

L'Chaim

The Yeshiva Centre - Chabad NSW Headquarters
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Living with the Rebbe



The name of a Torah portion is indicative of its contents and theme. The name of the first of this week's two readings, Tazria (literally "when [she] shall conceive") is therefore surprising at first glance, as the entire portion deals with the affliction of leprosy rather than conception and birth. In fact, the Biblical plague of leprosy was the most severe form of spiritual uncleanness, leading our Sages to declare, "The leper is considered as if dead."

Tazria, however, is an allusion to the positive, inner purpose of all the afflictions and punishments that are prescribed in the Torah, as will be explained:

G-d is the epitome of goodness and loving-kindness. He doesn't punish anyone for the sake of being punitive. His sole intention is to refine and purify the person, to remove the "shell" that was created by his sins, and to elevate him to a higher level. All of the Torah's punishments, even the most stringent, are for the ultimate good of the recipient.

This is also the inner intention of the Biblical plague of leprosy (tzara'at), as distinguished from the modern day illness known as Hansen's Disease. As Maimonides explains, the physical manifestations of tzara'at were miraculous in nature, and were visited on an individual for the sin of lashon hara (gossip). "The first symptoms would appear on a person's house; if he repented, the house would be purified. If he persisted in his wickedness until the house was destroyed, the leather garments in his house would begin to change... If he persisted in his wickedness until they had to be burned, the clothing he wore would be afflicted." It was only if a person did not return to G-d after all these warnings that any symptoms of tzara'at would appear on his body.

Once this happened, the afflicted person had to temporarily leave the rest of society and dwell in isolation. The purpose of this period of separation and reflection was to transform the former sinner into a new entity, one that was purified and refined.

The name of the Torah portion, Tazria, thus reveals the true objective of all the Biblical plagues: the "birth" of a new being, a purer and holier Jew.

This is also the inner meaning of the Jewish people's exile. During the exile, we "sow" mitzvot and good deeds that they may "grow" and flourish when Moshiach comes. The reward we will receive in the Messianic era will not be dissociated from our present service; on the contrary, it will be the natural outgrowth of all the "seeds" we are planting now.

May we merit to see this immediately.

Adapted from Volume 22 of Likutei Sichot

LESSON FROM A STORY

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 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 automatically 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.

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 performance 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.

Parsha in a nutshell

The Parshahs of Tazria and Metzora continue the discussion of the laws of Tumah v'Taharah, ritual impurity and purity.

A woman giving birth should undergo a process of purification, which includes immersing in a mikvah (a naturally gathered pool of water) and bringing offerings to the Holy Temple. All male infants are to be circumcised on the eighth day of life.

Tzaraat ("leprosy") is a supra-natural plague, which can afflict people as well as garments or homes. If white or pink patches appear on a person's skin (dark pink or green in garments or homes), a Kohen is summoned. Judging by various signs, such as an increase in size of the afflicted area after a seven-day quarantine, the Kohen pronounces it tameh (impure) or tahor (pure).

A person afflicted with tzaraat must dwell alone outside of the camp (or city) until he is healed. The afflicted area in a garment or home must be removed; if the tzaraat recurs, the entire garment or home must be destroyed.


When the metzora ("leper") heals, he or she is purified by the Kohen with a special procedure involving two birds, spring water in an earthen vessel, a piece of cedar wood, a scarlet thread and a bundle of hyssop.

Ritual impurity is also engendered through a seminal or other discharge in a man, and menstruation or other discharge of blood in a woman, necessitating purification through immersion in a mikvah.


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Thoughts that Count

When a woman conceives and gives birth (Lev. 12:2)

The potential contained within a seed is virtually limitless. When properly nurtured, a seed will develop into a mature tree, which, in turn, will yield more seeds with the potential for growth and regeneration. Our service of G-d must be performed in a similar manner. A good deed must not be self-limiting; a Jew must always strive to ensure that his actions have far-reaching effects, bearing fruit in the next generation as well.

(Likrat Shabbat, #22)

On the subject of afflictions, the Talmud states, "A person sees all defects, except for his own," meaning that we are sometimes blind to our own faults. The Baal Shem Tov explained that when a person notices a spiritual defect in another, it is a sure sign that he suffers from the same problem himself, at least to a small degree. The Hebrew verse can also be read, "All defects that a person sees in his fellow, are his own defects."

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN AND SPIRITUAL LEADER



The Rebbe spoke often of how important the Land of Israel is to the Jewish people and about the importance of maintaining possession of every inch of the land, saying:

"Just as the Jews are G-d's chosen people, Eretz Yisrael [the Land of Israel] is G-d's chosen land, a holy land given to the Jewish people, those living on the land at present, and those who are presently living in the Diaspora. No one is entitled to give up any portion of Eretz Yisrael to gentiles. Maintaining possession of these lands is the only path to peace. Succumbing to the pressure to surrender them will only invite additional pressure, weakening the security of the Jewish people and exposing them to danger. Heaven forbid that the government in Eretz Yisrael should consider surrendering any portion of Eretz Yisrael which G-d has granted us."

