

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE TAZRIA/HAHODESH

MARCH 28-29, 2014 27 ADAR II 5774
Rosh Hodesh Nisan will be celebrated on Tuesday, April 1 – Join Hal for breakfast!

Kiddush is given by Mrs. Barbara Halio in memory of her husband Dr. Solomon Halio. Apropos that Dr Halio's yearzeit this year falls on Shabbat Tazria when the portion begins with a woman who gives birth.

DEDICATIONS: In memory of Yaakov Ben Victoria – Jack David Gindi
Happy Birthday to Alison and her Grandmother
And for a refuah shelemah for Shulamit bat Faygeh Libah

Candle lighting this Friday evening is at 6:57 p.m. Shir Hashirim 6:40 Mincha at 6:55

SHABBAT Class at 8:30, Relevant Daily Halachot based upon the teaching of HaRav Ovadia Yosef
Hashem melech at 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 9:10AM
Welcome to Soon to be Rabbi, Asher Abittan who will be giving the Derasha

Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30
Ages 0-5 - in the Playroom / Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

Pirkey Avot with Rav Aharon 6:00
Mincha at 6:30 - Seuda Shelishi at 7:00 Birkat HaMazon at 7:40
Arbit at 7:45 - Shabbat Ends – 7:57 PM

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE
Shaharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE - Men and Women are Invited
Monday Night Class with Rabba Yenai – 7:30 PM –
Rabbi Yenay is changing his time for Monday class with the clock change. Class will start at 7:30 with prayers before. People should come at 7 for service but at 7:30 for class.

Daily class with Rabbi Colish - Weekday 6:30 AM (ADDITIONAL NEW TIME Sunday Mornings 7:30)
Kaballah as a Guide to Spiritual Growth based upon the teachings of Likutei Moharan

Don't miss the Stunning Israeli Art Show
Sunday Evening at 7pm in the Social Hall
There will be prints of watercolor as well as blown glass \$25 and up
Please see the Flyer on the bulletin board for more details

Sunday Morning April 6th 10:00 AM
Halachot of Cleaning and Kashering for Pesach
based upon the rulings of HaRav Ovadia Yosef and Harav Abadi

Holocaust Remembrance Rally
Sunday April 27th at 11:30 AM in front of the UN Iranian Mission
622 3rd Avenue & E 40th Street
"More than 6 Million Reasons to Show Up and Speak Out!"
For more information please email hashoah.mail@gmail.com

The Jan Eisenstein Youth Speaker Series presents, "Miracles & Fate on 78"
A survivor of the 9/11 attacks tells us his story of courage, danger, sacrifice and faith in the face of adversity.
Sunday, March 30th at 5:30 pm @ the BACH 210 Edwards Blvd. Long Beach, NY 11561
Includes hot pizza dinner and exciting raffles. This program is for pre-teens and teens and their parents.
FREE OF CHARGE ~ RSVP requested 516 897 2473 or beila@bachyouth.com.

Jeff Metviner is giving a defensive driving class on Sunday, April 6 from 10 AM to 4 PM. Flyer will follow. Cost \$50.

Rabbi Mann will again be assisting with the sale of Hametz, please see form attached

If there is enough interest in doing a communal Seder, David (Rabbi) will stay with us on Pesach and conduct the Seders together with Rabbi Colish and Sam Shetrit. It was an amazing experience when we did it together year before last. Cost will be \$50 per night per adult and \$25 per night per child under 12. We will try to subsidize anyone who needs it. Its important that we know who may want to come from now. We will try to limit to the first 80 people for each night. Please let us know right away if you would like to join us for both nights or for Monday or Tuesday.

To subscribe or to unsubscribe, please reply to ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com
 Newsletter archives now at BenaiAsher.Org

Our weekly article is now printed in the Jewish Voice. Please pick up a copy at your local shop or go on line to JewishVoiceNY.com. You can also comment on the articles there and tweet them to your friends.

Follow us on twitter @BenaiAsher for a daily dose of Torah, Israel or something of interest

Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame. Mincha at 4PM through October 30th – Please join us! 212-289-2100

Editors Notes

Its Thursday night and I'm sitting at my sister's kitchen counter in Florida. I came down to spend some time with my mom together with my wife, although my wife had to cancel her trip at the last minute – may she be blessed with a refuah shelemah. My article for this week got lost somewhere in Cyberspace and never made it into the Jewish Voice. I actually wrote it at 4AM on Monday morning after waking up from the strangest dream. But with twenty years of newsletters under my belt, I've learned to take a hint from Heaven. When files go missing or get corrupted, I take it as a sign that someone upstairs is hitting the censor button. I know many of our more yeshivaish readers would have liked to censor last week's newsletter and I thank you all for your comments and feedback.

So let's keep it a bit lighter this week. And if I have an opportunity to give a class down here, maybe I'll tell them about the crazy dream of sitting in the Yeshiva in Heaven and discussing Parshat HaChodesh.

This weeks portion begins with the verse, "If a woman conceives and gives birth". One is hard pressed to think of a greater act of Chesed than bringing a child into this world. There is no greater bond of love than the one that exists between a mother and her child.

The period after child birth is a difficult one for many mothers adjusting to this new life, to changing hormones and the pangs of child birth. My wife has for many years been there for women suffering from postpartum depression and we should appreciate that in the last decades we understand so much more and can help so many more young mothers.

Many communities have beautiful customs when it comes to supporting new mothers.

Chantelle would talk about the Mother-Baby Homes that many of her chaisdic friends visit after birth and look forward to as a special treat for a new mother. Women are as Ruchi Koval.writes on her blog: "lavished with delicious gourmet meals, luxurious accommodations, and entertainment while socializing with other postpartum women and mainly, resting. Their newborns are cared for by top-notch nurses around the clock. Most mothers of large families go away for a week to one of these facilities and have the time of their lives to rest and to have fun.

