

O H R N E T

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

UP TO THE BRIM

BY RABBI REUVEN LAUFFER

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

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

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

Pesach is the time of Redemption and the Rabbis describe Elijah as being the Angel of Redemption. We believe that in the same way that we were redeemed from Egypt, so too will we be redeemed from our present lengthy exile. Tradition teaches that it is Elijah who will announce the coming of the Mashiach, and the cup is prepared as a sign of our desire that he should come as speedily as he can. Our Sages tell of a certain Rabbi in Talmudic times who met Elijah and asked him when the Mashiach would come. Elijah told him that he would come immediately. When he didn't materialize the Rabbi was very upset and the next time he met Elijah he berated him for not having

been accurate in his assessment. Elijah, after hearing him out, explained to him that he had meant every word. But, ultimately, it was entirely up to us whether the Mashiach comes or not. If we truly want him to come he will come without delay. And if we are not too enthusiastic about the idea, well, Elijah will have to wait until we change our minds.

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

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

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

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

Fit To Print

“This will be the torah (the law) of the Metzora...” (14:2)

It always fascinates me how exactly the same amount of news takes place every day. The proof for this is that every day the newspapers contain exactly the same number of pages.

In 1887, Adolph Ochs, the new proprietor of the New York Times, coined the phrase, “All the news that’s fit to print”, which would be better phrased as “All the news that fits, and if it doesn’t fit, I’m sure we can add a little bit here and there.”

In fact, most of the news that’s printed is far from fit to print. The stock in trade of most newspapers is gossip, be it financial gossip or entertainment biz gossip or political gossip or sports gossip, or just plain gossip gossip.

In Jewish Law, gossip, even when true, is prohibited. No word can emerge from our lips before it is vetted to make sure that it’s ‘fit to print’.

The *Chovot HaLevavot* explains that when someone speaks slander or gossips, the sins of the victim are transferred to the slanderer, and the Torah and good deeds of the slanderer accrue to the account of the victim. We learn this from a verse in this week’s Torah portion: “This will be the torah (law) of the Metzora on

ACHREI MOT

Dedicated Followers of Fashion

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

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

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

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

In the first part of the service of Yom Kippur in the *Beit Hamikdash*, the *kohen gadol* would burn incense in the Holy-of-Holies. The *Tzadukim* (Sadducees), who denied the authority of the Oral Torah, claimed that the incense first should be placed on the fire in a fire-pan outside the Holy-of-Holies and only then the *kohen gadol* should carry it inside. The Talmud (Yoma 53) cites the above Torah verse as a proof to the con-

trary — that the incense should only be placed on the fire “in front of G-d”.

trary — that the incense should only be placed on the day he purifies himself and repents for speaking slander, his Torah is considered his own again; until he does this however, the merit of his Torah belongs to his victim.

In Europe before the war, Rabbi Zvi Dovid, the head of the Krakow Beit Din, fell prey to a tide of untrue rumors and gossip. Disparaging comments could be heard from all quarters, the lies even emanated from the local taverns.

That Shabbat, the Rabbi stood up to address the congregation, “King David said in *Tehillim*, ‘Those who sit by the gate talk about me and make up drinking songs of drunkards’.” Said Rabbi Zvi Dovid, “Seemingly King David is only concerned because *ruffians* that sit by the gate talk slander about him; would he be any the happier were great rabbis to talk about him thus?”

“Actually, were Torah scholars to have spoken badly of King David he would have been able to console himself that all their Torah and good deeds would be transferred to ‘his account.’ In the situation in which I find myself, however, I seriously doubt how much Torah and *mitzvot* will accrue to me — so I am losing out in this world and the next.”

• Source: *Iturei Torah*

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

Rain On My Parade

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

• *Chizkuni as heard from Rabbi Moshe Zauderer*

PARSHA Overview

METZORA

The Torah describes the procedure for a *metzora* (a person afflicted with *tzara’at*) upon conclusion of his isolation. This process extends for a week and involves *korbanot* and immersions in the *mikveh*. Then, a *kohen* must pronounce the *metzora* pure. A *metzora* of limited financial means may substitute lesser offerings for the more expensive animals. Before a *kohen* diagnoses that a house has *tzara’at*, household possessions are removed to prevent them from also being declared ritually impure. The *tzara’at* is removed by smashing and rebuilding that section of the house. If it reappears, the entire building must be razed. The Torah details those bodily secretions that render a person spiritually impure, thereby preventing his contact with holy items, and the Torah defines how one regains a state of ritual purity.

