



## Parshat Metzora: Seeing The Good

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur on Chassidut by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

Parshat Metzora discusses the affliction of *tzaraat*, a divine form of leprosy. According to the Gemara, this was caused by the sin of *lashon hara*, evil gossip. In order to rejoin the Jewish people, the *metzora*, the person stricken with *tzaraat*, needed to go through a purification process, which included bringing a *korban olah*, *chatat*, and *asham*. Why was the *metzora* required to bring these three sacrifices?

The Shem MiShmuel explains that *lashon hara* is an expression of *sinat chinam*, baseless hatred. The Tanya writes that even though the Torah mentions the *mitzva* to help unload the donkey of an enemy, it does not permit us to have enemies. We can hate the sins of sinners but not the sinners themselves.

The Gemara in Gittin notes that *churban bayit sheni* resulted from *sinat chinam*. Enmity produces enmity. The rabbis did not respond when Bar Kamtza was shamed. They should have judged him favorably, that he would repent. In the end, the Temple was destroyed due to their inaction.

*Churban bayit rishon* was caused by the three cardinal sins. The gravity of the sin of *lashon hara* parallels the severity of these three sins. Evil talk destroys society and makes it impossible to perform Torah and *mitzvot*. The three cardinal sins affect the three levels of the soul. Idol worship is a confusion of the intellect about the oneness of Hashem. This is related to the *neschama*. Adultery is uncontrolled passion which corresponds to *ruach*. Murder is a destruction of the basic life force of man, which is connected to *nefesh*. The *neschama* corresponds to thought and *nefesh* relates to action. Idol worship is a sin of thought, murder is a sin of action. Adultery lies between thought and action.

*Lashon hara* too perverts the human soul on all three levels. Therefore the *metzora* was commanded to bring three sacrifices. The *olah* atones for evil thoughts, the *chatat* atones for actions, and the *asham* atones for areas that lie between thought and action.

The Torah refers to *tzaraat* many times as *nega*. The letters of the word *nega* are the

same as in the word *oneg*. The Sefer Yetzira writes that *Oneg Shabbat* rectifies the *nega* of *tzaraat*. *Tzaraat* is rooted in the sin of *lashon hara* and affects the human soul on all three levels. *Oneg Shabbat* also penetrates us at the three levels of the soul. The Torah commands us, *zachor* and *shamor*, remember and keep the Shabbat. *Zachor* relates to thought, while *shamor* corresponds to action.

Shabbat is a day to focus on studying Torah. Torah connects thought to action. It takes human thought and energy, and channels them into actions that express Hashem's will. Additionally, Shabbat is a day of love, a day to work on *ahavat yisrael*. The Gemara says, "*Al tehi baz l'chol adam*." Do not treat another person with disregard. The good within a person is the true essence of his soul. The bad is just his external conqueror. Expressing positivity ignites the flame of righteousness within a person. Love and goodness can lead to change and repentance. This is the lesson of the *metzora*.

## Sefirat Haomer: Joy & Mourning

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Beinush Ginsburg

The seven weeks of *sefira* connect Pesach to Shavuot. The central goal of *Yetzivat Mitzrayim* was to receive the Torah. We were taken out of Egypt so we would be free to serve Hashem. This is expressed with the *mitzva* of *sefira*.

Rav Hirsch explains that on Pesach the Jews primarily experienced physical freedom, which is symbolized by the *korban omer*. Barley, commonly used as animal fodder, signifies physicality. The *shteif halechem*, the wheat bread sacrifice offered on Shavuot, symbolizes spiritual freedom. The Jews did not achieve complete freedom until they received the Torah. On the fiftieth day, when they finally attained the pinnacle of spiritual purity, they approach Hashem with human food. Rav Hirsch writes that the day after the Jews left Egypt they began to count *sefira*. This further demonstrates that the Exodus was only the beginning. It was not the goal.

The Orhot Chaim explains that we do not recite *shehechyanu* on the *mitzva* of *sefira*

because the *shechyanu* on Shavuot covers it. The whole purpose of *sefira* is to count towards Shavuot. Therefore, no separate *bracha* is required.

Additionally, although there is a special *mitzva* to rejoice on the *shalosh regalim*, the Torah does not mention it in relation to Pesach. This is because the *simcha* of Pesach isn't complete until Shavuot. The entire goal of Pesach is *Matan Torah*. The Ramban in Vayikra refers to *sefira* as *chol hamoed*. These seven weeks between Pesach and Shavuot link the two holidays together. Chazal refer to Shavuot as "*atzeret*." *Atzeret* means to stop and hold on. It is usually used in connection to the closure of Yom Tov where we are exhorted to hold on to the holiness that was gained during the holiday. Shavuot is *atzeret* because it is the end of the period of Pesach and *sefira*.

*Sefira* is both a joyous and mournful time. As we happily anticipate *Matan Torah*, we mourn the passing of the students of Rabbi

Akiva. Why did they die specifically during this time period? The Hegyonei Halacha explains that to properly prepare for receiving the Torah, a person must work on his *middot*. Indeed there is a custom to study Pirkei Avot during *sefira*. We need to think about why we are in *aveilut*, internalize the reason, and work to rectify our failings. The Gemara writes that the students died because they did not properly respect each other. These seven weeks are an opportune time to work on our relationships *bein adam l'chavero*.

