

## Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim

### Metzora-Shabbos HaGadol 5779

In this week's parashah the Torah continues to discuss the laws of one who is afflicted with *tzaraas*, the biblical version of leprosy. Yet, this affliction defies our imagination, as we are not witnesses to such an affliction in our times. The Ramban writes that *tzaraas* was only prevalent when the Jewish People were on the level that even a slight sin would be borne out by a manifestation of *tzaraas* on either their clothing, their homes, or on their bodies. In our times, unfortunately, our sins do not make that sort of impression on us, and we are usually left to our own devices to determine what the reason is for our severed connection from HaShem. Thus, although one can study the laws of *tzaraas* in detail, it is practically impossible to comprehend how this spiritual malady occurred. As we approach Pesach, however, one must begin to contemplate how we can even begin to experience spiritual reward, and regarding Pesach, we were surely the recipients of one of the greatest benefits that mankind ever received, and that was liberation from our oppressors. With the onset of the month of Nissan we begin our physical and spiritual preparations for the festival of Pesach, yet on the surface, freedom and liberation appear to be far from our everyday reality. As a nation we still suffer at the hands of our oppressors, we are degraded, injured and even, Heaven forbid, killed, and all because we are Jews, HaShem's Chosen People. Where, then is the freedom that the Torah and our Sages referred to over and over again in Scripture, Gemara, Medrash and in our prayers? Have we not

suffered enough that we should finally be able to declare that we are truly free people? The Gemara (Megillah 14a) states that we can recite Hallel on the three festivals of Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkos because we are servants of HaShem and not servants of Pharaoh. Yet, subsequent to the exodus from Egypt, we have been servants of many nations, and until today, we are still subjugated to the whims of various rulers throughout the world. The subject of freedom is a lengthy one, but in this essay we will attempt to briefly provide a solution to the enigma of freedom in relationship to our current situation. The Gemara (Shabbos 87b) states that in the second year in the Wilderness, the first day of Nissan was the day when the Jewish People took ten crowns. The Medrash states that the inauguration of the Mishkan was a day when HaShem was very joyous. Yet despite all this great joy and pomp, Aharon HaKohen's two sons, Nadav and Avihu, died a tragic death on this day. How can we reconcile this apparent contradiction, where this day was one of great ecstasy but was instantly transformed into a day of mourning and sadness? Perhaps the solution to this paradox can be found in a different Medrash. The Medrash (Magen Avraham in the beginning of Hilchos Pesach) states that although the construction of the Mishkan was completed in the month of Kislev, HaShem chose to postpone the inauguration to the month of Nissan, the reason for this delay was because HaShem desired that the inauguration of the Mishkan should be in Nissan, the month

when Yitzchak was born. What is the association between Yitzchak and the month of Nissan? We normally view freedom as liberation and release from powers that until now have been dominating us. On a deeper level, however, the Medrash (Shemos Rabbah 41:7) teaches us that when the Jewish People received the Torah, they merited being free from the angel of death. We find elsewhere in the Gemara (Bava Basra 16a) that the angel of death and the Evil Inclination are one and the same. Regarding the inauguration of the Mishkan, it is said (Vayikra 9:6) *vayomer Moshe zeh hadavar asher tzivah HaShem taasu viyeira aleichem kevod HaShem*, Moshe said: this is the thing that HaShem has commanded you to do; then the glory of HaShem will appear to you. In a surprising interpretation of this verse, the Toras Kohanim Ibid) states: Moshe informed the Jewish People that if you remove that Evil Inclination (of idolatry-commentary of Chafetz Chaim Ibid) from your midst, then you will merit the revelation of HaShem's glory. Thus, the removal of the Evil Inclination and the revelation of HaShem's Presence are directly connected. The Medrash (Rashi Bereishis 28:13 quoting Tanchuma) states that the Evil Inclination of Yitzchak was removed from him. Furthermore, Reb Tzadok HaKohen from Lublin writes that when the Gemara states that this matter was heard *mipi haGevurah*, from the Almighty, it alludes to the idea of Yitzchak. We can now begin to understand why HaShem chose to have the dedication of the Mishkan occur in the month of Nissan. Nissan was the month that Yitzchak was born, and Yitzchak merited completely subduing his Evil Inclination. When the Jewish People received the Torah, they merited having