She continues in the name of a friend, Libby, "I remember one of the Catholic nurses said that when she gives birth she will put on a snood [cloth head-covering, to impersonate a religious woman] and come here because there is nothing like this out there."

Many communities organize groups of women who cook for the new mother's family for the week after birth. Others help with kids homework, carpooling, cleaning services. Anything to help the new mother.

That's why I was so happy when I received an email from my niece Henriette Jemal talking about a new SBH program called "Meaningful Meals" for young mothers in Manhattan.

Henriette writes: "Whether it is for the sick, poor, elderly or someone simply in need of an extra hand, Sephardic Bikur Holim (SBH) is there to help our community members get back on their feet with kindheartedness, respect and discretion. This outstanding agency started in Brooklyn, NY and Deal, NJ, and we are proud to announce the opening of a new branch in Manhattan!

"One of the first programs to come out of SBH Manhattan is "Meaningful Meals." This wonderful program is dedicated to helping Manhattan's Jewish community by providing home cooked meals to mothers that have recently given birth as well as those who are hospitalized with an illness or recovering from a surgery. We have an extensive list of volunteers who prepare home cooked meals in their kosher kitchens and deliver it straight to the meal receivers' doors. "Meaningful Meals" aspires to continue growing and serving the Manhattan Jewish Community in the most supportive and efficient way possible. If you or anyone you know can use a "Meaningful Meal" please don't hesitate to contact us via email at SBHMeaningfulMeals@gmail.com or by phone at (347) 525-3518.

"We are always looking for compassionate volunteers to help prepare meals, so if you would like to donate your time, please contact us! Lillian Amar, Director SBH Manhattan along with Isadora Haddad ~ Henriette Jemal ~ Michal Mishan ~ Esther Sabbagh

If your community doesn't have such a program, it only takes a few good and committed friends to start one.

Because as we know, the verse perhaps shouldn't read, If a woman gives birth, but WHEN a woman gives birth. It happens every day and they can use all the help they can get.

Shabbat Shalom
David Bibi

This week, we have an article by Alan Dershowitz on European Anti Semitism. And an article I put in for my already nervous son in law who will be eating in my house on Passover with kitniyot all around. Another rabbi pushes for Ashkenazim to eat kitniyot.

Europe's Alarming Push to Isolate Israel
Tuesday, 11 Mar 2014 08:24 PM
By Alan Dershowitz

When President Barack Obama warned of "international fallout" if Israel fails to embrace the latest U.S. Middle East peace proposal, Newsmax asked noted author and Harvard Law professor Alan Dershowitz to comment on the growing talk of a European boycott against Israel.

Why are so many of the grandchildren of Nazis and Nazi collaborators who brought us the Holocaust once again declaring war on the Jews?

Why have we seen such an increase in anti-Semitism and irrationally virulent anti-Zionism in western Europe?

To answer these questions, a myth must first be exposed. That myth is the one perpetrated by the French, the Dutch, the Norwegians, the Swiss, the Belgians, the Austrians, and many other western Europeans: namely that the Holocaust was solely the work of German Nazis aided perhaps by some Polish, Ukrainian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian collaborators.

False.

The Holocaust was perpetrated by Europeans -- by Nazi sympathizers and collaborators among the French, Dutch, Norwegians, Swiss, Belgians,

Austrians and other Europeans, both Western and Eastern.

If the French government had not deported to the death camps more Jews than their German occupiers asked for; if so many Dutch and Belgian citizens and government officials had not cooperated in the roundup of Jews; if so many Norwegians had not supported Quisling; if Swiss government officials and bankers had not exploited Jews; if Austria had not been more Nazi than the Nazis, the Holocaust would not have had so many Jewish victims.

In light of the widespread European complicity in the destruction of European Jewry, the pervasive anti-Semitism and irrationally hateful anti-Zionism that has recently surfaced throughout western Europe toward Israel should surprise no one.

"Oh no," we hear from European apologists. "This is different. We don't hate the Jews. We only hate their nation-state. Moreover, the Nazis were right-wing. We're left-wing, so we can't be anti-Semites."

Nonsense.

The hard left has a history of anti-Semitism as deep and enduring as the hard right. The line from Voltaire, to Karl Marx, to Levrenti Beria, to Robert Faurisson, to today's hard-left Israel bashers is as straight as the line from Wilhelm Mars to the persecutors of Alfred Dreyfus to Hitler.

The Jews of Europe have always been crushed between the Black and the Red -- victims of extremism whether it be the ultra-nationalism of Khmel'nitsky to the ultra-anti-Semitism of Stalin.

"But some of the most strident anti-Zionists are Jews, such as Norman Finkelstein and even Israelis such as Gilad Atzmon. Surely they can't be anti-Semites."

Why not? Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas collaborated with the Gestapo. Atzmon, a hard leftist, describes himself as a proud self-hating Jew and admits that his ideas derive from a notorious anti-Semite.

He denies that the Holocaust is historically proved but he believes that Jews may well have killed Christian children to use their blood to bake Passover Matzah. And he thinks it's "rational" to burn down synagogues.

Finkelstein believes in an international Jewish conspiracy that includes Steven Spielberg, Leon Uris, Eli Wiesel, and Andrew Lloyd Webber!

"But Israel is doing bad things to the Palestinians," the European apologists insist, "and we are sensitive to the plight of the underdog."

No, you're not! Where are your demonstrations on behalf of the oppressed Tibetans, Georgians, Syrians, Armenians, Kurds, or even Ukrainians? Where are your BDS movements against the Chinese, the Russians, the Cubans, the Turks, or the Assad regime?