ACHAREI MOT

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

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

KEDOSHIM

The nation is enjoined to be holy. Many prohibitions and positive commandments are taught. *Prohibitions*: Idolatry; eating offerings after their time-limit; theft and robbery; denial of theft; false oaths; retention of someone’s property; delaying payment to an employee; hating or cursing a fellow Jew (especially one’s parents); gossip; placing physical and spiritual stumbling blocks; perversion of justice; inaction when others are in danger; embarrassing; revenge; bearing a grudge; cross-breeding; wearing a garment of wool and linen; harvesting a tree during its first three years; gluttony and intoxication; witchcraft; shaving the beard and sideburns; tattooing. *Positive*: Awe for parents and respect for the elderly; leaving part of the harvest for the poor; loving others (especially a convert); eating in Jerusalem the fruits from a tree’s fourth year; awe for the Temple; respect for Torah scholars, the blind and the deaf. Family life must be holy. We are warned again not to imitate gentile behavior, lest we lose the Land of Israel. We must observe *kashrut*, thus maintaining our unique and separate status.

TALMUDigest

Nazir 23-29

- Woman who violated the laws of *nezirut* unaware that her husband had nullified her vow of *nazirut*
- Other examples of sinning with intention and not action
- The righteous and the sinner in the same situation and an analysis of Lot and his daughters
- A sin for Heaven's sake and a mitzvah for the sake of reward
- Status of animal designated for sacrifice by a woman whose *nezirut* vow was nullified by husband
- Husband's financial responsibility for wife's sacrifices
- When a wife's funds belong to her and not her husband
- The *nezirut* ram sacrifices that require no loaves to accompany them
- What happens to sacrifices which cannot be offered because the *nezirat* vow was nullified
- The differences between funds designated for particular sacrifices and those that were not
- A son's ability to offer as atonement an animal designated by his father for his own sacrifice
- At which stage of the wife's *nezirut* sacrifice offerings can the husband no longer nullify her vow
- A father making his son a nazir
- The *nezirut* vow of a minor

Who Owns the Surplus

How is it possible for a married woman to have her own funds if the rule is that whatever she owns belongs to her husband?

This question arises in regard to the distinction made in the *mishna* between sacrificial animals belonging to the husband or to the wife who made a vow of *nezirut* whose vow was nullified by her husband before those animals were sacrificed.

One of the answers given by Rabbi Papa is that the wife was able to buy those animals from the money she saved by stinting on the food she consumed and thus remaining with funds from the food allowance given to her by law from her husband.

Tosefot presents a challenge to this approach from a *gemara* (*Ketubot* 59a) which states that money remaining from the food allowance belongs to the husband.

One solution provided by Tosefot is that there is a distinction between money remaining because the price of food went down and a situation in which the price remained the same but the woman ate less than normal. In the first case it is the husband who benefits from the food being cheaper while in the second case it is the wife who owns the money she saved by eating less.

• *Nazir* 24b

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TALMUDigest

Nazir 30-36

- When a nazir can utilize his nazir father's sacrifice funds for himself
- A commitment to the Sanctuary made in error
- An error made in the tithing of animals
- The nazir whose animal designated for a sacrifice was stolen
- The mistaken ruling of a sage regarding a nazir who made this vow unaware that the *Beit Hamikdash* had been destroyed
- The vow of *nezirut* based on a guess
- What is forbidden to a nazir
- If the nazir is forbidden to eat the grapevine
- An analysis of the Torah's delineation of what is forbidden to the nazir to consume
- Two different methods of interpreting two general terms with a particular in between
- When permitted matter becomes prohibited through being combined with forbidden matter

Black or White?

“I devote to the Sanctuary the black ox which is first to come out of my house.” Should someone make a commitment and the ox which first exits the house turns out to be white there is a difference of opinion between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel as to whether this commitment made in error is binding.

The simple reading of the text of the *mishna* in which this case appears is that the subject of contention is the status of the white ox which actually came out first. Beit Shammai's view is that the inten-

tion of the person making the commitment is to devote to the Sanctuary the first animal that leaves the house, and his referring to it as black is an incidental error in assuming that it would be black.

