

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

### Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd there were men that were ritually impure because of a human corpse, and they were not able to do the Passover [offering] on that day” (Bamidbar 9:6). The Talmud (Succah 25a-b, see Ritva) tells us that it was only “on that day” that they couldn’t bring the Passover offering, but the next day they would have been able to. In other words, the day before Passover, when the offering was brought (to be eaten that night), was the last day that they would be ritually unclean. Since contact with a corpse results in a 7-day period of ritual impurity (Bamidbar 19:11), with the mixture that includes the ashes of the red heifer being sprinkled on the 3rd and 7th days (19:12), this must have been their seventh day of impurity. If they had known for a week already that they were ritually impure, and had been told on the first of the month (see Gittin 60a) that the ritually impure can’t approach the Mishkan (Bamidbar 5:2) and therefore can’t bring any offerings, we would have expected them to have approached Moshe sooner than the very last day. Yet it was on that last day that they first tried to get Moshe to allow them to bring the offering anyway (9:6). Why did they wait so long? Even more than that, why did they think they could convince Moshe to let them bring the offering if they knew that the ritually unclean cannot? And why did Moshe need to ask G-d about it; shouldn’t he have known the answer? Additionally, being that Moshe had already been taught the entire Torah on Sinai, how could the answer to Moshe’s query have been a “new” law, that those who are ritually unclean when the Passover offering is brought (and others who didn’t bring it then) are given a second chance a month later (9:9-14)?

Before answering these questions, there is one more issue I’d like to bring into the discussion. The Talmud (Gittin 60a) tells us that there were eight sections of the Torah that were taught to Moshe on the day that the Mishkan was completed and fully operational (Nissan 1, 2449). One of these is “the section about those ritually impure.” This, Rashi tells us, is our section, when Moshe was approached by those who were ritually impure and was taught about the Second Passover. How could this have occurred on the first of the month if the Passover offering was not brought until the 14th, giving them plenty of time to

become ritually pure. And, as Tosfos asks, the laws of the Second Passover had to have been first taught on the 14th, as it is because these laws were taught 30 days before they were relevant that we know that the laws of a holiday must be taught 30 beforehand (Pesachim 6a); if this had occurred on the 1st, then it was taught 44 days beforehand, not 30!

Normally, if someone’s last day of ritually impurity is the day the Passover offering is brought, he (or she) can join a group that is bringing the offering. The offering is slaughtered and its blood sprinkled on the altar despite this person not being able to eat it just yet, provided that he or she will be ritually pure and able to eat it by nightfall (see Pesachim 90b). There are several exceptions to this rule. If any offering must be brought before the impurity is lifted, then it must have been given over to the kohanim before the Passover offering is slaughtered. Even if the “kappara” offering is brought afterwards, since it was not handed over before the Passover offering was brought, he (or she) must bring the Second Passover offering (a month later) instead. Similarly, if one had not yet immersed in a mikveh before the Passover offering was brought, going afterwards, even if it is before nightfall, will not help for the Passover offering. Or, if, on the 7th day, the mixture with the ashes of the red heifer were not yet sprinkled, even if they are sprinkled before nightfall and the person is therefore ritually pure, he or she must bring the Second Passover offering.

The above qualifications are true according to most Rishonim (e.g. Tosfos, Ra’ah, Rashba, Ritva, and Raavad). The Rambam (Hilchos Korbon Pesach 6:2) and the Meiri are of the opinion that someone whose ritual impurity is the result of contact with a corpse cannot eat the Passover offering even if he had the mixture with the ashes sprinkled on him and had gone to the mikveh before the Passover offering was slaughtered. There is some discussion as to why this type of ritual impurity is different than all others (with the answer seeming to be because it is the harshest/strictest type of impurity). It is therefore possible that, according to the Rambam, the reason they waited to ask is because they had assumed that as long as everything else was taken care of, they should be able to join everyone else in eating the Passover offering after nightfall, when they become ritually pure. It was only when Moshe stopped them from bringing the offering on the 14th that they became

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aware that they couldn't, to which they asked why not; isn't this the same as all other types of ritual impurities? Although Moshe thought it wasn't, he told them he would make sure, and ask G-d to verify it. G-d did so by telling Moshe that "anyone who is ritually impure because of a corpse" (9:10), even if the 14th of Nissan was their last day of impurity, should "bring the Passover offering on the 14th of the 2nd month" (9:11). Moshe wasn't being told this law for the first time, only that it applied here too.