Only the Palestinians, only Israel? Why? Not because the Palestinians are more oppressed than these and other groups.

Only because their alleged oppressors are Jews and the nation-state of the Jews. Would there be demonstrations and BDS campaigns on behalf of the Palestinians if they were oppressed by Jordan or Egypt?

Oh, wait! The Palestinians were oppressed by Egypt and Jordan. Gaza was an open-air prison between 1948 and 1967, when Egypt was the occupying power. And remember Black September, when Jordan killed more Palestinians than Israel did in a century? I don't remember any demonstration or BDS campaigns -- because there weren't any.

When Arabs occupy or kill Arabs, Europeans go hohum. But when Israel opens a soda factory in Maale Adumim, which even the Palestinian leadership acknowledges will remain part of Israel in any peace deal, Oxfam parts ways with Scarlett Johansson for advertising a soda company that employs hundreds of Palestinians.

Keep in mind that Oxfam has provided "aid and material support" to two anti-Israeli terrorist groups, according to the Tel Aviv-based Israeli Law Group.

The hypocrisy of so many hard-left western Europeans would be staggering if it were not so predictable based on the sordid history of Western Europe's treatment of the Jews.

Even England, which was on the right side of the war against Nazism, has a long history of anti-Semitism, beginning with the expulsion of the Jews in 1290 to the notorious White Paper of 1939, which prevented the Jews of Europe from seeking asylum from the Nazis in British-mandated Palestine. And Ireland, which vacillated in the war against Hitler, boasts some of the most virulent anti-Israeli rhetoric.

The simple reality is that one cannot understand the current western European left-wing war against the nation-state of the Jewish people without first acknowledging the long-term European war against the Jewish people themselves.

Theodore Herzl understood the pervasiveness and irrationality of European anti-Semitism, which led him to the conclusion that the only solution to Europe's Jewish problem was for European Jews to leave that bastion of Jew hatred and return to their original homeland, which is now the state of Israel.

None of this is to deny Israel's imperfections or the criticism it justly deserves for some of its policies. But these imperfections and deserved criticism cannot even begin to explain, must less justify, the disproportionate hatred directed against the only nation-state of the Jewish people and the disproportionate silence regarding the far greater imperfections and deserved criticism of other nations and groups—including the Palestinians.

Nor is this to deny that many western European individuals and some western European countries have refused to succumb to the hatred against the Jews or their state. The Czech Republic comes to mind. But far too many western Europeans are as irrational in their hatred toward Israel as their forbearers were in their hatred toward their Jewish neighbors.

As author Amos Oz once aptly observed: the walls of his grandparents' Europe were covered with graffiti saying, "Jews, go to Palestine." Now they say, "Jews, get out of Palestine" -- by which is meant Israel.

Who do these western European bigots think they're fooling? Only fools who want to be fooled in the interest of denying that they are manifesting new variations on their grandparents' old biases.

Any objective person with an open mind, open eyes, and an open heart must see the double standard being applied to the nation-state of the Jewish people. Many doing so are the grandchildren of those who lethally applied a double standard to the Jews of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s.

For shame!

Efrat rabbi tilts against Passover food restrictions for Ashkenazi Jews
Others, unhappy with holiday legume laws, launch Kitniyot Liberation Front
By Raphael Ahren for Haaretz.

Trying to ease the life of Ashkenazi Jews who observe the dietary laws of the upcoming Passover holiday, an American-born Orthodox rabbi recently issued a halakhic ruling expanding the menu of permitted food products during the weeklong holiday.

According to Ashkenazi custom, the consumption of legumes and other non-wheat grains, known as kitniyot, during Passover is forbidden because of a resemblance to hametz, leavened grain, which is strictly prohibited on the holiday. Since most Israeli Jews who observe the holiday's dietary laws are of Sephardic descent, and thus do not have this custom, many kosher for Passover products in the country contain kitniyot, such as rice, corn and beans. In recent years, a growing number of Orthodox Jews - especially Western immigrants to Israel - have started rebelling against the kitniyot ban, arguing they are adapting to the Israel's mainstream practice because the ban is a custom and not law. Rabbi Leshem Rabbi Leshem in his study this week in Efrat. "Certain things people think are prohibited are really permitted," he said. / Photo by Emil Salman

A few week's ago, Rabbi Zvi Leshem, of Efrat, issued a ruling that it is permissible to consume products and dishes containing kitniyot, as long as they do not constitute the main ingredient and are not directly recognizable. His decision will help those who do not want to entirely abandon the tradition of avoiding kitniyot but have difficulties finding certain items - such as oil, mayonnaise or chocolate spreads - that do not contain kitniyot in their ingredients.

"Some of those products that are labeled 'for those who eat kitniyot only' are permissible according to all opinions, since the ratio of kitniyot ingredients is less than 50 percent and they are therefore annulled in the majority of non-kitniyot ingredients," writes Leshem, 54, who was ordained by the Chief Rabbinate and holds a PhD in Jewish philosophy from Bar-Ilan University. "Since only products are forbidden in which kitniyot constitute the main ingredient, many oils, cookies and dairy products containing kitniyot are completely permissible for Ashkenazim." In addition, he permitted quinoa, the grain-like crop which is "a very new food" unknown to the sages who enacted the ban on kitniyot.

"It is a mitzvah [commandment] to publicize this decision, which is based upon the traditional Halachic methodology of the great authorities throughout the generations, and not upon looking for unnecessary stringencies," Leshem concludes.