There is, however, a radically different approach that proposes that the animal in question is not the white one that came out first but rather the black one that followed. The reasoning for this is that what the consecrator had in mind was not the first animal to come out but the first of the black oxen that would exit.

• *Nazir 31a*

What the SAGES Say

“One should study Torah and perform *mitzvot* even for selfish motives because this will eventually lead him to doing so for pure motives.”

• *The Sage Rav - Nazir 23b*

“A vow of *nezirut* is valid only if there is absolute clarity in the commitment. Should two people see someone coming towards them and one of them makes a vow to be a nazir if that stranger is a nazir, while the other makes a similar vow if the stranger is not a nazir – neither of them becomes a nazir because of the lack of clarity at the time of the vow.”

• *Rabbi Tarfon - Nazir 35a*

“Wherever there is a conflict between a positive commandment and a prohibition, you must try to reconcile the conflict and fulfill both. But if you are unable to do so the prohibition must be put aside in favor of the positive commandment.”

• *Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish - Nazir 41a*

“People will say: ‘Meir is dead, Yehuda is angry and Yossi is silent – what will happen to the Torah!’”

• *Rabbi Yossi - Nazir 50a*

TALMUDigest

Nazir 37-43

- Conversion of permitted matter into forbidden
- When taste is considered as substance
- The many applications of the measure of *revi'it* to halachic matters
- How a *nazir* can be liable for many sets of lashes for transgressing
- The *nazir* whose hair was prematurely cut
- How the hair grows
- Source for prohibiting any method of removing a *nazir's* hair
- The hair removal of the *nazir*, *metzora* and the Biblical Levites
- When a positive command is in conflict with a prohibition
- If all the *nazir's* hair is not removed when the time comes for his haircut
- Washing or combing the hair of the *nazir* during the period when removing it is forbidden
- When multiple transgressions of a *nazir* are punishable by only one set of lashes
- When a *kohen* may be involved in burying any Jew and when he is prohibited from burying even his father

The Emergency Burial

Although a *kohen* is prohibited to have contact with any dead person aside from his seven close relatives, the Torah made an exception in the case of a *met mitzvah* — a corpse with no one around but the *kohen* to bury him. The dignity due to such a Jew overrides the sanctity of the *kohen*.

What is the rule, however, in a case where there is a non-*kohen* who could handle the burial? Tosefot rules that in such a case it is the non-*kohen* who must take care of the burial even if he is not a relative of the deceased.

This ruling is based on a later *mishna* (*Nazir* 47a), which states that if a *kohen gadol* and a *nazir* come upon a *met mitzvah* it is the *nazir* who must take care of the burial because his sanctity is less than that of the *kohen gadol*. It then follows that in the choice between a regular *kohen* and a non-*kohen*, where the gap in sanctity is even wider, the responsibility for burial is incumbent upon the non-*kohen*.

• *Nazir* 43b

The HUMAN SIDE of the Story

Miracle of Maror

Pesach was approaching and a group of Jews in wartime Siberian exile were desperately searching for a source for the romaine lettuce they needed to fulfill the mitzvah of eating *maror* on Pesach eve. Virtually no vegetables grew in that frozen wasteland so that the prospects for acquiring *maror* were bleak indeed.

The revered Rav of Tsheben, Rabbi Dov Berish Weidenfeld, asked Yechezkel Klagbard, who later served as the first chazan in Bnei Brak's Central Synagogue, to make a search for the *maror*. His initial efforts proved futile and he came to the conclusion that it was up to G-d to provide a miracle.

To fulfill his own responsibility he returned to the frozen streets of the city and began to sing his most beautiful melodies. Although most people who heard his loud singing thought he was deranged, one old gentile woman suddenly came out of an alley and said, "I love the song you just sang. Sing it again for me and I will reward you." He sang as requested and when he finished he told her that he was not interested in money, only in romaine lettuce. To his pleasant surprise she went down to her cellar and brought from there enough of the precious vegetable to supply all the Jews in that group with their *maror* needs.

