

In memory of all those brutally murdered in the war on Israel and the fallen soldiers of the IDF. Praying for the safe return of all the hostages.

בס"ד

20 APRIL 2024 | 12 NISAN 5784

VOLUME 37 | #33

DAF HASHAVUA

מִצְרָה | METZORA

SHABBAT ENDS:

London 8.56pm
Birmingham 9.06pm
Cardiff 9.13pm
Dublin 9.27pm
Edinburgh 9.29pm
Glasgow 9.33pm
Hull 9.12pm
Leeds 9.10pm
Liverpool 9.18pm
Manchester 9.15pm
Nottingham 9.11pm
Sheffield 9.14pm
Southend 8.52pm
Southport 9.22pm
Jerusalem 7.50pm

Shabbat Hagadol

Latest time for eating chametz:
Monday 22 Apr, 10.36am.
Latest time for burning
chametz: 11.48am.
Pesach begins: 7:54pm.
Nightfall: 8.54pm.

Please note: These times are for London only.



SIDRA BREAKDOWN

מִצְרָע METZORA

5th Sidra in: וַיִּקְרָא VAYIKRA

By Numbers:
90 VERSES
1,274 WORDS
4,697 LETTERS

Headlines: PROCESS OF PURIFICATION FROM "TZARA'AT"

METZORA:
Artscroll p620
Hertz p470
Soncino p689

**HAFTARAH
(HAGADOL):**
Artscroll p1220
Hertz p1005
Soncino p1197

Sidra Summary

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – VAYIKRA 14:1-14:12

The Torah details the process through which a *metzora* – someone afflicted with the skin disease *tzara'at* – purified themselves after the period of isolation and the healing of the affliction. This involved a Kohen taking two birds, cedar wood, a crimson thread and hyssop. The Kohen would slaughter one of the birds and –using the wood, thread and hyssop together in a bundle – sprinkle its blood seven times on the *metzora*.

Point to Consider: *What was the significance of the metzora having to shave their head, beard and eyebrows? (14:9)*

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 14:13-20

The *metzora* would also bring three animal offerings and three meal offerings. The Kohen would then put blood from the guilt offering and oil on the *metzora's* right ear, right thumb and big toe of the right foot.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 14:21-3

A *metzora* who could not afford three animal offerings could instead bring one animal offering, one meal offering and two birds.

4TH ALIYA (REVI'1) – 14:33-53

Tzara'at also affected houses. The house owner would report the suspicious signs to a Kohen. The house would be evacuated before the Kohen's arrival. If the Kohen saw a deep green or deep

red 'affliction', he would order the house to be quarantined for a week. He would then re-inspect the house. If the affliction had spread, the infected stones would be removed and replaced. If the affliction nevertheless returned, the house would be demolished. However, if replacing the stones solved the problem, the Kohen would declare the house *tahor* (ritually pure).

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 14:54-15:15

The Torah lists specific circumstances that would cause a man to be considered *tameh* (ritually impure) and details the purification procedure.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 15:16-28

A similar set of laws is listed for a woman, as well as the laws of *niddah* (menstruation), which form the basis of the intimate laws of marital life.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'1) – 15:28-33

The Torah emphasises the importance of adhering to the laws of *tumah* and *taharah*, in particular warning about the severe punishment for entering the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) in a state of impurity.

HAFTARAH (MALACHI 3:4-24)

The special haftarah for Shabbat Hagadol is from the last chapter of the Prophets. God chastises Israel for neglecting to keep His laws. Eliyahu (Elijah) can come at any time, heralding a radical improvement in the nation's fortunes.

United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

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Watch your Words!



**RABBI
BARRY
LERER**

Central Synagogue

This Shabbat is *Shabbat HaGadol*, the Shabbat before Pesach. It is also Parashat Metzora, which deals with the purification process of the *metzora*, the person who speaks *lashon hara* (evil speech) about others.