their Evil Inclination removed from them, and this was also HaShem's desire regarding the inauguration of the Mishkan. Sadly, Nadav and Avihu did not live up to this task on their level, and they perished inside the Holy of Holies. Nonetheless, HaShem's will was accomplished, and Moshe informed Aharon that Nadav and Avihu were greater than Moshe and Aharon. There is no question that Nadav and Avihu attempted to completely subdue their Evil Inclination and transform themselves to the state of Adam HaRishon before the sin of eating from the tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad. In a similar vein, when we enter the month of Nissan, it is incumbent upon us to attempt the complete subjugation of our Evil Inclination. This is the meaning of true freedom. If we wonder why we are still subjugated to other powers, it is because we have not yet succeeded in overcoming our Evil Inclination. The Gemara (Brachos 17a) clearly links the Evil Inclination and the subjugation of the nations together. In this month of redemption, Nissan, we must attempt to emulate our forefather Yitzchak, who subdued his Evil Inclination, and then we will merit true freedom from the angel of death and from the nations who subjugate us. It should, be Hashem's Will that this Pesach we merit the true redemption with the arrival of Moshiach Tzidkeinu, speedily, in our days.

## **Shabbos in the Zemiros**

### **Ribbon kol HaOlamim**

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*Visein banu yeitzer tov leovdecho biemes uviyirah uviahavah*, give us a virtuous desire to serve You with honesty, awe and love. The Medrash (Koheles Rabbah 4:13)

states that the Yeitzer Tov, the Good Inclination, enters into a Jewish person upon becoming Bar Mitzvah, at the age of thirteen years old. One must wonder, then, why we request here that HaShem should instill in us the Yeitzer Tov, if we already have had the Yeitzer Tov in our company since the age of Bar Mitzvah. Perhaps the answer to this question can be found in the prayer that we recite every morning when we ask HaShem: *vidabkeinu biyeitzer hatov uvimaassim tovim*, attach us to the Good Inclination and to good deeds. At times our Evil Inclination can be so overwhelming that the Good Inclination is shunted aside and has little influence on our actions. Thus, we pray that HaShem should attach us to the Good Inclination so that we can perform His will. With the onset of Shabbos, however, all harsh judgments are removed, and the Good Inclination is given a wide berth to perform. Thus, we beseech HaShem that He give us a Good Inclination, who during the week at times appeared to be almost non-existent.

## **Shabbos in Tefillah**

*Umi domeh lach*, for who is like You? It is said (Tehillim 65:2) *lecho dumiyah sehillah*, to You, silence is praise. Perhaps we can suggest that when we say *umi domeh lach*, we are intimating that the only way to praise HaShem is with *dumah*, silence.

## **Shabbos Story**

The parents of a retarded child entered the study of Rabbi Shlomo Auerbach. They decided to place their child in a special school in which he would live; the question was which one. “Have you asked

the boy where he would like to go?” asked the sage. The parents were dumbfounded. “Our child cannot be involved in the process! He hasn’t the capacity to understand,” explained the father. Reb Shlomo Zalman was not moved. “You are sinning against your child. You are removing him from his home, placing him in a foreign environment, and you don’t even consult with the child? He will feel helpless and betrayed – I would like to talk to him.” The couple quickly went home and brought the boy to the Torah sage. “My name is Shlomo Zalman,” smiled the venerable scholar. “What is yours?” “Akiva.” “Akiva,” exclaimed Rabbi Auerbach, “I am one of the leading Torah sages in the world and many people discuss their problems with me. Now, I need your help. “You are about to enter a special school, and I need a representative to look after all the religious matters in the school. I would like to give you *semicha*, making you my official Rabbinical representative. You can freely discuss any issue with me whenever you want.” Reb Shlomo Zalman gave the boy a warm handshake and hug. The boy entered the school and flourished. In fact, with the great feeling of responsibility, he rarely wanted to leave the school, even for a weekend; after all, who would take care of any questions that would arise?

