

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI MORDECHAI WEISS

The Greeter

The Talmud in Tractate Taanit tells a fascinating story of a certain place where Elijah the prophet was present daily. A certain Rabbi Brokah once chanced meeting him there and asked him to point out to him who of the people that they would pass was going to receive a portion in the world to come. When Elijah identified one, Rabbi Barokah approached the person and asked him what he does that he should merit this share in the world to come.

The man was in a rush and told him to return tomorrow. He was wearing black shoes and his tzizit were no where to be found. When Rabbi Baroka returned the next day, the man said that he was a guard in the prison and his job was to protect the young women there from being abused. If there would be a situation of concern he would alert the Rabbis to intercede and pray to remedy the situation. He was wearing black shoes and didn't have his tzizit out, because he was dealing with non-Jews and he was concerned with his safety.

When Elijah met Rabbi Baroka again, he pointed out additional people that would also receive a share in the world to come. Rabbi Barokah asked them what their profession was and they responded that they told jokes and made people happy and if there was a dispute between people they would attempt to make peace.

One would expect that Elijah the prophet would choose a more worthy person to designate as someone who would receive this coveted reward. Perhaps a learned Rabbi or a man who gives a great deal of his money to Tzedakah! Yet it was this one man who seemingly didn't even look like a Jew and another who only made people laugh that would receive this special gift!

Perhaps it is precisely this message that the Talmud wanted to impart to us. It is not a person's scholarship that necessarily will gain his/her reward, but it is rather one's sensitive interaction with people and the compassion that one shows his neighbor. Sometimes even smiling at a person or starting their day with a positive greeting is all that is necessary.

There are such people living today who devote their lives to making people feel happy and starting their day with some sunshine and brightness. Such a

person was a greeter in a school in Miami Beach Florida. Every day he would volunteer his time to greet all the children as they entered school. He would at times take their picture when they arrived at school and show them the results at dismissal. He would share with them the adventures of his travels and in essence start their day with a smile and an appreciation for the gift of life. When he died it was as if the sunshine had faded away.

To be a "Greeter" seems like an unimportant job, but in my school in Greater Hartford we treat it as vital to setting the tone of the day in a child's life. I and my assistant principal stand at the door as the children arrive at school. To enter, all the students must say "Boker Tov" good morning, and smile. As meaningless and unimportant as it seems, that small and simple act does wonders for the children

It is the smile that is so important.

It is written that the only part of our body that is not ours entirely is our face. A person's face belongs to everyone. One must teach our children the importance of a smile. To begin each day with a smile or a gesture of love and concern.

That seemingly meaningless gesture makes all the difference in a child's day-one that our sages attach an award of such great significance- A share in the world to come. © 2008 Rabbi Mordechai Weiss is the Principal of the Segal Hebrew Academy of Greater Hartford. Any comments can be e-mailed to him at RavMordechai@aol.com

RABBI MORDECHAI WILLIG

Seeing Clearly

The story of Pesach is inextricably linked to the heroic life of Moshe Rabbeinu. Ultimately, the Torah teaches, "Never again has there arisen in Israel a prophet like Moshe, whom Hashem had known face to face" (Devarim 34:10). As such, we cannot strive to be as great as Moshe. Nonetheless, every Jew can be as righteous as Moshe (Rambam Hilchos Teshuva 7:2). What does this mean?

"Moshe received the Torah at Sinai and gave it to Yehoshua" (Avos 1:1). Only Moshe received all of Torah; all others were given it but something was lost in transmission. Only Moshe saw clearly; all others saw reflections or dreams (Bamidbar 12:6,8). Moshe was the humblest person (3). Since he had absolutely no personal agenda, he saw clearly.

**TORAS AISH IS A WEEKLY PARSHA
NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL AND THE
WORLD WIDE WEB AT [HTTP://AISHDAS.ORG](http://AISHDAS.ORG).
FOR MORE INFO EMAIL YITZ@AISHDAS.ORG**

The material presented in this publication was collected from publicly available electronic mail, computer archives and the UseNet. It is being presented with the permission of the respective authors. Toras Aish is an independent publication, and does not necessarily reflect the views of any given synagogue.

