**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Tazria-Metzora 5770**

**Story #646**

**A New Cousin for Seder**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

 In our holy books it is written that every Jew should take upon himself one mitzvah to do it with special devotion. Sometimes, for our own good, we are even sent from heaven a special trial in the mitzvah that we seek to excel in.

 For the tzadik Rabbi Elazar (Lezer) from Reishe, a city in Galicia, Poland, the mitzvah was hospitality, as is fitting for the descendants of Abraham. He strived always to bring home guests and honor them, and never more so then for the first night of Passover, for the Pesach Seder. So it was no wonder that when he saw an unfamiliar face in shul after the holiday Evening Prayer, he approached him and thought to invite him home.

 But when he approached closer to this poor man, he saw how he was struck with a leprous-type skin disease, and because of the stench of his disease, it was difficult to get near to him. Even so, I must not let such minor matters repel me from performing this great mitzvah, he thought.

**How will My Wife React?**

 But, what about my wife? She is a most righteous woman, but she also has her limits. So he told the wayfarer, I want you to come have the Seder and the meal with me, but first I have to arrange something. Wait here, and I will come back to take you home.

 So off he went to his house, walking in with a somber face more befitting Tisha B'Av than Pesach. Lezer, git yom tov ('Good Holiday')! his wife warmly greeted him, but he barely whispered back a subdued git Yom Tov.

 What is the matter? she asked, concerned, for it was most unusual for him to display even the minutest trace of sadness on a holiday.

 He asked her if she remembered their second cousin Moshe from some other town. Embarrassed to admit that she did not, she responded, Nu, so what is with him? He is here in shul.

 What? she exclaimed. Everyone in the world you bring home, and our relative you leave in shul? What an embarrassment! Go back fast and bring him here! I would like to, the Rebbe said quickly, but he is leprous, and has a bad smell.

 Even so, he is our relative, she said firmly. I will make a separate table for him. So the Rabbi went and brought the relative. After the Seder, the Rebetzin started asking him questions about mutual relatives, such as what is with Uncle Yitzchak and how is Aunt Rivkah, but the poor guy didnt know what she was talking about. Finally she caught on and said, Lezer, you are such a wise guy!

**Preparing a Bed for the Guest**

 She prepared a bed for the guest, but didnt want to give him a pillow, because it would have to be thrown out afterwards. The tzadik said to her, that pillow will be a 'michaye' (pleasure) for you in your grave, so she gave in.

 Before they went to bed, they locked all the doors and windows, so there simply was no way to enter or leave the house in the middle of the night. Yet, in the morning, they found the bed of the guest empty. Eliahu Hanavi (Elijah the prophet) doesnt sleep!

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[Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from a submission by Ezra Radhun, who heard it from Rabbi Mordechai Tachaver, zl, a man who brought many wandering Jews back to their faith, and started a cheder school for young boys here in the Old city of Tsfat.]

**Connections** (2): Seasonal Passover, and Weekly Reading skin disease

Biographical note:Rabbi Elazar of Reishe (1839-15 Tamuz 1910), a city in Galicia, Poland, was a great-grandson of the Rebbe Elimelech of Lyzhinsk. He was best known for miraculous healings, and for his book, Mishna Lemelech, on the weekly Torah readings.

finished before Shabbos.

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Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed. To subscribe to this email, please send your requests to: [editor@ascentofsafed.com](http://webmailb.juno.com/webmail/new/5?userinfo=eff1e795994608ed6885dfdeac88e827&count=1271196491)

**The Miracle of the**

**Expensive Medicine**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

 The double Torah portion we read this week deals mostly with the impurity 'disease' of Tzoraat and its implications.

 Tzoraat is one of the most severe impurities in the Torah. It manifests itself as discolorations of the skin or hair but it indicates spiritual blemishes in the souls of those who possess it.

 But on the other hand we see that the Moshiach is called 'Metzora' (namely one who has Tzoraat) (Sanhedrin 98b) and so is the Holy Temple (Eicha Raba, petichta 21).

Does this make sense? Moshiach and the Holy Temple are the highlights and the goals of Judaism. They both are the fulfillment of what Abraham had in mind when he founded Judaism: that the entire world will realize that G-d alone creates, directs and provides for all being constantly. The Holy of Holies in the Holy Temple was a place that demonstrated that such a thing is possible and Moshiach will make it a world reality.

**Why are Both Called “Metzora” and “Tzoraat?”**

 So why are they both called Metzora and Tzoraat?

 To understand this here is a story I heard from my friend Rabbi Chaim Dayan in Kfar Chabad just recently.

 Seventy years ago in New York lived a poor Jewish family. The father, who had been a Rabbi, suddenly passed away just a year or so after the birth of his first son leaving his wife alone to provide for the baby.

 She managed to make ends meet by cleaning houses and somehow scraped together enough each week to provide for herself and her son and to even put a bit of money aside but then tragedy struck.

**Hospital Doctors Unable to Diagnose the Illness**

 The boy became ill and the standard treatments that their family doctor prescribed didn't help. He referred them to the hospital where, after extensive testing and probing, they also admitted that they couldn't diagnose the disease but it looked fatal.

 She had spent her meager savings but she certainly did not give up and after frantic searching and inquiring someone mentioned the name of a great professor. Sparing no time she got his phone number, called his office, requested that he make a house call and declared that money was not an obstacle.

 When the professor arrived at the run-down apartment building he began having serious doubts and when he knocked on her door, entered and saw that poverty was screaming from every corner he had an urge to just turn around and go home.

