, Peah 2:4).

Rav Kook Torah

Yom Ha'Atzma'ut: Rav Kook and Zionism

During controversy over the Hetter Mechirah in 1910, Rabbi Yaakov David Wilovsky (the "Ridbaz") of Safed leveled a serious accusation. He accused Rav Kook of abandoning his religious beliefs and becoming a Zionist in his old age. (In fact, from a very early age Rav Kook was imbued with a great love for Eretz Yisrael.)

For an Orthodox rabbi to support a secular movement that publicly proclaimed that it "has nothing to do with theology" was close to heresy. Why should a religious scholar with a deep love for all peoples be supportive of a secular nationalist movement? Indeed, Rav Kook's outlook on Zionism is a complex topic, the subject of numerous books and academic articles, and certainly beyond the scope of a brief essay. Nonetheless, the following excerpts from his writings and letters shed light on his views on this nonreligious (and sometimes anti-religious) movement.

Historical Precedents

Rav Kook noted that our generation is not the first to experience a return to the land of Israel comprised primarily of Jews lax in religious observance. When Ezra led the return to Eretz Yisrael in the beginning of the Second Temple Period, many of the Jewish pioneers who joined him were Sabbath-desecrators and worse; and yet this period witnessed the rebuilding of the Temple and tremendous advances in Torah scholarship.

Centuries later, during the corrupt reign of Herod, the nation suffered from a cruel king, far removed from the ideal Jewish leader. The irony of the holy Temple built by Herod, a brutal and paranoid despot, is even greater than the current phenomenon of the Holy Land being resettled by secular pioneers. The actual construction, Rav Kook wrote, "may be carried by those who fail to penetrate the profound secrets of the righteous. And not just the stonemasons; they may even be the ones orchestrating the construction." Yet this does not sully the innate purity of the lofty objective.

The Positive Influence of Eretz Yisrael

Rav Kook suggested that we need not be overly concerned about the religious level of the pioneers, since the Land on its own will determine who is deserving of living in it.

"There is no need to check the level of kashrut of those who come, for the Land will vomit out the true chaff; and 'all those remaining shall be called holy' (Isaiah 4:3). This is similar to how we do not separate food from its waste elements before we eat it, but leave this [separation] process to life's natural functions."

Furthermore, the merit of Eretz Yisrael helps even the unworthy:

"The merit of the Land even protects the wicked. Even a gentile maidservant in the land of Israel is promised a portion in the World to Come (Ketubot 111a). Clearly the Talmud is not speaking of a righteous maidservant, who would anyway merit the World to Come... Rather it is

referring to an ordinary maidservant, with sordid deeds and coarse traits. Nonetheless, the merit of living in the land of Israel enables her to gain a portion in the World to Come....

“All the more so [regarding the secular Zionists, since] one may find in every Jew, even the most unworthy, precious gems of good deeds and positive traits. Certainly the land of Israel helps elevate and sanctify them. And if this is not evident in them, it will become so in their descendants.”

Sacred Roots

Despite the current secular nature of Zionism, the return to Eretz Yisrael in recent times was first promoted by great tzaddikim — starting with the disciples of the Gaon of Vilna and the Baal Shem Tov — and Zionism derives its spiritual nourishment from these holy roots.

“[It was] the lofty righteous of previous generations who ignited a holy inner fire, a burning love for the holiness of Eretz Yisrael in the hearts of God’s people. Due to their efforts, individuals gathered in the desolate land, until significant areas became a garden of Eden, and a large and important community of the entire people of Israel has settled in our holy land....

“Recently, however, the pious and great scholars have gradually abandoned the enterprise of settling the Holy Land.... This holy work has been appropriated by those lacking in [Torah] knowledge and good deeds.... Nonetheless, we see that the [secularists’] dedication in deed and action is nourished from the initial efforts of true tzaddikim, who kindled the holy desire to rebuild the Holy Land and return our exiles there.”

Breaking of the Vessels

For Rav Kook, the fall of Zionism into the hands of the secularists was a form of shevirat keilim, reminiscent of the Kabbalistic “breaking of vessels” that occurred when the universe was created. The original light and holiness was simply too great to be contained within the limitations of the physical vessels; and it is our task to return these fallen sparks to their elevated source.

But why did the return to the land of Israel need to be appropriated by a secular nationalist movement? Rav Kook attempted to solve this riddle by noting certain qualities lacking in religious circles:

“The fundamental moral force hidden in [the Zionist movement] ... is its motto, “the entire nation.” This nationalism proclaims... that it seeks to redeem the entire Jewish people. It does not concern itself with individuals or parties or sectors.... And with this perspective, it reaches out to the land of Israel and the love of Zion with a remarkable bravery and courage.