"I tried to show that certain things that people think are prohibited are really permitted," Leshem, who lived in Cleveland and Indianapolis before he immigrated to Israel in 1979, told Anglo File this week. He said he used to avoid products labeled "for those who eat kitniyot only" for many years before looking into the matter.

"It is very misleading, certainly for Anglo olim [immigrants] who are not used to the whole issue. The obvious thing that most of them do is avoid anything that says kitniyot. But that's in many cases unnecessary."

But more and more Ashkenazim, especially Anglos, feel that in Israel it no longer makes sense to observe a custom followed by a minority.

Louis Gordon, for example, said he wondered about the kitniyot divide since he moved from Baltimore to Israel 21 years ago. "I couldn't understand how kitniyot is kosher for these and treif [not kosher] for those," he told Anglo File. "There are people for whom kitniyot is worse than hametz. It didn't make any sense."

To vent his frustration, Gordon, 44, recently created a Facebook group called Kitniyot Liberation Front. The site, which currently has over 600 members, many of them local Anglos, seeks to promote awareness of lenient rabbinic opinions regarding the use of legumes on Passover. His opinion is mainly based on the views of Rabbi David Bar-Hayim, the head of Jerusalem's Shilo Institute, who in 2007 issued a ruling allowing Ashkenazim in Israel to eat kitniyot.

"The issue of kitniyot turns the holiday of Pesach from one of abstaining from hametz into abstention from kitniyot. Ashkenazim won't eat with Sephardim - this is not what God put us on earth for, to divide the people," the Yad Bimiyamin resident told Anglo File.

The opposition against kitniyot will soon reach the "breaking point," Gordon predicted. "A lot of people are pushing hard for this." Especially Anglo immigrants are ready to drop the kitniyot prohibition, which has to do with the fact that newcomers often feel they're abandoning their family traditions as soon as they arrive in Israel, he said.

"If you're looking to leave the galut [Diaspora] mentality behind then you're definitely going to leave kitniyot behind."

David Schwartz, a former New Yorker living in Ra'anana, says he started eating kitniyot soon after he moved to Israel.

"When I grew up in the States kitniyot wasn't an issue, it was just assumed that it was hametz," he said. "I didn't even know there was an issue until I came here and realized that half the country was eating humus and corn and the other half wasn't." In the last few years eating kitniyot has become "considerably more acceptable among my Orthodox friends," added Schwartz, a member of the Conservative movement, whose Israeli branch permitted kitniyot two decades ago.

Leshem, too, said he noticed many Orthodox Israelis disavowing the kitniyot prohibition. "It bothers me even though I can understand where it's coming from," he told Anglo File. "I'm in favor of unity among the Jewish people. But it does not seem to me halakically legitimate to just abandon the custom." His ruling allows Ashkenazim to eat in Sephardic homes, as long as they're not eating actual recognizable kitniyot, or dishes containing mostly of kitniyot, he added.

Although Gordon, of the Kitniyot Liberation Front, argues for an end to the "foolish custom" of banning kitniyot, he hinted that his wife is not ready to introduce the controversial items to her kitchen. "We don't serve kitniyot, but if I'm out or if I'm with Sephardim and they're serving it, it's not an issue at all," he said.

"The real idea behind the Liberation Front is that we need to forget about the little things. Kitniyot are little things. We mustn't panic about eating something we know is not hametz on Pesach," Gordon said. "If this is the thing that consumes the attention of the Jewish people, we're really in a bad situation. We have much bigger issues to worry about."

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st, 2nd and 3rd Aliya: The laws of purity and impurity as they pertain to childbirth are discussed. The basic laws of Tzaras, its diagnosis by a Kohain, the possibility of a quarantine, and the laws of Tzaras as it relates to healthy and infected skin are discussed.

4th, 5th, 6th, & 7th Aliyot: The laws of Tzaras as it relates to a burn, a bald patch, dull white spots, and the presence of a Tzaras blemish on clothing is detailed.

This week, in addition to the regular Parsha, we read the section known as HaChodesh. The additional sections of Shekalim, Zachor, Parah, and

Chodesh are read prior to Pesach for both commemorative and practical reasons.

This additional section from Shemos, Parshas Bo, Chapter 12, is read on the Shabbos before the month of Nissan, or on the Shabbos of Rosh Chodesh Nissan. This section is an account of the very first Mitzvah given to the Jewish people as a nation. It includes the concept of Rosh Chodesh - the New Moon, as well as the basic laws of Pesach and the Pascal Lamb. Being that Pesach starts on the 15th of Nissan, this section is read about two weeks before Pesach begins. As with Parshas Parah, Chazal wanted the reading of this Parsha to be a reminder that Pesach is almost upon us! Only two more weeks to make the necessary arrangements to get to Yerushalayim and bring the Paschal Lamb! Only two more weeks and your house had better be in order! (are you panicked yet?)

It is interesting that Hashem selected the Mitzvah of the New Moon as the first national Mitzvah. Basically, the Mitzvah required two eye witnesses to testify before Beis Din that they had seen the tiny sliver of the new moon's crescent that is the very first exposure of the moon's new monthly cycle. The Beis Din would then declare the start of the new month.

The most obvious consequence of this procedure was the 29 or 30 day month, otherwise identified by a one or two day Rosh Chodesh. A two day Rosh Chodesh is comprised of the 30th day of the previous month and the 1st day of the new month. A one day Rosh Chodesh means that the preceding month was only 29 days long making Rosh Chodesh the 1st day of the new month. This would have an immediate effect on the scheduling of Yomim Tovim and other calendar ordained activities. It underscores from the very inception of the nation that the Beis Din, representing the Rabbinic leadership of the nation, were the single most important factor in guaranteeing the practice of Torah throughout time. It was as if G-d would wait for Beis Din to notify Him when His Yomim Tovim were to be.