 But something inside of him told him to accept it with equanimity and see the patient. He examined the boy, went to the sink to wash his hands, turned to the boy's mother and said. "Your son has a rare disease. I know what it is, I know what the cure is and I know where you can get the medicine.

**Only a Certain Drug Store Can**

**Make the Miracle Drug**

 “It's in a large drug store about three miles from here. They are the only ones that can make it. But there's a problem. It will be very expensive; probably several hundred dollars. I'm willing to forget about my payment, but do you have money to pay for the medicine? They won't give it to you for free, that's for sure. What are you going to do?"

 The woman, tears of gratitude filling her eyes, thanked the Professor profusely and firmly stated that as far as the money goes she was sure that … G-d would help.

 He packed up his instruments, wrote out the prescription, she thanked him again and again and as soon as he left she ran outside, caught a taxi, entered the pharmacy, approached the counter and handed the prescription to the pharmacist.

 The pharmacist took the prescription and as he examined it his brow raised in wonder and he glanced at her several times. Finally he leaned forward, narrowed his eyes and said to her skeptically, "This will cost a few hunded dollars. Have you got the money?"

**Offers to Come and Clean the**

**Drugstore Each Evening**

 She stood straight, stared him back in the eyes and replied that she was willing to promise, even to sign an agreement that she would come in and clean the drugstore every evening after she finished work until she covered the bill. But she needed the medicine to save her son's life.

 The pharmacist relaxed a bit and replied that, in fact she was in good luck because their cleaning woman just quit and they needed a replacement. But it would only be for two hours a day and at that rate it would take ….. he took out a pencil and paper, began calculating and when he finished looked up … one year and eight months to pay off the debt!

 She immediately agreed, signed a paper obligating herself to work until she had paid for the cure and in one half hour was on her way out the door with several bottles of medicine in her purse.

 But when she looked in her pocket book she realized that she had spent her last dime on the taxi and now didn't even have money for a bus. So she began walking; walking as quickly as possible, home.

 It was cold outside but she was sweating. It was over an hour's walk to her house and by the time she had walked one hour it was already dark. There was no one around, she was alone, it was getting really cold and she was passing through a bad neighborhood. She put her purse under her coat so as not to draw unwanted attention, quickened her gait, said a few prayers, looked down at the pavement in front of her and walked as fast as possible, careful not to look up.

 But it didn't work.

**Assaulted by a Robber**

 Suddenly she felt someone grab her by the shoulders from the front, push her against a wall and say almost sarcastically, 'Whatchu got there under that coat?" She looked up to see a massive man who had wrested her purse from her and was opening it. A freezing wind blew. No one was around.

 "Please" she pleaded "I have no money. All I have is medicine for my sick son, he's dying. Please … please let me go!" But that didn't work either.

 "Medicine!?" he smiled! "Let'see the medicine. Maybe it's something good!" He opened one of the bottles, took a big smell and waited for something to happen. "Achhhh! It's terrible! It smells like puke!!" he yelled out as he opened the rest and poured their contents all over her head and coat. Then he pushed her again against the wall, slapped her face knocking her down to the pavement, threw the empty bottles at her and left, spitting and cursing as he went."

**Limps Back to the Drugstore**

 Without hesitating she stood, brushed herself off, picked up one of the bottles, returned it to her purse, buttoned up her coat and began walking back, whimpering silently from the trauma, limping a bit, to the drug store, as fast as possible, hoping it was still open. And an hour later she arrived to find…. It was!!!

 She again entered, approached the counter and when the pharmacist appeared from the back room and saw her he gasped "My G-d, what happened?! What happened to you!? What is that smell? Your face is all swollen? Please, sit down. I'll get you some water. What is that smell?!"

 She refused the water, said she was all right and explained quickly. "I got beaten and robbed. Thank G-d I'm alive. But it's not really important. The main thing is that right now I don't have the medicine and right now I still need the medicine. Please, give me the paper I signed and I'll sign for another year eight months. Please, I must have that medicine for my son."

 The pharmacist stared at her and began to tremble in fear. "Tell me, that smell and that stain on your coat… that's the medicine?"

 "Yes." She answered as she took the empty bottle from her purse and handed it to him. "But it's not important what happened to me. I need…."

 The pharmacist cut her short, took the bottle, read the label, put his hand over his face and almost fell over backwards as he repeated to himself "No! No! I don't believe it! It can't be! no!!".

 As he removed his hand and looked again at the bottle his eyes filled with tears. He gazed at her as though she was a ghost and kept repeating "I don't believe it. I just don't ….. believe it!"

**“I Made a Terrible Mistake!”**

 After a few minutes he came to himself and said almost in a whisper, "Listen! I made a mistake! A terrible mistake! …… I gave you …… the wrong medicine! The wrong bottles! If your son would have taken what I gave you it would have killed him! Do you understand? I would have killed him!! He'd be dead. It's crazy but… it was a miracle that that you got robbed!"

 He wiped his brow, leaned forward, lowered his voice and said. "Listen lady, don't tell anyone about this. No one! If you tell people I could lose my license. Look…. I'll give you the right medicine. Just wait here." He disappeared into the back room and in a minute returned with several bottles identical to the first.

 "Here, take the medicine for free and, and here, see?" He took the contract she signed and ripped it up. Then he took out his wallet and gave her a bill, "here, take a hundred dollars. Take it! This time, take a cab home, don't walk! And the rest, use for your son. And here," He put some gauze pads and ointments in a bag. "Here is something for that swelling on your face. Just please, just don't tell anyone til I retire say, in ten years or so. Okay? You want more money?"