**TO DEDICATE THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE CALL
973-472-0180 OR EMAIL YITZ@AISHDAS.ORG**

Moshe's humility was greater than Avraham's (Chulin 89a). Hashem called "Moshe Moshe" (Shemos 3:4) without the line that usually exists between the two repetitions of a name, such as exists in (BraishisShemos Rabba 2:6). The separating line represents the gap between the person's potential, represented by the first name, and the actual person, represented by the second name. Only Moshe, who was exceedingly humble, reached his full potential (Rav Chaim of Volozhin, Avos 1:1). No prophet will ever be like Moshe, but for everyone has there is the possibility of being righteous like Moshe, reaching hisher full potential through great humility. 22:11) "Avraham Avraham" (Moshe's name is omitted from the Hagada. Klal Yisroel feels bad, and poignantly searches for their hero to thank and credit him (see Shira Hashirim Rabba 3:2). But Moshe, in his humility, prefers anonymity.

"Hashem saw that Moshe went to see, and He called out to him from the bush and said 'Moshe Moshe'" (Shemos 3:4). Moshe left his palatial setting and went out to his brothers to see their burdens (2:11). He focused his eyes and heart to be distressed over their suffering (Rashi). "Hashem said, 'You left your affairs and went to see the pain of Yisroel and help them. I will, in kind, leave the angels and speak with you'" (Shemos Rabba 1:27). Moshe saw Hashem because he went to see the pains of his brothers. His love and active concern for them resulted from his humility, which led him to ignore his comfort and focus on the problems of Klal Yisroel. Rashi explains "Hashem saw Bnai Yisroel" (2:35) to mean He focused on them and did not hide His eyes. Moshe's focus on the burdens of Am Yisroel was a reflection of Hashem's focus.

"At the image of (vitmunas) Hashem does he (Moshe) gaze" (Bamidbar 12:8). The Netziv understands this phrase to equate Moshe's manner of looking with that of Hashem, i.e. Moshe's look of empathy and clarity resembled Hashem's. Moshe saw Torah clearly because of his humility and lack of any personal agenda, and similarly saw all of the world, and its people, clearly for the same reason.

"One with a good eye will be blessed, for he has given of his best to the poor" (Mishlei 22:9). This refers to Moshe. Hashem gave the pilpul (in-depth

analysis) of Torah to Moshe, but he had a good eye and shared it with all of Klal Yisroel (Nedarim 38a).

The same good eye that sees the Torah clearly and sees the best in people gladly shares the most precious commodity, Torah, with others. Moshe, the great prophet, was happy to share the great gift of prophecy as well. "Would that the entire people of Israel be prophets" (Bamidbar 11:29). By sharing pilpul with, and wishing prophecy upon, Klal Yisroel, Moshe's uniqueness may be diminished but his humility, and the love of Am Yisroel that it engendered, motivated his ultimate spiritual altruism.

As an advocate for Am Yisroel, Moshe demanded that Hashem exercise the same "good eye" when dealing with His wayward people. Even if a slave doesn't obey his master, a magnanimous master gazes upon him with a pleasant face. So too, You should not look at their stubbornness, as it says (Devarim 9:27), "do not turn to the stubbornness of these people" (Bamidbar Rabba 16:28).

Only one who possesses a good eye should be given a *kos shel bracha* (read "yevorach" as "yevarech", Sotah 38b). One who sees the good side of others can bless for them and can bless them, as Moshe did. On the Seder night, the *ba'al habayis*, who has demonstrated his good eye by inviting the poor, leads the *zimun* (Orach Chaim 479:1).

Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him (Shemos 13:19). Chassidic masters interpret that Moshe took the essence (*atzmius*) of Yosef with him (Iturei Torah). Yosef had an *ayin tov* (good eye) to the extent that the *ayin hara* (evil eye) had no power over his descendants (Rashi Braishis 49:22). He fed the entire world (42:6) and had mercy on the very brothers who mistreated him (Rashi 42:8). When Yosef brought evil reports to his father about his brothers, his sole intention was *l'shem shomayim*, for Hashem's sake, so that Yaakov could help his brothers improve.

Yosef's brothers viewed him as a threat to Am Yisroel, akin to their uncles Esav and Yishmael, and sold him *l'shem shomayim*. And yet, despite their ostensibly pure motivation, this sale is the paradigmatic interpersonal sin (Meshech Chochma Vayikra 16:30). How did their *l'shem shomayim* intentions lead to a grave sin? The brothers were jealous of Yosef (37:11) and their jealousy did not allow them to see clearly. Without jealousy they would have seen that Yosef was a *tzaddik* (Rashi Shemos 1:5) and would have either forgiven his evil reports to their father, or brought their complaints to their father for his resolution. Yosef did not anticipate his brothers' jealousy because he lacked it completely. He forgave and assisted those who harmed him. It is this *ayin tov* essence that Moshe took with him.

