

METZORA מצרע



In loving memory of Chaya Rachel bat Moshe Ben-tzion z"l

Volume 35 | #28

9 April 2022

8 Nisan 5782

Shabbat ends:

London 8.36pm

Sheffield 8.50pm

Glasgow 9.06pm

Edinburgh 9.02pm

Birmingham 8.45pm

Southport 8.58pm

Hull 8.47pm

Jerusalem 7.41pm

Shabbat Hagadol

Latest time for eating
chametz:

Friday 15 Apr, 10.42am.

Latest time for burning
chametz: 11.52am.

Pesach and Shabbat
begin: 7:43pm.

First night Seder starts
from: 8.41pm.

Please note:

*These times are for
London only.*

Metzora:

Artscroll p620

Hertz p470

Soncino p689

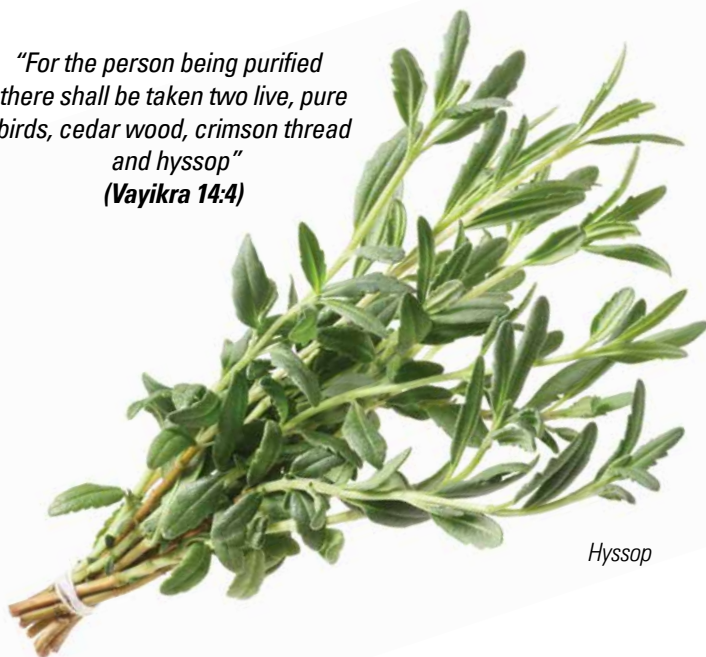
Haftarah (Shabbat Hagadol):

Artscroll p1220

Hertz p1005

Soncino p1197

*"For the person being purified
there shall be taken two live, pure
birds, cedar wood, crimson thread
and hyssop"
(Vayikra 14:4)*



Hyssop

Daf Hashavua

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by Rabbi Greg Bank

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by Rebbetzen Rina Shindler

Foreign Places in the Mishna

by David Frei

Sidra breakdown

מצֹרָע

Metzora

5th Sidra in:

ויקרא

Vayikra

By Numbers:

90 verses

1,274 words

4,697 letters

Headlines:

Process of purification from "Tzara'at"



United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

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999 Call a Kohen!

By Rabbi Greg Bank,
Yeshurun Hebrew Congregation, Cheadle



A visitor once walked into Yeshivat Har Etzion, Israel, in its early years. It was break time and the

pews of the study hall were empty. A lone cleaner was taking advantage of the quiet moments to give an extra sparkle to the room. As he navigated himself with his brush and broom between the seats, the visitor interrupted him and asked where one might find the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Amital, whom he was scheduled to meet.

The cleaner lifted his head to answer the visitor's enquiry, put down his broom and smiled. "Yes, it is me that you are meeting, come and take a seat."

Amazingly, the unassuming Rosh Yeshiva was doubling up as a cleaner.