**Tries to Return the Hundred Dollars**

 She shook her head no and tried to give the hundred dollars back as well but he insisted she it for her son. He even escorted her outside and hailed a cab.

 The medicine worked and her son not only lived but grew to be a Rabbi of great stature; Rabbi Moshe Sherer. He became the Nasi (President) of Agudat Yisroel in the U.S.A. He would tell this story every year on the anniversary of his mother's passing.



**ArtScroll biography of Rabbi Moshe Sherer, z”l**

 This answers our questions.

 The First Rebbe of Chabad Rebbe Schneur Zalman writes in his book "Li'kutay Torah" that before the signs of Tzoraat on the Metzora were examined and declared impure by a Cohen (priest) they really were so supremely and intensely holy that they could not be practically brought into daily life.

 Something like how riches, fame or power, although these things in themselves are intensely good, but in 'overdoses' they can bring insanity or worse. So also, the Moshiach and the Third Temple he will build will be called Metzora because of the high spiritual revelations they will contain. But unlike all the above examples of Metzora, Moshiach will change the priorities of all mankind so that these revelations will be acceptable.

 Indeed, Moshiach will explain all the pain and hardships we Jews have been subjected to all these thousands of years and transform all the Tzoraat to blessings!

 It's all up to us to do just one more good deed, say one more good word and think always about...Moshiach NOW!

*Reprinted from this week’s TorahOhr Tmimim email.*

**Talking Points:**

**Parshas Tazria - Metzora**

**1. HISTORIC ATONEMENT**

*"When her purification period for a son or a daughter is complete, she shall bring to the Kohen, to the Tent of Meeting entrance, a yearling sheep for a burnt-offering, and a young common dove, or a turtle dove for a sin-offering. The Kohen shall offer [them] before G-d and atone for [the woman], thus cleansing her of the blood coming from her womb..." 12:6-7*

 Atone for the woman - What sin could this woman possibly have committed that should require her to offer a sin-offering and a burnt-offering after giving birth to a child? When a woman is in the throes of childbirth, she experiences terrible pain, fear, and sometimes life-threatening conditions. This can cause her to wish that she had never become pregnant and swear to herself that she will never do so again.

 Of course, once the delivery is past and her health is restored, she forgets all about her negative feelings and the oath she made under duress. She continues to lead her life as before. Her offerings atone for the oath she uttered under duress and has no intention of adhering to them, once calm has been restored. *- Talmud, Tractate Niddah 31b*

 Rabbeinu Bachya explains that the sin she requires atonement for is not one that she herself committed, but rather, a sin committed by her ancestor, Eve. Prior to partaking of the Tree of Knowledge, children were conceived and born without temptation or difficulty, just as trees give off fruit without a struggle or any form of passionate engagement.

 It was only once Eve sinned that the need for temptation arose and that women were smitten with the difficulties and dangers of childbirth. The sin of the Tree of Knowledge entailed both thought and deed, and therefore, a new mother must bring two offerings, the burnt-offering to atone for the sinful thoughts, and the sin-offering to atone for Eve's sinful actions.

*Reprinted from this week’s Mentor Talks, a publication of Partners in Torah.*

**RABBIS' MESSAGES**

**The Remedy for Lashon Hara**

**Is Learning Torah**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“*If a person will have on the skin of his flesh a “se’et” or a “sapahat” or a “baher*et.” (Vayikra 13:2)

 In the days of old, speaking lashon hara could cause a skin blemish called sara’at. The Torah lists three major types. The se’et, which is white like plaster; the baheret is white like snow; the sapahat is a blemish that is one step removed in color from the other two, and we might call it an off-se-et or an off-sapahat (like an off-white).



**Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch**

 Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch tells us a beautiful hint in these blemishes that reveals a lot about lashon hara. The word se’et also means to uplift. Sometimes a person will talk about people to make himself look good. The word baheret means something clear. Sometimes a person talks about people because everything must be clear to him, including everyone’s private lives and their secrets. He must know everything. The third one is the sapahat which means something which is connected to something else, like a tag-along. Some people don’t speak lashon hara but they tag along with those that speak and don’t have the courage to stop them. He can’t beat the se’et or the sapahat so he joins them.

 What’s the remedy? Rabbi Shimshon Pincus says, it is in the Torah: “He will be brought to Aharon the Kohen or to one of his children who are Kohanim. Instead of sitting and talking about the world and all of its inhabitants, connect yourself to those that learn Torah and are G-d fearing people who always emit purity to the world. Or one can turn to the Kohen of our time, the Hafess Hayim (who was a Kohen) and study his books on the subject. And finally, sara’at is always white because the one who speaks evil says he is white, he is only trying to fix the world, it’s even a misvah!

 Learn what is permitted and what is not, until you become an expert on the subject and bring purity to Israel and expect the Mashiah!

**“It Appears to Me”**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

"*And he that owns the house shall come and tell the Kohen 'It seems to me there is a leprosy in the house*.'" (Vayikra 14:35)

 Rashi tells us that even if the owner of the house is a Torah scholar and feels certain that what he sees is leprosy, he should still say, "It appears to me" rather than definitively, "It is!"

 The lesson we learn from here is very profound and yet very practical. We tend to be very sure of our perceptions, and we therefore jump to conclusions. Many times, however, our information is incorrect, or our inferences are mistaken. Because we were so assured of our opinions, we find it difficult to admit our mistakes, and therefore exacerbate the situation.