In Vayikra 14:4 we read that, as part of the purification process, the Kohen will command the one to be purified to take two living birds. Rashi (1040-1105), quoting the Talmud (*Arachin 16b*), writes that birds are brought because the affliction of *tzara'at* (a type of skin disease) comes as a punishment for *lashon hara*, which is done by 'chattering'. Birds are therefore obligatory for this purification because they also 'chatter' continuously with a chirping sound.

In Proverbs 18:21 we are told "*Mavet vechayim beyad lashon*", life and death are in the hands of the tongue. We have so much power in what we say and how we say it, and the consequences for the good and the bad are therefore immense. It can lead to death and destruction, but on the flip side, we also have the ability, when speaking appropriately and constructively, to ensure positive outcomes.

How so? I can think of no better

way than an idea that should be in our thoughts as we approach the final few days of preparations for Pesach.

Pesach is the holiday that celebrates the redemption of the mouth, of speech.

The Maharal of Prague (Rabbi Yehuda Loew, c.1525-1609) says that this is the reason why we call the festival Pesach. The word is made out of the words *Peh* and *Sach* which mean: (the) mouth speaks. The central part of the celebration is the recital of the Haggadah, which itself means 'to tell', which is an obligation upon the individual even if they are alone on Seder Night.

The Seder reminds us about our miraculous redemption from the grasp of Pharaoh, whose Hebrew name literally means "evil mouth" (*Peh Rah*). And our redemption was led by Moshe (Moses), a leader whose one limitation was in the area of speech.

We commemorate the end of an era of slavery that included labours of crushing harshness that the Torah calls "*b'pharech*" but which the Talmud interprets to mean "*peh rach*," with a "soft mouth", that the Israelites were drawn into the slavery by the Egyptians' beguiling tone.

And our redemption and freedom began, according to the Torah in Shemot 14:2, at a place called "*Pi HaCherot*" - "Mouth of Redemption".

Pesach therefore becomes the holiday of speech, and

articulation itself appears to be the primary purpose of the mitzvot of Seder night.

But we do not need to wait until Pesach itself to begin the redemption of our mouths. In these stressful last few days before Pesach, we have to watch how we talk to each other. Our spouses, our children, our parents. Things can become fraught as more and more time is devoted to cooking, cleaning and shopping and less time to sleeping and relaxing.

Not only do we have to be wary of how we talk to others, we also have to look at how we describe Pesach itself. We should try to avoid saying Pesach is expensive, exhausting or tiring. Instead we should say it is fun, educational and family-oriented.

By speaking positively about Pesach, our children and grandchildren will enjoy the Pesach experience even more and, in so doing, we can ensure that Pesach will continue to be observed for generations to come. It is all about our attitude and how we word it!

ONCE UPON A SEDER PART 1:



**RABBI
ELI BIRNBAUM**

Head of Community
Development,
Stanmore & Canons
Park Synagogue

It may seem like a childish request, but here is the truth: no-one ever fully grows out of that child who wants nothing more than to lose themselves in a world of pure imagination.

Storytelling has always been the universal language of communication. The Chauvet cave system in the south of France is famous for its series of remarkably well-preserved cave drawings, considered to be the oldest on the planet. Some depict the day-to-day lives of our ancient ancestors, hunting deer or warding off predators. But others depict something closer to imagination: pictorial tales of dramatic volcanic eruptions, rhinos competing for territorial supremacy with lions and even hints to an early belief system in various gods.

In this vein, it is worth mentioning the comments of the Mishnaic sage and famed convert to Judaism, Onkelos. In his seminal

Tell Me a Story

translation of the Torah, Onkelos renders Bereishit 2:7 thus: "And Hashem God created the man as dust from the earth, and He breathed into his nostrils a soul of life; and it was in Adam as a power of speech". What sets us apart from other sentient creatures is our ability to communicate. We are, as Aristotle put it, a "social animal".

Storytelling is part of the very fabric of society. Our shared narratives can bind us to and establish commonality with almost total strangers, leading to remarkably quick and deep levels of cooperation. It is no coincidence that the Hebrew word for telling over a story – *Hagadah* – shares a phonetic connection with the word for a bundle tied tightly together: *Agudah*.

