

L'Chaim

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Weekly Publication
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April 8, 2011 – 4 Nisan, 5771

1166: METZORA

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Living with the REBBE



This week's Torah portion, Metzora (literally "Leper") deals with the Biblical plague of leprosy and the various processes a person had to go through in order to become spiritually pure. Aside from its literal meaning, "Metzora" is also one of the names the Talmudic Sages used to refer to Moshiach, commenting on the verse in Isaiah (53:4): "Surely he has borne our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, struck by G-d, and afflicted."

The name Metzora specifically relates to Moshiach as he exists in exile, prior to the Final Redemption. During this period, although he is already present in the world, he has not yet been revealed as King Moshiach. Moshiach's essential nature is the epitome of perfection, as he is described: "My servant is enlightened; he is exalted, lofty and highly elevated." Nonetheless, because he is still in exile and shares in the suffering of the Jewish people, he is termed "Metzora."

A Biblical commentator, the "Ohr HaChaim," explains that the purification process of the leper is symbolic of the process of Moshiach's revelation and the cleansing of the Jewish people from exile. The leper's "day of purification" corresponds to the day on which the Final Redemption will occur.

Furthermore, from the fact that Moshiach is called "Metzora," we learn the precise nature of his suffering before the Redemption. Chasidic philosophy notes that leprosy is an external affliction "of the skin of his flesh," rather than an illness that has already invaded the inner workings of the body. Accordingly, it symbolizes a condition in which a person's essence is whole, and the damage is limited only to his exterior.

Thus on a deeper level, "Metzora" signifies a person on the highest spiritual plane, whose powers of the soul have already been purified and refined. The Metzora's inner essence is pure; all that is left for him to do is to cleanse his "skin" - the very outermost layers of the body. Moreover, the Metzora's external affliction isn't really "his," but that of the Jewish people, as it states, "Surely he has borne our sicknesses."

This, in fact, is the condition in which we find ourselves now, at the very end of the exile and just prior to the Redemption. Outwardly, it appears as if the Jewish people is suffering from a variety of ailments, but our inner essence is actually pristine, having already been completely purified over the course of generations. The only thing left to be refined before Moshiach's revelation is our "outer layer." All other prerequisites for the Final Redemption are already in place. May it happen immediately. ■

Adapted from Vol. 22 of Likutei Sichot, and the Rebbe's talk on Shabbat Parshat Tazria-Metzora 5751

Don't Block the Aisle

Grocery shopping. It's not like shopping in a mall. Usually you're on a tight schedule. There's a list, specific items to be bought, long lines at the checkout - 10 items or less sometimes takes longer than the all-you-can-stuff-in-the-cart line.

Regardless of what time you shop, it often seems like everyone shops at the same time as you. So there you are, maneuvering around idlers with hand-basket - just the gourmet coffee, filters and a small package of expensive cheese - or the harried mom with one kid trying to unstrap himself from the basket seat and the other burying herself beneath the cereal boxes. And you're just going up and down the aisles, dropping items in your cart and checking them off. And there it is - The Cart That Won't Move!

Some old man consulting with his wife or young girl texting, blocking the aisle. Excuse me, excuse me! Sometimes it's a polite 'sorry'; sometimes it's a dirty look; sometimes it's a refusal to respond or move the cart. But the aisle is blocked!

It doesn't just happen in the grocery store, either. It happens on airplanes, in banks, even on the sidewalk. Even in synagogue. Anywhere people gather, someone - or a few yakkers - are sure, at some point, to block the aisle, stopping you from coming in or going out.

There are aisle blockers in our spiritual lives as well. Things that prevent us from coming in - coming in to more mitzva (commandment) observance - and things that prevent us from going out - going

out of our pre-conceived notions, our limitations, our conceits that we've figured it out, our comfort zone illusions.

What causes aisle blockitis? Why do some people, almost always unaware of what they're doing, stop other people from moving forward, in or out? Usually they're too busy focusing on themselves. They literally block out the world and people around them, until they're reminded they're not alone. No man is an aisle unto himself.

It's the same symptom that causes us to block our spiritual aisles ourselves: we get so caught up in examining the ingredients in that box of cereal - metaphorically speaking - that we forget what we're really shopping for. Aisle blockers are frustrating. But when we've got a bad case of spiritual aisle blockitis, like the blocker in the grocery store, we often blame our spiritual side for trying to get through.