The Rebbe's approach to Eretz Yisrael could almost be described as that of "L'chatchila Aribet." L'chatchila Aribet means, "to begin with, go over."

This concept was innovated by the Rebbe Maharash (Rabbi Shmuel, the fourth Chabad Rebbe), whose birthday is celebrated this Friday, 2 Iyar.

The approach of L'chatchila Aribet teaches that if we come upon an obstacle to a task we are involved in, or an obstacle to a mitzva or project or good deed which comes our way (or we pursue), we should overcome the obstacle in the most direct manner.

The Rebbe Maharash explained that while some people propose that when confronted with an obstacle the best route is to go around, or under it - and the Rebbe Maharash says: "And I say one has to go l'chatchila aribet [from the start, go over it]."

May our pursuit of Torah and mitzvot be in a manner of "l'chatchila aribet." Surely this fortitude and persistence will have its desired effect, true peace in the Land of Israel, and throughout the entire world, with the revelation of Moshiach, NOW!

Pinchus Feldman

Rabbi Pinchus Feldman OAM

Smile it's Friday: A yuppie was opening the door of his BMW when a car came along and hit the door, ripping it off completely. When the police arrived at the scene, the yuppie complained bitterly about the damage to his car. "Officer, look what they've done to my Beemer!" You yuppies are so materialistic, it's ridiculous" retorted the officer. "You're so worried about your stupid BMW; you didn't even notice that your left arm was ripped off." Oh, my God!" screamed the yuppie, noticing the bloody stump where his arm used to be. "My Rolex!"

Riddle of the week: If 3 salesman can sell three stoves in 7 minutes, how many stoves can six salesmen sell in seventy minutes?

Answer to last weeks riddle: Q Divide 110 into two parts so that one will be 150 percent of the other. What are the 2 numbers? A 44 and 66

Slice of Life

Unexpected Responses

The young bearded man in the dark suit hardly resembled the regular customers of the large clothing store in a New York inner city neighborhood. But Tony, the non-Jewish security guard, was not surprised to see this "regular." Every week, he would come to visit Tony's boss, the owner of the store.

"We talk about our religion," the boss had told Tony when he asked about the visitor. "He also tells me all kinds of miracle stories about this holy Rabbi of his who lives in Brooklyn and helps sick people. He has a lot of admirers, this Rabbi. I heard that even the President sends him a card on his birthday. Impressive, eh?"

But Tony wasn't thinking about the president. He thought about his own four-year-old little son, Michael, who was suffering from a developmental disorder. He did not talk, walk, or feed himself, and the doctors had been unable to help.

"It's a far out idea," Tony thought hesitantly. "But maybe...." Still, he could never bring himself to approach the bearded man.

One hot summer afternoon, Tony was standing listlessly at his post when the young man walked through the door. Maybe the intense heat gave Tony a sense of urgency. "It's now or never! I've got to ask the man to get his Rabbi to bless my son."

After waiting nervously for the man to end his meeting with the boss, Tony called out, "Hey sir, got a minute?"

The young man turned to the guard. "What can I do for you?" he answered politely.

With a what-do-I-have-to-lose shrug, Tony blurted out his request. He could see the man listening attentively and thinking as he spoke, and then he offered to help. "But there's one small condition," the young man said. Tony instinctively reached for his wallet.

"No, no," the young man said, waving his hand. "That's not what I meant." Tony was surprised. Now it was his turn

to listen. The man told him about the Rebbe's campaign to begin each day with a moment of silence, meditating upon the Creator of the World and His expectations of man. He explained the Seven Universal Laws commanded to Noah and his descendants which all non-Jews are obligated to observe.

"I'll write the letter about Michael to the Rebbe," the young man concluded, "but I'd like to tell him that you're trying to earn the blessing. Do the things that we spoke about for a week, and then we'll see."

"It's a deal," responded Tony enthusiastically. "I'll do my thing and you do yours. I'll think about G-d every morning and try to act right. I swear my wife will be in on this too. Next week, we write this letter to the Rabbi and you give it to him, O.K.?"

The next time they met, Tony vowed that he had kept his part of the deal. "It ain't bad, thinking about G-d and all that every morning..."

The letter was written, but Tony's boss left for vacation, and it was several months before the two saw each other again. When they met again, Tony greeted the young man with a flashing smile. "Unbelievable! The kid suddenly started living! He's walkin' and talkin' and he's gonna go to school this September! Listen, would you help me write a thank-you card to the Rabbi?"