 However, if we learn to speak and think using terms such as "it appears to me," "I believe so," "I'm not sure but," then even if we were mistaken, it will be easier to concede and change our views.

 Of course, there are times when it's appropriate and necessary to make strong statements, but in many instances, by saying, "It appears to me" we will avoid confrontation and will assess the situation correctly and properly.

*Reprinted from this week’s Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin email.*

**Mordechai Etengoff Reports on Enjoying Last Shabbos in Brookline**

 Baruch HaShem.....I spent a wonderful Shabbos in Brookline!

 Frinight I went to the Young Israel-which is only five minutes from where I am staying and Shabbos Morning I walked to the 7 A.M. minyan by Bais Pinchas...the Bostoner Rebbe's Schul.

 I had always wanted to go there since the Rebbe Zatzal was such an important force for kiruv and Yiddishkeit in America and also after I read the book "As the Angels Laughed" (worth reading!) about the Rebbe and his family growing up in Brookline etc....

 That walk took 1/2 hour going  and 20 minutes coming back...BECAUSE COMING BACK WAS ALL DOWN HILL!

 I wonder if the people living here take for granted the beauty of this area...the construction and facade of the buildings and the cleanliness of the area. There were many joggers running both at 6:30AM and after shul was over and a lot of them said Good Morning and Happy Shabbos or Good Shabbos. ALL OF THEM OF COURSE I DID NOT KNOW!

 At the YI Minyan at night the Chazan was one Dovid Ben Reuven Lieberman......who laynes the Torah very nicley and was at Bais Pinchas Shabbos morning. In addition to davening nicely at night...as stated Dovid really read the Torah so nicely that I believe even Aron Tilevitz from YI in Kensington would approve!

 Dovid goes to the rebbe's shul Shabbos morning because he learns b"chavrusa after davening! This fellow also was by the YI for Mincha and Maariv and I struck up a nice friendship with him.

 At the Rebbe's Shul in the middle of Krias HaTorah...I met the present Rebbe and he gave me Shalom. I also met his son. The gabbai Reb Rosenblum..a distinguished man wanted to give me the fourth aliya; but I explained that I am a Lavi........he said OK.

**An Interesting Conversation Ensues**

 An interesting person in front of me then asked me if I was a Lavi after hearing my answer to the Gabbai ! So I told this person with a smile...ever since I was born. Then later I asked him (thinking that he might be a Lavi too) if HE was a Lavi and he said NO but I am a Kohain....so I said with a smile "I"LL wash your hands anytime!" That seemed to be enough for him and I believe the fellow moved on mentally in life.......So I was given Maftir and said the Brochos. Baruch HaShem that Reb Dovid layned the Haftara (what a long haftara!).

 Rabbi Gershon Gewirtz of the Young Israel is related to my friends in Brooklyn: Yona and Yossi and their brother Chaim Dovid Gewirtz in Israel. Rabbi Gershon's father and my friends's father (Ozur Gewirtz) were brothers of a large family.9 or 10 siblings. I don't know if they have ever in fact met.

**A Nice Shalosh Seudos Talk**

 Rabbi G spoke very nicely during Shalosh seudos and connected the beginning of the Parsha(where Aharon's sons died) and the end with all the intricasies of kosher animals etc...Rabbi G said that in the beginning of the Parsha that the sons of Aharon (and he cited Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz) forgot the basic din of not paskening in front of one's rebbe - Moshe and that HaShem killed them very shortly after this mistake occured.

 Rabbi G went on and said at the end of the Parsha with Kashrus we see that these ideas and laws have to be understood correctly and a lot of the information that we do have is orally transmitted from rebbe to talmid and that if there was a breakdown in this mesora..this giving over or if the students felt that they could pasken in front of their rebbe with these laws of Kashrus or any other THEN the rebbe's respect would be diminished and the mesora (tradition).would and could be compromised and mistakes would happen. That's why Kavod HaRav is so important! Rabbi G obviously spoke longer and better than Iam transmitting here and he cited different Gemoras etc...

 I am planning to go to YI tomorrow for their 9AM minyan and Bais Pinchas for their 8Am on Mon & Tues. Mincha and Maariv by either of them; but Bais Pinchas has a late Maariv too so that is good.

 I plan on going to the Aquarium tommorrow and connect with the walruses and penquins!

**Lesson from a Story**

**Told by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson,**

**The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Zt”l,**

**At a public gathering on 11 Nissan, 1983.**

 A true story. A story of a Jew who unknowingly started a chain of events whose ripple effects he could never have imagined. A Jew blessed by G-d with great wealth, who takes an occasional vacation on his yacht. He employs a captain, a non-Jew, to sail the yacht.

 The time for prayer arrives. Jews face towards the holy city of Jerusalem during prayer, towards the east. He does not know where east is on the ocean. He asks the captain.

 Prayer time again. Again the same problem, where is east? Again he asks the captain. And so with the third time he prays, and the fourth.

**The Captain Becomes Curious**

 The first time he asks, the captain pays no special attention. When the employer keeps on asking the same question, the captain becomes curious. His employer is not the navigator. Why is he always interested in knowing where east is? He asks him.

 The Jew is not ashamed. "I am a Jew," he answers. "I want to pray to G-d. Prayers pass through the site of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. So I must face that direction, which in this part of the world is east. Each time I pray I need to know where is east."

 The captain is impressed. This is a successful man, wealthy enough to own a yacht and hire a captain. Yet he considers it proper to interrupt his affairs to pray to G-d - and to bother to face the correct direction. "I will also begin to think of G-d and pray to Him," exclaims the captain.