Rabbi Yehuda Amital (1924-2010) was a celebrated personality. He wore the mantle of Rosh Yeshiva because of his vast Talmudic knowledge. He was charismatic, revered, a lover of Israel and its people. Due to his special traits, he had achieved high recognition on a national level. Rabbi Amital, however, was not divorced from the mundane duties of his students and staff that allowed the new yeshiva to function. He humbled himself to take a role of engagement and understanding of his followers rather than one of separation and aloofness.

Sidra Summary

1st Aliya (Kohen) – Vayikra 14:1-14:12

The Torah details the process through which a metzora – someone afflicted with the skin disease tzara'at – purified him/herself after the period of isolation and the healing of the affliction. This involved a Kohen taking two birds, cedar wood, a crimson thread and hyssop. The Kohen would slaughter one of the birds and – using the wood, thread and hyssop together in a bundle – sprinkle its blood seven times on the metzora.

Point to Consider: What was the significance of the metzora having to shave his head, beard and eyebrows? (14:9)

2nd Aliya (Levi) – 14:13-20

The metzora would also bring three animal offerings and three meal offerings. The Kohen would then put blood from the guilt offering and oil on the metzora's right ear, right thumb and big toe of the right foot.

Leadership requires interaction, not distance. To truly embrace those around them, a leader has to be out there, in the trenches, with them.

Why was it that the Kohanim were the ones to determine if a person had been diagnosed with *Tzara'at*, the skin disease spoken about in our parasha, and to oversee their purification process? Surely a doctor would be more appropriate to give a medical prognosis. After all, do spiritual matters not belong in the Temple and are bodily matters not the domain of health professionals?

The *Midrash Tadsheh* (an early rabbinic commentary) gives an incredibly insightful answer to this question and explains that it was specifically the Kohanim who needed to deal with *Tzara'at* because they had to show the nation that they were engaged with the people. They were on the ground. They had to connect to ordinary people and deal with their challenges and ailments.

The Kohen worked in the Temple

The Kohen worked in the Temple and was in awe of its sanctity, but he could not be seen to limit his work to its perimeters.

and was in awe of its sanctity, but he could not be seen to limit his work to its perimeters. By dealing with *Tzara'at*, he indicated to the multitudes that he represented them in the house of worship because he knew the people, interacted with them and lived with them.

Everybody is required to show

leadership on various occasions. In our leadership roles, those that we guide need to feel that they are not alone and vulnerable. They will be inspired by our readiness to get involved with the less lofty aspects of what needs to be done, to "get our hands dirty".



In loving memory of Yehuda ben Yaakov HaCohen z"l

3rd Aliya (Shlishi) – 14:21-3

A metzora who could not afford three animal offerings could instead bring one animal offering, one meal offering and two birds.

4th Aliya (Revi'i) – 14:33-53

Tzara'at also affected houses. The house owner would report the suspicious signs to a Kohen. The house would be evacuated before the Kohen's arrival. If the Kohen saw a deep green or deep red 'affliction', he would order the house to be quarantined for a week. He would then re-inspect the house. If the affliction had spread, the infected stones would be removed and replaced. If the affliction nevertheless returned, the house would be demolished. However, if replacing the stones solved the problem, the Kohen would declare the house tahor (ritually pure).

5th Aliya (Chamishi) – 14:54-15:15

The Torah lists specific circumstances that would cause a

man to be considered tameh (ritually impure) and details the purification procedure.

6th Aliya (Shishi) – 15:16-28

A similar set of laws is listed for a woman, as well as the laws of niddah (menstruation), which form the basis of the intimate laws of marital life.

7th Aliya (Shevi'i) – 15:28-33

The Torah emphasises the importance of adhering to the laws of tumah and taharah, in particular warning about the severe punishment for entering the Mishkan (Tabernacle) in a state of impurity.

Haftarah

The special haftarah for Shabbat Hagadol is from the last chapter of the Prophets. God chastises Israel for neglecting to keep His laws. Eliyahu (Elijah) can come at any time, heralding a radical improvement in the nation's fortunes.