“It is clear that we cannot confront this adversary if we lack the same noble sense of responsibility that speaks in the name of the entire nation, all of Israel. We may not distinguish and divide. We may not say, “This one is one of ours so we will take care of him, but not that one.” ... [We must] care in our hearts and souls for the good of the entire nation and its redemption, in the most inclusive way possible.”

Additionally, Rav Kook explained that the pre-Messianic era requires a more practical, down-to-earth orientation, so that the Jewish people may return to their land as a healthy, balanced nation, after centuries of detached statelessness in exile.

“We have a tradition [see Sotah 49b] that there will be a spiritual revolt of the Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael during the initial period of national revival.... The aspirations for lofty and holy ideals will cease and the nation’s spirit will sink....

“The necessity for this revolt will be the tendency for materialism, which must be powerfully generated in the entire nation after the passage of so many years in which the need and availability of material pursuits were completely absent. When born, this proclivity will trample angrily and stir up storms; these are the birth pangs of the Messianic era.” (Orot HaTechiyah sec. 44, p. 84)

However, secular Zionism can only bring about the material rebuilding of the Jewish people in their homeland. The nation’s complete renewal will only come about when Zionism is restored to its original holiness.

“Secular nationalism may be defiled with much defilement, concealing many evil spirits. But we will not succeed by trying to expel this

movement from the nation’s soul. Rather we must energetically return it to its elevated source and combine it with the original holiness from which it emanates.” (Orot HaTechiyah sec. 22, p. 75)

True Zionism

And what about the Ridbaz’s accusations that Rav Kook had descended to heresy, becoming a secular Zionist? Rav Kook responded that Zionism, when based on its true ideals, is nothing to be ashamed of:

“My dear friend! If all Zionists would love the land of Israel and seek the settlement of the Holy Land for the same reason and holy goal that I have in mind — because it is God’s land, special and beloved out of the entire world, containing unique holy qualities that foster prophesy and Divine inspiration... then it would be certainly a great honor for every important rabbi and Torah scholar and tzaddik to be such a Zionist. Even your honor should find nothing objectionable in this form of Zionism.”

To summarize the salient points in Rav Kook’s views on Zionism:

- There are historical precedents for significant Jewish movements in which irreligious Jews played a major role.
- The special merits of Eretz Yisrael will elevate those who participate in its settlement and rebuilding.
- The original roots of Zionism are holy, going back to the disciples of the Gaon of Vilna and the Baal Shem Tov. Zionism must be returned to these authentic holy roots.
- The success of secular Zionism is due to its non-sectarian concern for the entire Jewish people, and it serves as a necessary correction for the imbalances caused by centuries of statelessness.

(Silver from the Land of Israel, pp. 175-180. Based on letters from Igrot HaRe’iyah.)

Yom Hazikaron 5785

Rabbi Moshe Hauer

Yom Hazikaron, Israel’s Memorial Day, will be observed tonight and tomorrow, April 29-30, paying tribute to those who gave their lives to build and protect the modern State of Israel. It is a day of intense mourning in Israel, but it has been less seriously observed in the United States.

I do not think I will ever forget past experiences of Yom Hazikaron in Israel. The day is not simply a memorial to Israel’s fallen; it is a day in which the country celebrates the value of national service. Whether in emotional communal events, or in the pilgrimage of thousands to the cemeteries, one sees a nation celebrating the role of individuals in its founding and continued existence. Thousands of young students, considering their futures, walk amongst the graves of Har Herzl’s military cemetery hearing seventy-year-old and seventy-day-old stories of the individuals buried there, and consciously setting these individuals as their role models. Family members cluster around the graves of close and distant relatives, experiencing both the continued pain of their loss and pride in their contribution to the presence and safety of their people in Eretz Yisrael.

On one occasion, I observed one impressive family gathered in one of the older sections, around the grave of Esther Cailingold. Esther was an Orthodox Jewish young woman who was deeply affected by her work with teenage Holocaust survivors in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and was moved to become a member of the Jewish community in pre-state Palestine. She travelled there in November 1946 at the age of twenty-one to assume a position as a teacher and eventually joined the Haganah. She was wounded and died in the siege of Jerusalem in May 1948. Those visiting her grave were the descendants of her siblings, still holding her memory as a beacon for their values and direction. Esther’s letters from that period in Israel are published in a moving book, “An Unlikely Heroine,” with her final letter – written six days before her passing – made famous by her brother-in-law Yehuda Avner, who cites it in “The Prime Ministers”:

May 23, 1948

Dear Mummy, Daddy and everybody,

If you do get this at all, it will be, I suppose, typical of all my hurried, messy letters. I am writing it to beg of you that whatever may have happened to me, you will make the effort to take it in the spirit that I

want to and to understand that for myself I have no regrets. We have had a bitter fight, I have tasted of Gehenem (Hell) – but it has been worthwhile because I am convinced that the end will see a Jewish State and the realization of all our longings....