TALMUDigest

Nazir 44-50

- Differences between the nazirite prohibitions re wine, haircut and contact with dead
- The haircut and sacrifices of the *nazir* who became ritually impure through contact with dead
- The haircut and sacrifices of the *nazir* who has successfully completed his period of *nezirut*
- What happens to the cut hair in each of the above cases
- The *kohen's* share of the *nazir's* sacrifice
- When the *nazir* becomes free to drink wine
- When the *nazir's* sacrifices prove to be invalid
- Contact with the dead in midst of sacrificial process
- When a *nazir* and a *kohen gadol* come upon a *met mitzvah*
- The different levels of sanctity in the hierarchy of the *kohanim*
- The universal suspension of sanctity for the sake of the *met mitzvah*
- What constitutes contact with the dead for interruption of his *nezirut*
- Rabbi Yehuda and the disciples of Rabbi Meir
- Status of decayed flesh of man or animal in regard to ritual impurity

that he would come under attack from his colleague's disciples. He therefore urged his own disciples to prevent them from attending his Torah dissertations lest they attempt to challenge him just for the sake of proving him incorrect.

One of Rabbi Meir's disciples, the Sage Sumchus, somehow forced his way in and did challenge something that Rabbi Yehuda said. In our *gemara* it was in connection with Rabbi Meir's statement about a *nazir's* contact with the dead. In the *Mesechta Kiddushin* (52b) the challenge was regarding a statement by Rabbi Meir about a *kohen* using the flesh of a sacrifice to make *kiddushin*.

In both of these cases Rabbi Yehuda became angry at his disciples for permitting the challenger to enter and he summarily dismissed the challenges. One of the disciples, Rabbi Yossi, then made this puzzling declaration: "People will say: Meir is dead, Yehuda is angry and Yossi is silent — what will happen to the Torah!" He then proceeded to show why the challenges of Sumchus were indeed valid.

Maharsha (*Kiddushin*) explains that Rabbi Yossi's comment about Rabbi Yehuda's anger was intended to express his feeling that perhaps the master had erred as a result of becoming angry and that there was an urgent need for him to correct the situation for the sake of Torah truth.

• *Nazir 49b*

A Puzzling Declaration

When Rabbi Meir passed away the collegial Sage who regularly disputed his rulings, Rabbi Yehuda, was greatly concerned

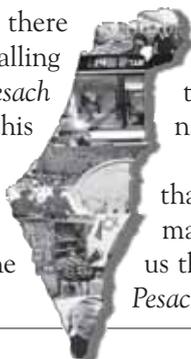
LOVE OF THE LAND

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

Gilgal – A Memory and a Hope

When the Festival of Pesach arrives there comes along with it the practice of recalling the special sacrifice — the *Korban Pesach* — that every Jew offered in connection with this holiday during the time of the *Beit Hamikdash*.

The first time this sacrifice was offered in Eretz Yisrael was when our ancestors settled in Gilgal and "offered the *Korban Pesach* on the Plains of Yericho" (*Yehoshua 5:10*).



The name Gilgal is derived from the Hebrew word for "removing", a reference to the removal of the "shame of Egypt" through a national process of circumcision.

It is our identification with the memory of that *Korban Pesach* and those that followed for so many centuries that we hope and pray will give us the merit of soon seeing the renewal of *Korban Pesach* in the rebuilt *Beit Hamikdash*.

Fast of the Firstborns

From: Charles in Melbourne

*Dear Rabbi,
What is the fast of firstborns and why is it done?*

Dear Charles,

It is customary for Jewish firstborns to fast during the day of the eve of Passover. It commemorates the miracle that saved the Jewish firstborns from the plague that slew all the firstborns in Egypt the night of Passover.

But why commemorate by fasting?

I say it was the “firstborns in Egypt” that died and not the “Egyptian firstborns” because, according to the Talmudic sages, all firstborns in Egypt, even of other nations, perished in the plague. If all firstborns died, the Israelites were also potentially subject to the plague. The Jewish firstborns therefore fast to commemorate their being spared the same fate as the other firstborns.

However, according to this, the fast should be on Passover itself when the miracle actually took place. The reason it’s not observed then is because we don’t fast on a festival. It is therefore usually observed on the day of the eve of Passover.

This leads to another explanation for the fast. In anticipation of the plague threatening all the firstborns in Egypt, the Israelite firstborns fasted on the eve of Passover to absolve themselves of any potential harm from the pending plague called for Passover night. Hence the miracle is commemorated through fasting on Passover Eve when the firstborn Jews themselves fasted and were thereby saved from the plague.

