

THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

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Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Parshas Tazria-Metzora

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A Taste of Torah Building for Others

by Rabbi Shmuel Halpern

“When you will enter the land of Canaan... I will place a *tzara'as* affliction upon a house in the land.” (Vayikra 14:34) The Torah goes on to explain how, in certain instances, the homeowner would have to demolish either a part or the entirety of his home. Rashi, quoting a Medrash, tells us that in this verse Hashem was conveying good news to the Jews. What can be so good about having to demolish your home? The Medrash explains that the Canaanites hid their valuables in the walls of their homes in order that the Jews not benefit from their property. Hashem would reveal these hidden treasures by afflicting the home with *tzara'as*; since the home had to be demolished, the valuables would be discovered. What seems to have been a great bother turns out to be a great blessing.

The Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter of Gur; 1847-1905) asks a profound question on this Medrash. In a natural world of cause-and-effect, we can understand how the intentions of the Canaanites were thwarted by the *tzara'as* affliction. But we aren't discussing a natural phenomenon. The *tzara'as* that attacked a home was of a miraculous nature; why, then, didn't Hashem simply prevent the Canaanites from hiding their valuables? Why allow them to hide it, and then require the new Jewish owner to demolish the home in order to find it? The Sfas Emes answers that this was an immense spiritual opportunity for the Jews who would settle in the Land of Israel. The Canaanites had built material homes; the Jews would

now build spiritual homes.

What can we learn from this Medrash about the meaning of a Jewish home? What exactly does it mean to build a spiritual home?

In an attempt to answer this question, let's contrast the aforementioned Medrash with a passage in Tractate Yoma (11a). The Gemara explains how Hashem deals with a miserly fellow who refuses to lend out his possessions, always claiming he doesn't own the item being requested for borrowing. This fellow's home would be afflicted with *tzara'as*, and, as mandated by the Torah, the entire home would be emptied. This would reveal the miserliness of the homeowner and hopefully inspire him to change his evil ways. At first glance, the Medrash and the Gemara seem to be in conflict. Is the *tzara'as* a blessing or a punishment?

Perhaps the answer to this conflict can be understood based on the comments of the Sfas Emes we previously quoted. The Canaanites had built homes of selfish materialism; the Jews would now have the opportunity to rebuild those homes into ones of selfless materialism. When one uses the material world with one's own benefit in mind and excludes others from benefiting, he is following the ways of Canaan. The Jewish way is to use the material blessing not only for one's self, but for others as well. The holier the person, the more his engagement with the physical world is for the benefit of others. The gift hidden in the Canaanite homes was the opportunity to build a home

Stories for the Soul

No Horsing Around

The great and saintly Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (1839-1933) devoted much time and energy to writing and speaking about the evils of *lashon hara*. The name of his work on the laws of *lashon hara*, *Sefer Chofetz Chaim*, became the name by which he is known until today.

The Chofetz Chaim once spent Shabbos at an inn. The innkeeper, not recognizing his prestigious guest, seated him at a table with a group of horse traders.

After Shabbos, the storekeeper was informed of the identity of his guest, and apologized profusely to the Chofetz Chaim for having seated him with the horse traders, who were surely not the type of company he would have preferred.

“On the contrary,” said the Chofetz Chaim, “I was happy to sit with them. The entire Shabbos, all the conversations at the meals focused on one thing: horses. Nobody spoke about people, just horses!”

This week's double parsha focuses a great deal on the laws of *tzara'as*, a skin ailment brought on my various spiritual shortcomings, most famously *lashon hara*. While *tzara'as* does not occur today, as we are not on the spiritual level to experience it, the evils of *lashon hara* are no less severe.

Kollel Happenings

LEARN-A-THON & SIYUM ON MAY 13TH

Join the communal completion of an entire tractate of Talmud in the course of one hour of Torah study! Men, sign up and study a preassigned section of Tractate Beitzah and Mo'ed Katan with a class or chavrusah. Women, sign up to take part in a special study session. Sponsorship opportunities available with all proceeds to go to Tomchei Shabbos of Denver. For more info, to sign up or to sponsor, visit denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org, or call 303-820-2855.

THE TWO SIDES OF THE GUN CONTROL DEBATE AT MAY 9TH T4T

Join Ken Toltz, Founder & Co-Chair of Safe Campus Colorado, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they discuss the explosive issue of gun rights vs. gun control. Wednesday, May 9th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Tuesday nights at Aish Denver (lounge area), 8:15-9 pm, for men and women.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What is a practical halachic calculation based on where the mid-point of the Torah's verses are?

A: Halacha states that there is a minimum of three verses read in one *aliya*. If only two verses were read, and the mistake was only realized after the *aliya* completed, there is a halachic dilemma. If the same individual is called again to reread the verses, we are declaring that his original *aliya* and blessings were not valid. Conversely, if we call another individual for the makeup *aliya*, we may be depriving the original fellow of his chance at a kosher *aliya*.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986) ruled that the first fellow be given the *aliya* only if we are convinced that the two verses read were indeed just that. If one of them is a "long" verse, and there is a possibility that it may

actually be two conjoined *pesukim* (i.e. two individual verses which later were assumed to be one), we should call a different individual for the makeup *aliya*. This is especially true, he wrote, at any reading from Tazria (13:33) and further. Since the Gemara cites that as the mid-point, and our count yields the mid-point earlier (Tzav 8:8), there must be quite a few verses in the latter half which were originally two separate verses! (See Igros Moshe Orach Chaim 1:35. Gilyon Hashas, Shabbos 55b, however, seems to imply that our mid-point and count carry halachic weight.)

This week's question: How can an item in its natural state be permitted for consumption by one Jewish individual and forbidden to another? Neither is a *Kohen*, has any health issue or different customs, and no vows are involved.

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Noda BiYehuda Part III

Not long after his marriage, Rabbi Landau convinced his father-in-law to move his entire family to Brody, where Rabbi Landau had previously studied. In 1734, barely twenty years old, Rabbi Landau was appointed the Av Bais Din (Head of the Rabbinical Court) of Brody.

In 1745, Rabbi Landau was appointed the rabbi of the city of Jampol. It was during his time in Jampol that the terrible dispute between Rabbi Yaakov Emden and Rabbi Yonasan Eyebchutz raged, dragging European Jewry into its swirling vortex and disrupting Jewish communal life.

A Taste of Torah

continued from front

based on *chesed*, loving-kindness. This opportunity would be especially presented to one who was challenged in the area of *chesed*, such as the fellow who couldn't find it in himself to lend his possessions to his neighbors.

When the Jews took possession the Canaanite houses, they were

challenged to transform them to homes of holiness, places where each person was primarily concerned with the needs of others. The Torah is eternal; although we don't have the miracle of *tzara'as* today, we can certainly apply the lessons we learn from *tzara'as* in our daily lives.