I hope that you will enjoy from Mimi and Asher the satisfaction that you missed in me – let it be without regrets, and then I too shall be happy. I am thinking of you all, every single one of you in the family, and am full of pleasure at the thought that you will one day, very soon I hope, come and enjoy the fruits of that for which we are fighting.

Much, much love, be happy and remember me only in happiness,
Shalom and Lehitraot,

Your loving Esther

At this particularly difficult time, it is exceptionally important that we elevate the awareness and engagement of American Jews in commemorating this day, both as an expression of empathy with the many grieving their raw and fresh losses – mitablim imahem – and to demonstrate appreciation and respect for those who have sacrificed their lives for us, for Klal Yisrael. As noted in the Talmud (Bava Batra 10b) regarding the Harugei Lud (the heroes murdered at Lud), those who readily sacrifice everything for their people occupy an exclusive and vaulted place in the World to Come.

This is also an opportunity to highlight the powerful worldview, hashkafat hachayim, of the Religious Zionist community that has borne a disproportionate number of the losses experienced in the past year and a half. The students in that community are driven by a sense of mission to serve G-d and the Jewish people by assuming responsibility to protect and build the modern State of Israel in the way of Torah. That mindset is lacking in our American Jewish value system. We teach our children to be religious, learned, charitable, and to volunteer for good causes, but we do not move them to define themselves in terms of what they can do for their people.

Towards that end the Orthodox Union has once again partnered with Bnei David Institutions in Eli to produce a video presentation for Yom Hazikaron that shines a bright light on the Torah and emunah that drives its students – 29 of whom have given their lives since Simchat Torah 5784 – and others in the Religious Zionist community to volunteer at the front lines in securing and building Israel. Please take a few minutes to learn from this film's story of faith, courage, resilience, and sacrifice.

May we indeed be blessed soon with peace and security for Israel and the world and that those grieving be granted comfort and healing to enjoy the fruits of that for which their loved ones gave their lives.

בצפיה לישועה קרובה,

Sincerely,

Rabbi Moshe Hauer

Executive Vice President

Meeting with Ben-Gvir

By Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

There are few more polarizing people in the Jewish world today than Itamar Ben-Gvir. The firebrand national security minister of Israel attracts attention, protests, headlines, and controversy wherever he goes. This week, he came to America and brought all of that with him to Florida, New York, and Washington. Many find him abhorrent and categorically reject comments he has made, policies he has pursued, and positions he espouses. Others recognize he has some extreme views but believe he has the courage to make changes necessary for greater security and agree with much of his platform, enough that they have given him a mandate in the current government coalition.

Ben-Gvir's team expressed interest in his speaking at our Shul, which I immediately declined. This was a very simple and clear-cut calculation. I have learned that if hosting someone will attract significant controversy, potentially from within the community and almost certainly from without, if it will draw negative attention, headlines, become time-consuming and can even alienate and offend a fair number of shul members, it simply is not worth it.

Some people who read the above paragraph are undoubtedly shocked and disturbed to think we would even consider giving him a platform.

And no doubt some who read the same paragraph are offended and troubled that I would attempt to deny the BRS community from hearing an elected Israeli minister whose views they strongly agree with or think at least people should be open to. Both groups are likely disappointed that I am not using this space to take a definitive position on Ben-Gvir. If you want to formulate your own opinion on him or confirm what you already think, there has been plenty written about him, including a large number of articles revolving around his trip that you can read. I have nothing new to add and that isn't my goal in this space.

While we declined the opportunity to publicly host Ben-Gvir, I did accept the request to meet with him privately. We sat together for almost an hour in my office, in which he shared the accomplishments that he is proud of and what remains on his agenda to achieve, explained what he would do to bring the hostages home, shared how he regrets some things he has said and done in his past, and talked about projects he is working on now. I used the opportunity to both respectfully challenge him on things I find objectionable and also encourage him on what I think he could do better or more of.

I had not shared with anyone that we were meeting, neither before or after, and he told me that he hadn't either. Nevertheless, several articles about his trip mentioned in passing that we had met, which elicited two emails respectfully questioning my judgement in having done so, arguing that the meeting alone endorses and supports a person who should be isolated and marginalized.

The correspondence raised some interesting questions: Should private meetings be held to the same standard as giving a public platform? Should we meet with those we don't just disagree with but find objectionable? If a journalist can meet with just about anyone because they are doing an interview or bringing a story to the public, should communal leaders not meet with controversial or objectionable public officials in order to better be informed and to share feedback and criticism? If we do have a red line of who we are willing to talk to or meet with, where should the line be set, what are the criteria to be excluded or outside the line? If you wouldn't meet with someone you object to, should they not be allowed to enter the campus, daven in our minyan?