The Semag (Asin 224, see also Zais Raanan on the Yalkut) adds another wrinkle. Even though normally (if everything was taken care of) even one who was ritually impure because of a corpse can eat the Passover offering, here there was a different problem. The Talmud (Shabbos 87b) tells us that Nissan 1, 2449 was a Sunday. Which would make the 14th a Shabbos. There is a rabbinic prohibition against sprinkling the mixture with the ashes on Shabbos, a prohibition that the Semag says was instituted by Moshe. Therefore, because Moshe didn't let them finish their purification process, they couldn't partake in the Passover offering. It is therefore possible that they were asking Moshe if, when the Biblical commandment would be preempted because of the rabbinical decree, it should still be enforced, or should he let them remove their impurity. G-d's answer was that they had to wait for the (previously commanded) Second Passover, even if it was caused by the rabbinical decree.

The other Rishonim seem to be of the opinion that this rabbinical decree had not been enacted yet, as they understand the problem to be that these individuals had wrongly assumed that the Passover offering could be slaughtered even before they went to the mikveh. By the time they asked Moshe it was too late to go the mikveh and slaughter another offering in place of the disqualified one they had already brought, so they had to wait until the Second Passover. Again, Moshe might have been verifying what he already knew, with the verification coming in the form of G-d saying that all who are impure (et al) must bring a Second Passover instead.

In any case, everybody involved knew that the ritually impure couldn't bring the Passover offering; the discussion was only about whether their ability to (at least Biblically) become pure after nightfall allowed

them to partake in the offering. They had thought that they could, so waited until that 7th day before asking about it (or being told they had thought wrong). Moshe had been taught about the Second Passover at Sinai, and again in the Mishkan on the 1st of Nissan. Those who were ritually impure then, upon hearing that they couldn't bring any offerings, approached Moshe, who didn't need to tell them yet about the Second Passover because they still had two weeks to become pure. They procrastinated, and because of their misunderstanding had to wait another month for the Second Passover. Therefore, even though the section detailing the laws of the second Passover was one of the eight taught to Moshe on Nissan 1, 2449, it wasn't relayed to the nation until it became relevant on the 14th. © 2008 Rabbi D. Kramer

### **RABBI AVI WEISS**

## **Shabbat Forshpeis**

In this week's parsha, G-d tells Moshe (Moses) that a person (ish) who is impure because of contact with a dead body (tameh lanefesh) or too far away from Jerusalem (derekh rekhoka) is given a second chance to eat the paschal lamb. (Numbers 9:10-11)

The phrase tameh lanefesh speaks about a spiritual deficiency - when one has contact with a dead body, emotional and religious turbulence sets in. The phrase vederekh rehoka, speaks of a physical impediment - one who is simply too far away to partake of the paschal lamb on time.

Indeed, throughout Jewish history we have faced both spiritual and physical challenges. What is most interesting is that in the Torah the spiritual challenge is mentioned first. This is because it is often the case that the Jewish community is more threatened spiritually than physically.

Despite its rise, anti-semitism is not our key challenge. The threat today is a spiritual one. The spiraling intermarriage rate among American Jews proves this point. In America we are so free that non-Jews are marrying us in droves. The late Prof. Eliezer Berkovits was correct when he said that from a sociological perspective, a Jew is one whose grandchildren are Jewish. The painful reality is that large numbers of the grandchildren of today's American Jews will not be Jewish.

And while we are facing grave danger in Israel, thank G-d, we have a strong army which can take care of its citizens physically. Yet, in Israel, it is also the case that it is the Jewish soul, rather than the Jewish body, that is most at risk.

Most interesting is that even the phrase vederekh rehoka, which, on the surface, is translated as a physical stumbling block, can be understood as a spiritual crisis. On top of the last letter of rehoka (the heh), is a dot. Many commentators understand this mark to denote that, in order to understand this phrase,

the heh should be ignored. As a consequence, the term rahok, which is masculine, cannot refer to derekh which is feminine. It rather refers to the word ish, found earlier in the sentence. (Jerusalem Talmud Psakim 9:2) The phrase therefore may refer to Jews who are physically close to Jerusalem yet spiritually far, far away.