 Later, the captain told the yacht owner that ever since he decided to pray to the Creator, he has also told his family and friends about praying to G-d. "If all the people in the world would think about their Creator," concluded the captain, "the world would not be the jungle it is!"

 A Jew can influence non-Jews to acknowledge the Creator and ruler of the world, and to therefore conduct themselves according to the Seven Noachide Laws. Moreover, as seen from the story, such influence is effective just by a Jew being proud and firm in his religion. The yacht owner did not intend to influence the captain. But because he conducted himself properly, his influence was automa-tically felt. He could not know of the ripple effect he would cause merely by asking where was east. And because of him, a non-Jew began to think about G-d, conduct himself more righteously - and in turn, lead others in the same path. All because of one Jew's actions.

**The Meaning on a Deeper Level**

 On a deeper level: The world is like a ship sailing in stormy seas, steered by the governments of the world. But appearances are misleading. It is not they, with their plans and strategies, who determine its course and destination. The course of the world is determined by the spiritual, not the physical. The governments who conduct the world's affairs are the captain who steers the ship. They steer the ship; the Jew, through his perfor-mance of mitzvot, charts the course.

 And this is what the story of the yacht teaches. It seems the non-Jewish captain is the master, for he controls the rudder that steers the ship. Yet it is the Jewish owner who is truly master, and it is the owner who directs the yacht's destination.

 The owner of the yacht is wealthy, and "there is no wealthy person except in [Torah] knowledge." Through Torah, the Jew can influence the world, can chart the course. Just as the yacht owner, through acting according to the Torah's teachings, influenced the captain, so too Jews, through standing firm in performing mitzvot, can influence the nations to acknowledge the Creator and Master of the world.

*Reprinted from this week’s issue of L’Chayim, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization.*

**A Lesson to Be Learned from**

**Reflecting on the Current Sefira Period**

 It is well known that HaRav Dessler, Z’tl, teaches and reiterates that our Holidays are not mere commemorations and remembrances of glorious events that took place in years past, but are times in which we re-experience and relive those very events and occurrences. Thus, every Pesach we are to feel and arrive at new levels of freedom, and at Shavuos we are to undertake a new echelon of Torah acceptance and study.

 So what is it that we are supposed to be re-experiencing during the Sefira period itself? Most likely, there were no concerts or CDs in the desert that Bnei Yisroel were forced to miss, so that could not be it. It also cannot simply be an abstinence from barbers and barber shops for an extended period of time.

 At a Hakhel Shiur, Rabbi Eliyahu Schneider, Shlita, provided the following wonderful insight:

**The Sefer HaChinuch Writes**

**On the Purpose of the Sefira**

 The Sefer HaChinuch writes that the purpose of the Sefira is for us to count up to Shavous, instilling within us a sense of appreciation, excitement and enthusiasm. As we

slowly but surely progress through the Omer period, we must rid ourselves to the greatest extent possible of the robotic nature in which we may perform our mitzvos, and any mental stupor we may experience while listening to a Shiur.

 We must teach ourselves that Torah and Mitzvos cannot be comprised only of “doing today’s daf”, or “learning the two Halachos”. Of course, it is essential that we have goals, and guide ourselves with certain daily accomplishments. However, we must infuse a genuine desire and drive into our Torah study and Mitzvah performance.

 As Rabbi Schneider points out, even though fish live in water, when it rains they come to the surface, as if they are thirsting for the new drops of the life-giving liquid, even though they are already surrounded by it!

**The Mitzvah of Hakhel**

 Indeed, Hakhel is one of the last Mitzvos in the Torah for this very reason. What does Hakhel represent? After all, could not every one simply study the Parshios recited at Hakhel either at home, in Shul, or at a Shiur? Why did \*\*every one\*\* -- man, women and children of all ages have to ascend to the Bais HaMikdash on one particular day to hear a portion of the Torah being read?!

 Rabbi Schneider suggests that Hakhel not only represented the study of Torah, but the experience of Torah. Every so often, one must reinvigorate himself and excite himself about the great opportunity that awaits him every day. It is an opportunity shared by a minute, actually, very minute, percentage of all the people in the world. Just as people may forget to appreciate their eyesight, their ability to walk, that they have a job, food, clothing, so, too, may they forget to consider the infinite and eternal Torah that is or can be their daily companion.

 Let us take these last few weeks before Shavuos to learn Torah with the effort and energy, with the exhilaration and enthusiam, that it really, truly deserves!

*Reprinted from the Hakhel Community Email Bulletin of 30 Nisan 5770/April 14, 2010.*

**Kyrgyzstan Jews in Danger; Anti-Semites Attack Chabad Synagogue**

**By Tzvi Ben Gedalyahu**

 The 2,000-member Jewish community of Kyrgyzstan suddenly lives in fear following an attack on its only synagogue after rebels last week apparently overthrew the government in a bloody uprising in which more than 80 people were killed.



**Rabbi Arye Raichman**

 The Chabad-Lubavitch synagogue in Bishkek was firebombed, and the local Jewish school temporarily shut its doors as a precaution. “We ask that everyone keep the people of Kyrgyzstan in their prayers," said Chabad Rabbi Aryeh Reichman. "While we remain cautious, with the help of G-d, peace will soon be restored and life will return to normal."

 He told Israel National News in a telephone interview that at least three firebombs exploded at the synagogue but did not cause any interior damage. Rabbi Reichman added that Jewish leaders have protested to the interim government and asked for protection against further anti-Semitic incidents. He added the rebels have taken up office in a parliament building that survived heavy damage in the uprising.