This week's Haftorah is from Yechezkel - Ezekiel Chapter 45 and is related to the reading of Parshas Hachodesh. The latter chapters of Yechezkel describe the future Bais Hamikdash and the service that will take place once Mashiach has come and the Jews have returned to Eretz Israel. The Haftorah describes the offering that the Prince (the King or the High Priest) will bring on Rosh Chodesh - the New Moon.

This selection from Yechezkel is especially appropriate for the Shabbos that precedes or

coincides with the beginning of the month of Nissan. The month of Nissan is known as the month of redemption. Our exodus from Egypt took place in the month of Nissan. The Mishkan was first assembled on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. The Mizbeach was inaugurated into service during the first 12 days of Nissan. Therefore, we hope that this year, in the month of Nissan, we will again merit to be redeemed from exile, rebuild the Bais Hamikdash, and again inaugurate the Mizbeach by bringing the Rosh Chodesh offering in the service of G-d.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

“And there will be an affliction of sara’at on his skin.” (Vayikra 13:2)

Our Sages tell us that sara’at (a disease similar to leprosy) comes as a punishment for speaking lashon hara. We find in the Sefer Shemuel (1:20) that when Yehonatan wanted to inform David that Shaul was planning on killing him, he did not tell him directly. Rather, they devised an elaborate plan whereby he gave the message indirectly, by the manner in which he instructed his servant to retrieve the arrows that he had shot. This whole plan seems strange since they did speak to each other that day after sending the servant away. Why did they use that plan? Why not speak directly? The answer is that they didn’t want to speak lashon hara about Shaul, but said it in a roundabout way.

The obvious question is: since this was a matter of life and death, there certainly was no issue of lashon hara in telling David that Shaul wanted to kill him. If so, why couldn’t Yehonatan have told him directly?

The Vilna Gaon zt”l (quoted in Torah Ladaat) deduced from this that even when it is permissible or even where there is a misvah to tell lashon hara one should tell only what is absolutely necessary, and if it is possible to get the message across without actually speaking it, it’s best to do so in that manner. If this is true in a life and death situation, it will certainly apply in our daily lives. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

The perashah tells us that when certain sins were committed, a plague would affect either the homes, the garments or the skin of the Jewish people. Although this seems like a severe punishment, we must realize that all punishments are merely signals to us to examine our ways and improve our conduct.

Once, the owner of a large factory wanted to hire an experienced engineer. He advertised in all

the trade journals and announced the time and place to interview for the job. Many candidates turned up at the designated time, but the owner failed to appear. Hours passed. The candidates grew annoyed and began to shout in anger. Only then did the owner come out calmly from his office to address the crowd. He said, “I don’t know what you are angry about. You have been waiting in vain. Two hours ago, at the exact time that I had set, I sat in my office and began tapping out signals in Morse Code indicating that anyone who understood me should come into my office for an interview. Only one of you picked up my message and entered my office. He is the one whom I have chosen for the job. The rest have failed the test.”

We know that Hashem is All-Merciful and loves us like a father loves his children. Very often, we get “signals” sent to us, some in the form of punishments. Punishments don’t only mean drastic things, G-d forbid. Rather, they can also include inconveniences, minor frustrations and the regular ups and downs of everyday life. We must learn to recognize these signals from Hashem and focus on their meaning and their intent. This way we will live up to our status as the “Chosen People.” Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Stop ‘n’ Go - One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda

The ability to make decisions is a key element of achievement. Successful executives, who know that procrastinating can result in the loss of a profitable opportunity, encourage their management personnel to make the moves that will keep the company going forward. The managers, in turn, drive their people to do what it takes to overcome obstacles and move on to the next challenge.

Our Sages say that the word “now” in Scriptures indicates a call to repent. Their intent is to teach us that once we realize our errors, we should act immediately to make amends. Delay will only cause us to rationalize and forget the feelings of guilt or shame that constitute a healthy alarm calling for teshubah – repentance.

Sometimes, people who are inspired to do good are lazy to act. The yeser hara – evil inclination – does not say, “Don’t do it!” Instead, he encourages a small delay: “Do it later.” How many smokers are going to quit “tomorrow,” and how many overweight individuals are going to start their diet “after the weekend”? But the same evil inclination that advocates procrastination when it comes to doing good, also pushes people to immediately fulfill desires which are harmful to the spirit or contrary to a commandment of the Torah.

Wise people deal with the wiles of the evil inclination by reversing his instructions, thereby

rechanneling the yeser hara's directives into spiritually successful behavior. When doing good, wise people act with alacrity to do the Will of Hashem. When responding to a physical desire, they delay gratification and consider the gain vs. loss of temporary satisfaction.

Success is easy for those who know when to stop and when to go.

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
 Visit DailyHalacha.com, DailyGemara.com,
MishnaBerura.com, LearnTorah.com

Learning From the Sacrifices

Parashat Tazria begins with the laws of a "Yoledet," a woman after childbirth, who was required in the times of the Bet Ha'mikash to offer special sacrifices several weeks after delivering a child. Specifically, she would bring one animal as a Hatat (sin offering), and another as an Ola (sacrifice which is completely burned on the altar).

Already in the Gemara (Keritot 26) we find the question raised as to why a woman must bring a sin offering after delivering a child. Certainly, not only is there nothing wrong in bearing children, but this is precisely what we are supposed to be doing. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai therefore explained that a woman brings a sin offering to atone for the comments she makes while experiencing the extreme pain of labor. At the height of her suffering, a woman on the birthing table might likely make a vow never to cohabit with her husband again so that she will never have to experience this suffering. As the weeks and months pass, however, she changes her mind and wishes to have another child. The Torah instructs her to offer a sin offering to atone for her improper vow during labor.