On Pesach we must learn from the generosity of spirit of the great leaders who saved us, both in Egypt and when leaving Egypt. This includes avoiding

jealousy that clouds our wisdom and leads to serious interpersonal failings, fostering a sense of humility which allows us to reach our potential, and seeing and feeling the pain of our brothers, especially in Eretz Yisroel, and endeavoring to assist them.

We should try to emulate Moshe and see Am Yisroel, even its wayward members, as Hashem does, in a positive light, even as we entreat Him to focus on our tribulations and not our sins (Selichos, Day 2). Hopefully, if Klal Yisroel learns and internalizes these lessons, Hashem will quickly fulfill, "in Nissan they will be redeemed" (Rosh Hashana 11b). © 2008 Rabbi M. Willig and The TorahWeb Foundation

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

The Book of Leviticus opens with the word Va-yikra, "and He [the Lord] called." (Leviticus 1:1) Rashi points out that va-yikra is a term of endearment. The text tells us that G-d spoke to Moshe (Moses) from the Tent of Meeting. Rashi understands this to mean G-d's calling came from the two cherubs atop the Ark.

The Talmud explains that the cherubs were in the form of children embracing with wings at their sides lifting towards each other, heavenward. (Hagigah 13b) What is the significance of this image and what does it mean in light of the fact that it was the seat of G-d's endearing love?

The Hagaddah, which is read at the seder, may offer the answer. On that night, we relate to G-d through two different types of love. On the one hand, there is the love described in the book Shir Ha-Shirim, The Song of Songs, recited by many after the seder. It is the type of love of a lover for his beloved, reflective of G-d's intense love for the Jewish people. There is no love more powerful, there is no love more deep.

But even that intense love has its limits. Spousal relationships are humanly made and can also be terminated. In fact the Torah tells us that if a woman divorces and marries another, she can never return to her first husband. What would happen when the Jewish people rebel against G-d for other beliefs? If reconciliation is not possible, how can they reunite with the Lord?

Thus, in the Haggadah, another form of G-d's love emerges. It is the love of a parent to a child. This is the love accentuated at the outset of the seder through the presentation of the four children, the four questions and the telling of the Exodus story. Perhaps this love is not as passionate as spousal love, but it contains a quality that spousal love does not have, the element of eternity. It lasts forever. A parent child relationship can never terminate. The love of parent to child expressed at the seder is a reflection of G-d interacting with his people as the parent par excellence.

This then can be the meaning of the cherubs, of the little children embracing. It is symbolic of two

loves, the spousal love of embrace and the parent / child unbreakable love. Together, these two types of love lifts one heavenward, much like the wings of the cherubs pointing to the sky.

The seder actually balances these two loves. Before the meal we emphasize parental love, which moves us to remember our past, as father and mother share the Passover story. After the meal we emphasize spousal love, the love of Shir Ha-Shirim, with all its trappings of bride and groom under the chupa with a dream of a beautiful future.

At the seder this year, we will be praying for G-d's intense spousal love and for G-d's eternal parental love. We will be praying for the time when we hear G-d's voice in the spirit of the cherubs, of va-yikra, the language of true, authentic endearment. © 2008 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

With Erev Pesach being on Shabbos, we couldn't be in Passover mode any more without it already being Pesach. The house has been cleaned; we're where we will be for Yom Tov; and aside from the carefully eaten challah or egg matzoh eaten at the earlier-than-usual morning seudah, we are already limited to kosher-for-Passover foods. But just when you were almost exclusively in a Passover state of mind, the first three aliyos of the Parasha we read on Shabbos Erev Pesach is about... the Yom Kippur service! Is there a connection between Pesach and Yom Kippur? Or is the juxtaposition of the Yom Kippur service while we're in our Passover motif just a twist of fate on our leap-year calendar?

It is true that many Jews who are not religious the rest of the year do not eat on Yom Kippur and refrain from eating bread on Pesach, indicating that the punishment of "karais" (being "cut off" from the rest of the nation, usually understood to mean in the world to come) that applies to both prohibitions is well ingrained into the Jewish consciousness. The family gatherings that occur at the Seder are, in non-Orthodox circles, similar to the gatherings when they break the fast together after Yom Kippur ends. Even growing up Orthodox (thanks Mom and Dad!), there is a certain sanctity attached to the High Holidays and Pesach that seems to go beyond the sanctity of the other holidays (besides wearing a kittul on both). Nevertheless, the focus of the two holidays are very different from each other, making reading about one-when we are all set for the other-stand out all the more.