After considering these questions, I don't regret privately meeting Ben-Gvir, for several reasons. Firstly, he is the democratically elected National Security Minister of the State of Israel. Love him or hate him, the position and title he carries, and representing the Israeli citizens who elected him, I believe make him deserving of an audience and conversation. Secondly, I have a relatively broad red line when it comes to fellow Jews, particularly leaders, who want to meet and have a conversation. (That is not to suggest that I have the time or ability to meet every non-BRS member who asks for a meeting) If someone wants to meet, not for a photo op or publicity but for a genuine open conversation, why wouldn't I want to take advantage of the opportunity to listen and learn and to influence and impact, particularly if it was someone I have differences with or even oppose?

I believe this applies to all those to the right and left of me politically and religiously, in Israel or America. I mean this sincerely, and it applies to even the worst actors in politics. I abhor everything Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar stand for and their stances on Israel are dangerous if not outright evil. Of course they would never be welcomed to give a speech at BRS, but if they wanted to meet with me privately, why would I pass on the opportunity to tell elected members of Congress exactly how I feel about their positions and actions? Private dialogue and respectful debate will go much further in bringing change than shunning or boycotting.

The Torah describes that Yosef's brothers hated him to the point that v'lo yachlu dabro l'shalom." The Ibn Ezra explains, "v'lo yachlu dabro l'shalom – afilu l'shalom." It isn't that they just couldn't talk about the issues they disagreed about. It isn't just that they didn't want to be close, loving brothers. It isn't just that they couldn't debate respectfully. "Afilu l'shalom" – they couldn't even give each other a shalom aleichem. The hatred and intolerance had grown so deep that they

couldn't stand to even extend greetings to one another or to be in a room together.

Rav Yehonasan Eibshitz in his Tiferes Yonasan has an additional insight. When we disagree with people, we withdraw from them and stop speaking to them. We see them and paint them as "the other," different than us and apart from us. As our communication breaks down, the dividers rise up, stronger and stronger and we can't find a way to break through them.

Certainly, there are important disagreements and no doubt there are statements and policies that people will find objectionable about others. But there is no doubt in my mind that given the opportunity, it is better, healthier, and more productive, to communicate directly, attempt to influence, and find common ground, than sow further divide. I respect anyone's right to disagree, I just hope they would communicate it directly, instead of boycotting a conversation.

Drasha

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Tazria

Kohen... Kohen... GONE!

Parshas Tazria deals primarily with the physio-spiritual plague that affects gossips and rumor mongers with the plague of tzora'as. Tzora'as appears as a white lesion on various parts of the body, and the status of the afflicted depends on its shade of white, its size, and its development. The afflicted does not go to a medical clinic nor does he enter a hospital. If afflicted he is quarantined and then reevaluated; if condemned he is sent out of the Jewish camp until he heals, a sign that he has repented his slanderous ways. A physician or medical expert does not evaluate him. In fact, the entire ordeal is evaluated, reevaluated, determined, and executed by non-other than the Kohen. Moreover, the Torah does not keep that detail a secret. In the 47 verses that discuss bodily affliction of tzora'as, the Kohen is mentioned no less than 45 times! "He shall be brought to the Kohen," "The Kohen shall look", "The Kohen shall declare him contaminated," "The Kohen shall quarantine him," "The Kohen shall declare him pure" (Leviticus 13:1-47).

Why must the Torah include the Kohen's involvement in every aspect of the process? More so, why does the Torah mention the Kohen's involvement in almost every verse? Would it not been well enough to have one encompassing edict: "The entire process is supervised and executed according to the advice of the Kohen."

The parents of a retarded child entered the study of Rabbi Shlomo Auerbach. They decided to place their child in a special school in which he would live; the question was which one.

"Have you asked the boy where he would like to go?" asked the sage. The parents were dumbfounded.

"Our child cannot be involved in the process! He hasn't the capacity to understand," explained the father.

Reb Shlomo Zalman was not moved. "You are sinning against your child. You are removing him from his home, placing him in a foreign environment, and you don't even consult with the child? He will feel helpless and betrayed □ I'd like to talk to him."

The couple quickly went home and brought the boy to the Torah sage.

"My name is Shlomo Zalman," smiled the venerable scholar. "What's yours?"

"Akiva."

"Akiva," exclaimed Rabbi Auerbach, "I am one of the leading Torah sages in the world and many people discuss their problems with me. Now, I need your help.

"You are about to enter a special school, and I need a representative to look after all the religious matters in the school. I would like to give you semicha, making you my official Rabbinical representative. You can freely discuss any issue with me whenever you want."

Reb Shlomo Zalman gave the boy a warm handshake and hug. The boy entered the school and flourished. In fact, with the great feeling of responsibility, he rarely wanted to leave the school, even for a weekend; after all, who would take care of any questions that would arise?