The Gemara does not, however, address the question of why she brings an Ola sacrifice. The Ola offering is generally brought voluntarily, yet here the Torah requires that the woman bring this sacrifice. Why?

Don Isaac Abarbanel (1437-1508) explains that the woman brings an Ola to express her gratitude to the Almighty for emerging safely from the dangerous situation of childbirth. The process of labor and delivery, while on the one hand perfectly natural, is also fraught with danger, and a woman after delivery must give thanks to Hashem for bringing her safely through this dangerous condition.

The question remains, however, as to why the Torah requires the woman to bring a special sacrifice to express her gratitude. Earlier in Vayikra, the Torah

discusses the Toda, or thanksgiving offering, which one would offer to express gratitude to G-d. The Rabbis explained that this offering would be brought by somebody who emerged safely from one of four dangerous situations – imprisonment/captivity, an overseas journey, desert travel, and serious illness. Seemingly, a woman after childbirth should be no different than any patient who survived a serious illness, and must therefore bring a Toda sacrifice. But for some reason, the Torah chose to require the woman to offer an Ola sacrifice, instead of a Toda, and the question naturally arises as to why this is the case.

Two answers have been given for this question. One answer is that a Toda should be brought soon after the experience, when the person still feels the excitement and joy of salvation. As we know, human nature is such that even after the most exhilarating and inspiring experience, the feelings of inspiration gradually wane with time. Therefore, in order for a Toda to express genuine feelings of gratitude and thanksgiving, it must be brought soon after the individual is rescued from the dangerous situation he confronted. A woman after childbirth, however, is considered Teme'a (ritually impure) for several weeks, and she is thus unable to bring a sacrifice until well after the birth. Hence, a Toda offering would not be appropriate, and the Torah requires her to bring a different sacrifice – an Ola – instead.

But there is also a second answer, one which many people will find difficult to relate to in contemporary society. The Toda sacrifice was very large, consisting of an animal as well as forty loaves of bread, and it all had to be eaten the day the offering was brought or that night; nothing could be left until the following day. The reason for this is because the Torah wanted the individual bringing a Toda to invite a large crowd to participate in his celebration and thus publicize his experience of G-d's assistance and salvation. In the case of a woman, however, such a public affair would not be appropriate. The Torah value of Seniut (modesty) extends beyond mode of dress; it refers more generally to an overall sense of humility and discretion, and when it comes to women, it involves a greater emphasis on privacy. Women are encouraged to conduct themselves in a quieter, more private fashion, and thus being at the center of a large celebration would not be appropriate.

Even though we do not offer sacrifices today, as we are still without the Bet Ha'mikdash, we have much to learn about Torah life by studying the concepts underlying the Korbanot. The sacrifices of the Yoledet teach several valuable lessons, as we have seen, reminding us of the importance of maintaining

our sense of appreciation and gratitude for all that Hashem does for us, and how we must remain committed to the Torah value of *Seniut* even as we live in a society to which these ideals are so foreign.

Rabbi Wein The Truth Hurts

We are all well aware that it is oftentimes not polite or wise to state the whole truth when human sensitivities are involved. The Talmud in one of its famous statements asks the rhetorical question: "If one has purchased an item in the marketplace, should his friend praise the purchase or denigrate it?" The Talmud apparently feels that it is discourteous if not even downright mean to denigrate something that has already been purchased, even though in truth there is much room for criticism.

So truth and the telling of it is a somewhat chancy matter. Nevertheless, we are told that the seal of the Lord is truth. One of the main attributes describing Torah is truth. And we pray daily that the Lord should grant us, the descendants of Jacob, the gift of truth. Apparently this ambivalence towards the trait of truth is caused by the fact that in many, if not most cases, truth hurts.

According to Chasidic tradition, the great rebbe of Kotzk, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern, was a person devoted to absolute truth and he regularly lashed out at his followers with his tongue of truth. But, disappointed that the words of truth apparently made little influence upon his audience, he eventually withdrew from public life. For decades he was a recluse, condemned to isolation because of his penchant for telling the truth no matter how painful the consequences.

In our current world, the whistleblowers receive scant commendation for telling us the truth about the failings and corruption of governments, corporations or organizations. Since the truth hurts we prefer to ignore the message and pillory the messenger.

The Ministry of Defense for the State of Israel recently told the truth in a very undiplomatic manner. He stated the obvious, that the emperor has no clothes. He said that the United States could not be relied upon in spite of previously made promises, commitments and treaties.

One need only observe American policy regarding Syria, Iran, and currently Crimea and Ukraine, in order to realize the truth of Minister Yaalon's statement. It is obvious to all, especially to Comrade Putin, that the United States will not go to war for any

reason except if it is directly attacked on its shores. For any country to base its defense strategy on the likelihood of American intervention and aid is risky and foolish.

Of course, Yaalon told the truth and it hurt. America now demands an extravagant apology from Yaalon and the Israeli government. It will undoubtedly receive such an apology for such is the make-believe world of diplomacy that we live in. Diplomacy is the world of nuanced falsehood and the avoidance of harsh truths at almost all costs. Yet, in our heart of hearts, the truth of Yaalon's statement is well recognized and resonates within us.

Apparently he has to apologize, not for what he said but rather for saying it. The prophets of Israel were beaten and imprisoned for telling the truth to the nation. All dictatorships survive on the suppression of truth. One must be very courageous to tell the truth because it will undoubtedly bring about repercussions. For the truth really does hurt.