**Anti-Semitism Rare Before Last Week’s Rebellion**

 The Jewish community in the country has almost never experienced anti-Semitism before the rebellion last week. (Pictured at left is a Bar Mitzvah ceremony of a Bishkek Jewish boy at the Chabad synagogue.)

 Several political observers have linked the attack with rebels’ anger at an American Jewish businessman, who is closely tied with the government of Kurmanbek Bakiyev and his son Maxim but who has no strong ties with the local Jewish community.

 Posters scattered throughout Bishkek proclaimed, "Dirty Jews and all those like Maxim Bakiyev have no place in Kyrgyzstan."

**Violence Erupted After Recent National Election**


**Chabad synagogue in Bishkek**

 Bakiyev has fled the capital and technically is in power but said he might resign if his safety were guaranteed. The violence began after a large protest against the election victory of Bakiyev, who has been accused of corruption.

 Kyrgyzstan's tiny Jewish population mostly lives in the capital of Bishkek and largely comprises descendants of Eastern European and Bukharan Jews who relocated during the Second World War and Soviet Regime. Many of them are welfare recipients, and the Jewish Agency is actively processing applications for those wanting to move to Israel.

 Rabbi Reichman, who has served in Bishkek since 2002 and lives with his wife and four children, remains optimistic and says there is no “direct danger” to the Jewish community. He said that 300 Jews participated in the recent Chabad community Passover Seder and that Jewish awareness is growing.

 Russian President Dmitry Medvedev told a Washington think tank Tuesday that Kyrgyzstan “is on the brink of civil war” and could become a "second Afghanistan." A key American air base in the war against Afghani terrorists is located in Kyrgyzstan.

**The Parashah of**

**“Hashgahah Peratit”**

 This parashah, which deals with the infliction of ssara’at, is the parashah of divine providence – “hashgahah peratit.” The Gemara (Arachin 16b) tells us that ssara’at comes as a punishment for seven different types of sins. There are many conditions that must be met for an infection to be considered ssara’at, and the punishment brought about by Hashem is precisely measured by Hashem.

 Does the discoloration come before the hair, or vice versa; is only one hair infected, or two; is the infection the minimum size; is it one of the four colors of ssara’at, etc. If the person is deserving of punishment, then Hashem ensures that all the conditions are met.

 For good reason, the Midrash at the beginning of our parashah (Vayikra Rabbah 15:3) brings the story of the person who would teach, “There is no hair for which the Almighty did not create its own hole, in order that it would not benefit from the other one.” After some time this man became poor and could no longer afford to purchase even bread to eat. He decided to travel to find some means of a livelihood.

**Husband Heeds His Wife’s Advice**

 His wife said to him, “Was it not you who said that the Creator takes care of every hair? We never find that a hair must wander about to find a means of livelihood! Stay here, and your Creator will take care of you!” He heeded her advice, and the Almighty indeed assisted him.

 In this context, we would like to tell a story, a true story, the details of which we have confirmed. A young married kollel student lived in a small apartment in Bnei-Brak. A child was born, and then another, followed by yet another. They purchased folding beds and bunk-beds. They spread small mattresses about on the floor, and when the eighth child was born, they walked at night on a carpet of mattresses.

**Let’s Praise Those Who Sacrifice Themselves in the Tents of Torah**

 Not to mention the lack of space for the preparation of shiurim. The man did not even entertain the possibility of a private work area or even his own drawer in the family’s only closet. Some glorify the pioneers who drained swamps and lived in tents. Let us also praise those who kill themselves in the tents of Torah and choose the eternal world over this temporary world. It is in their merit that the world continues to exist, and in their merit we live, as it says, “I will bear the entire locale on their behalf” (Bereishit 18:26; Sanhedrin 99b).

 When the ninth child was on its way, the mother asked herself where they would have place for the crib. “Will we have to hang a crib from the wall?” she wondered. She was right; this was indeed a real problem. Her husband said to her, “I will ask father; perhaps he can get us a different apartment.”

**Husband is Referring to a Different “Father”**

 The wife laughed. “If your father had money,” she said, “we would not have been living like this until now!” But he was referring to a different “father.” He took a vacation day from the kollel and traveled to Jerusalem, to the Western Wall, the remnant of the Bet Hamikdash. He took out a Sefer Tehillim and began pouring out his heart through the recitation of the eternal Psalms, and he shed rivers of tears.

 The poverty, the cramped apartment, the intolerable living conditions – everything suddenly burst forth. Hecontinued with one chapter after another, one hour after another. Suddenly, someone interrupted him, somebody tapped him on the shoulder. A stranger had come along and asked him why he was crying. “It’s nothing,” he replied. “It just a matter between me and my Creator.”

 He continued his tear-filled recitation of Tehillim, and the stranger disrupted him again. “Please tell me what bothers you; when a personfeels anguish in his heart, he should speak about it.”

 The man told him of his troubles, and the stranger asked him to come with him to his car. He took him to the offices of a well-known agent and asked, “Do you have an apartment with five rooms ready?” A spacious, ground-level apartment was found. The stranger wrote out a check for $230,000, took the keys, and gave them to the kollel student.

**The Student Can’t Understand Actions of His Benefactor**

 The student said, “Thank you very much, but I don’t even know you. I did not turn to you for help, I never asked for your assistance.”