Part of the metzora's (leper's) healing process is dismissal from the Jewish camp. However, it is a delicate ordeal, one wrought with trauma, pain, and emotional distress. The Kohen, a man of peace, love, and compassion must be there for every part of the process. He must be there to guide him through the tense incubation period as well as his dismissal. Moreover, he is there again to ease him back into society.

The Torah teaches us, perhaps more than 50 times, that every traumatic decision needs spiritual guidance. It can turn a cold-hearted punishment into a process of spiritual redemption. It can turn a tough, seemingly dispassionate decision into a beautiful experience.

For when the Kohen holds your hand, even if it is a stricken one, even if you may be leaving for somewhere outside the camp, you are definitely not gone.

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

Redemption through Natural Means

Revivim

The Redemption of Israel—that is, the 'Ingathering of the Exiles' and the 'Settlement of the Land'—must occur through natural means • The intention of the Torah is that God will assist Israel in fulfilling this commandment • Without God's help, no human effort will bear fruit • Due to the abundance of discourse about a miraculous redemption, the commandment to do everything possible to ascend to the Land and settle it, has been forgotten • The process of redemption will unfold in such a way that initially, Israel will return to their Jewish identity, ascend to the Land, and settle it

The redemption of Israel, that is, the 'Ingathering of the Exiles' and the 'Settlement of the Land', must occur through natural means. For the commandment of ascending to the Land and settling it is a practical mitzvah incumbent upon the entire nation of Israel and upon each individual, and it is fulfilled when the Land of Israel is inhabited by Jews under Jewish sovereignty (see Peninei Halakha: Ha'Am Ve'HaAretz 3:1-3). It follows that the sin causing the delay of redemption is the national negligence in organizing the Ingathering of the Exiles and the Settlement of the Land, and the negligence of each individual Jew in ascending to the Land, and settling it.

Similarly, we find in the second redemption, in the days of the return from Babylon and the establishment of the Second Temple, that most Jews did not ascend to the Land. Therefore, the people of Israel did not succeed in achieving sovereignty over the Land, the Divine Presence did not dwell in the Temple, and we were not obligated in tithes, terumot, and the sabbatical year from the Torah (see Peninei Halakha: Kashrut 12:11). Therefore, the Sage, Reish Lakish, said that he hated the Babylonians who did not ascend to the Land in the days of Ezra, because due to them the Divine Presence in the Temple was partial, the settlement in the Land was weak, and ultimately, the Second Temple was destroyed, and Israel went into a long exile (Yoma 9b).

Those Who Claim That Redemption Must Occur Miraculously

Some claim that, indeed, the essence of redemption is the 'Ingathering of the Exiles' and the 'Settlement of the Land,' but these must come from God through signs and wonders. And so they learned from the plain meaning of the verses, that God will gather the exiles and settle the Land, as it is said:

"Then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, and He will return and gather you from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. Even if your exiles are at the ends of the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will take you. And the Lord your God will bring you into the Land that your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers" (Deuteronomy 30:3-5).

And it is also said:

"I will take you from among the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land" (Ezekiel 36:24), and similarly in other verses in the Torah and the Prophets.

The Intention of the Torah Is That God Will Help through Natural Means

However, the intention of the Torah is that God will help Israel to fulfill the commandment, for without God's help no human effort will bear fruit. And if we do not explain it thus, God forbid, we would nullify the commandment that God commanded Israel to settle the Land, as it is said: "You shall dispossess the inhabitants of the Land and dwell in it, for I have given you the Land to possess it. And you shall inherit the Land" (Numbers 33:53-54). And it is said: "You shall possess it, and dwell in it" (Deuteronomy 11:31).

Sanctification of God's Name through Natural Means and Through Miracles

Some claim that if the redemption occurs through natural means, there will be no sanctification of God's name, because only through signs and wonders will His name be sanctified. However, the truth is that the greatest sanctification of God's name is when the children of Israel walk in God's ways, and God blesses the work of their hands through natural means, as explained in the Torah (in the portions of Bechukotai and Ki Tavo). For then, heaven and earth are connected, and God's blessing flows in everything, and all creation sings praise, and it is revealed that "the Lord is God in heaven above, and on the earth below; there is no other" (Deuteronomy 4:39). And as Rabbi David Tabil wrote, that when God governs the world in a hidden manner under the wings of nature, "this is the highest form of governance... by sending blessing in the work of their hands... as was the case in the wars of David," and this was a greater sanctification of God's name than the miracle that God performed for Hezekiah in his war against Sennacherib. Therefore, King David, of blessed memory, did not ask God to perform a miracle for him. "For King David, of blessed memory, estimated in his soul that he was ready and prepared to be a chariot for receiving the divine abundance, even in his physical structures, his arteries, and his material sinews... and the desire was that he himself would strike them, and this is the greatest of the levels" (Nachalat David, Discourse 1).