Much of the discord and divisiveness that exists in current Israeli and Jewish society stems from the inability or unwillingness of individuals or groups to hear and face the truth. The truth is that the Palestinian Authority has no intention of coming to a peaceful agreement with the State of Israel. This truth is known to almost all Israelis today, no matter what our distinguished president says.

It is slowly dawning on our government and perhaps even on other governments as well that the panacea of a two state solution is not really possible or operative. This is a very harsh and bitter truth and it certainly hurts. But, it remains the truth. So we are very much in need of a plan B, as plan A has proven to be false and ephemeral.

The truth is that much of the religious society here in Israel is in financial collapse. The reasons for this are many but they are really no longer relevant to the discussion. The bitter truth is that the social, educational and politically motivated policies pursued in the immediate past can no longer survive the economic crisis of tens of thousands of families being raised in poverty and want.

That is a bitter truth that has to be faced and that truth will engender change and eventually bring about different social mores. Truth can be ignored and it can be suppressed. But it never disappears and sooner or later it comes to the surface no matter how painful and wrenching the process

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Price of Free Speech

Hannah Smith was a fourteen-year-old schoolgirl living in Lutterworth, Leicestershire. Bright and outgoing, she enjoyed an active social life and seemed to have an exciting future ahead of her. On the morning of 2 August 2013 Hannah was found hanged in her bedroom. She had committed suicide.

Seeking to unravel what had happened, her family soon discovered that she had been the target of anonymous abusive posts on a social network website. Hannah was a victim of the latest variant of the oldest story in human history: the use of words as weapons by those seeking to inflict pain. The new version is called cyber-bullying.

The Jewish phrase for this kind of behavior is lashon hara, evil speech, speech about people that is negative and derogatory. It means, quite simply, speaking badly about people, and is a subset of the biblical prohibition against spreading gossip.[1]

Despite the fact that it is not singled out in the Torah for a prohibition in its own right, the sages regarded it as one of the worst of all sins. They said, astonishingly, that it is as bad as the three cardinal sins – idolatry, murder and incest – combined. More significantly in the context of Hannah Smith they said it kills three people, the one who says it, the one he says it about, and the one who listens in.[2]

The connection with this week's parsha is straightforward. Tazria and Metsora, are about a condition called tsara'at, sometimes translated as leprosy. The commentators were puzzled as to what this condition is and why it should be given such prominence in the Torah. They concluded that it was precisely because it was a punishment for lashon hara, derogatory speech.

Evidence for this is the story of Miriam (Numbers 12: 1) who spoke slightly about her brother Moses "because of the Ethiopian wife he had taken." God himself felt bound to defend Moses' honour and as a punishment, turned Miriam leprosy. Moses prayed for God to heal her. God mitigated the punishment to seven days, but did not annul it entirely.

Clearly this was no minor matter, because Moses singles it out among the teachings he gives the next generation: "Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam along the way after you came out of Egypt" (Deut. 24: 9, and see Ibn Ezra ad loc.).

Oddly enough Moses himself, according to the

sages, had been briefly guilty of the same offence. At the burning bush when God challenged him to lead the people Moses replied, "They will not believe in me" (Ex. 4: 1). God then gave Moses three signs: water that turned to blood, a staff that became a snake, and his hand briefly turning leprosy. We find reference later in the narrative to water turning to blood and a staff turning into a serpent, but none to a hand that turns leprosy.

The sages, ever alert to the nuances of the biblical text, said that the hand that turned leprosy was not a sign but a punishment. Moses was being reprimanded for "casting doubts against the innocent" by saying that the Israelites would not believe in him. "They are believers the children of believers," said God according to the Talmud, "but in the end you will not believe." [3]

How dangerous lashon hara can be is illustrated by the story of Joseph and his brothers. The Torah says that he "brought an evil report" to his father about some of his brothers (Gen. 37: 2). This was not the only provocation that led his brothers to plot to kill him and eventually sell him as a slave. There were several other factors. But his derogatory gossip did not endear him to his siblings.

No less disastrous was the "evil report" (dibah: the Torah uses the same word as it does in the case of Joseph) brought back by the spies about the land of Canaan and its inhabitants (Num. 13: 32). Even after Moses' prayers to God for forgiveness, the report delayed entry in the land by almost forty years and condemned a whole generation to die in the wilderness.

Why is the Torah so severe about lashon hara, branding it as one of the worst of sins? Partly this has deep roots in the Jewish understanding of God and the human condition. Judaism is less a religion of holy people and holy places than it is a religion of holy words.

God created the universe by words: "And God said, Let there be ... and there was." God reveals himself in words. He spoke to the patriarchs and the prophets and at Mount Sinai to the whole nation. Our very humanity has to do with our ability to use language. The creation of homo sapiens is described in the Torah thus: "Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Gen. 2: 7). The Targum renders the last phrase as "and the man became a speaking being." Language is life. Words are creative but also destructive. If good words are holy then evil words are a desecration.

One sign of how seriously Judaism takes this is the prayer we say at the end of every Amidah, at least three times a day: "My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from deceitful speech. To those who curse me let my soul be silent; may my soul be to all like the dust." Having prayed to God at the beginning to "Open my lips so that my mouth may declare Your praise," we pray to Him at the end to help us close our lips so that we do not speak badly about others, nor react when others speak badly about us.