It is also no coincidence that storytelling is at the very heart of the Pesach celebration. At a simple level, there is an intrinsic and profound inter-relationship between freedom and the power of a story. A slave's imagination is barely his own. His every waking moment is dedicated to the wants and whims of his master. He collapses exhausted into bed at the end of a laborious day. He dreams of one thing: freedom.

What he imagines beyond this will be dulled and narrowed by the acute drudgery of his day-to-day experience. Pity him, for he has no other frame of reference.

This is echoed in the Israelites' complaints in the desert: "We remember the fish we ate in Egypt, the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic!" (Bemidbar 11:5). Imagining a land "flowing with milk and honey", a land within which they will be able to build their own society and culture, is beyond the grasp of a generation raised in slavery. 'Give us what we already know, just more of it!'

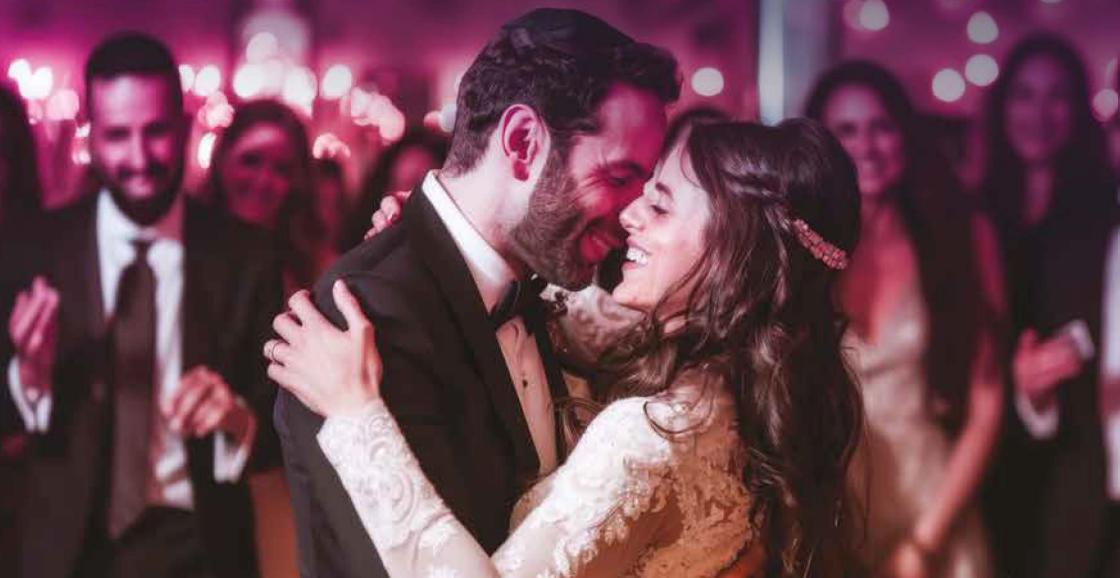
The free person suddenly has all paths open to them. Every fork on every road is another chapter in a book that they write, knowingly or otherwise. So, there is an intrinsic and profound inter-relationship between freedom and the *ability* to tell a story at all.

Pesach is our annual invitation to embark on that journey, to raise our heads above the parapet of the familiar world that is and start imagining the world as it could be. To do this, we must first radically adjust the way we tell stories. Next week, we will begin analysing how this is done.

Unforgettable Moments



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The Art of Rebuke



**RABBI
BRENDAN
STERN**

Assistant Rabbi,
Hendon United
Synagogue

One Rosh Hashanah, when Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski was 10 years old, a visiting guest asked him to play chess. Although he felt that it was inappropriate to play chess on such an important day as Rosh Hashanah, given the guest was a teacher he played nonetheless and beat him in both games.

After Rosh Hashanah, Rabbi Twerski's father, known as the Hornosteipel Rebbe, called young Abraham to his study and chided the boy, "You played chess on Rosh Hashanah?" His tone revealed that he considered his son to be above this kind of behaviour, and that he was disappointed with him. The rebuke struck deep in the little boy, who felt very ashamed.