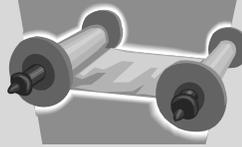
Aisle blocking, spiritually speaking, can be a sign of confusion, of laziness, of indecision. When the mitzva-cart tries to come through, that can interrupt our self-absorption, startling us; we might blame our frustration and anger on the "mitzva shopper" in our soul, instead of the impulse that makes us stop and waste our time considering the trivial.

When we find ourselves standing still Jewishly, complacent, content with our understanding, our feelings, our actions - when we're stagnating in Torah and mitzvot, we need to recognize we have a case of aisle blockitis. And we need to heed the voice of G-dliness within that tells us, quietly at first, but shouting if it must - don't block the aisle! ■

CUSTOMS

What are some of the Jewish customs to celebrate or perform on one's birthday?

It is appropriate to celebrate with family and friends, to recite the blessing of "Shehecheyanu" over a new fruit (thereby showing one's "joy" in performing a mitzva - commandment). Also, to undertake a good resolution in the area of Jewish observance, give charity and increase one's Jewish knowledge. For more customs visit www.SichosInEnglish.org/books/birthday-celebrations/12.htm ■



A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

For the first 13 days of the month of Nisan (which began April 5 this year), a special portion of the Torah known as the "Nesi'im" is read, enumerating the offerings that each leader of the 12 tribes brought to the Sanctuary. As the Sanctuary, and later the Holy Temple, occupy a central place in Judaism, let us take a deeper look at their significance.

G-d, of course, is everywhere, as the Torah states, "The earth is filled with His glory." In the same way that the soul animates the body, G-d's Divine Presence fills and sustains the world.

Nonetheless, G-d commanded the Jews to build a special Sanctuary in which His Presence would be openly manifested, to remind them that G-d was always in their midst. The instructions for erecting the Sanctuary were given to Moses on the day after Yom Kippur, in the second year after the Exodus.

The Sanctuary was a portable structure with many components: the Tent of Meeting, the Holy of Holies, the menorah and altar, the ark in which the Ten Commandments were kept, etc. The Sanctuary served as G-d's dwelling place on earth for a total of 479 years: 39 in the desert, 14 in Galgal, 369 in Shiloh, 13 in Nov, and 44 in Givon.

At that point the focus turned to Jerusalem. No longer would the Sanctuary be moved from place to place. The first Holy Temple was built by King Solomon, and stood for 410 years. The second Holy Temple stood for 420, until the time of the Romans.

The third Holy Temple will be built by Moshiach. Superior to all the structures that preceded it, it will be an eternal edifice that stands forever. In the Messianic era, G-d's Divine Presence in the world will be restored, and His dwelling place on earth established for eternity. At that time, the entire world will be bathed in a G-dly light.

May we merit to see it (The third Holy Temple) immediately. ■

The Rebbe Writes

11th of Nissan, 5720 [1960]

I received your letter of the 29th of Adar, and may G-d grant that you have good news to report on the matters about which you write in your letter.

As we are approaching the Season of Our Freedom, I trust that you will take time out to reflect on the significance of this great festival, recalling the enslavement in Egypt, which was not only a physical enslavement but also a spiritual one. Yet, because of the great faith of the children of Israel in G-d, they were liberated from bondage, and received the Torah, thus giving them true and complete freedom. The simple message of it is that no Jew should ever give up hope, and should always strive to free himself from the influences and limitations of the environment, as well as from internal temptations, and make steady strides along the path of Torah and mitzvot.

As for your personal problems, the best advice is that you should try to think as little as possible of your inner problems, until you completely dismiss them from your mind. This means not even thinking about their harmful aspects or how to overcome them, but completely disengaging your thoughts from those problems and engaging them in matters of Torah and mitzvot [commandments]. Another good method is to try to be among people as much as possible.

... May the forthcoming Season of Our Freedom bring you true freedom from all the distracting thoughts and from all temptations and diversions, both external and internal, so that you can serve G-d with the fullness and gladness of your heart.

Wishing you a kosher, happy and inspiring Pesach [Passover],



via telegram 6th of Nissan, 5734 [1974]

I am delighted to associate myself with the Pre-Dedication Celebration for the new Landow Yeshiva Center - Oholei Torah School.

The timeliness of the event is underscored by the fact that it is taking place in the auspicious days when the Nesi'im (Princes of the Twelve Tribes) brought their individual contributions to the dedication of the altar of the newly erected Mishkan (Sanctuary) in the desert on the way to the promised Holy Land. The connection is obvious, since every sacred House of Prayer and House of Study is termed Mishkan Me'at, a Sanctuary in Miniature.