The message is clear. What is needed is a strong and passionate focusing on spiritual salvation. The Torah teaches that the Jewish community must continue to confront anti-Semitism everywhere. But while combating anti-Semitism is an important objective in and of itself, the effort must be part of a far larger goal - the stirring and reawakening of Jewish consciousness throughout the world. © 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 DOVID SIEGEL

## Haftorah

**T**his week's haftorah gives us a profound insight into the spiritual direction of our present exile and final redemption. The haftorah begins with the prophet Zecharya experiencing a vision wherein the ordained High Priest, Yehoshua, was brought to a critical trial regarding his pending esteemed position. Zecharya says, "And I was shown the High Priest Yehoshua standing before Hashem's prosecuting angel." (3:1) The reason for this prosecution is stated shortly thereafter in the following words, "And Yehoshua was clothed with soiled garments." (3:3) Our Chazal explain that these garments refer to the wives of Yehoshua's descendants. Although Yehoshua was personally a very pious individual some of his children were adversely affected by the foreign environment of Babylonia. They strayed from their rich heritage of priesthood and married women prohibited to them due to their lofty ritual status. Because of this offense to the priesthood, Yehoshua's personal status of the High Priest was under severe scrutiny.

Suddenly, an angel of Hashem interceded on behalf of Yehoshua and defeated the prosecuting angel with the following statement of defense. "Is Yehoshua not an ember rescued from the fire!? (3:2) This response of defense was quite favorable in the eyes of Hashem and Yehoshua was immediately restored to his lofty position. The angel responded and said, "Remove the soiled garments from upon Yehoshua... See that I have removed his sin from him... Dress him with new garments." The prophet continues, "And they placed the pure priestly turban on his head." (3:4) Rashi (adloc.) explains that Yehoshua was granted the opportunity of rectifying his children's behavior and he successfully influenced them to divorce their wives and marry more appropriate ones. Once Yehoshua's garments-referring to his children's

inappropriate spouses- were cleansed Hashem clothed Yehoshua with the priestly garb and restored him to the position of Kohain Gadol.

What was the angel's powerful defense that produced such immediate favorable results? After his sons' disgrace to the priesthood, what outstanding merit could Yehoshua have possessed that secured his lofty position? The Radak explains that the angel argued that Yehoshua was "an ember rescued from fire." Radak understands this to mean that Yehoshua had been previously thrown into a fiery furnace. He sacrificed his life for the sake of Hashem and was miraculously spared from the fire. Through this heroic act, Yehoshua demonstrated total submission for the sake of Heaven offering his life for Hashem's glory. Such individuals deserve to prominently serve Hashem and His people. Such devotion and commitment must be inculcated into the blood stream of the Jewish people. Although Yehoshua's children veered from the straight path there remained much hope for them.

The shining example of their father could surely inspire them to return from their inappropriate ways. They too could eventually become devout servants of Hashem and attain lofty levels of priesthood. Through their father's guidance they could also rise above their physical and mundane pursuits and develop the purest qualities. In fact, Yehoshua was told that his children could potentially perfect themselves beyond normal levels of human achievement. Hashem said, "I will establish them superior to these angels standing here." (3:7) Yes, Yehoshua's submissiveness could produce untold results and certainly lead his children back to perfect spirituality.

This same lesson is taught to us in this week's parsha regarding the newly appointed judges. We read about the masses of Jewish people straying from the perfect path demonstrating serious leanings towards certain physical and inappropriate dimensions of life. They disgraced the Heavenly manna bread which Hashem sent them on a daily basis and expressed their physical cravings for substitute foods such as; melons, onions and garlic. They even complained about the Torah's strict standards of morality and sought freedom from its taxing and demanding life. Hashem responded with a severe punishment which ended the lives of many thousands of Jewish people. But at the same time Hashem responded to a plea from Moshe Rabbeinu and instituted a structure of seventy elders to share the judicial responsibilities. During this process these hand-picked judges experienced an incredible transition. The Torah states, "And Hashem intensified the Heavenly Spirit which rested upon Moshe Rabbeinu and shared it with the seventy elders." (Bamidbar 11:25) In addition to their new position as judges, these elders received prophecy and merited for a short time, to actually serve as a sanctuary for the Divine Presence.

Rashi comments on this incident and reveals the secret identity of the seventy elders. He quotes Chazal who explain, "These were the Jewish policemen in Egypt who were beaten mercilessly instead of their Jewish brethren." (Rashi to Bamidbar 11:16) These elders refused to enforce upon their brethren the unreasonable Egyptian demands and opted to accept torturous Egyptian blows on behalf of their brethren. This previous heroic act of self negation now served as a meaningful merit and lesson for the Jewish people. The recent outburst of the Jewish people revealed that they were embarking upon an immoral path, focusing on pleasure and self pursuit. Hashem responded to this by elevating a host of their own peers to the lofty position of leadership. These elders were not ensnared by self pursuit but were instead perfect role models of self negation. Their interest lay in spiritual association with Hashem and their selfless efforts brought them to the lofty achievement of personal sanctuaries for the presence of Hashem. With such personalities at the head of the Jewish people their direction could be effectively reversed. Their self sacrifice could secure the Jewish survival and hopefully remind the Jewish people never to plunge into self pursuit and immorality.