Despite everything, however – despite the Torah's prohibition of gossip, despite its stories about Joseph, Moses, Miriam and the spies, despite the unparalleled strictures against evil speech by the sages – lashon hara remained a problem throughout Jewish history and still does today. Every leader is subject to it. The sages said that when Moses left his tent early in the morning, people would say, "You see, he has had a row with his wife." If he left late they would say, "He is plotting against us." [4]

Anyone from CEO to parent to friend who seeks to be a leader has to confront the issue of lashon hara. Firstly he or she may have to put up with it as the price of any kind of achievement. Some people are envious. They gossip. They build themselves up by putting other people down. If you are in any kind of leadership position, you may have to live with the fact that behind your back – or even before your face – people will be critical, malicious, disdainful, vilifying and sometimes downright dishonest. This can be hard to bear. Having known many leaders in many fields I can testify to the fact that not all people in the public eye have a thick skin. Many of them are very sensitive and can find constant, unjust criticism deeply draining.

If you should ever suffer this, the best advice is given by Maimonides: "If a person is scrupulous in his conduct, gentle in his conversation, pleasant toward his fellow creatures, affable in manner when receiving them, not responding even when affronted, but showing courtesy to all, even to those who treat him with disdain ... such a person has sanctified God and about him Scripture says, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified (Isaiah 49:3)." [5]

That is in relation to lashon hara directed against yourself. As for the group as a whole, however, you should practise zero tolerance toward lashon hara. Allowing people to speak badly about one another will eventually destroy the integrity of the group. Evil speech generates negative energies. Within the group it sows the seeds of distrust and envy. Directed outside the group it can lead to arrogance, self-

righteousness, racism and prejudice, all of which are fatal to the moral credibility of any team. Whether or not you are the leader of such a group you must politely make it clear that you will have nothing to do with this kind of speech and that it has no place in your conversations.

Cyber-bullying is the latest manifestation of lashon hara. In general the Internet is the most effective distributor of hate-speech ever invented. Not only does it make targeted communication so easy, but it also bypasses the face-to-face encounter that can sometimes induce shame, sensitivity and self-control. Greek myth told the story of Gyges' ring that had the magical property of making whoever wore it invisible, so that he or she could get away with anything. [6] Social media that enable people to post anonymous comments or adopt false identities are as near as anyone has yet come to inventing a Gyges' ring. That is what is so dangerous about it.

The story of Hannah Smith and the other teenage suicides is a tragic reminder of how right the sages were to reject the idea that "words can never harm me," and insist to the contrary that evil speech kills. Free speech is not speech that costs nothing. It is speech that respects the freedom and dignity of others. Forget this and free speech becomes very expensive indeed.

All of which helps us to understand the biblical idea of tsara'at. The peculiar property of tsara'at – whether as a skin disease, a discoloration of garments or mould on the walls of a house – is that it was immediately and conspicuously visible. People engage in lashon hara because, like wearers of Gyges' ring, they think they can get away with it. "It wasn't me. I never said it. I didn't mean it. I was misunderstood." The Torah is here telling us that malicious speech uttered in private is to be stigmatised in public and those who engage in it are to be openly shamed.

To put it at its simplest: as we behave to others so God behaves to us. Do not expect God to be kind to those who are unkind to their fellow humans.

[1] Leviticus 19: 16.

[2] See Maimonides, Hilkhot Deot 7: 3.

[3] Shabbat 97a.

[4] See Rashi to Deut. 1: 12.

[5] Maimonides, Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah 5: 11.

[6] See Plato, The Republic, book 2, 359a–360d.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"A plague of leprosy" (13:2)

"All agree that leprosy is a punishment for slander...This is a miracle received in our nation by tradition, in the same manner and effect of the trial of the Sotah (woman suspected of adultery). The good effect of this belief is evident" (More Nevuchim/RMBM 3:47).

In this matter we perceive the double purpose that is evident in many Mitzvot.

1) the Perfection of mind and character, 2) physical benefit. The physical benefit of isolating the leper and thereby preventing contagion of others, although not uniformly found in all the laws of this subject, is indeed an important purpose in itself.

But the chief intention of the Mitzvot and procedures of leprosy is to impress upon the minds of our nation the urgency of proper qualities of character. We note that RMBM considers the ancient Torah-leprosy to be a miracle, by which Hashem manifested His judgement and retribution just as in the case of the guilty Sotah.

Yet we must understand that the miracle of leprosy is actually a model for all forms of misfortune which must be considered as the work of Hashem. "When a man sees misfortune come upon him let him search in his deeds" (Berachot 5A).

It should be added that even if the leprosy had been sent upon a man for no sin that he committed, yet by his affliction he performs an important service to Hashem, for he provides a lesson and a warning to all men that they take heed and guard against evil-doing. If this man is entirely innocent, yet he accepts his unhappy state as an opportunity to teach others what could come upon them, and thus cause them to fear Hashem. How great this man becomes in the eyes of Hashem for his willingness to be a model and a teacher.

Thus, although leprosy may be Hashem's retribution upon a sinner, yet when an innocent man is similarly afflicted he may thereby be considered as one chosen by Hashem to perform important service by his suffering for which he shall gain a great merit of reward.

Quoted from "A Kingdom of Cohanim" by Rabbi Miller ZT'L

Parts of this newsletter are courtesy of Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway. Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Project Genesis, and refer to learn@torah.org and http://www.torah.org/. Both the authors and Project Genesis reserve certain rights. For full information on copyrights, send email to copyrights@torah.org.

Shabbat Shalom From Cyberspace E Mail Edition is published each week since 1995 and is distributed to 18,000 readers. Our goal is to spread torah knowledge. Articles are downloaded from sites and from e-mail forwarded to us. We encourage you to reprint the newsletter and distribute it to co-workers, friends and family. You can retransmit copies by fax, mail or by hand. Be a part of the Mitzvah of spreading torah. It takes so little to make copies and distribute them. And with E Mail it just takes a click to send this along. To subscribe directly or have us send to a friend or family member Send a request to ShabbatShalomNewsletter@Gmail.com with your name, phone, fax and E-Mail Address