Passover is about a national event, the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt, while Yom Kippur is spent in introspection, trying to figure out which

personal flaws need to be worked on and corrected, and how to become better. The Kohain Gadol (High Priest) represents the entire nation before G-d for the Yom Kippur Service, while every Jew must bring the Korbon Pesach (Passover offering). Our Parasha begins by reminding us the deaths of Nadav and Avihu and the consequences of trying to take on a religious role that we are not designated or ready for, while every head of household runs the family Seder, and every Jew must talk about the exodus and consider it as if G-d actually took him or her out of Egypt. Aharon's sons, who were as great or greater than Moshe and Aharon (see Rashi on Vayikra 10:3) couldn't bring the same incense offering their father had brought, while even the youngest in the family takes part in the Seder (by asking the four questions and being given the answer). If anything, it seems as if Yom Kippur and Pesach are at opposite ends of the spectrum, one representing the individual growth each of us are required to strive for and the other representing the need for every individual to be part of the "klal," the nation as a whole. Both are important, and we usually are given the space to focus on each aspect at different times of the year. This year, however, we are almost forced to deal with both at the same time. It is almost as if we must reconcile the two aspects simultaneously.

There are (baruch Hashem) many individuals who have sacrificed much of their time, energy, and resources for the greater good. The dichotomy between G-d wanting them to be as close to Him as possible, while having to sacrifice some of their own personal growth in order to help others get close to G-d, is something they have to deal with on a regular basis. Yes, doing things for others is a marvelous way of getting close to G-d, perhaps even the most appropriate way. But just ask any community leader, whether it be a pulpit Rabbi, Rosh Yeshiva, or kiruv (outreach) worker, and they will surely let out a big "krechs" (sigh that borders on complaint) about the things they wanted to accomplish and/or think they should have accomplished, but couldn't because the needs of the community have held them back. They won't turn their backs on the community, and aren't really complaining about being in a position to help the community, but that doesn't negate the fact that in a very real sense they are being held back by putting so much time into the community.

On the other hand, Moshe is told that he only reached his level of greatness because of the community he represented and worked for (see Rashi on Vayikra 1:1). And there is certainly extra "siyata deshemaya" (heavenly help) bestowed upon those that work for the community, including "siyata deshemaya" in their personal growth. Every Shabbos we say a prayer for those that "work for the needs of the community faithfully," asking G-d to "give them their reward." We would have assumed that G-d always

gives everybody their reward, so the almost tongue-in-cheek explanation that we have to ask G-d to reward them because no one else will is unsatisfactory. The words used in the prayer are not that G-d should "give them" ("yitain") their reward, but "compensate" ("yeshalem") them, or "make them complete" (from the word "shalem," whole), as if we are asking G-d to make up for all of the personal sacrifices they had to make, including in their spiritual growth.

It makes for an interesting synergy. We need individuals that are spiritually developed enough to be viable leaders, while the leaders need the nation's reliance on them in order to receive the divine help necessary to maintain (and even surpass) their sacrificed spiritual growth. Nadav and Avihu taught us that even the most gifted of leaders need to know their limits, with the Kohain Gadol performing the service on Yom Kippur showing us that we need that special leader to represent us. And while we must focus our energies on personal growth, epitomized on Yom Kippur, that growth is largely dependent on our being part of the nation as a whole, as demonstrated by the importance of reliving the exodus from Egypt every year at the Seder. © 2008 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND

RavFrand

Achrei Mos is the parsha of the Yom Kippur service. The pasuk [verse] says, "For on this day, He shall provide atonement for you to cleanse you, from all your sins before HaShem shall you be cleansed" [Vayikra 16:30]. Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria (in the last Mishneh of tractate Yoma [8:9]) derives the following lesson from that pasuk: Sins between man and G-d Yom Kippur atones for, however Yom Kippur does not atone for sins against one's fellow man, until he first appeases his fellow man.

The Gemara [Yoma 87a] states in the name of Rav Yitzchak "Whoever angers his friend needs to appease him." Rav Yitzchak cites as a proof a series of pasukim in Mishlei [6:1-3]: "My son, if you have been a guarantor for your friend, if you have given your handshake for a stranger, you have been trapped by the words of your mouth, snared by the words of your mouth, do this, therefore, my child and be rescued; for you have come into your fellow's hand. Go humble yourself before him and placate your fellow."