In our present times we hear repeated vibes of similar physical calls to immorality. We realize that our predecessors were also embers rescued from the fiery furnace-the fires of Europe-and their self sacrifice for the sake of Hashem surely serves as an everlasting merit for us. Our recollections of their total devotion to Hashem is a significant factor in the incredible transition for many of us from total physical pursuits to a sincere yearning to become sanctuaries of Hashem. May this new development continue to flourish and contribute to the hastening of Mashiach we so anxiously await.  
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#### **MACHON ZOMET**

## **Shabbat B'Shabbato**

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak, Yeshivat Har Etzion

**T**here are very close parallels between two subjects that appear in this week's Torah portion-the journey in the wake of the holy clouds and the "mit'avim"-the people who complained that they wanted more food. In the passage about the clouds, the Torah describes the different time periods when Bnei Yisrael stayed in one place or traveled, following the movements of the cloud. For example, "It might happen that it stayed between nightfall and morning, and it then rose in the morning. Or it stayed for a day or a night and then rose, and they would travel. Or for two days or a month, or a year, if the cloud remained over the Tabernacle, Bnei Yisrael would remain in camp and not travel. But when it rose they would travel." [Bamidbar 9:21-22]. These same time periods appear in the affair of the people who complained. This is true first of all for the description of their craving-"You will eat not for one

day, or two days... rather up to a full month, until it comes out of your nostrils, and it becomes distasteful to you." [ 11:19-20]. And it is also true when the meat is provided to them-"And the people rose all that day and during the night, and all of the next day" [ 11:32]. The passage of the journey emphasizes the aspect of the revelation of G-d in the cloud and the fire: "This is the way it always would be-it was covered by the cloud and by a vision of fire at night" [9:16]. The same themes also appear in the affair of the craving of the people: "And G-d heard, and He was angry. So a fire of G-d devoured them at the edge of the camp." [11:1]. "G-d descended in a cloud and spoke to him" [11:25]. What is the meaning of these parallels?

In order to answer this question, we must first understand the journey in the wake of the clouds by itself. The passage is unusually wordy with respect to the different time periods involved-a day, several days, a month, a year, etc. The Torah repeatedly emphasizes one point-that the schedule of stopping and traveling was according to the command of G-d: "By G-d's word Bnei Yisrael traveled and by G-d's word they would camp... And if the cloud remained over the Tabernacle for many days, Bnei Yisrael maintained G-d's watch and did not travel. And it might happen that the cloud remained over the Tabernacle for several days. By G-d's word they would camp, and by G-d's word they would travel." [9:18-23]. It seems that the Torah wants to emphasize that the fact that their rest and travel times were set by the cloud was meant to give Bnei Yisrael the feeling that they were not on a normal journey but rather a journey guided directly by the Almighty.

And this is the main point of the sin of those who craved for more. They did not understand the special significance of the times in which they lived. Anybody who instead of understanding the significance of pausing on the journey for a day, two days, or a month chose to occupy himself with the question of meat would not eat the meat for one day or two but for an entire month, such that it would come out of his nostrils and become distasteful to him. This would lead him to understand the true worth of meat and of food in general. Anybody who could not understand the miraculous nature of the manna which G-d provided every day would be cut off by fire and the cloud. The gap between a journey led by fire and clouds on one hand and the material involvement with meat is what led to the sin. And this eventually is what showed that the people were not worthy of entering Eretz Yisrael.

#### **RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## **Shabbat Shalom**

**“W**hen the cloud left its place over the tent, Miriam was leprous, white like snow" (Numbers 12:10). Is the prohibition against gossip necessarily referring to a false accusation?

Codifying the laws of gossip and slander, Maimonides, in his Laws of Knowledge, Ch. 7, Law 1, cites the verse "You shall not be a talebearer among your people," pointing out that the second part of the verse, "...you shall not stand upon the blood of your brother" proves 'gossip can destroy the world' " (Maimonides' language). He cites the example of Do'eg the Edomite, who reported to King Saul that David had been granted hospitality in the priestly city of Nov. And, indeed, David had been granted hospitality in the priestly city of Nov. Do'eg's insensitivity to reporting the incident which triggered off Saul's wrath truly "destroyed the world;" it resulted in the destruction of 85 priests, as well as every man, woman, child, and beast in the city... (I Samuel, Ch. 22). Their rehilit, tale-bearing, refers to reporting a true occurrence.