Haggadah Highlights

Hallel: Peak Experience or Free Flow?

by Rebbetzen Rina Shindler, Cockfosters & N Southgate United Synagogue



You know that part of the Pesach *seder* where you surreptitiously start counting the pages? What about the part

of the *seder* where you find yourself sitting up straighter, listening intently, feeling a part of the action? For some people, it is when a familiar melody crops up. For others, a dramatic rendition of the ten plagues is their highlight. For those for whom the hard-boiled egg in salt water is the crescendo of your experience, we will not judge you. There are many moments of fun, insight and learning sprinkled throughout the night, yet few would select the penultimate section, *Hallel*, as their peak moment of inspiration. It has been a number of years since I have come to realise that the true measure of a successful *seder* for me, personally, is how I feel during the recitation of *Hallel*.

Amongst the myriad preparations required to get us to *seder* night, I sometimes find that I can easily lose sight of the deeper purpose and meaning. Our festival calendar commemorates not only a historic moment that occurred 3,334 years ago, but celebrates a time suffused with an energy that is alive and pulsating here and now, if only I can take the opportunity to be aware of it and activate it in my own life.



Hallel is the ultimate prayer of praise and thanksgiving; its poetic verses are a gripping account of national deliverance and gratitude. The poet, King David, speaks of God's love, kindness and salvation, and our response of thanksgiving, faith and service. Gratitude is wired into our very essence as Jews, or "*Yehudim*," a name which stems from the verb *hoda'ah*, meaning to thank. Acknowledging the good we have received through the recitation of *Hallel*, we come to a deeper appreciation for all the goodness and kindness that God has given us both collectively and individually. Robin Wall Kimmerer, a distinguished professor and author on environmental

science, utilising the wisdom of indigenous peoples, says in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, that:

"Conceiving of something as a gift changes your relationship to it in a profound way, even though the physical makeup of the thing has not changed. A woolly knit hat that you purchased at the store will keep you warm regardless of its origin. But if it was hand knit by your favourite auntie, then you are in relationship to that thing in a very different way. You are responsible for it and your gratitude for it has motive force in the world. You're likely to take much better care of the gift hat than the

In memory of Yisrael Shmuel ben Yirmaya Yehoshuah z"l

commodity hat because it is knit of relationships. This is the power of gift thinking."

Although Robin Wall Kimmerer is speaking about our ecological impact on the world and our consumption of the physical gifts it bestows, it resonates on the spiritual plane as well. How transformative might it be if one were to truly appreciate the cosmic significance of the remarkable gift of our heritage? Inasmuch as we view it as a gift - passed down from *sedertable* to *seder* table over the millennia, despite the most tragic times we have been through - we will be in relationship with it "in a very different way."

Accessing the deep spiritual powers uniquely available to us at this time of year takes effort, but of a different sort to the shopping-cooking-cleaning variety. Taking time to really prepare for *seder* night on a spiritual level requires that we mindfully attend to the personal miracles we witness daily which then enables us to meditate on the miracles we have experienced nationally. The pinnacle of *seder* night, then, is when we are able to truly feel deep in our bones how very lucky we are to be a part of this wonderful family, the Jewish people - a family that started out as "*shiv'im nafesh*," the 70 souls that went down to Egypt with Jacob, that experienced the revelations of the Exodus and that is today thriving and succeeding despite the many challenges we have faced and continue to face as a people. The gift of our heritage has enabled us to weather the difficult times and flourish in the good; it is how we view this gift that makes all the difference.

In all fairness, the human tendency towards habituation has its benefits. A too-tight collar will soon diminish in its irritability. Moving to a new area directly under a flight path, the

low-flying planes soon go unnoticed. Driving for years with the same level of intense awareness as when you began learning would become

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exhausting. This very useful tool of the mind can, however, just as easily deplete us if we are not on guard. This can happen when we become too accustomed to the regularity of our rituals - not in the focused way that frees up our mental energy to practice with greater intention but rather to, over time, come to disregard their potency, purpose and meaning. *Seder* night is a powerful resource to resuscitate our habituated relationship with our heritage.