At first glance, this teaching of the Amora Rav Yitzchak seems very strange. Why do we need his exegesis from the pasukim in Mishlei to teach us the fact that one needs to appease his friend, if we have an explicit pasuk from Chumash --? cited by the Tanna Rav Elazar ben Azaria-that teaches us the same thing?

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik explained the novelty of Rav Yitzchak's teaching to his son, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, in the course of an incident that happened in Brisk. A certain butcher came to the Beis Din of Rav

Chaim Soloveitchik (Rav of Brisk) and Rav Simcha Zelig (Dayan of Brisk) asking them to adjudicate a din Torah involving a sum of 3,000 rubles. Rav Chaim suggested they make a compromise (peshara), but the butcher refused. The Beis Din then heard the case and decided against the butcher. The butcher reacted angrily to this, and started yelling at Rav Chaim, calling him a thief and a murderer.

Rav Chaim answered back: When you came to this court, I suggested that you compromise with your disputant, but you refused. Since it was you who refused the compromise, it is not my fault that you have now lost 3,000 rubles. It is your own fault. The butcher yelled even louder at Rav Chaim. Rav Chaim then said, "You disrespectful one, get out of here!"

On Erev Yom Kippur, Rav Chaim told his 3 sons that he must go to the butcher and ask for his forgiveness for the harsh words they exchanged that day in court. The Rav of Brisk accompanied by his 3 sons went to the shul where the butcher davened. Everyone was davening with their tallesim over their heads so it was impossible to tell who was who. Rav Chaim went around from person to person until he finally found the butcher. Rav Chaim then said, "I want to ask your forgiveness for calling you disrespectful and sending you out of my court." The butcher turned to Rav Chaim --? right before Kol Nidre-and said, "I do not forgive you. You are a thief and a murderer!"

Rav Chaim responded: "The halacha is that I must ask you three times in front of three people for forgiveness. I have brought my three sons here with me. Will you forgive me?" Again the response was "No!" The exchange was repeated three times and then Rav Chaim said "I have discharged my duty and am ready to leave." Before leaving he turned once more to the butcher and said, "You should know that at this point I am no longer obligated to ask for your forgiveness. In fact, you were the one who insulted me in the first place, and I had a right to respond in kind to your insolence. The only reason I came to appease you is because it is meritorious to overlook one's honor and accept embarrassment rather than cause embarrassment to others. I was not obligated to ask your forgiveness, but I did it anyway, three times in front of three people. I am leaving. Now it is your problem!"

When they left the synagogue, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik asked his father why he went in the first place, when he never did anything wrong and it was the butcher who should have been asking for forgiveness all along.

Rav Chaim explained to his son that this was in fact the novelty in the ruling of Rav Yitzchak in Yoma. The pasuk in Achrei Mos cited by Rav Elazar ben Azaria in the Mishneh teaches that if one WRONGS his fellow man, he must ask forgiveness. The pasukim in Mishlei expounded by Rav Yitzchak teach that if one

angers his fellow man --? even justifiably so --? he still needs to try to make peace and ask for forgiveness.

This was not the type of "mechila request" which would have held back the effectiveness of Rav Chaim's Teshuva vis a vis sins between man and G-d. Those are only for sins where you in fact harmed someone or insulted him inappropriately. Rav Yitzchak is saying a stronger teaching: Even when I am 100% right, if I utter harsh words against my fellow man, it is still appropriate for me to beg forgiveness and attempt to restore friendship between us.

This, Rav Chaim, said is the meaning of the Shulchan Aruch when it states that on Erev Yom Kippur, every person needs to ask for forgiveness from his fellow man. This halacha is difficult? -- if I wronged someone, why should I wait until Erev Yom Kippur to make amends? The answer is that this law is not speaking about a case where I've wronged someone. Nevertheless, on Erev Yom Kippur there is a special obligation to make peace even when, strictly speaking, no amends are called for. © 2008 Rabbi Y. Frand and torah.org

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

This Shabat is the great Shabat - Shabat Hagadol. Shabat Hagadol this year falls on erev Pesach. It is really most appropriate that Shabat will be already part of the Pesach experience for it is Shabat that truly provides us with the key to the appreciation of Pesach and freedom.