To be sure, everyone is aware that slander and libel, spreading a false rumor, is universally condemned (Maimonides' category of the "motzi shem ra")! But try and tell "a friendly neighbor" or a magazine specializing in gossip that parading unnecessary information about people, even if true, is forbidden as well! Lashon Hara is defined by Maimonides as true information about someone which can be interpreted to his/her detriment. Maimonides even includes the seemingly innocent detail passed along from one to another which, on the surface, is utterly innocuous. This is what he would call rehilit, or tale bearing. Take, for example, the complimentary comment: "Laura is a wonderful cook." If said about a woman who is noticeably overweight, it can engender the kind of guffaws which will lead to disparaging comments. This is the tale-bearing which the Torah condemns.

From this perspective, let us look at this week's Biblical reading. In Behalotcha, we read the tale of Miriam's leprosy - which came as a result of the fact that "Miriam and Aaron begin speaking against Moses because of the dark-skinned (Cushite) woman he married," (Numbers 12:1) - which may serve as an example of Maimonides' innocent, but deadly, gossip.

Miriam's loose tongue results in G-d's anger. Miriam's punishment is her skin becoming leprosy, "white like snow."

Our tradition tells us that leprosy is the punishment for slander, the condition and the cause linked linguistically because the word for leper - metzora - and the word for slander - motzi shem ra - echo each other. And, in terms of Maimonides' definitions motzi shem ra is spreading a false rumor, slander.

However, in analyzing the text itself, we are hard-pressed to come up with a case of slander. All that is revealed is something happened "concerning" ("al odot ha'isha," 12:1) the Cushite woman whom he (Moses) had taken to wife. Rashi (loc cit) quotes the Sifri, which brings down the words of R. Natan who explains that Miriam happened to be standing next to

Moses' wife Tziporah when Moses was informed that two men in the camp, Eldad and Medad, had begun to prophesy. Commiserating with the wives of Eldad and Medad, Tziporah shared the possibility that their husbands will leave them as her husband had left her. Presumably Moses, the prophet who spoke to G-d, felt that he could not continue an ordinary husband-wife relationship at the same time that he enjoyed such an intensive prophetic relationship with G-d, and had ceased living with his wife.

Armed with this intimate detail, Miriam pulls along Aaron, and the gossip about Moses gets rolling, though the text merely hints at what transpired. This is why Rashi fills us in with the missing pieces, including the idea that a Cushite woman is synonymous with beauty and goodness. According to Rashi's reading, the Cushite is Tziporah; Miriam is merely broadcasting the divorce, subtly adding (with the word "Cushite") that her brother had divorced a beautiful and good woman, who apparently did not warrant such treatment, although divorce is possible according to Jewish law.

An alternative interpretation by Joseph ben Kaspi understands the verse to be a literal reference to Moses having taken a second wife, a Cushite, and this is why Miriam and Aaron are gossiping; here, too, the Bible allows for more than one wife.

Common to both readings is the simple fact that nowhere is there the remotest suggestion that Miriam and Aaron are spreading untruths; and yet the result of this talk leads to Miriam's flesh turning leprous, decayed and desiccated, a tragic condition, especially for a woman venerated as a prophetess. This confirms our earlier teaching that even if someone is simply passing on a true occurrence, the message could, in a given circumstance, "destroy the world."

In the following verse, we read that Miriam and Aaron go on to say, "Is it to Moses exclusively that G-d speaks? Does he not also speak to us?" (Numbers 12:2). If, indeed, Moses divorced Tziporah because of his spiritual, prophetic calling, his siblings may well be touting the fact that they too are prophets, and yet they remain married!

In effect, Miriam may be defending her status as a prophet, one who speaks to G-d but who also lives with her husband as man and wife. Weakening Moses' reputation by subtly criticizing his divorce may well be an attempt to "whiten" her own reputation, another reason why the talebearer suffers leprosy, the disease that makes one's skin look as white as snow. The illustration of Rav Yisrael Salanter, founder of the Mussar movement in the 19th century, is apt. He attempted to explain the attraction of slander, why it is such a difficult transgression to overcome: I can appear taller than you either by climbing atop a ladder, or pushing you down onto the floor. And it is always easier to push someone else down than it is to lift oneself up.