The Meaning of the Description of Redemption through Miracles

Two interpretations have been given for the fact that the prophets described the redemption through miraculous means (Isaiah 11:1-10; 30:25-26; Ezekiel 38:18-23, and others), and both are true. The first is to explain that God will help Israel succeed in ascending to the Land and settling it. And the miraculous aspect of the descriptions is expressed in metaphorical language, to describe the great wonder of the 'Ingathering of the Exiles' and the 'Settlement of the Land' that was desolate and ruined and will become blooming and prosperous, something that has not happened to any nation or land. And what is said that the wolf will dwell with the lamb, means that the wicked of the world, who are likened to wolves, will not do evil to kill (Rambam, Hilchot Melachim 12:1).

The second is that the miraculous descriptions were said about the World to Come, which is after the days of the Messiah and the redemption, which is indeed beyond the nature of this world, and entirely miraculous for us. This is what our Sages said: "There is no difference between this world and the days of the Messiah except for the subjugation to kingdoms alone" (Sanhedrin 99a), meaning, that even in the days of redemption, the world operates as usual, except that Israel is free in their Land and can choose the good, and only afterward, in the World to Come, nature will be perfected and elevated.

The Encouragement, and the Risk

Indeed, at times we find in the words of early and later authorities who wrote about the imminent redemption that it would occur through miraculous means, contrary to the commandment of Settling the Land, which, as we have learned, is a practical mitzvah that must be fulfilled through natural means, and contrary to the destiny of Israel to reveal God's word through natural means. And perhaps they feared that Israel would despair of their redemption, after it seemed that there was no chance to act for the 'Ingathering of the Exiles' and the 'Settlement of the Land,' and therefore, they encouraged their spirits with the hope of a miraculous redemption, beyond nature. And there is truth in this, because even when redemption comes through suffering and natural

means, there is an aspect of a miracle that is unbelievable. However, due to excessive talk about miraculous redemption, the commandment to do everything possible to ascend to the Land and settle it was forgotten, and thus, when it was possible to ascend to the Land, they remained in exile, and great and terrible troubles came upon us: the Holocaust, the rule of the evil communist regime, and assimilation. Perhaps there was no choice, and without the hope of a miracle, we would not have survived, but the price of relying on the miracle was unbearably heavy.

Indeed, had they studied the Torah properly, they would have understood that the commandment of Settling the Land obligates Israel in every generation to do everything possible to ascend to the Land, and consequently, in modern times, when suitable conditions were created, according to the Torah, it was necessary to ascend to the Land and build it, thereby advancing the process of Israel's redemption.

The Words of the Rambam

And so we find that many of the Sages of Israel, headed by Rabbi Akiva, hoped that Bar Kokhba would be the Messiah, and if redemption depended on miracles, it would not have been conceivable that Bar Kokhba would be the Messiah, for all his actions for the independence of Israel were through natural means. And so the Rambam wrote:

"Do not think that the King Messiah must perform signs and wonders, or bring about new things in the world, or resurrect the dead, and similar things that the fools say. It is not so. For Rabbi Akiva, a great sage of the Mishnah, was the arms-bearer of King Koziba, and he would say about him that he is the King Messiah, and he and all the sages of his generation thought that he was the King Messiah, until he was killed due to sins. Once he was killed, it became known that he was not the Messiah. And the sages did not ask him for a sign or a wonder" (Hilchot Melachim 11:3).

The Words of the Later Authorities

And so wrote Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Kalischer in his book Derishat Tzion:

"The redemption of Israel, which we await, let no one think that suddenly the Lord, blessed be His name, will descend from heaven to earth, saying to His people, 'Go out!' Or that He will immediately send His Messiah from the heavens to blow a great shofar for the dispersed of Israel, and gather them to Jerusalem, and make for her a wall of fire and a Temple descending from above" (Geulat Tzion, Essay 1). Rather, the redemption will come by Israel awakening to ascend to the Land and settle it, and from this, all the words of the prophets will be fulfilled in us.

And so wrote his colleague Rabbi Eliyahu Gutmacher:

"Many err in thinking that they will sit... each according to his way in his home, and suddenly the gates of mercy will open, miracles will be performed in the heavens and the earth, and all the prophecies of the prophets will be fulfilled, and they will be called from their place of residence. But it is not so," rather, they will need to act naturally to ascend and settle the Land (Shivat Tzion, pp. 260-261 in the Har Bracha edition).

And so wrote many, among them the Malbim:

"For the redemption will sprout gradually... and the settlement of the Land of Israel will precede the coming of the Messiah" (ibid., p. 196).

And so wrote Rabbi Yehoshua of Kutna that it is a commandment to ascend to the Land, and settle it,

"...for the Ingathering (of exiles) is the beginning of redemption" (Yeshuot Malko, Yoreh De'ah 66). And so wrote the Netziv (ibid., pp. 200-205).