 He replied, “True, you turned to the Almighty. But it was He who stirred my heart, and I feel as though I am His agent to help you.” The “Father” gave them a different apartment…

 The student returned to Bnei-Brak, told his wife the good news, and brought some pastries to the kollel to conduct a thanksgiving celebration. The other students heard what happened, and were overcome with excitement. They asked for a group vacation for a day,rented a car, and drove to the Western Wall. They recited Tehillim with sincere emotion, each for their own requests – livelihood, a new apartment, health, education, who knows what.

**Their Tehillim Recitation Elicits a Different Type of Response**

 They recited one chapter after another, one hour after an hour. Suddenly, as they had hoped, their recitation was interrupted. Someone tapped them on the shoulders. They excitedly turned around – and they were asked to donate some money for charity.

 Disappointed, they made their way back. They consoled themselves with the knowledge that they at least had the privilege of praying at the vestige of the Bet Hamikdash, they knew that they still had recited dozens of chapters of Tehillim with concentration and emotion.

 The next day they arrived as usual for their studies. They told the Rosh Kollel of their disappointment and asked why their colleague had such success while they did not.

 They were right; this is indeed a question. He replied, “The answer is simple. He traveled to the Western Wall in order to pray before the Almighty, to appeal to Him and ask for His assistance. The Almighty then sent him the wealthy Jew to save him. But you traveled to meet that Jew – why, then, would Hashem help you?”

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Aram Soba Newsletter.*

[**The Human Side of the Story**](http://ohr.edu/yhiy.php?seriesid=17&archive=1)

**Five-Minute Investment**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

 Walking along a street in Tel Aviv an observant Jew decided to try his luck at bringing a secular resident of the bustling metropolis closer to his Jewish roots. He courteously stopped a passerby and offered to study some Torah with him for five minutes.

 To his pleasant surprise the fellow responded that he was interested in the offer and even invited him into his nearby home. Together they learned some *Chumash*, and when the five minutes were up our hero got up to leave.

 "Wait", said his host. "If we already studied together I would like you to give your blessing to me and my wife who have been married many years and have not yet been blessed with children."

 "Who am I to give you a blessing which will bring you the fulfillment of your wish!" was the humble response. "But what I can do is give you a suggestion that will help. Invite some of your neighbors and friends to participate in a weekly Torah shiur in your home and I will supply the teachers. In the merit of such an initiative you will be blessed."

 The offer was accepted, the shiur became a regular event for many years and the hosting couple was soon blessed with their first child.

*Reprinted from the Yeshiva Ohr Somayach (Yerushalayim) website: Ohr.edu*

**Perke Abot As Heard From**

**Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l**

 “Rabbi Yossi says: …and let all your deeds be for the sake of Heaven” (Abot 2:12)

 Rabbi Yossi was one of the five greatest disciples of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakai. He was a Cohen and was noted to be a “Haseed”, who served Hashem in an extraordinary manner in all aspects of service.

 The Mishna lists for us three cardinal paths which R’ Yossi lived by. In the final one he teaches us that we can practice having all of our actions done ‘In order to serve You Hashem’, and thereby reach high levels of perfection, through mundane as well as spiritual actions.

 Rambam, z’l, wrote that this principle, of making all your actions for the purpose of Heaven, is a “wondrous point”. We can utilize this great principle in all facets of our lives and thereby elevate mundane activities into the spiritual realm of holiness and serving Hashem.

 Prior to eating, walking, exercising, getting dressed, showering, opening then door to your place of work etc. just say the words, for example, “I am going to sleep tonight “To serve You Hashem”.

 You have now elevated your sleep and transformed it into actual serving Hashem.

 By making this “wondrous” practice a regular part of our everyday life it will bring us to yirat shamayim, (Awareness of G-d), in all of our actions and it will transform the most physical and ordinary daily activities into acts of Serving Hashem.

 “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” (Mishle 3:4).

 The Gaon of Vilna explains this as “Let all of your deeds be for the sake of Heaven”.

 This principle will also elevate our spiritual actions to a level closer to Hashem’s will. When the women are cooking meals for their families or lighting candles…; When the men are putting on tefillin; Even before a person is about to open a book to learn Torah; Say it, once a day: "I am doing this in order to be more aware of Hashem”

 Make all your actions for the purpose of Heaven, “Leshem Shamayim”

**Lt.-Gen. Ashkenazi Declares the Tanach (Jewish Bible) is the IDF's Guide**

**By Gil Ronen **



**General Gabi Ashkezazi**

 "The IDF sees the Tanach (Jewish Bible) as a guide in the deep and practical sense of the word,” IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi said Wednesday in a meeting with participants in the International Bible Quiz for Youth. “It is no accident that the IDF swears in its soldiers with a weapon in one hand and the Tanach in the other – a custom that reflects the uniqueness of the IDF and the deep bond of the Jewish people to the Book of Books,” he added.

 The 46 competitors in the Bible Quiz hail from twenty different countries. They met Lt.-Gen. Ashkenazi at Beit HeChayal in Jerusalem, in the presence of the IDF's Chief Education Officer, Brig.-Gen. Eli Shermeister, Chief Military rabbi Brig.-Gen. Avichai Ronsky and members of the World Management of the Bible Quiz.

 The 47th annual World Bible Quiz for Youth is being held with the aid of the Jewish Agency. Its theme this year will be “Hebrew Comes Alive,” to honor the 150 yea birthday of Zionist visionary Binyamin Ze'ev Herzl and 120 years since the establishment of the Council for the Hebrew Language. The quiz will take place on Independence Day, April 20, the Ninth of Iyyar.