On the first Shabat Hagadol - tradition teaches us that the Exodus itself that year fell on a Thursday - Jews took their paschal lambs and tied them to their bedposts to prepare for the Pesach sacrifice that would herald their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The lamb was a symbol of Egypt, of its G-ds and empire and vaunted powers. The taking of the paschal lamb was therefore most risky and dangerous for the Jews. Apparently freedom and independence cannot be gained without risk and danger. Only a people willing to risk comfort and even life itself for its freedom and independence earns that freedom and independence. Thus it was the actions of Israel on that first Shabat Hagadol that guaranteed the deliverance from bondage and Egyptian slavery that very same week. The importance of the paschal sacrifice is directly traceable to this idea of risk taking and danger inherent in any drive for freedom and self-improvement.

One of the reasons that this Shabat is called Gadol -great and large - is because of the importance of this lesson in how freedom is achieved. Freedom is a great and noble goal both in terms of personal and national life. But the Torah wished us to know its price and cost. Hence the Shabat Hagadol that precedes Pesach. Shabat itself is a great risk taking adventure, independent of the story of Egypt, the Exodus and

Pesach. Being idle and economically non-productive for one-seventh of the week appears to be a dangerous course for one attempting to earn a living for himself and one's family.

Shabat has always been a sacrifice for its observers. Its benefits were not easily known or describable to outside observation. Especially in a world where for millennia Saturday was considered to be an ordinary day of the work week, Shabat stood out as being an anomaly and an irrational waste of time and opportunity. Therefore Shabat itself was always seen in Jewish life as being *gadol* - the defining issue of Judaism itself. The seeming sacrifice of Shabat observance itself achieved Jewish self-identity and true internal independence over the centuries, in a fashion that has been unequaled in the human experience.

It is the greatness of the Shabat, its ability to bring serenity and hope to a person and a family that sparks all other positive activities in our lives. As we say in *Lecha Dodi* - "For it -Shabat - is the source and core of all blessings." Freedom without Shabat only leads one to different and more subtle forms of tyranny but tyranny nevertheless. That is why aside from all of the physical, cleaning and food preparations for Pesach there comes Shabat Hagadol to prepare us mentally and spiritually for the great holiday of redemption.

© 2008 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

This is one of those special years when the day directly preceding Passover (the 14th day of the Hebrew month of Nissan) falls out on Shabbat.

During ordinary times and under ordinary circumstances, the day preceding Passover is by far the most hectic of our entire Jewish calendar year: the evening before is the final search with a candlelight to ferret out any bit of leavening (hametz) which may still remain in the house, a portion of hametz is then put away for the following morning meal which must be concluded by the end of the fourth hour of the day, and then comes the final act of the burning of hametz as the symbol of the destruction of evil. Hametz, is after all, fermented and puffed up matzah, thereby serving as a symbol of pride, materialism and hedonism which can readily lead to sin.

But what do we do this year when the day before Passover falls out on Shabbat? When do we eat our last hametz meal and when do we burn the hametz? The Bible prescribes, "... but on the day preceding Passover, you must destroy (tashbitu) the leaven from your homes. (Exodus 12:16) In what manner is the hametz to be destroyed? The Mishna

teaches: "Rabbi Yehudah says that there is no destruction of hametz except than by burning. And the Sages say that you can even destroy the hametz by crumbling it and scattering it to the winds or by casting it into the sea." (Mishna Pesachim 2,1)

Let us now examine the Mishna (Pesachim 3,8) which specifically deals with our question: "When the fourteenth day of Nissan falls out on the Sabbath, all the hametz is to be destroyed before the Sabbath (that is, on Friday), says Rabbi Meir. The Sages say that the hametz is to be destroyed at the proper time (which means on Shabbat)". Logic would dictate that the difference of opinion between the Sages and Rabbi Meir is similar to the difference of opinion we have previously cited between the Sages and Rabbi Yehudah; since Rabbi Meir agrees with Rabbi Yehudah that the hametz must be destroyed by fire, this destruction is forbidden on Shabbat and so the hametz must be burnt on Friday. The Sages on the other hand, who believe that hametz can also be destroyed by casting it to the winds or by throwing it into the sea, can very well have us destroy the hametz on Shabbat; all you really have to do is flush it down the toilet. We would therefore expect that normative practice follows the Sages and that the last hametz meal along with its destruction take place on Shabbat before the end of the fourth hour.

However, the great scholar and codifier Maimonides does not see it this way. He rules (Laws of Hametz and Matzah 3,3) that indeed the search for hametz this year must take place on Thursday evening; on Friday morning the hametz must be burnt. Sufficient hametz - or rather sufficient bread for 'hamotzi' for the two Sabbath meals - must be set aside and eaten apart from the "passoverized" dining area. He would suggest that four hallot (or rolls or pitas) be placed in a porch area or any suitable separate room which will prevent the hametz from coming into contact with the "passoverized" food; in other words, the "motzi" bread must be eaten separate and apart from the main "passoverized" Sabbath meals. The last bit of hametz must be eaten before the end of the fourth hour on Shabbat morning.