G-d's response would seem to indicate the negative nuance of Miriam's report, even if true. G-d clarifies the difference between the prophecies of Miriam and the prophecies of Moses: "Listen carefully to my words. If someone among you experiences Divine prophecy, then when I make myself known to him in a vision, I will speak to him in a dream. This is not true with my servant Moses, who is like a trusted servant throughout my house. With him I speak face to face... How can you not be afraid to speak against my servant?" (Numbers 11:6-8).

Noteworthy is that in G-d's defense of Moses, there is no reference to the Cushite woman. Certainly Miriam had spoken the truth - Moses had either taken a second wife or he had divorced Tziporah. But that isn't the real issue. What is at stake is the positioning, and the purpose, of the seemingly innocent remark, to the detriment of Moses! And G-d is explaining to Moses' siblings that, indeed, their younger brother's contact with G-d is far more intense than theirs.

The laws of kosher food, what one may or may not allow into one's mouth, have always been easier to keep than the laws of kosher talk - what one may or may not allow out of one's mouth. And perhaps this principle is one reason why Maimonides' classification uses such a strong moral language, quoting the dictum of the Sages, that idol worship, incest and murder remove a person from this world and the next world, and that "lashon hara," even though it be true, is equivalent to all three. "Often life or death for an individual depends on the power of someone else's tongue." © 2008 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

#### **RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### **Wein Online**

**L**ighting the menorah - the great candelabra - in the Temple seems to be a very straight forward, cut and dried matter. One needs little skill or training apparently to light a candelabra. Yet the Torah's emphasis in this week's parsha insures that a deeper meaning is also present to this seemingly mundane and simple act.

Rashi already indicates the presence of this deeper idea by his comment that the obligation of the kohein was to keep his fire at the candelabra's wick, "until they caught and burned brightly on their own." This is a rule not only in lighting a menorah but also in life generally - in raising and educating children and students, in inspiring others with ideals, skills and knowledge.

It is a rule in the home, the classroom, the workplace and anywhere else in human life where people intersect and influence one another. It applies in those areas of life that are also subject to this challenge - that the wick has to catch fire and rise on its own.

The ability to let the "wick" catch fire and flame eventually on its own is a necessary trait in successful

parenting and teaching. It is always difficult to let go of a child and a student. One becomes so emotionally involved that letting go becomes increasingly impossible. But the truth is that only by letting go and allowing the "wick" - child, student, etc. - to flame on its own is one's parental and educational responsibility fulfilled. We cannot live another person's life for that person. We can only attempt to provide that other person with the wherewithal to succeed and accomplish.

The other side of the coin in this matter is equally valid and important. The kohein may not remove the flame from the wick prematurely. He must make certain that the flame of the wick will not sputter out when he removes his flame from the wick.

The responsibility of parents and teachers remains as long as the child or student is still unable to flame on its own. Many times in life it is difficult to light the flame in others. It always seems never to catch and flame on its own efforts and abilities. The tendency therefore is for the flame giver to despair and eventually give up on the effort.

Students are expelled from schools and parents and children remain distant. No two instances in life are alike and there are therefore no real general rules that can be imposed in such situations. Yet it must be obvious to all that infinite patience and untiring efforts must first be expended before reaching a point of impasse and no return.

Some people are late bloomers and thus the flame has to be kept to their wick longer than usual. These are all naturally individual judgments and uncertain decisions. Perhaps that is why the Torah emphasizes this seemingly ordinary act of lighting the menorah in the Temple because it represents the ambiguities that lie at the heart of many basic issues in life, family and community affairs. © 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](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory](http://www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory).

#### **RABBI LIPMAN PODOLSKY**

### **Yeshivat HaKotel**

**H**ow does the mechanech (educator) know that he has succeeded in his mission? When he bids farewell to his students, how can he rest assured that he did all he could to provide them with a comprehensive, well-rounded, Torah education? These questions emanate from the very neshama of any good mechanech. The answer is not simply important; it is quintessential.

The title of this week's parsha begs explanation. Usually, when we ignite a fire, we describe it as "lighting" a fire. Hence, the Hebrew "I'hadlik" would have been most appropriate to describe the kindling of

the Menorah. But our Torah chose to use the word "Beha'aloscha"—"When you cause to ascend." What does ascent have to do with lighting a fire?

Rashi clarifies: "... for [the Kohen] must continue to kindle the Menorah until the flame ascends on its own accord." It is not sufficient to merely touch the match to the wick. The Kohen must make sure that the flame is self-sustaining. Only then may he withdraw the match. The holy sefarim (books) reveal: The light of the Menorah is symbolic of learning Torah. "For a mitzvah is a candle, and Torah is light (Mishlei 6:23)." Kindling the Menorah, then, is analogous for the teaching of Torah, i.e. chinuch. From the Menorah, we learn how to successfully teach Torah.