After his father was certain that he had made his point, he lifted his head from the book he was studying, peered above his glasses and with a proud twinkle in his

eyes he pried out of his son, "Did you win?"

Years later, Rabbi Twerski related that this was the single most powerful rebuke he had ever received!

This week's parasha discusses the law of the *Metzora* (one afflicted with *Tzara'at*, a skin disease with a spiritual cause) being purified from his affliction (Vayikra 14:2). Our Sages (*Arachin 15b*) point out that the title "*Metzora*" is a conjunction of the words "*motzi shem ra*", describing the negative action of defaming others.

If last week's parasha, Tazria, already provided an extensive description of the disease and its impact on the person, their clothing, and their property, why does the Torah wait to describe the reason why the person was afflicted until the stage of their purification process? Would it not have made more sense to describe the root of the problem at the point of punishment and affliction rather than when the person was coming out of it and returning to his normal day-to-day life?

Rabbi Avraham Weinfeld

(1930-1987, USA) explains that, in so doing, the Torah is teaching us a fundamental lesson in education. Although conventional wisdom is to rebuke at the time of wrongdoing, the Torah is emphasising that the optimal time for rebuke is not when someone is on the way down, but rather when they are on their way back up! When a person is experiencing pain and punishment – even if self-inflicted and due to their own actions – our job is to be there for them and show them love, support and encouragement, rather than telling them what they did wrong and why they are being punished as they are.

It is only when that chapter is closed and the person is ready to begin anew with a fresh start that it is now an appropriate time to let the person know where they had strayed, what the source of their problem was and what they need to do differently moving forward in order to rectify their ways and prevent any recurrence.

As the popular adage goes, "timing is everything", and we too need to be wise to rebuke only on the rise!

Tzara'at and Spiritual Cleanliness



**CHANA
SHELDON**

Rosh Tribe Camp 2023

In this week's parasha, we delve into the laws of *tzara'at*, a skin disease often mistranslated as leprosy. This portion is particularly relevant as this week is "Shabbat Hagadol", the special Shabbat that precedes Pesach.

What exactly is *tzara'at*? *Tzara'at* is not just a physical ailment, but it is also a spiritual affliction. In ancient times, if someone showed signs of *tzara'at*, like unusual spots on their skin, clothes or it even appeared on the walls of their house, they had to be separated

from others. This separation allowed them to undergo a special spiritual cleansing process before they could rejoin their community. *Tzara'at* reminds us to pay attention to both our physical and spiritual health, and it teaches us about the importance of spiritual cleanliness and renewal.

But why focus on this during the lead-up to Pesach? Well, Pesach is a time of renewal and freedom. Just as those afflicted with *tzara'at* had to undergo a process of purification to be allowed back into the community, Pesach represents our own journey from slavery in Egypt to freedom, where we cleanse ourselves of the spiritual 'impurities' that hold us back.

Shabbat Hagadol, the "Great Shabbat," occurs on the Shabbat

before Pesach. It commemorates the miraculous events leading to the Exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt, in particular, when the Israelites saw as a symbol of their god and tied them to their bedposts for four days without resistance. This act symbolises the defiance of the Israelites against their Egyptian oppressors and marks the beginning of their liberation from slavery in Egypt, as they embarked on their journey toward freedom.

As we approach Pesach, we should internalise the message of *tzara'at* and the Exodus, striving to cleanse ourselves of whatever enslaves us and embracing the freedom to live authentically and purposefully.