Tony promised to tell all his friends about the miracle. He tried to convince them to start their day with a moment of silence and to keep those seven laws.

A colorful combination of adept professionalism, personal charm and downright chutzpa blended in the "770" photographer, Reb Levi Yitzchak Frieden.

Reb Levi Itche, as he was affectionately called, had visited "770" from his home in Israel during each of the High Holidays since 1975. His camera's lens captured many touching

incidents, such as the Rebbe's blessing of yeshiva students moments before Yom Kippur began. With one eye on his watch, as he dared not desecrate the holiest day of the year, and the other eye focusing his camera, Levi Itche took shot after shot of this memorable moment.

He was so involved in his work that the Rebbe once told Frieden to tell the yeshiva students studying at "770" that if their enthusiasm would match Frieden's passion for photography, things would look much better.

Frieden was eager to share the scenes of "770" with other Jews in Israel. In 1976, he held an exhibit called "770" at Tel Aviv's journalist center, Beit Sokolov. The exhibit, which later moved to Jerusalem and Bar Ilan University, afforded the large crowd of viewers a mix of spiritual experience and professional expertise.

On the whole, the exhibit was highly applauded. However, one journalist commented in the guest book: 'With all due respect to the superb photography, the subject you have chosen is extremely clerical and takes us back to the primitive darkness of the Middle Ages.'

"Upon my next visit to the States," Frieden continued. "I presented the Rebbe with the guest book. Leafing through it quickly, the Rebbe noticed that negative remark. "Please compliment the journalist on his strength of character. It takes fortitude to differ from all of the other responses,' the Rebbe said, 'But tell him that not everything in the Middle Ages was dark. Furthermore, ask him to review his own newspaper. Today's news is not all that bright either.'

"The Rebbe then handed me a dollar, asking me to deliver it to that journalist."

From To Know and To Care by Rabbi Eli and Malka Touger, published by Sichos in English

Moshiach

Many people await the coming of Moshiach and the "better days" it will bring. In truth, however, these are the best days there are. What Moshiach will do is reveal the hidden goodness of our present-day existence.

(Rabbi Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch - Sefer HaSichot 5704, p.93)

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Rabbi Shmuel "Shmelke" Horowitz (1726-1778), known as "Rabbi Shmelke of Nicholsburg," was a very remarkable Chassidic Master. He claimed the biblical prophet Shmuel haNavi as his ancestor, and said that the prophet passed his soul on to him. He was not always a Chassid; in fact, he was originally among the early opponents of Chassidism, until he met the famous Maggid of Mezritch. Later Rabbi Shmelke became the rabbi of Nicholsburg (Mikulov) in Moravia. He is the author of the Torah works Divre Shmuel, Imre Shmuel, and Shemen haTov.

When he was appointed as rabbi in Nicholsburg, the community leaders informed him that they had a special custom: every new rabbi was expected to add a new rule or custom to the chronicles of the community. Rabbi Shmelke smiled and said nothing. As time went by and the new rabbi still had not contributed anything to the rule-book, the officers of the community began to press him about this; but Rabbi Shmelke continued to procrastinate and make all sorts of excuses. Finally, his secretary took the initiative and placed the book in front of him, open on his desk, an inkwell and a pen neatly next to it.

Reb Shmelke sat down, picked up the pen, and wrote the Ten Commandments.

We know them, but they are always new for us.


The Chassidic master Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rymanov (c.1755-1815) was a very special person, an ascetic who was known for his tremendous awe of G-d, his modesty and his passionate prayers, and people came to see him because he was considered a miracle worker as well.

Despite all his accomplishments, the Rymanover Rebbe did not have money and he didn't care for money either. He was actually so poor that he often could not feed his children.

There is a beautiful story about how he came home one day and found his little son crying, for the poor boy had not eaten in a long time. "I can't bear being hungry anymore!" sobbed the child. With a bleeding heart his father rebuked him: "If your hunger was really as great as you say, G-d would provide something..."

The boy could not stop crying and he left the room in tears. After a moment his father called him back and said to him: "Please forgive me, my sweet child! I had no idea that your hunger was so overwhelming. I just took one of my books off the table and look what I found next to it—a coin. You see, G-d always helps when it is needed most. Now go and buy some bread and make a blessing..."

We often think we that can't hold out any longer, be it hunger, grief or some other test, but G-d is knows what we truly need and at the right moment—which He alone knows—He gives. So trust Him and Him alone.



Candle Lighting Times
Friday 16th April 2010

City	In	Out
Sydney	5:15pm	6:09pm
Brisbane	5:13pm	6:05pm
Surfers Par	5:11pm	6:03pm
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