Moreover, it is written in our sacred sources that the Mishkan is essentially indestructible, which, by extension, applies also to the sacred Houses of Study and Prayer. Indeed, our Sages declare that in the future (in the time of Moshiach) all Houses of Prayer and Study in the Diaspora will be transplanted into the Holy Land.

Reflecting on the eternal nature of the project that you, and we, are celebrating, it should even further "encourage the energetic" to make the utmost effort with the utmost joy and inspiration, for it is truly an everlasting investment bearing everlasting dividends.

Inasmuch as we are soon to celebrate the Season of Our Liberation, Pesach, may G-d grant that the new Center, which is designed to bring true liberation to Jewish children through Torah-true education, will bring true liberation from all negative aspects to each and all of the friends and supporters who are privileged to participate in the project, and the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Sages quoted above.

With esteem and blessing for a kosher and inspiring Pesach, ■



SLICE OF LIFE

A Final Request

by Rabbi Rafoel Jaworowski

Rabbi Aron Wolf, founder and director of the Chicago Mitzvah Campaigns, was asked by the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services to visit an elderly Jewish woman, whom we'll call Marian. The CDFSS had received reports from Marian's neighbors that she banged on her doors and walls at all hours of the night and continuously screamed at herself and at others. She did not speak to people or allow anyone to visit her. She had even rebuffed the police and the social workers whom the CDFSS had sent to try to see if they could help her.

Rabbi Wolf arrived at the apartment building and told the doorman that he had come to see Marian. The doorman shook his head. "I'm afraid that she won't let you in, sir," he said. But the rabbi was undeterred and asked him to call up to Marian's apartment. The doorman regretfully responded, "The poor lady doesn't own a phone."

Rabbi Wolf proceeded to Marian's apartment but the only response to his knocks was a barrage of shrill hysteria: "Get out of here! Go away!" Undaunted, Rabbi Wolf repeatedly reassured Marian that he meant no harm. If she would only open the door, he said, she would see that he was a rabbi who had come to visit her and see what he could do to help her. Finally, Marian let him in.

"I sleep on the floor," Marian began, pointing to two ragged blankets in a crumpled heap. "But here, you can sit on the chair." Observing the precarious state of the chair's legs, Rabbi Wolf declined to sit. He gently spoke to Marian about her situation and the obvious need for her to accept assistance. During the conversation, Rabbi Wolf walked over to the kitchen area and opened the refrigerator. It was pitifully empty.

Marian gradually came to understand that she was unable to live alone anymore. Overwhelmed and bewildered, she asked Rabbi Wolf what to do. Rabbi Wolf advised her to be

immediately admitted to the ER of a nearby hospital in order to be placed under medical care. Once she was stabilized, had appropriate medication and a doctor's report, she could be smoothly admitted into a nursing home. Rabbi Wolf's caring approach had the desired effect, and helped Marian to focus. "Let's go!" she exclaimed.

The sight of Marian being quietly and calmly accompanied by Rabbi Wolf to his car left many mouths gaping in wonderment among the neighbors in her apartment complex. It had not taken long for the elderly lady to pack her scant belongings; they all fit in just two small bags.

The ER was full of people waiting to be seen. Rabbi Wolf registered Marian's presence under the watchful eye of hospital staff members and hurriedly went out to get food for her. Returning to the hospital, Marian gobbled up the fare with the relish of a person who hadn't eaten proper food in a long time. He stayed with Marian until she was admitted and settled in a hospital room. Rabbi Wolf maintained contact with the hospital staff to be aware of the medicine, treatment, and plan of care. And he helped facilitate Marian's transfer into a nursing home of her choice, where she will live in a safe and caring environment.

As part of the CMC's commitment to Jewish hospital patients throughout Chicagoland, Rabbi Wolf visits hospitals every week. One Friday morning he received a call from a chaplain explaining that the regular chaplain at a certain hospital was absent that day, that an elderly Jewish patient, ES, was seriously ill, and that his family was anxious for someone to say a prayer in Hebrew on his behalf at bedside. Rabbi Wolf asked for the patient's name, which he immediately recognized as someone he had known for about ten years. He called ES's daughter at her father's bedside and assured her that he would be there soon.

That afternoon Rabbi Wolf visited with ES and his loving children and grandchildren. The rabbi's presence and prayers were of great comfort to the family. They listened with much interest as the rabbi recounted how ES had called him out of the blue about 10 years earlier. After a short introduction, ES had explained that he wanted to buy a pair of tefillin, as he desired to become more Torah observant. Over the many lessons it took for Rabbi Wolf to teach ES, a man in his 80s, to correctly wrap the tefillin and say his prayers, a beautiful friendship developed. ES visited Rabbi Wolf in his home, and the rabbi went to see ES in his home.