Research has shown that gratitude helps us to initiate, maintain and strengthen relationships. Gratitude makes our relationships closer and more satisfying. One example of a study of couples found that individuals who took time to express gratitude for their partner not only felt more positive toward the other person but also felt more

comfortable expressing concerns about their relationship. In sincerely expressing gratitude for all of His kindnesses to us, how much more could we be getting and giving in our relationship with God? What spiritual riches will we discover when we reach inwards, access the power of gift-thinking and take responsibility for His gifts? Would we not engage in our Judaism in a whole new way?

The invitation to all of us in this month of *Nisan*, more intensely over the *chag* (festival) of *Pesach*, and most particularly as we traverse the monumental journey of the *Haggadah* during *seder* night, is to notice, appreciate and express our thanks for the myriad details in the moment-to-moment of our lives since the historic Exodus of our people - every heartbeat, every breath and every grain of salty deliciousness on your egg. May it be His will that through the collective "*Hallels*" that we say, engaging in our relationship with our age-old heritage in a new way, that we merit to sing all together in the newly-built Temple - next year in Jerusalem!

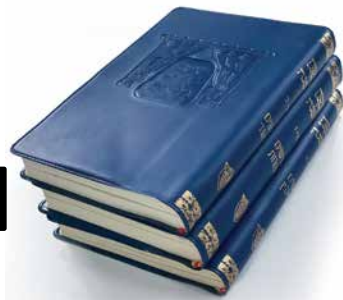


Foreign Places in the Mishna

Part Nineteen:

Babylonia–Nehardea III

by David Frei, US Director of External and Legal Services
and Registrar of the London Beth Din



In the last articles, we discussed the Jewish community of Babylonia and its connection with the Jews in the Land of Israel. We pointed out the dearth of information about Jewish life in Babylonia in the Hellenistic and Mishnaic period. It appears from the sources that the interaction between Babylonia and the Land of Israel was strengthened after the failure of the Bar Kochba Revolt in 136 CE.

This appears to be the background to a Mishna in Tractate *Yevamot* (16:7) in which Rabbi Akiva relates how when he 'went down' to Nehardea in Babylonia to proclaim a leap year with the addition of a second month of Adar, he met Nechemia from Bet D'li. This man told him he had heard that, in the Land of Israel, only Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava maintained that it was permitted for a woman to remarry on the testimony of just one witness to her husband's death. When Rabbi Akiva confirmed this, Nechemia asked him to tell the Sages in Israel that he had heard Rabban Gamliel the Elder also permit it. On Rabbi Akiva's return home, he related this message to Rabbi Gamliel of Yavne (grandson of Rabban Gamliel) who rejoiced, recalling that this was indeed the

It appears from the sources that the interaction between Babylonia and the Land of Israel was strengthened after the failure of the Bar Kochba Revolt in 136 CE.

position of his grandfather.

The commentators discuss how Rabbi Akiva could have proclaimed a leap year outside the Land of Israel. They explain that it was not possible to have done so in the Holy Land (presumably because of the fierce Hadrianic persecution in the wake of the Bar Kochba Revolt) and the fact that Rabbi Akiva was greater than any sage left in the Land of Israel.

Nehardea, chosen by Rabbi Akiva as the venue to proclaim the leap year, was situated at the confluence of the Euphrates and the Royal Canal, a waterway joining the Euphrates with the Tigris. Today, its ruins are to be found close to the town of Fallujah, about 40 miles west of Baghdad.