Another reason for commemorating the miracle by fasting may be to express our regret that the redemption from Egypt involved such great loss of life. Even though the Egyptians persecuted the Jews terribly and ultimately brought the destruction upon themselves, we nevertheless temper our joy to emphasize that we celebrate the salvation from G-d, not the destruction of our enemies. Similarly, for this reason we do not recite the full version of the special “Hallel” prayer for most of Passover — we cannot express full joy when the redemption left so many of G-d’s creations dead.

While the fast of the firstborns is still in effect today regarding penitence and giving charity, it is usually not observed by fasting. What is usually done is that firstborn males over 13 years old attend some special event that involves a mitzvah and accompanying mitzvah-meal. Since they are present, they are permitted to partake of the mitzvah-meal. Having broken the fast for a mitzvah, they may eat for the rest of the day. This event

is usually a “*siyum*”, celebrating the completion of a Talmudic tractate that is scheduled for the eve of Passover after the morning prayer service.

In a year when Passover is on Shabbat, the fast is usually observed in its proper time on Friday, despite its being the eve of Shabbat. However, if Passover is on Sunday such that the eve of Passover is on Shabbat when fasting is prohibited, the fast is observed on Thursday since a fast that has been suspended from its normal time may not be held on the eve of Shabbat. That is the case this year (5768, 2008).

Incomplete Hallel

From: Barry in Seattle

*Dear Rabbi,
Why do we read the complete hallel for only the first day of Pesach but not the rest of the holiday? I think this is different than on Chanukah when we read the complete hallel for the entire holiday. Weren't the miracles that occurred regarding Pesach greater than Chanukah?*

Dear Barry,

After departing Egypt on what became the first day of Passover, the Jews reached the Sea of Reeds (Red Sea) on the seventh day. As you know, they were pursued by the Egyptians in chariots of war led by Pharaoh who intended to annihilate them. Trapped with the sea before them and the Egyptian army rapidly approaching from behind, the Jews turned their hearts upward. In that merit, G-d miraculously split the sea and the Jews passed through.

As the last Jews exited the sea, the last of the Egyptians had finished entering in after them. The raging waters held at bay were let loose with a fury and drowned the entire Egyptian army. Having witnessed this awesome miracle and surreal salvation, the Jews broke out in song and praise of G-d, “Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the L-rd, and they spoke, saying, I will sing to the L-rd, for very exalted is He; a horse and its rider He cast into the sea” (Shmot 15:1).

According to the Midrash the angels observed all this from on high and also wanted to chime in and praise. G-d reprimanded them saying, “My creations are drowning in the sea and you wish to sing?!” From here we learn that the joy of the salvation must be tempered by sorrow over the destruction of the enemy, as in the verse “Do not rejoice in the downfall of your enemy” (Proverbs 24:17).

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ASK! *the Jewish Information Service*

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Therefore, the *hallel* of this day, the seventh day of Pesach, is not completed since our joy over the miraculous salvation at the sea is marred by the loss of life of the Egyptians. And since the *hallel* is not completed on this last day, it's abridged for the intermediate days as well, so that they should not be viewed as more important than the concluding festival day.

You might ask, If G-d stopped the angels from singing, why did Moses and the Jews sing — and why didn't G-d stop them as he stopped the angels? And if He didn't stop them, then why shouldn't we sing as well? Furthermore, according to this, we shouldn't complete the *hallel* on the first day either, as there was also great loss of life in the plague of the firstborns. Why do we complete it then? Well, I'm glad you asked. All can be answered with the same idea.

G-d did not allow the angels to sing because they were only spectators and did not actually experience the miracle themselves. They were therefore expected to consider both the salvation and the destruction simul-

taneously and reduce their joy. However, the Jews of that generation had actually lived through the most harrowing of experiences and literally saw G-d's salvation with their own eyes. Their joy was completely focused on the miracles, then, and not on the destruction. Accordingly, this reason also applies to future generations of Jews who did not actually experience the miraculous salvation but were more like distant spectators. Therefore we don't complete the *hallel* on this last day, or on the intermediate days either, as explained above.