"It's really amazing that you are the rabbi with my father in his last days. None of us are affiliated with any congregation; I might not have even thought to ask for a rabbi now. It's just that over the last 10 years, praying has been such an important part of my father's life. That's why I had a strong feeling to request someone to say a prayer now on his behalf," said ES's daughter.

Rabbi Wolf approached ES's bed; his eyes were glazed. It had been more than 48 hours since he had shown any signs of responsiveness, but when Rabbi Wolf called his name his eyes flickered into focus. The room went completely still; everyone seemed to hold their breath.

"It would be too difficult for you to wrap the tefillin now," Rabbi Wolf said, leaning gently towards ES, "but would you like me to help your family with the tefillin?" ES nodded his head ever so slightly, and his eyes twinkled. With Rabbi Wolf's able assistance, ES's two sons and four grandsons wrapped tefillin in his presence. For five out of the six men it was the first time in their lives that they had performed the mitzva (commandment), but the feeling they had in fulfilling the final request of their beloved father/grandfather and providing him this last moment of nachas was irreplaceable.

That very night, ES passed away. His funeral took place the following Monday, with Rabbi Wolf officiating. Providence was on his side. ■

www.chichagomitzvahmapaigns.com

Moshiach Matters The first person, Adam, chose this name for himself, explaining that the letter "alef" of Adam alludes to G-d, Who is "One" (alef has the numerical equivalent of 1), and the "Chief" ("aluf" in Hebrew). The letters "dalet" and "mem" of Adam spell "dam" (blood), alluding to man's physical component. Man is comprised of spirituality and physicality - soul and body. When a person achieves just the right mixture of both, then he becomes a true "adam" in the fullest sense which is why the numerical value of "adam" is equal to the numerical value of the word for Geula - Redemption. ■

(Rabbi Pinchos Winston)

What's in a Name?

EFRAYIM is Hebrew, meaning "fruitful." In the Torah (Genesis 41:52), Efrayim was the second son of Josef. He and his older brother, Menashe, were counted among the twelve tribes of Israel. Jacob prophesized that Efrayim's descendants would be greater than those of Menashe; Joshua, the leader of the Jewish people into the Land of Israel, was descended from him.

EDNA is Hebrew meaning "delight, desired." Edna is referenced in the apocryphal works Sefer HaYavalim & Tobit.

News

The Passover Hagaddah

The newly released

The Passover Hagaddah by Rabbi Yosef

Marcus and published by Kehot Publications is sure to enhance everyone's Seder table and Passover experience. The Hagaddah features a unique interpretive translation, an in-depth analysis of the commandments and customs, informative notes for beginners, insight from all Chabad leaders, many translated for the first time, a vast collection of commentaries, indicated by beautiful source icons and a reader-friendly design with instructive visual graphs and original artwork. ■

Important Times – Scottsdale, AZ April 8 – April 15 <i>Shacharis</i> 7:00am Sunday 8:00am Monday/Thursday 6:45am <i>Minchah/Maariv</i> 6:30pm Shabbos 6:15pm <i>Shabbat</i> <u>Chassidus Club</u> 8:15am <u>Kabbalah of Cholent</u> 9:05am <u>Shacharis</u> 9:30am Light Candles 6:35pm Shabbat Ends 7:31pm	Brought to you by: Chabad-Lubavitch in Cyberspace www.chabad.org Copyright © 2010 Lubavitch Youth Organization www.lchaimweekly.org	Re-printed by: Chabad of Scottsdale (480) 998-1410 chabadofscottsdale.org  The Jewish Learning Center of Scottsdale 480.443.5362
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It Once Happened

Although the farmer, Yankel, was as wise as could be in the ways of farming, in the vast sea of Torah, he could not swim a stroke. For his sons, however, he wanted better. He sent them to a nearby town which had a good cheder and yeshiva and the two boys learned assiduously until they became known as the brightest students of the school.

One day they happened to hear the Baal Shem Tov speak and from that time they became great adherents of his and went to Mezibuzh whenever they could steal away. Their father couldn't understand what they found so interesting there. "We want to hear the words of the famous Baal Shem Tov," they would reply.

Once Yankel's curiosity was so great that he decided to visit Mezibuzh himself. When he arrived, he quizzed the Baal Shem Tov on his knowledge of farming, and when he seemed to know all the correct answers, the farmer was satisfied that the Baal Shem Tov was, indeed, a wise man. Over the course of time, Yankel also became a great admirer of the Baal Shem Tov and he traveled to Mezibuzh to seek advice.