The Process of Repentance and Redemption

From examining the words of the Torah (Deuteronomy 30:1-10), and the prophets (Ezekiel chapter 36), we have learned that the process of redemption will occur in such a way that initially Israel will return to their Jewish identity, ascend to the Land and settle it, and this is called "and you will return to ('ad' in Hebrew, lit. 'up until') the Lord your God," and not "to" completely, and from this, they will continue to progress until they return in complete repentance "to the Lord your God." So wrote and taught Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda HaKohen Kook ztz"l ('The State as the Fulfillment of the Vision of Redemption,' LeNetivot Yisrael Part 1, p. 281 in the Beit El edition). And so wrote before him

Rabbi Alkalai in the name of Rabbi Yehuda Bibas (Writings of Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai Part 1, p. 20, Part 2, p. 324). And so wrote Rabbi Teichtal in the book 'Eim HaBanim Semeicha' (pp. 109-120), based on many sources, "that the essence of repentance (in the first stage of redemption) is the return and restoration to the Land of Israel, thus fulfilling all those who have deviated from the ways of the Torah and commandments due to our many sins, the repentance that the Lord, blessed be He, expects... and afterwards the Holy One, blessed be He, will open their hearts with a great opening, and incline their hearts to love Him, and serve Him with all their heart."

In the Merit of Those Engaged in the Commandment of Settling the Land, We Merit Redemption

Rabbi Kook wrote: "They ask: What merit did our generation have for redemption? The answer is simple: it merited because it engaged in the greatest commandment of all the commandments, in the commandment equivalent to the entire Torah, because it engaged in the redemption of Israel. And not only did it engage, but it engages, and will engage incessantly, in its redemption, and this divine power elevates and exalts it in salvation" (Shmona Kevatzim 7:201).

[CS late-breaking post

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>

date: Apr 30, 2025, 7:07 PM

**Rabbi Yakov Haber -
On Words and Birds**

The majority of the sections of parshiyos Tazria and Metzora discuss the detailed halachos of both the impurity and the purification process of the metzora as well as those of clothing and houses stricken with tzara'as.[1] Chazal and the commentaries (see Rashi to Tazria 13:46 and to Metzora 14:4) unanimously identify tzara'as as an outward manifestation of spiritual deficiency whose sole cure is repentance. This is indicated by the metzora's being "brought before the kohein" (14:2) (see Kli Yakar), the spiritual guide who facilitates his atonement not only through declaring his state of impurity and purity but by performing the various acts of purification and offering several korbanos to facilitate the process of correcting his sins. Perhaps it is not unreasonable to assume that, besides the formal acts of purification performed by the kohein, a knowledgeable kohein would also speak to the metzora instructing him in a tailor-made program of teshuva to assure that the sins causing the tzara'as can be properly avoided in the future.

The Talmud (Arachin 16a) lists seven sins whose punishment can be tzara'as.[2] The ones most highlighted by the commentaries are the sins of lashon hara and gasus haruach (arrogance). Indeed, the Gemara (ibid. 15b) and Midrash (Tanchuma, Metzora 3) list various Biblical allusions linking tzara'as and the sin of lashon hara. The word מצורע can be viewed as an abbreviation of מוציא שם רע – one who defames another's reputation. The verse from Mishlei (21:23), "שומר פיו ולשונו, שומר מצרות נפשו – One who guards his mouth and tongue, guards his soul from travails," can also be read with a play on words as שומר מצרעת נפשו – he saves himself from tzara'as, also indicating a linkage between lashon hara and tzara'as.

Not surprisingly then, the commentaries teach that the purification process presented in parshas Metzora contains many symbolic atonements of and spiritual techniques for correcting these sins. Quoting the verse from Mishlei (18:21), "החיים והמות ביד הלשון – Life and death are in the hands of the tongue," the Chafetz Chaim (al Hatorah) explains that to correct the flaw of evil speech engaged in by the metzora, he must go to a kohein, one whose speech is primarily the holy speech of Torah "כי שפתי כהן ישמרו דעת, ותורה יבקשו מפיהו" (Malachi 2:7)) and whose very words determine the impurity and purity of the afflicted one. Thus, evil speech causes the punishment, and the holy speech of the kohein facilitates spiritual rehabilitation. Kli Yakar (14:4, s.v. "v'ta'am lishtei tzipparim") and Sefer Apiryon (by Rav Shlomo Gantzfried, famed author of Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, quoted in Tal'lei Oros) both interpret the symbolism of the two birds brought, one slaughtered and one set free, as indicative of how the metzora should now act. Birds chirp, alluding to chatter or speech (see Rashi from Chazal to 14:4). The