However, the reason we do complete the *hallel* on the first day despite the destruction of G-d's creatures in the plague of the firstborns is based on the injunction incumbent on every Jew to view himself as if he had actually partaken in the exodus from Egypt. Since our appreciation and joy is to be so great that we are to feel as if we had actually experienced the exodus ourselves, for this reason we recite the complete *hallel* on the first night and day of Pesach.

WHAT'S *the Right Thing* TO DO?

Diplomatic Declining

Question: I have been invited by a relative to join her family for a meal on Pesach. Although she is *kashrut* observant her standards for Pesach do not quite measure up to mine. I don't wish to insult her with a flat refusal, but I also refuse to make any compromises. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: The great Torah leader of the previous generation, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, the rosh hayeshiva of Torah Voda'as in Brooklyn, was once faced with a similar dilemma. He solved the problem by declaring that he did not eat *gebrokts* — matzah meal combined with liquid, which is the

basis for *kneidlach* and other Pesach foods. Since this is not a universal custom he was able to thus decline the invitation extended by a *gebrokts* user without hurting any feelings.

This is one way of diplomatically declining an unwelcome invitation on Pesach and there are certainly other ideas that you can come up with and need not make any compromises in your standards.

By the way, it was not the practice of Rabbi Kamenetzky's family to avoid *gebrokts*, but once having made the statement this man of truth did avoid eating *gebrokts* for the rest of his life.

*The Ohr Somayach family wishes
you a Chag Kasher v'Somayach.
מַעַל יְדֵי עֵין*

PARSHA Q&A

METZORA

1. When may a *metzora* not be pronounced *tahor*?
2. In the *midbar*, where did a *metzora* dwell while he was *tamei*?
3. Why does the *metzora* require birds in the purification process?
4. In the purification process of a *metzora*, what does the cedar wood symbolize?
5. During the purification process, the *metzora* is required to shave his hair. Which hair must he shave?
6. What is unique about the *chatat* and the *asham* offered by the *metzora*?
7. In the *Beit Hamikdash*, when the *metzora* was presented “before G-d” (14:11), where did he stand?
8. Where was the *asham* of the *metzora* slaughtered?
9. How was having *tzara’at* in one’s house sometimes advantageous?
10. When a house is suspected as having *tzara’at*, what is its status prior to the inspection by a *kohen*?
11. What happens to the vessels that are in a house found to have *tzara’at*?
12. Which type of vessels cannot be made *tahor* after they become *tamei*?
13. Where were stones afflicted with *tzara’at* discarded?
14. When a house is suspected of having *tzara’at*, a *kohen* commands that the affected stones be replaced and the house plastered. What is the law if the *tzara’at*: a) returns and spreads; b) does not return; c) returns, but does not spread?
15. When a person enters a house that has *tzara’at*, when do his clothes become *tamei*?
16. What is the status of a man who is *zav* (sees a flow): a) two times or two consecutive days; b) three times or three consecutive days?
17. A *zav* sat or slept on the following: a) a bed; b) a plank; c) a chair; d) a rock. If a *tahor* person touches these things what is his status?
18. What does the Torah mean when it refers to a *zav* who “has not washed his hands”?
19. When may a *zav* immerse in a *mikveh* to purify himself?
20. What is the status of someone who experiences a one time flow?

Answers to Metzora’s Questions

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

1. 14:2 - At night.
2. 14:3 - Outside the three camps.
3. 14:4 - *Tzara’at* comes as a punishment for *lashon hara*. Therefore, the Torah requires the *metzora* to offer birds, who chatter constantly, to atone for his sin of chattering.
4. 14:4 - The cedar is a lofty tree. It alludes to the fact that *tzara’at* comes as a punishment for haughtiness.
5. 14:9 - Any visible collection of hair on the body.
6. 14:10 - They require *n’sachim* (drink offerings).
7. 14:11 - At the gate of Nikanor.
8. 14:13 - On the northern side of the *mizbe’ach*.
9. 14:34 - The Amorites concealed treasures in the walls of their houses. After the conquest of the Land, *tzara’at* would afflict these houses. The Jewish owner would tear down the house and find the treasures.
10. 14:36 - It is *tahor*.
11. 14:36 - They become *tamei*.
12. 14:36 - Earthenware vessels.
13. 14:40 - In places where *tahor* objects were not handled.
14. a) 14:44-45 - It is called “*tzara’at mam’eret*,” and the house must be demolished; b) 14:48 - the house is pronounced *tahor*; c) 14:44 - The house must be demolished.
15. 14:46 - When he remains in the house long enough to eat a small meal.
16. 15:2 - a) He is *tamei*; b) he is *tamei* and is also required to bring a *korban*.
17. 15:4-5 - Only a type of object that one usually lies or sits upon becomes a transmitter of *tumah* when a *zav* sits or lies on it. A *tahor* person who subsequently touches the object becomes *tamei* and the clothes he is wearing are also *tmei’im*. Therefore: a) *tamei*; b) *tahor*; c) *tamei*; d) *tahor*.
18. 15:11 - One who has not immersed in a *mikveh*.
19. 15:13 - After seven consecutive days without a flow.
20. 15:32 - He is *tamei* until evening.