 The contestants – all of whom won the Bible Quizzes in their respective countries – have been taking part in an 18-day preparatory camp which includes volunteer activity, hikes through Biblical sites, a visit to Yad VaShem and gun training in the Gadna Youth Corps base. Four of the 46 participants are the Israeli quiz's finalists, one of whom is the Prime Minister's son, Avner Netanyahu.

*Reprinted from the April 15th email of National Israel News (Arutz Sheva)*

**Saved by Keeping Sabbath:**

**Interview with Poland's Chief Rabbi**

**By Eli Stutz**

**Rabbi Michael Schudrich, who was** [**spared almost certain death**](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/136941) **four days (April 10th) ago by refusing to violate the Sabbath and fly with President Lech Kaczynski, discussed his feelings on Israel National Radio. He spoke to Tovia Singer about the legacy and tragic death of Poland’s leader.**

 **Tovia Singer:** Last Saturday you were spared being on a flight to a memorial commemorating the massacre of Poles by the Soviets. You were invited to join the President of Poland to attend that memorial, but because the flight was on Shabbat, you were not on it when it crashed. When you heard about the crash, what went through your mind?

 **Rabbi Schudrich:** I knew the president well, and his wife, Maria, and had about another fifteen or so other friends on the flight. My first thought was disbelief and shock. A little bit later, it sunk in that I could have been on that flight.

 It's very hard to describe the feeling of a person who realizes they could have been on a flight that crashed. On the one hand, I felt tremendous sorrow for the loss of my friends. On the other hand, there is a sense of tremendous relief and gratitude. The president always made a point of inviting me to accompany him to places of massacre during the [Second World] War, as part of the clergy of the people of Poland; especially to Katyn, where about ten percent of the soldiers murdered were Jewish. This is a fact that has been remembered and emphasized by Presidents and Prime Ministers of Poland over the last 15 years.

 The last time I was there with the president, I remember that he insisted that we had to fly together. One of the soldiers who was killed in Katyn was the chief rabbi of the Polish armed forces, Rabbi Baruch Sternberg. Kaczynski made a point of finding his plaque together with me. He said it was a Polish obligation to remember how Jews fought and died for Poland.



**Chief Rabbi Michael Schudrich of Poland**

 **Tovia Singer:** President Kaczynski was a conservative Catholic. Yet he had a legacy of someone who wanted to repair wounds with the Jewish community. What was the driving force behind President Kaczynski's good relationship with the Jewish community?

 **Rabbi Schudrich:** In many ways it was from his mother. His mother, who is now very ill, always taught her sons that Jews were always part of Poland. She had a lot of Jewish friends before and even after the war. Somebody told me that President Kaczynski's godmother was Jewish, which was very unusual at the time, and that must have had a huge impact on him as well.

 While in general, people think that being farther to the right makes people more xenophobic and antisemitic, in his case, it was the opposite. He was a devout "John Paul the Second Catholic." The late Polish Pope, in his 27 year papacy, did more to fight antisemtism than anyone else in 2000 years. He was the first pope to state clearly that antisemtism is a sin. Part of Kaczynski's patriotism and part of his Catholicism was due to John Paul the Second's influence.

 **Tovia Singer:** Poland, to many Jews, is one big Jewish cemetery. Yitzchak Shamir referred to the Poles as very antisemitic. You personally have been attacked in Poland. Many people would say to you, "Rabbi, what are you doing in Poland, building Jewish life? Poland is the past." What do you say to them?

 **Rabbi Schudrich:** Before World War Two, there were 3.5 million Jews in Poland. By the end of 1944, over 90% of those Jews had been murdered in the Holocaust, still leaving approximately 350,000 Jews alive. After the war, Poland was immediately occupied by Soviet Communists. Many Jews realized that to feel safe saying the statement, "I am a Jew", they would have to leave Soviet-occupied Poland. So most Jews left. But some remained, many of whom gave up their Jewish identity. But since the fall of Communism, thousands and thousands of Poles have discovered that they really have Jewish roots.

 **Tovia Singer:** There must be thousands of Poles who think they are Catholic, but are actually Jewish. Are you involved in trying to find the hidden Jews of Poland?

 **Rabbi Schudrich:** That's what I'm doing here. I'm here because of them. I'm here to give them the chance to come back to the Jewish people. I'm here to give them a chance to learn about Yiddishkeit. There was one man, a little older than myself, who was invited to a memorial organized by the Israeli embassy for a Polish woman who saved two Jewish women during the war. He was told by a representative of the embassy that his mother was saved by this woman. He then understood that he himself was Jewish. That was nine months ago. A few months ago, he had his circumcision, and now he is a proud and active member of one of our Jewish communities.

 One woman in her mid-forties told me that her grandmother used to make these strange pancakes, and then she met some Israelis a few years ago and understood that what her grandmother made was matzah. The woman said, "When little children used to misbehave, Grandma would say this strange word, 'Meshigeh' ['crazy person' in Yiddish - ed.] – do you know what that means? Grandma liked to play cards, and whenever she would get a bad hand, she would say, 'Oy vey' – do you know what that means? When we had meat (and we never really had pork in the house), she would never let us have milk afterwards."

 So, did she know she was Jewish? Didn't she know she was Jewish? What her pushed her to see me, was that her son said, "We're Jewish. I want to be Jewish." He was at our Friday night Shabbat dinner last week. And now, their 15-year-old wants to go to a Jewish summer camp. Other grandchildren of "hidden" Jews I have met are slowly becoming part of the community, coming to our lectures, and learning about what it means to be Jewish.

*Reprinted from a transcription of a radio interview on Arutz Sheva (Israel National Radio) on Wednesday, April 14, 2010*