



Dedicated in memory of Rachel Leah bat R' Chaim Tzvi

אמך WOMEN'S TORAH WEEKLY

Volume 3 Number 9

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Parshat Metzora – Profound Purity

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Parshat Metzora details the purification process of the *metzora*. “And for the person being purified there shall be taken two live clean birds, cedar wood, crimson thread, and hyssop.” Rashi notes that the chattering birds signify *lashon hara*. The crimson thread and the hyssop represent lowliness. It is not enough for the *metzora* to repent for his wrong act. He must focus on the root of his sin, which is haughtiness. Why then does the Torah command him to bring cedar-wood, a symbol of arrogance and grandeur?

The divine light of clarity leaves an arrogant person. It is as if he is in a black hole. In contrast, humility makes all doubt fall away.

Humility means using ourselves as a benchmark of our accomplishments in life and not comparing ourselves to others. The cedar-wood is a reminder that all of our accomplishments are from Hashem.

When a person lowers himself as a hyssop, he must still have some cedar-wood mixed in. He must know that he has the ability to do the will of Hashem and that he can accomplish his purpose. Any *midda*, if used appropriately, can be good. *Gaava* can move us forward to achieve our mission. Inappropriately humbling oneself is misplaced.

The Baalei Mussar say that a person should have two pockets where he should keep two

notes, “*Bishvili nivra h’olam*. The world was created for me.” He should have another pocket for “*Anochi afar v’efer*. I am dust and ashes.” A person who determines to do something for the right reasons will receive help from above. This is the cedar-wood. If he acts as the hyssop and thinks, “Who am I, I cannot do this,” he will not receive any assistance. Realizing that everything is a gift from Hashem can help us integrate the attributes of the hyssop and the cedar-wood. It is not about ourselves; it is about Hashem. Just as these two contrasting ingredients were combined into one sacrifice, we can work on ourselves to perfect that delicate balance of humility and brave zealousness.

Shabbat Scenarios

Dosh/Sechita Demonstrations Part III #15

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

- Wringing out wine from a tablecloth into a cup is prohibited. If you want the wine, it is *Dosh*. If you want to drain the tablecloth, it is *Melaben*.
- A woman may not express mother’s milk into a bottle on Shabbat. Instead, it should be done directly into the sink.
- Using a regular sponge on Shabbat is prohibited. Non-absorbent nylon sponges are

- permitted.
- Many poskim prohibit the use of baby wipes on Shabbat as one could come to squeeze out the liquid.
- The Rambam equates squeezing liquid out of ice to extracting juice from a fruit. Therefore, one should avoid doing this on Shabbat. The Sefer Hatruma adds that changing the form of a food item from a liquid to solid or visa versa on Shabbat is *molad* and renders the food

- muktza*. Therefore, one should preferably not make ice on Shabbat.
- Similarly, warming up congealed fat in a permitted fashion on Shabbat so that it turns into liquid is *molad* according to the Sefer Hateruma and should be avoided
- Bar soap, whipped cream spray, and toothpaste all raise a question of *molad* and should not be used on Shabbat.

Rebbetzin’s Perspective I Class #9

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

Question:

When my kids were small I ached for some privacy and time alone. Now that I have it, I am having trouble structuring my day. I waste precious time shopping for things I don’t need just because I enjoy the thrill of finding bargains. I also spend a lot of time eating. When I see a food that I crave, I must finish all of it. I can’t control myself. I feel there is a common thread here but I need help putting my finger on it.

Answer:

You need to develop a personal program of self-growth. The soul yearns for control, achievement, and nurturing. If it does not get it through meaningful ways it will look for other avenues. Shopping for the best bargains is your soul’s way of expressing its desire to achieve

something. You need to find a more constructive mode of doing this. Call up the people in charge of *hachnasat kallah* and offer to buy things for needy brides. Volunteer to shop for elderly people in your community. Do things that will help bond you with others and the part of you that craves meaning.

Your uncontrolled eating is misguided self-nurturing. Be good to yourself in a different way. Rav Nachman Breslover says *chomer* can cover *tzura*. Physical self-nurture can choke the part of you that wants spiritual self-nurture. You need to learn to remove the heavy blanket of illusion that says that food is pleasurable and nurturing. Before you begin a meal, give yourself permission to eat whatever you want. However once you finish, you must decide firmly that you will not eat anything again until the next meal.

This spiritual exercise will move you away from impulsivity which drowns out the mind, its yearnings, and its capacity to know. It will not necessarily make you thinner or healthier, but it’ll make food smaller in your eyes. Once you’ve done that, you can then think about how you can nurture yourself in ways that are authentic. What do you really want to be? What do you want to do? How will you achieve it? Don’t go into stress mode, go into discovery mode. Think what has made you happy in the past and what could bring you joy in the future. Work towards becoming something greater. Ask yourself how you could make the world a better place. Make a plan to channel your gifts positively. In this way you will attain the harmony and *shleimut* your soul desires.