One would now expect Maimonides to rule that some last remaining hametz be destroyed by casting it to the winds or by flushing it down the toilet in order to fulfill the commandment of destroying hametz. However, Maimonides insists that no hametz be physically destroyed on Shabbat. He insists that some hametz is to be burned on Friday and that, if there still remains hametz on Shabbat morning, a covering must be placed over it so that it cannot be seen and it must be burnt at the conclusion of the first day.

Now why is Maimonides so insistent that the hametz not be destroyed on the Sabbath? After all, normative law should follow the Sages, and they maintain that hametz can be destroyed by casting it to

the seas or - in our terminology - by flushing it down the toilet. Should we not physically destroy it on Shabbat and thereby fulfill the command of destroying hametz at its proper time on the fourteenth day of Nissan?

My teacher and mentor Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik provides a marvelous explanation based on the concept that hametz symbolizes evil. He explains that there are two ways to destroy evil or to destroy Amalek who represents evil: either by physically destroying him or by converting him to our side. After all, if Amalek were to accept the seven Noahide laws of morality, he would no longer be Amalek the symbol of evil! The festival of Passover tells us to destroy the hametz physically because at the dawn of our history we were not strong enough to influence evil to accept our ethical world view. Rosh Hashanah, which comes seven months later, is the festival which teaches us that our ultimate and highest goal is to perfect the world under the kingship of G-d and to influence Amalek to repent. The Sabbath represents this higher ideal of converting Amalek rather than destroying him. Therefore on the Sabbath we can never destroy hametz, not even by casting it to the winds or flushing it down the toilet. On Shabbat morning we can eat the hametz - and therefore utilize it to strengthen ourselves - but we dare not destroy it. Our goal is not to destroy but rather to convert and uplift - even evil! © 2008 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

At the end of this week's portion, the Torah describes the laws of illicit sexual relationships. This is followed by a summary emphasizing the serious nature of these sins. And then a surprising element appears: a remarkable repetition. First it is written, "Do not become contaminated with all of this, for the nations which I am sending away from you were contaminated with all of these things. And the land became impure, and I recalled its sins, and the land expelled its inhabitants." [Vayikra 18:24-25]. And the Torah therefore reaches a conclusion, "And you shall observe my laws and my regulations, and do not do these abominable things? the inhabitant and the convert who dwells among you" [18:26]. And then the Torah seems to repeat the same idea: "For the people who came before you did all of these abominable things, and the land became contaminated. And the land will not expel you when you contaminate it, as it expelled the nation that preceded you." [18:27-28]. Why is this repetition necessary?

A detailed look at the passage can show the significant difference between the two passages. The second one (18:27-28) is very clear: Eretz Yisrael is a pure land, and it therefore purges out anybody who

contaminates it and makes it impure. This is what happened to the previous nations who dwelt there, and it might also happen to Bnei Yisrael if they contaminate it with their sins. According to this approach, the punishment of exile is not a Divine action but is rather a "natural" consequence, something that happens when the people dwelling in the land do not maintain the moral standards that are needed to continue living there. Just as a country might expel people who are unworthy of living within it, so Eretz Yisrael expels all those who contaminate it.

Now let us return to the first passage, (18:24-25). This has one phrase that does not appear in the second one, "and I recalled its sins." It implies that the land itself was contaminated by the sinners who lived there, and that this contamination is to the detriment of the land itself. If the inhabitants of a land commit sins, the land itself shares the responsibility for the sins. According to this approach, the expulsion of the inhabitants is a process under direct control of the Almighty, in response to a direct command: "And I recalled its sins, and the land expelled its inhabitants."

The idea that the land shares the responsibility for serious sins committed on it is not unusual. It appears not only in relation to illicit sex but also with respect to murder. After the murder of Hevel, the complicity of the land is emphasized: "the land, which opened its mouth to absorb your brother's blood" [Bereishit 4:11; see Rashi]. The Torah also explains that there is a need for the land to atone for blood which is spilled: "And the land will not be forgiven for the blood spilled on it except by the blood of he who spilled it" [Bamidbar 35:33]. Eretz Yisrael is perceived as a living entity, which bears some of the responsibility for the deeds of those who dwell on it.