PARSHA Q&A

ACHAREI MOT

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

KEDOSHIM

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

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

Answers to Acharei Mot & Kedoshim's Questions

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

ACHAREI MOT

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

KEDOSHIM

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

Parshat Metzora

For the Birds

Two birds serve the purpose of purification of the *metzora* whose leprosy-like affliction has come to an end. Rashi cites the explanation of the Talmudic Sages for the choice of birds:

“The affliction was a Heavenly punishment for sinfully chattering gossip and slander. It is therefore fitting that the purification be achieved through birds that are constantly chirping.”

One of the truly unpleasant facets of Israeli society is the almost fanatical preoccupation of the media with reporting all the negative actions of the nation’s citizens. The so-called “right of the people to know” which is the mantra of the “fourth estate” serves as an excuse to perpetrate character assassination.

Perhaps the lesson of the *metzora* will serve as a warning to the “public’s watchdogs” in the media that not everything is fit for print or any other form of media. When such chatter is left for the birds we will have a cleaner and better Israel forever.

Parshat Acharei Mot - Shabbat Hagadol

“Have a Great Shabbat”

Each generation has its own favorite expressions. One example of our own time is the popular pre-Shabbat wish to “have a great Shabbat”.

Every Shabbat should hopefully be great for every Jew but only one Shabbat a year is actually called Shabbat Hagadol – The Great Shabbat.

This is the Shabbat before Pesach that deserves that title because of the great miracle that took place on the pre-Exodus Shabbat when our ancestors took animals worshipped as idols by the Egyptians and offered them as sacrifices to G-d with no opposition from their oppressors.

It is a source of pain to all Shabbat observers to witness the lax attitude of so many Jews in Israel in regard to the sanctity of Shabbat. Perhaps the identification we have with the “Great Shabbat” of history will inspire all Jews to make every Shabbat a great one which will, as promised by G-d, protect Israel forever.

Shabbat Chol Hamoed

Four Sons at One Table

In the Haggadah which Jews throughout Eretz Yisrael and the world recited at the Seder Table on Pesach we read about four sons — a wise one, a wicked one, a simple one and one who is unable to ask. There is no indication in the Torah sources for their asked and unasked questions that all four are seated at the same table. But the fact that the Torah provides us with the proper response to each of them indicates that a dialogue with each of them is a real possibility.

In Eretz Yisrael there are many Torah observant Jews who are anxious to engage in such dialogues in the hope of educating the ignorant and embracing the alienated. There is definitely a possibility for all four sons to sit at one table and allow the wise son to show the way to learn from the Exodus how to secure Israel forever.

Parshat Kedoshim

The Inseparable Connection

“You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you... I am the L-rd your G-d, Who has distinguished you from all the nations.”
(*Vayikra* 20:24)

These Divinely spoken words from this week’s Torah portion serve as a timely reminder, as Israel prepares to celebrate its sixtieth birthday, that there is an inseparable connection between our ability to peacefully inherit our Promised Land and our determination to remain distinct in our beliefs and practices from all the nations.

To our deep regret there are many Jews in Israel who are tempted to imitate the non-Jewish world in matters of dress, entertainment and general culture. The Torah’s warning that will be heard in synagogues throughout Israel and the world is that we will deserve Heavenly protection in the Land granted to us alone by G-d only if we maintain our distinctiveness as G-d’s chosen people.

This is the only way we can inherit a peaceful Israel forever.