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Maggid: A Blueprint For Self Improvement

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Maggid begins with the words "*Ha lachma anya*, This is the bread of poverty." In what sense is matza the bread of poverty? The Maharal explains that matzah is a simple food. It contains only two ingredients: flour and water. We should approach Pesach with simplicity. Simplicity implies *bitul hayesh*, self-nullification. Self-discovery entails going back to being ourselves, which is what liberation is about. Animals have no ambition and no yearnings. This kind of passivity is our enemy. In our hearts we have a whole menagerie which keeps us from discovering ourselves. The more we focus on our failures and disappointments, the more paralyzed we become.

We have to believe in ourselves. A person can make a decision to improve himself and Hashem will help him. This is contingent on telling Hashem, "I am who I am. I want to approach You with simplicity. Help me." Receiving this level of *siyata d'shmaya* at the seder is encapsulated in "*Ha lachma anya*," our statement of simplicity. At the end of this hymn, we invite all those in need to join our seder. Although it is only a ceremonial statement, it teaches us an important lesson. Our goal should be to imitate the ways of Hashem. The animal self is passive. The spiritual self is active and wants to give. That is why we begin Maggid with a declaration of kindness.

We proceed to Mah Nishtana. One of the mystic names of Hashem is *Mah*, the one who brings forth questions. Mah Nishtana questions a series of contrasting pairs: chametz and matzah, dipping out of pain and dipping as a sign of freedom, reclining as kings and eating the bitter marmor. Although we live lives that are in some ways paradoxical, we must search with open hearts and admit that sometimes we do not know.

We then recite Avadim Hayinu, which tells how we were enslaved to Pharaoh. Pharaoh comes from the root word *paruah*, wild. The

same letters spell *oref*, the back of the neck, the source of involuntary motion. Pharaoh took us to the world of subconscious, where rational thinking was irrelevant and where there were no moral choices to make. In Kabala, *galut mitzrayim* is called the exile of *daat* because we did not know who we were and what we were meant to accomplish.

If Hashem had not redeemed us we would still be enslaved to everything Pharaoh stood for. *Mitzrayim* comes from the root word *metzar*, narrow straits. Egypt was a wide open place with no moral strictures to hold a person down. In truth, there is nothing more constricting than a wide open place. The endless possibilities paralyze a person from pursuing a life of growth. When we left Egypt and received the Torah, the strictures of the Torah opened us up to a life of purpose.

The Maharal notes that the enslavement was a step towards redemption. We often do not discover who we are until we figure out who we are not and who we do not want to be. In Egypt, the Jews learned that they did not want to be Egyptians. They did not desire broadness that was really narrow, or freedom of thought that was really enslavement to the subconscious. This rejection made the Jews free, together with the inspiration that came from above.

We continue the Hagadah with a discussion of the four sons. The four sons live within each of us at different times in our life. There are four different levels of awareness. The wise son asks, What are all these mitzvos? What do the paths look like? He wants to know how to get from where he is to where he wants to be.

Chochma comes from the words *koach mah*, the potential that lies in essence, rather than how it can be used or how it feels. Ultimately we have to come to a level of not speaking. We have to look for a higher awareness and channel it. That is what makes someone a *chacham*.

The rasha asks, "What is this service to you?"

He calls Judaism *avodah* (service) and not *halacha* (Jewish law) because he does not see himself as going from one place to another. He has no destination, but lives in the present. It seems senseless to him to burden himself with seeking. The difference between a *tzaddik* and a *rasha* is that while the *rasha* sees only the top of the mountain, the *tzaddik* sees the path. He is willing to live in the world of process. The *rasha* lives only in the world of product. People become *reshaim* by being reactive and losing themselves. They allow their emotions to control them.

The Hagadah says that you should "grind the teeth" of the *rasha*. Teeth break large pieces into smaller pieces. Similarly, *reshaim* take ideas that are grand and trivialize them into nothing. We answer him with "*Ba'avur zeh*." These *halachot* are important because they redeemed us from Egypt. They transformed us from living a life of constraint to one of walking with Hashem. Judaism is not *avodah*. *Halacha*, from the root word '*halach*', to go, takes us where we want to be. We have to learn to silence the *rasha* within us.

The Tam says, "*Mah zot? What is this?*" According to the Zohar, *zot* is the *Shechina*. The Tam asks, "Where is Hashem?" He wants a religious experience without having to keep *halacha*. We answer, "*B'yad chazakah...*" Hashem displayed miracles and took us out of Egypt. However, he did all this because he wanted us to take it further. Tam also means straightforward. Yaakov was an "*ish tam*," he was the same inside and outside. Our simple self tells Hashem, "All I really want is to know you."

The fourth son does not know how to ask. In today's society, most people are incapable or unwilling to ask about Hashem. The biggest enemy in *kiruv* is apathy. Telling about our personal experiences and what has given us meaning can kindle a spark within the hearts of our lost brethren.