RABBI DOVID SIEGEL

Haftorah

This week's haftorah, read in conjunction with Shabbos Hagadol, depicts the Jewish scene moments before the advent of Mashiach. Malachi, the last prophet before our first exile, shares with us the prevalent conversations during the final moments of our final exile. The masses of our people will reflect upon the generation's unprecedented affluence and conclude that Torah observance is a wasted exercise. Their argument will be, "What material gain has ever come from observing His commandments or walking the downtrodden path for His sake? We constantly praise the agnostics and the wicked who met much success and yet, escaped the wrath of Above." (3:14, 15) The impressive financial success of so many unaffiliated Jews will suggest an indifference on the side of Hashem, almost to the extent of condoning their inexcusable behavior.

What will be the response of the righteous? The prophet continues, "Then the G-d fearing people

will speak amongst themselves and Hashem will hearken, listen and preserve the comments of those who revere Him and respect His name." (3:16) During those dark moments G-d fearing people will be scarce. However, those who will endure and persevere, despite the fierce influences of exile, will remain steadfast in their faith. They will gather and strengthen one another sharing their true perspectives on life. They do not seek tangible benefits from life and certainly do not expect a reward in this finite world (see Malbim to 3:16) Their service is based on reverence and respect rather than reward or material gain. To them, the absence of fame or financial success will not present a serious challenge to their commitment. Instead, they will patiently await the era of redemption wherein the glory of Hashem will become revealed to all.

Our Chazal in Yalkut Shimoni (591) explain this unwavering faith with the following parable. The queen was once confronted by a maidservant in the midst of a dark night. The latter argued that she was more attractive than the queen herself! The queen responded calmly, "Say all you wish now because tomorrow in the light of day the truth will be revealed." In the same vein righteous people, during our dark exile, find themselves at a serious disadvantage. In the absence of Hashem's clear revelations, anything can be presented and said. Allusions can easily be construed that promise eternal bliss for those who walk the unethical and immoral path. It requires men of great character and commitment to rise above public opinion and speak the truth. Their response to this senseless talk is, "The truth is around the corner." "Soon Mashiach will arrive and the clear revelations of Hashem will tell the real story." Regarding these devout, the prophet says, "And for you who fear Hashem a gracious and healing sun will shine upon you." (3:20) Those who firmly awaited the light of redemption will merit its light, the brilliant radiance of Hashem. The light of day will finally arrive and those clear perspectives of the righteous will become self evident truths.

In truth, these very same discussions took place in Egypt and served as an essential factor in the preservation of our people. The Midrash Rabba (Shmos 5:18) reveals to us that the Jewish people observed Shabbos long before they were commanded. In defense of his people, Moshe Rabbeinu approached Pharaoh and insisted on a day of rest. After being granted his request, Moshe conveniently dedicated the seventh day of the week for this purpose. The Midrash adds that the Jewish people effectively utilized this day to study scrolls of redemption. In the midst of heavy persecution, the Jews maintained their faith in Hashem. Although no trace of Hashem could be seen, they remained devoted to Him. They didn't question Hashem's lack of involvement and were not influenced by the darkness of their exile. Although their wicked taskmasters enjoyed a comfortable life this could not

seduce the Jewish people into straying from Hashem. They, too, gathered together and encouraged each other with the truths of Hashem. They understood that daylight would eventually arrive and, in the radiance of Hashem, the truth would become self evident. In this merit, they did experience those long awaited results. Eventually, Hashem did shine His light upon them as it says, "For the Jewish people there was light in their settlement." (Shmos 10:23) May we merit to experience this light speedily in our days. © 2008 Rabbi D. Siegel & torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

Did you know that the airline safety announcements were taken from this week's Parsha, Acharei Mot? When the Torah says that the Kohen Gadol (high priest) worked for forgiveness of himself, his family and of the nation as a whole (16:17), one should wonder why he couldn't just work on forgiveness for everyone, which would clearly also include himself and his family.

The answer is that before we can think about fixing the world, we need to fix ourselves and our immediate surroundings. As the airlines say, "secure your mask before assisting others"! What's even more interesting in the wording is that the word "forgiveness" is only mentioned once, and yet it affects himself, his family and the entire nation. It seems that a single positive action can have the affect of improving ourselves, our families AND the nation! It's clear from this that finding ways to improve ourselves has a cumulative affect far greater than the improvements themselves, an important concept which should motivate us to find us a mask to secure! © 2008 Rabbi S. Ressler and LeLamed, Inc.



<http://www.library.fau.edu/>

חג שמח וכשר!