The mechanech may not simply "touch the match", as it were, to his charges, for then the fire of enthusiasm will quickly wane. Rather, he must continue to inspire his students with the flame of Torah until they become capable of sustaining their own fire. Then and only then can the mechanech consider his mission accomplished.

If the student continues to grow, to build on what he or she learned and to carry on striving for excellence, the mechanech (and the student) has succeeded. But if, chas v'shalom, the embers slowly die down, then the year in Eretz Yisrael was a nice experience, but chinuch it was not.

May Hashem help us keep the flame burning, growing ever higher, ever brighter, till the day when we will joyously greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu, soon in our days! © 2001 Rabbi L. Podolsky & Project Genesis, Inc.

#### **RABBI MICHA BERGER**

### **Aspaqlaria**

**H**ashem chose Aharon and his descendants to serve Him as Kohanim. It seems strange. If anyone should be chosen to be the first Kohen wouldn't it be Moshe? Wasn't he the Eved Hashem—the greatest servant of the Almighty?

The Gemara attributes to Moshe the attitude of "let the law uproot mountains." He lived to the ideal, teaching by setting an example of what man can become. He was able to separate himself from everything earthly, and single-mindedly pursue the higher ideal. Moshe begins his final speech to his people with the words "Hear O skies and I shall speak; listen O earth to the words of my mouth." Rashi comments that Moshe had to use a stronger language in speaking to the earth, as he was a man who was more heavenly than earthly. He was further from the earth, so it had to listen more carefully.

In contrast, Hillel (Mishnah Avos 1:12) enjoins us to learn from Aharon, who he describes as as a "lover of peace and a pursuer of peace. A lover of Mankind who brought them close to Torah." Aharon represents another kind of teacher, one who is part of the people, and works from within the community.

Though society needs both a Moshe, an ideal to aspire to, and an Aharon, it is the Aharon who is chosen for the Kehunah, the priesthood. In order to represent the masses in the Avodah, you must be part of them.

In this week's parashah, Hashem tells Moshe to instruct Aharon "Biha'aloschah es haneiros—when you cause the candles to go up". This is a very odd way to phrase it. More straightforward would be bihadlikchah—when you light the candles.

One of the explanations Rashi offers for this strange terminology is that it refers to a law about how the menorah is lit. One may not light the menorah directly, by letting a fire touch the wick. Instead the Kohen holds a fire close to the lamp, and the wick bursts into flame from the heat.

This is a beautiful metaphor for how the Kohen teaches. He doesn't instruct directly. Instead, he loves mankind, and by bringing the light of his example close to the masses, brings them to emulate.

The same is even more true of the Jewish People's job to be a Mamleches Kohanim viGoy Kadosh—a Kingdom of Priests and A Holy Nation. We do not spread the truths of ethical monotheism to the world by prosletization, in fact it is assur to teach Torah to non-Jews. Rather, by striving for kedushah in the midst of the nations, we can teach by example. © 1995 Rabbi M. Berger & AishDas Society

#### **RABBI SHLOMO KATZ**

### **Hama'ayan**

**“T**here were men who were tamei from a human corpse and could not make the Pesach-offering on that day..." (9:6) "Moshe said to them, 'Stand and I will see what Hashem will command you.'" (9:8) "Speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying, 'If any man will become tamei through a human corpse...' " (9:10)

R' Pinchas Halevi Horowitz z"l (1730-1805; rabbi of Frankfurt, Germany; author of the Talmud commentaries Hafla'ah and Hamakneh) contrasts these verses with another instance in which Moshe had to approach Hashem to seek an answer to a halachic question that certain individuals had asked. In Bemidbar, chapter 27, the daughters of Tzelofchad asked that daughters be allowed to inherit the property of a man who died with no sons. Moshe asked Hashem, and Hashem responded, "The daughters of Tzelofchad speak properly..." Hashem specifically acknowledged the daughter of Tzelofchad in His answer. Here, in contrast, Hashem's answer did not refer to the men who asked the question; instead He responded, "If any man will become tamei..."

R' Horowitz explains: The gemara tells us that the men who asked this question were the pallbearers of Yosef's coffin. The halachah is that one who carries a coffin does not become tamei if he is not carrying most of the weight. Thus, these people did not know for

certain that any of them were tamei; perhaps the weight was distributed in such a way that no one had become tamei.