We can learn from the death of the students of Rabbi Akiva the importance of *mesora* and how we have to be careful to keep it perfectly intact. Rav Aharon explains that if these students would have lived they would have been the future Tannaim and the *baalei mesora*. Respecting our friends means having objectivity to accept the truth of another opinion even if you did not think of that idea first. Rav Aharon explains that the students had a problem with their

Continued on Page 2



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Continued from Page 1

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opinion even if you did not think of that idea first. Rav Aharon explains that the students had a problem with their learning. They could not put aside their personal ego to concede their friend's position even if it was true. If they would have lived, their *mesora* would have been corrupted because they were lacking in *middot*. Instead of passing

on a corrupted tradition, they died.

The lofty weeks of *sefira* are meant to help us gradually ascend the ladder of self development so that ultimately we can reach the holy day of Shavuot with pure hearts ready to receive the Torah anew.

## Bringing Torah To Life #10

### Tefilla: Opening The Gates of Prayer

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The roots of *emunah* begin in very early childhood. Young children between the ages of three and six are concrete thinkers. Abstract ideas such as the concept of a Creator are difficult for them to grasp. Is making *tefilla* a central part of their day, doing them harm or good? There are two views. One opinion maintains that it is detrimental because it makes it almost impossible for a child at a later stage of development to shake the superficial robotic *tefillot* of their early youth. Even Israeli children who understand Hebrew are so tuned out that *tefilla* becomes just a reading exercise devoid of meaning. At this age, little children enjoy parroting. Nursery rhymes make no sense to them yet they like reciting them. To that end, the second opinion holds that when a young child learns the *tefillot*, the part of them that loves repetition absorbs the words of the prayers into their souls. There is so much *kedusha* in *tefilla* that taking it in like mothers milk has enormous benefit as it creates a

positive backdrop for a later reality.

What about the present? How do we help our children create a connection with Hashem? Young children are superficial. If they hear that they can please Hashem with their *tefillot*, they will feel empowered and connected, especially if *tefilla* is done rhythmically or in song. Song gives them a sense of security, stability, and connection which is important. When you teach a child to daven, you are setting the stage for them to feel good about being Jewish. If you expect them to say every word with exactitude, or repeatedly admonish them to sit straight or pay attention the child may come to associate davening with feeling inadequate and disconnected. Don't kill their love for davening with being overly focused on the form. I once had a charming book about the Baal Shem Tov published by Machanayim. It had a beautiful picture of a young child holding a siddur aloft while davening in the forest. When my children saw this drawing, they became the Baal

Shem Tov for a moment. They could understand talking to Hashem because the picture concretized it.

If a young child davens and his prayers are not answered, he needs to be told very plainly that Hashem said no. You can bring examples from Tanach such as when Hashem rejected Moshe's *tefillot* to enter Eretz Yisrael because it would not have been good for him or the Jewish people. Tell your child that Hashem had reasons for saying no which we may not see at the moment, but may understand later on.

In summary, for young children, keep *tefilla* short, do it in song, and be sure to create some level of positive association. Don't take them to shul. If you want to daven, find a girl who is willing to watch them. If the shul is tolerant about kids disturbing, don't frequent such a shul. A child should be taught that *kovod* and decorum must reign in a *beit kneset*

## Class #2: Achieving Balance: G-d, Family, and Work

Excerpted from Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller's Question and Answer series on Naaleh.com

### Question:

I am responsible for cooking, cleaning, and childcare, along with pursuing a demanding career to support my husband's learning. At times this leaves me sad and angry as I feel unable to succeed in any area. Do you have suggestions for how I can be *b'simcha* even when I am tired, frustrated and overwhelmed?

### Answer:

You do not always have to be *b'simcha*. It's ok to be frazzled when Shabbat starts at 4:PM and you're racing against the clock to finish on time. You don't have to start dancing in the supermarket when you notice that the *treif chickens* cost a fraction

of the kosher ones. The *gemara* says, "Lefum tzara agra. The reward is commensurate with the pain." This means that your values are such that you're willing to suffer a certain amount of frustration and difficulty to get something you want even more.

It is admirable that you consider worthwhile this struggle so your husband can dedicate himself to Torah. Of course, a person should work at acquiring *simcha shel mitzva*. Appreciate that the trade-off you're making is worth it. Look forward to reaping the fruits of your labor, a worthy husband, children who value Torah, and a home where the *yetzer hara* is defeated because "Torah *tavlin lo*."

It's ok to find the going rough at times. Try to

make it easier by drastically lowering your standards. Your house does not have to look perfect. Prioritize what needs to get done. I've spoken to respected Rebbetzins who told me that there was a good deal of disorder in their homes when they were raising young children and supporting their husbands in learning. You need to work *b'emuna* at your job, but you don't have to be the star of the team. Give yourself permission to define success as working within the parameters of your real goals which are to build a warm Torah home, support your husband in his spiritual growth, and raise happy, healthy, well adjusted children.