According to tradition, King Yechonya of Judea was exiled to Nehardea before the destruction

of the Second Temple and those accompanying him brought stones and soil from Jerusalem, which formed the basis of an ancient synagogue called Shaf ve'Yativ, which became the spiritual centre of Babylonia (see Talmud *Megillah* 29a and *Iggeret Rav Sherira Ga'on*). The ruins of the synagogue were visited by the famous traveller, Benjamin of Tudela, in the second half of the 12th century, over 1500 years after it was built.

Josephus (*Antiquities*, Book 18, Chapter 9) refers to Nehardea as one of the two collection centres in Babylonia (the other was Netzivin) for the half shekel donated annually by every Jew for the public sacrifices in Jerusalem and Temple upkeep.

At the end of the Mishnaic period, one of the greatest sages of the first generation of *Amoraim* (Sages between approximately 200-500 CE) was Mar Shmuel (c.165-254 CE) of Nehardea. Not only was he a brilliant Torah scholar - his disputes with Rav (Abba Aricha, 175-247 CE) are found throughout the Talmud, where Halacha usually follows Rav in ritual law and Shmuel in civil law - but he was also an accomplished physician and astronomer.

Shmuel declared himself to be as familiar with the orbits of the planets as with the streets of his native Pumbedita.

COMING SOON



SHABBAT UK 13-14 MAY 2022

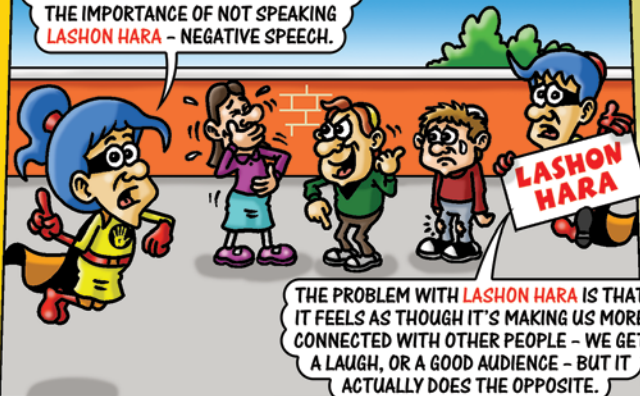
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THE TRIBE SCRIBE

METZORA: SQUASH THE LOSH!

THIS WEEK'S PARASHA REMINDS US OF THE IMPORTANCE OF NOT SPEAKING **LASHON HARA** - NEGATIVE SPEECH.



THE PROBLEM WITH **LASHON HARA** IS THAT IT FEELS AS THOUGH IT'S MAKING US MORE CONNECTED WITH OTHER PEOPLE - WE GET A LAUGH, OR A GOOD AUDIENCE - BUT IT ACTUALLY DOES THE OPPOSITE.

SO WHAT TRICKS CAN WE USE TO HELP **SQUASH THE LOSH!**



WHAT'S THE ANSWER? **LASHON TOV**, OR GOOD SPEECH. TRY TO NOTICE SOMETHING POSITIVE ABOUT EACH OF YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS OR WORK COLLEAGUES EVERY DAY AND PRAISE THEM FOR IT.

Rabbi Lord Sacks had another idea:



ONE SUGGESTION IS TO CHOOSE A SHORT TIME EACH DAY, SAY HALF AN HOUR, TO BE A '**LASHON HARA** FREE ZONE'. NO BAD TALK ABOUT ANYONE! YOU CAN TELL THAT GOOD STORY, JUST DON'T USE NAMES! THIS STRATEGY MAY NOT BE FLAWLESS, BUT IT WILL DEFINITELY MAKE YOU MORE SENSITIVE.



EVIL SPEECH DESTROYS RELATIONSHIPS. GOOD SPEECH MENDS THEM.



SEEING AND PRAISING THE GOOD IN PEOPLE MAKES THEM BETTER PEOPLE, MAKES YOU A BETTER PERSON AND STRENGTHENS THE BOND BETWEEN YOU.



PRACTICE THE **LASHON TOV**, AND YOU'LL SOON START DROPPING THE **LASHON HARA!**



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