Hashem, of course, knew which, if any, of them were tamei. Thus, He could not address His answer to them directly because for some, or all, of them, it was not pertinent. Therefore He said, "If any man..."

R' Horowitz adds: The rule is that when a situation of doubtful tuma'ah arises in a public place, one is considered to be tahor. If so, why couldn't these men bring a Korban Pesach?

He answers: Had each person come alone to ask, Moshe could have told each person, "We will presume that you are tahor and your colleague is tamei." However, since they came together, Moshe was not permitted to give this answer. (Although in certain cases of doubt, a rabbi may issue contradictory rulings, he may not issue contradictory rulings simultaneously.) (Panim Yafot)

"When the cloud lingered upon the Tabernacle many days, Bnei Yisrael would safeguard the charge of Hashem and would not journey." (9:19)

Couldn't the verse have said, "When the cloud lingered upon the Tabernacle many days, Bnei Yisrael would not journey"? What is added by the phrase, "[They] would safeguard the charge of Hashem"?

R' Aryeh Leib Zunz-Charif z"l (Poland; 1765-1833) answers: Perhaps the verse is teaching that even though Bnei Yisrael had a strong desire to reach Eretz Yisrael, when they saw that it was not Hashem's will that they travel, they willingly safeguarded His charge and did not journey. (Melo Ha'omer)

#### **RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY**

### **Fish Tale**

Complaining was a trademark of the Chosen People from the time they left Egypt. Many complaints were understandable. This week, however, the complaints were inexplicable. They were fed up with the heavenly Manna and they began to reminisce about the good old days back in Egypt when they ate free fish.

Numbers 11:5: "We remember the fish that we received in Egypt free of charge; we also remember the gourds, cucumbers, onions and garlic. Yet here (in the desert) our life is parched, all we have is the Manna."

The commentaries question where the free fish came from. After all weren't they slaves? Ramban suggests that perhaps the fish were given to slaves who were fishermen's apprentices. Some are bothered. "Why would that be considered free? Being forced into any job, and then getting paltry remuneration, is not considered free fish."

Perhaps the secret of free fish lies in the Plague of Blood. The Torah tells us that during the first of the Ten Plagues all the Egyptian waters turned to

blood. "All the fish died and the rivers stank." (Exodus 7:21) If all the fish died, then there was plenty of free fish! I would like to propose that those fish may have been the free fish that evoked fond memories in the complaining Jews. It has always amazed me. The Jews were given miraculous bread that, according to the Talmud, had the supernatural ability to conform to any taste that was imagined by the eater. Yet, the golus minded Jew yearned for his rotten fish with a little onion and garlic on the side.

Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski of Pittsburgh tells the story of the small European shtetl that heard about a marvelous new invention—the locomotive. The government was offering to put a station in their town, but taxes would have to be raised. Skeptical about the concept of a horseless carriage, they sent an emissary to a nearby town that had just completed a set of tracks on which the new-fangled, modern miracle was to travel. His mission was to verify the existence of such a machine and explain its mechanics to the entire town. They would then vote whether or not to accept its presence.

He returned home in awe. He had learned the mechanics and principles of the machine and was set on convincing the townsfolk to accept the offer. Equipped with diagrams and working models of the train, he explained the concepts of a steam engine. For hours he explicated and demonstrated the workings of the internal combustion engine, pistons and levers. Finally, almost everyone agreed. The train was a true marvel and would be a great benefit to the town.

One man had other ideas. "Bah! Feh! It's all a trick! How can something run without horse. It just can't be!"

The emissary started the whole display over again. He showed the skeptic a working model. He even boiled water and fascinated the crowd showing a model train actually move. Even the doubter was shaking his head in amazement. "It's truly amazing," he nodded in submission, "but tell me, just where do you attach the horses?"

Many people have their ideas set. You can offer and even give them vast improvements in lifestyle, knowledge, and understanding, yet they long for an empty world. They will not ponder the blessing of Torah due to the responsibilities that accompany it. They are content as slaves with mundane fare while shirking the lofty vision that accompanies heavenly food. That attitude stems from dissatisfaction and lack of vision. It is the stuff that complainers are made of.

When one wants to complain, and remain in his accustomed mode, even Utopia will not fit the demand. Delicious, ever-satisfying Manna will be shunned. The complainer will even long for the old rotten fare. He will imagine how delicious it was as he ignores the true goodness that he fails to appreciate. © 1996 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky & Project Genesis, Inc.