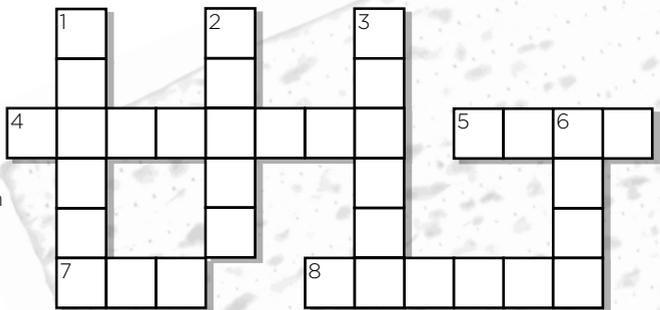
Pre-Pesach Puzzler

Across

- A celebration of the escape of the Jews from Egypt
- A young sheep
- To take in food though the mouth
- A flaw or blemish that keeps something from being perfect

Down

- A serious disease or disaster
- The red liquid that is sent through the body by the heart
- To hit someone or something
- The flesh of animals that is used as food



Answers
Down: 1. Plague 2. Blood 3. Strike 6. Meat
Across: 4. Passover 5. Lamb 7. Eat 8. Defect



THE TRIBE SCRIBE

METZORA: NOTE TO SELF!

One **Chol Hamoed** (Intermediate Festival days) morning, **Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer** (1870-1953) was learning with his student **Rabbi David Finkel** at home in Jerusalem.

COULD YOU PLEASE BRING ME A PIECE OF PAPER AND A PEN?

YES, OF COURSE, **RABBI**.

I HAVE SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT THAT I MUST DO.

IS SOMETHING WRONG **RABBI**? WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

YOU CAN BRING ME A PAPER AND PEN.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, **RABBI**. WHY DID YOU HAVE TO WRITE DOWN A FEW WORDS FROM **MISHLEI** (PROVERBS) THAT YOU ALREADY KNOW BY HEART?

LET ME EXPLAIN. ON **CHOL HAMOED**, HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE IN **JERUSALEM** COME AND VISIT ME. MANY ARE **TORAH** SCHOLARS, FRIENDS AND RELATIVES - FINE RESPECTABLE PEOPLE. BUT THERE ARE ALSO PLENTY OF LESS DISTINGUISHED RESIDENTS OF **JERUSALEM**. FOR SOME REASON, IT HAS BECOME A 'THING TO DO' TO VISIT THE **MELTZERS** ON **CHOL HAMOED**.

LET YOUR EYES
LOOK STRAIGHT
AHEAD, AND
YOUR EYELIDS
STRAIGHTEN
YOUR PATH.
MISHLEI - PROVERBS
4:25

OVER THE COURSE OF THE DAY, YOU'LL SEE THAT I HAVE TO WELCOME ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE WITH PATIENCE AND KINDNESS. AT TIMES, I FEEL MY PATIENCE WEARING OUT AND I'M TEMPTED TO LASH OUT WITH SOME SHARP WORDS. SO, I'VE DEVELOPED A SYSTEM - I CONCENTRATE ON THIS VERSE FROM **MISHLEI** TO STOP ME FROM SAYING SOMETHING I SHOULDN'T.

LET YOUR EYES LOOK STRAIGHT AHEAD, AND YOUR EYELIDS WILL STRAIGHTEN YOUR PATH. I MEDITATE ON THE UNDERSTANDING - WHEN YOU SEE SOMEONE ELSE'S FLAWS AND SHORTCOMINGS, DON'T FOCUS ON THEM, FOCUS ON YOURSELF. YOU ARE ALSO FAR FROM PERFECT. DOING THIS HELPS ME NOT TO LOSE CONTROL. THIS YEAR I FORGOT TO PREPARE MY PAPER BEFORE **YOM TOV** (FESTIVAL), SO I HAVE TO WRITE IT NOW. WITHOUT IT, I'D BE IN BIG TROUBLE!

THIS WEEK'S **PARASHA** TALKS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF AVOIDING **LASHON HARA**. HOWEVER IMPORTANT A PERSON IS, THEY ARE NOT SAFE FROM **LASHON HARA**.

RABBI MELTZER WAS A VERY ILLUSTRIOUS **RABBI**. HE UNDERSTOOD THAT NOT CRITICISING PEOPLE AND SPEAKING **LASHON HARA** IS A STRUGGLE THAT ALWAYS NEEDS EFFORT, NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE. LET'S **SQUASH THE LOSHI**!



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Tribe is the Young People's Department of the United Synagogue: Creating a future for our community through engaging, educating and inspiring the next generation.