When years had passed and the Yankel's daughter reached marriageable age, he decided to consult the Baal Shem Tov about finding an appropriate mate. "Send your sons to me and I will send them home with the proper husband for your daughter," the Baal Shem Tov advised the him.

The two sons arrived and traveled with the Baal Shem Tov to a distant town where the tzadik made inquiries about a certain young man named Shmerel. They remained in the town for several weeks, but the youth, Shmerel, was nowhere to be found. On the eve of the new month, when the townspeople had gathered at a festive banquet in honor of their distinguished guest, a wild-looking young man entered the hall. His manners were most uncouth, and he ran in and out just as quickly. This very youth was the one whom the Baal Shem Tov had been seeking, and although the two sons of the farmer Yankel couldn't understand what he could have possibly wanted with such a character, they duly informed him that they had found the boy.

The Baal Shem Tov was delighted and gave instruction that the boy be cleaned up and dressed properly and then brought before him. Shmerel was given the place of honor next to the Baal Shem Tov, and during the meal the Baal Shem Tov passed his handkerchief over the boy's face and commanded, "Give us a Torah discourse!" To the shock of all present, Shmerel began speaking and he expounded gems of Torah for the next few hours. The two brothers were very pleased with what they saw and heard and they set off for home with the yovel in tow.

The wedding was held immediately and throughout the entire week of celebration, the groom delivered marvelously impressive Torah discourses to the assembled guests. The brothers couldn't wait until the days of rejoicing were over and they could sit together with him and learn from his seemingly inexhaustible fountain of wisdom. However, they were to be profoundly disappointed.

The first week, when he failed to show up in the study hall, their sister replied only, "My husband is sleeping," or "My husband is very tired." The brothers then began to observe him closely and found that he didn't observe even the most basic Jewish laws and customs.

They left for Mezibuzh and told the Baal Shem Tov what had transpired that week. "Let me explain," he said. "You see, there are celestial matchmakers as well as their earthly counterparts. It was determined in Heaven that Shmerel was to be your sisters husband, but it was a difficult match to arrange. How would a girl from a wealthy family with such scholarly brothers agree to marry a man like Shmerel? At first it was thought to make her deranged, but with her family fortune, she would still be able to make a good match in spite of the illness. Then it was suggested that the girl be deranged and her father die. It was then that I made my suggestion. I would take it upon myself to assure that the match be made. The only way to achieve my goal was to open the young man's mind to Torah wisdom, and in that way, endear him to you.

"If only Shmerel had been worthy of the knowledge, it would have remained with him forever, but alas, he was not. The Torah I put into him lasted only the seven days of blessing the marriage, then it was lost. But there is nothing to be done about it, for Shmerel is the mate who was destined for her from Above. Tell your sister to remain married to him and I will guarantee her fine children. As for you, continue to teach him and he will slowly improve and learn."

This story was often related by the Apta Rav, who would then add, that the descendants of this match are among his closest disciples. ■

When they defile My sanctuary within their midst (Leviticus 15:31) When a person defiles himself, he defiles the Divine sanctuary - the Jewish soul - with which he is endowed. For every Jew is created in the image of G-d, and the Divine Presence dwells within him. Going against the will of G-d by sinning causes the sanctuary to become dirtied. (Abarbanel)

He shall sprinkle upon him that is being cleansed from the leprosy (Leviticus 14:7)

The literal translation of "him that is being cleansed" is "he who cleanses," to teach us that the process of purification is not a passive one; the leper must repent of his misdeeds before he is worthy of approaching the priest. (Meshech Chochma)

This shall be the law of the leper on the day of his cleansing (Lev. 14:2) The reason the future tense is used, "this shall be the law," rather than the present, "this is the law," indicates that the purification process connected to the Biblical plague of leprosy should continue even after the individual has been pronounced clean. The sense of humility and meekness that were required for the person to be cured must be carried over into the everyday life, as our Sages said, "It shall be - perpetually and always." (Shem MiShmuel)

In an earthen utensil over mayim chaim (lit. "living waters") (Lev. 14:5) Although the leper (who was usually afflicted with leprosy due to the sin of gossip) was obliged to feel humbled and contrite, great care had to be taken to ensure his spirit was not completely broken. The "living waters" of the Torah protected him from becoming too downhearted and reduced to spiritual inertia. (Sichot Tzadikim)