



# THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Tazria/Chodesh 5776

April 8, 2016

## A Taste of Torah Protection Plan

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Good things come in threes. The rule of three that says that things are better and more satisfying when tripled finds expression in numerous places in Judaism. Think three patriarchs, the three festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot, three pillars upon which the world stands – Torah, *avodah* (service of G-d) and *chesed* (loving-kindness). There are threes, though, that are less-than-positive. Like *tzara'as*. There are three places *tzara'as* can erupt: On one's body, on one's clothing, or on one's home. Why did Hashem select these three specific things for *tzara'as* to display itself?

The Shem Mishmuel (Rabbi Shmuel Bornsztain of Sochatchov; 1855–1926) illuminates this subject with a passage from the Talmud (Menachos 43b) that states that it is evident that the Jewish People are very dear to Hashem, for He surrounded them with three special mitzvot: tefillin, tzitzit and mezuzah. These three mitzvot, explains the Shem Mishmuel, allow a person to be surrounded by Hashem's Divine Presence, shutting out the forces of spiritual impurity that would make inroads and cause great damage in a person's life.

When a person commits one of the sins that brings the malady of *tzara'as* (see Tractate Arachin 16a), he has effectively severed the ties of these special mitzvot that bind him tightly with Hashem, allowing the impurity in. Each of the three aforementioned mitzvot parallels one of the locations of *tzara'as*. Tefillin are worn upon the body, tzitzit are placed upon one's

garment, while a mezuzah is placed upon the doorpost of one's home. The result is a manifestation of this spiritual impurity – *tzara'as*.

These three mitzvot are singled out because they have the capacity to bring Hashem's Divine Presence into our life at varying levels. Tefillin bring Hashem's Presence into our personal bodies, while tzitzit are a step removed – they connect our clothes with Hashem. Mezuzah, which is placed upon the doorpost, moves yet further away from our person – it brings Hashem into our abode. When a person loses his connection with Hashem at any of these levels, the results can be spotty.

Today, we are not on the spiritual level to experience the bitter fruits of disconnecting with Hashem in real-time. But when we let our guard down, spiritual negativity is waiting to swoop in and take over. In a world that assails us with depravity and immorality at every turn, wherever one walks, looks or lives, surrounding ourselves with as much G-dliness as possible is more important than ever.

The more sanctity we can bring into our homes, the more we can connect ourselves with other individuals who desire to grow and develop in their relationship with Hashem, the more we can be connected with an institution and teachers focused on spiritual development, the more we can create a protective cocoon around ourselves, our families and our communities, and prevent *tzara'as* from making itself at home.

## Stories For The Soul

### Two-Tongued

Rabbi Shmuel HaNagid (993–1056) was the Vizier of the Caliph in Spain during the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry. In his position, he greatly assisted his brethren, and his efforts and financial support allowed the Jewish communities and yeshivos to flourish.

Rabbi Shmuel and the caliph were once walking through the market when a man in the street began to hurl insults at Rabbi Shmuel. The enraged caliph demanded that Rabbi Shmuel have the man's tongue cut out. Instead of doing so, however, Rabbi Shmuel began sending gifts to the offender on a regular basis.

Some time later, Rabbi Shmuel and the caliph were again walking, and they encountered the same man, who began praising Rabbi Shmuel.

The caliph was quite upset. He turned to Rabbi Shmuel and said, "I ordered you to have this man's tongue cut out!"

"I did exactly as Your Majesty commanded," replied Rabbi Shmuel. "By lavishing him with gifts, I removed his vile tongue and replaced it with a noble one!"

The caliph was duly impressed by Rabbi Shmuel's wisdom, and his admiration for his Jewish adviser only grew.

*Lashon hara* (slander) is the most famous cause of *tzara'as*, a spiritual skin malady discussed in this week's parsha. Proper attitude toward others is vital to ensure that our tongues remain noble and not descend to vileness.

## Kollel Happenings

### LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact [rmh@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org).

### RABBANIT MIZRACHI THIS WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13TH

The Women's Division of the Denver Community Kollel and Aish Denver present a video for women, *Leil Haseder*. Wednesday, April 13th at 8 pm at Aish Denver. Lecture sponsored by Dana Goldfarb in memory of her father-in-law, Aharon Ben Yaakov (Wurm), who recently passed away. No charge, suggested donation of \$5 to help cover costs of future video presentations.

### THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch-and-Learn class on the weekly parsha at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. at 12:00 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

## Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** What is the longest time span during the year that we don't recite Hallel at all?

**A:** Since Hallel is not recited on Rosh Hashana or Yom Kippur, Hallel is not recited for 42 consecutive days, from 2

Elul through Erev Sukkos (14 Tishrei).

**This week's question:** What is the longest time span during the year when Hallel *Shalem* (the complete Hallel) is not recited?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email [ryz@denverkollel.org](mailto:ryz@denverkollel.org).

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### The Rashba Part III

One of the results of the Spanish Jewish community's involvement with secular philosophy was that their faith and faithfulness was not as strong as that of their Ashkenazic brethren. While there were relatively few forced conversions among the Ashkenazic communities during the Crusades and other sporadic pogroms during the Middle Ages, as the Jews there generally chose death over conversion, the same cannot be said of the Spanish Jews. True, many Jews withstood the pressures of the Christian society to convert, but many others did not.

Another unfortunate phenomenon during our long and bitter exile has been messianic movements. Especially during or following times of suffering, Jewish communities have been more inclined to believe in the rise of a figure claiming to herald the imminent arrival of Moshiach (the Messiah) or to be Moshiach himself. When the messianic movement falters, depression and despair inevitably come in its wake. In addition, messianic movements would raise the ire of the non-Jewish populace, who were all-too-easily riled up.

Late in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a man by the name of Rabbi Avraham Abulafia began preaching the imminent arrival of Moshiach. Charismatic and knowledgeable in kabbalah, he attracted many disciples as he traveled through

Spain, Italy and Sicily.

The Rashba saw great danger in Rabbi Abulafia's effort, and he proclaimed that no one should follow his movement. He attacked Rabbi Abulafia and his efforts, hoping to keep fellow Jews from pinning their hopes on him. (It should be noted that Rabbi Abulafia was a noted kabbalist, and later Kabbalistic authorities used his writings. However, his approach was regarded as dangerous by the Rashba.)

The Rashba's opposition succeeded in limiting Rabbi Abulafia's influence, although there was still much disillusionment in many Spanish communities when nothing came of Rabbi Abulafia's promises.

(As an interesting sidebar, Rabbi Abulafia traveled to Rome in 1280 in an attempt to convert Pope Nicholas III. Nicholas heard of the man who wanted to convert him, and gave orders to have him burned at the stake. A pyre was set up in the town where Nicholas was staying. Rabbi Abulafia arrived in the town and walked right past the pyre prepared for him to seek an audience with Nicholas - only to discover that Nicholas had died the night before. Although Rabbi Abulafia was thrown into prison for a time, he managed to escape with his life.)

The Torah Weekly is made possible through a generous grant from the Harry H. Beren Foundation of Lakewood, NJ, in memory of Harry H. Beren, z"l.

Denver Community Kollel | 1516 Xavier Street, Denver, CO 80204 | 303-820-2855 | [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org)

Web: [www.denverkollel.org](http://www.denverkollel.org)

To receive Torah Weekly by email, send an email to [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org)