former metzora must "kill" or cease the evil speech as indicated by the slaughter of one bird. But he cannot just stop talking! He must now use speech exclusively in a proper manner, engaging in words of prayer and Torah study as alluded to by the freeing of the live bird which also chirps. A similar idea is recorded in an anecdote about Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan zt"l, who, after publishing his central work, Chafetz Chaim on the laws of lashon hara, was approached by an individual who complained to him, "Rebbe, after you published this work, we cannot say anything!" To this, the tzadik replied, "On the contrary! Before I described when speaking evil of another is prohibited and when it is permitted, you couldn't open your mouth out of concern that maybe what you were saying was lashon hara. Now that you have a detailed guide as to the assur and the mutar, now you can speak!" Indeed, it is said of the Chafetz Chaim that he was a very pleasant conversationalist; he just was careful to only speak that which is permitted. This story alludes to an important, additional type of permissible, and sometimes even required, speech. Proper speech does not solely consist of words of Torah and prayer but sometimes, when the occasion calls for it, includes even derogatory words when they are done l'toeles, for a positive benefit in order to protect someone from damage. Lashon hara l'toeles has detailed laws as to when and how it is permitted – all spelled out in detail in the sefer Chafetz Chaim and related works – and is often not just allowed but required in fulfillment of the commandment of "lo sa'amod 'al dam rei'acha" – not standing idly by when a fellow Jew is in danger of being harmed.[3]

The blood of one bird is to be dripped into mayim chayim, spring water. Kli Yakar explains that this also alludes to eliminating evil speech and substituting words of Torah, which is compared to "living waters," for the sinful speech. The atonement of the sin of haughtiness which also causes tzara'as is alluded to by the earthenware utensil which the water and blood are placed in. When a keli cheres absorbs non-kosher food, it cannot be kashered; it must be broken – "ein lo takana ela shevira." This alludes to "breaking" one's ego in repentance. Of course, the sins of lashon hara and haughtiness are interrelated. One who has an overinflated sense of their worth will take the liberty of bad-mouthing others to gain popularity; one who is properly humble views harming another just as severely as harming oneself.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains the allusion conveyed by the two birds in an opposite manner. He first notes the parallel to the two goats brought on Yom Kippur. Whereas one is slaughtered and its blood is sprinkled in the Holy of Holies, the other is "v'shilach - sent away." So too concerning these two birds, one is slaughtered and one is sent away. A bird, not generally accepting subjugation to a master, represents unbridled animalistic freedom, that which, when manifested by a human being, leads to a sinful life both bein adam laMakom and bein adam lachaveiro, his sense of personal gratification not allowing for the sensitivity necessary to be a cooperative member of society. The teshuva process of the metzora requires the subjugation of his animal nature to the will of G-d, or, in the language of Tanya, the subjugation of the nefesh habehamis to the neshama Elohis. The slaughtered bird represents this subjugation of the animal nature of man to the higher order of sanctity commanded by Hashem, its blood being placed in "mayim chayim," representing the values of Torah. Physical involvement in the world is not to be eschewed; it is to be channeled for a higher purpose. The second bird being freed "on the face of the field" symbolizes sending the unfettered animal nature where it belongs, in the wild, not in human behavior. The fact that Chazal teach us both concerning the two birds of the metzora and concerning the two goats of Yom Kippur that they are to be acquired together and to look alike further highlights the idea of free choice; each creature represents the same human being, and he can decide whether to live a life of sanctity or the opposite.

On a practical level, especially in an era of instant messaging including the ability to forward something sent on the internet to thousands of people in a split second, the encouragement of consumers of goods and services to write a review of the product and the seller and an environment fostering instant comments on everything one does and

everywhere one visits, the proper application of permitted or even required speech versus prohibited speech takes on even greater scope and significance than in the past. The only solution is to study the laws of lashon hara thoroughly from a variety of sources available in so many different forms beyond the original classic sefer Chafetz Chaim and to seek Rabbinic guidance in different situations. May Hashem guide us to use the very essence of our humanity, our ruach memal'la, only in a befitting manner.

[1] In light of the firmly established concept that the medical condition known as leprosy is not identical with tzara'as, I chose to consistently use the Hebrew term without translation.

[2] They are: gossip, murder, false or vain oaths, arayos, arrogance, theft and stinginess.

[3] A similar allusion to the proper balance between speaking and not speaking can perhaps be found in the interrelationship between the silent cloth pomegranates and the noisy bells attached to the me'il of the kohein gadol, the garment which atoned for evil speech. (See also Chafetz Chaim al Hatorah, Tzetaveh.)

© 2025 by TorahWeb Foundation. All Rights Reserved]

Siyum in memory of YOCHANAN BEN YEKUTIEL YEHUDA (JOCHANAN KLEIN) is ready to enroll.

visit <https://www.lzechernishmas.com/signup.php?id=12573> in order to participate in the siyum DECEMBER 10/2025

לע"נ
יוחנן בן יקותיאל יודא ע"ה
שרה משה בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה
אנא מלכה בת ישראל