After the end of World War II, the brilliant and flamboyant Torah sage, Rabbi Eliezer Silver visited and aided thousands of survivors in displaced persons camps in Germany and Poland who were waiting to find permanent homes. One day, as he was handing out Siddurim (prayer books) and other Torah paraphernalia, a Jewish man flatly refused to accept any. “After the way I saw Jews act in the camp, I do not want to have any connection with

religion!” Rabbi Silver asked him to explain what exactly had turned him off from Jewish practice. “I saw a Jew who had a Siddur, yet he only allowed it to be used by the inmates in exchange for their daily bread ration. Imagine,” he sneered, “a Jew selling the right to daven for bread!” “And how many customers did this man get?” inquired Rabbi Silver. “Far too many!” snapped the man. Rabbi Silver put his hand around the gentlemen and gently explained. “Why are you looking at the bad Jew who sold the right to pray? Why don’t you look at the many good Jews who were willing to forego their rations and starve, just in order to pray? Isn’t that the lesson you should take with you?” [Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky, reprinted with permission from [www.Torah.org](http://www.Torah.org)]

## **Shabbos in Navi**

### Shoftim Chapter 6

In this chapter the Navi records the beginnings of the prophet Gideon, whose father Yoash worshipped idols. HaShem instructed Gideon to break apart the altar of the Baal that belonged to his father and to cut down the Asheirah-tree that was near it. Gideon then built an altar for HaShem and offered one of his father’s bulls on the altar as an offering. The people of the city who discovered the breaking of the altar of the Baal and the cutting down of the Asheirah tree requested from Yoash that Gideon should die for his actions. Yoash, however, refused, declaring that the Baal should avenge its honor. The Gemara (Eiruvim 69b) states that one who intentionally desecrates the Shabbos is akin to one who worships idols. It would behoove us to

study well the laws of Shabbos so that we can also declare like Yoash that idolatry and all foreign influences are mere distractions from the reality of HaShem and His Torah.

## **Shabbos in Agadah**

We just completed the month of Nissan, when we are reminded of the great miracles that HaShem performed for our forefathers in Egypt. Moshe performed a less known miracle when he had Pharaoh acquiesce to allowing the Jewish People to rest on Shabbos. The Holy Shabbos is the lifeblood of our nation, and we must view the opportunity to observe Shabbos freely as nothing short of a miracle. In times of Jewish persecution, Shabbos was one of the main precepts of Judaism that was initially attacked. When we observe the Shabbos, we are demonstrating that we are only subservient to HaShem and not to any other master.

## **Shabbos in Halacha**

One is permitted to stir water and other pure liquids, such as milk, if they were boiled and are still warm. This stirring is even permitted if the liquids are on a flame. (Once the liquids cool, however, liquids are subject to the restrictions of bishul, cooking, and like uncooked liquids, they may not be stirred.)

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A reader pointed out an error in Last week’s Halacha insight. It should read as follows (correction is in bold):

We learned earlier that when one stirs food that has not been fully cooked he violates the melacha of bishul. This prohibition applies equally to fully cooked

foods. Thus, it is forbidden to stir cooked or uncooked food which is on a flame. This prohibition applies even when the flame is covered by a blech. There is a distinction, however, between fully cooked foods and foods that have not been completely cooked. One **cannot** stir a food that is not fully cooked even if the pot was taken off the blech, as long as the food is still yad soledes bo. Regarding fully cooked foods, however, there is only a prohibition when the food is directly over a flame. If the pot is lifted off the flame or if the pot is moved to a location on the blech that is not directly over the flame, one can stir the cooked food.

### **Shabbos in Numbers and Words**

It is the custom amongst many Jews to sing *zemiros*, songs of praise by the Shabbos meals. It is noteworthy that the word *zemer*, song, in mispar katan, digit sum, equals 13 (zayin is 7, mem is 40, which is 4, and reish is 200, which is 2). This alludes to the idea that Shabbos is *raza diechod*, the Secret of Oneness, and the word *echod*, one, equals 13.



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