

“When you shall come to the land of Cana’an...and I shall put the eruption of *sara’at* in the house of the land of your possession...Whoever’s house it is shall come and tell to the *Kohen*, saying, ‘Something like an eruption has appeared to me in the house.’” (Vayikra 14:34,35)

Rashi says that Hashem conveyed good tidings to *Klal Yisrael* by stating that the plague will affect their houses: ‘Because the *Emoriyim* (*Cana’anim*) hid their wealth within the walls of their homes...through the plague (and its consequences) the house was demolished and the treasure was found.’ The question is asked: Why does the *pasuk* say “*kenega*” – “like” a *nega* (plague)?

R’ Klonymous Kalman z”l of Piatzetzna writes (Warsaw Ghetto, 1940): We know and believe that all that Hashem does is for our own good. However, at a time like now, when the afflictions are not just physical but even spiritual in nature, we wonder how can Hashem cause us such pain? There is no *cheder* or *yeshivah* here for children to study Torah. There is no *shul* to pray in or a *mikveh*. Is it possible that all this is for our own good?

The answer is that everything that Hashem does is for our good. Sometimes, though, a person doesn’t realize it and thinks that it is a “plague,” while in truth, it only appears like a plague. This is the lesson of the impure house that must be closed for seven days. Even this was an affliction for the person’s own good. Thus, the Torah says that the owner, upon seeing it, must say, “It appears like a plague” – not that it actually was a plague. We must bear in mind that Hashem only wants to do good for us. (Torah Tavlin)

Royal Toil

R’ Chaim Honig of Stamford Hill in London has an engraving business. Every day people come to his shop to have items engraved; sometimes it is a *bar Mitzvah* boy’s name on a *Kiddush* cup; sometimes a *hatan’s* initials on cufflinks; sometimes it is an inscription on a plaque intended for an honoree at a *shul* or school dinner.

Recently, R’ Chaim was commissioned to do something he had never done before. A Jewish organization wanted a large, decorative *mezuzah* case to be enclosed in an elaborate silver setting; it would be presented to Her Royal Highness, Queen Elizabeth of the British Commonwealth. A message in both Hebrew and English lettering was to be ornately engraved, decorated and surrounded by a magnificent floral design.

R’ Chaim had been engraving such items for more than a decade, yet for this assignment, it took him more than two hours to align, realign, measure and re-measure every letter until he was convinced that the result would be perfect. It took another hour to get the floral pattern in place. Never had he been so meticulous.

As he worked, he marveled at his own painstaking concentration and deliberation. It was then that he remembered the following *Talmudic* teaching: The early pious people would tarry for one hour and then pray, in order that they might direct their hearts to their Father in heaven (*Berachot* 30b).

“I always wondered what they did during that hour,” says R’ Chaim. “However, as I became aware of my own behavior in this instance, I understood that when one is about to make a presentation to royalty, the preparation and vigilance necessary to achieve perfection are time consuming. Those righteous people knew that their prayers were an offering to the King of Kings, thus they spent a long time making sure they understood each word, were positive of the pronunciations, and sure of the intent they had to have with every word they would say.”

How do we prepare ourselves for praying? (Reflections of the Maggid)

The Lorraine Gammal A”H Edition

לְעִילּוֹי נִשְׁמַת לְאָה בַּת בְּהִיָּה

בס”ד

Congregation Magen Abraham

479 Monmouth Road - P.O. Box 444

West Long Branch, New Jersey 07764

(732) 870-2225



שַׁבָּת תַּזְרִיא-מֶסוֹרָה * אֶבְרָהָם - אִלְמִירָה

Haftarah: Yehayahu 66:1-24

APRIL 24-25, 2020 1 IYAR 5780

See enclosed sheet for full Shabbat schedule

This bulletin is dedicated *l’ilui nishmat* Simcha bat Esther and Nizha bat Chana
by Raymond & Michele Levy

This week’s bulletin is dedicated in memory of Abraham “Al” Mizrahi
by his children לְעִילּוֹי נִשְׁמַת אֶבְרָהָם בֶּן אִסְתֵּר

Rosh Hodesh Iyar will be celebrated on Friday & Shabbat, April 24 & 25.

Condolences to Moshe Cohen on the passing of his mother.

Condolences to Freddie (Linda) Harari on the passing of his father, Ray Harari.

A Message from our Rabbi

“They have eyes but cannot see” (*Tehilim* 115:5) “עֵינַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יִרְאוּ”

On the holiday of Pesah and on *Rosh Hodesh* coming up this week, we read the Hallel. The Hallel is one of our most uplifting prayers, especially in the difficult times we live in today.

I came across an interesting article by Tzvi Yaakovson of the Yated Ne’eman:

“Still on the subject of the coronavirus, I must mention the following: I will never forget my encounter with Professor Ephraim Katzir, the fourth president of the State of Israel. Katzir was a scientist first and foremost; he was a biophysicist. He was a mediocre president, but he was a highly respected professor. I once conducted an interview with him; perhaps I will eventually publish it here in full.

During our conversation, we discussed the scientific evidence of the creation of the world. I remarked to him, “Rav Shach says that an orange shows us that there is a Creator of the universe. You are a scientist and you see the wonders of creation. How is it that you don’t wear a yarmulke and daven? After all, it is clear as day that there is a Creator of the world.”

After thinking for a short time, Katzir replied, “As scientists, we do not believe in anything we cannot see in a microscope. A scientist believes only in things that are visible.”

What could I have said to that bizarre response? Here was a man who understood with absolute certainty that the world must have a Creator, yet he refused to accept His

authority and all that it entailed – because Hashem is not visible to the eye. We both knew that his argument was illogical, but I had nothing to say.

This week I came across a powerful answer to his claims in a *shmuess* delivered by the Santzer Rebbe. “Just as the coronavirus cannot be seen by the eye, yet it has created a major upheaval in the world, we must recognize that even though Hashem cannot be seen, He is also managing the world,” the Rebbe declared. “And for those who will argue that one can see the virus with the proper equipment, the answer is that if a person had the necessary tools, he would also be able to “see” Hashem.”

The rebbe went on to make a number of other powerful statements: “When it is said that punishment comes to the world only for *klal Yisrael*, it means that it is for the sake of elevating *klal Yisrael*...It is forbidden to say that anything happened by chance; we must contemplate the reason that Hashem would do such a thing. People have given all sorts of explanations for it, but we have a tradition from my father, which is one of the most fundamental principles of *chassidut*, that we should not look to place blame on others...The first thing that we must resolve to do is to be joyful, to be calm with ourselves and with our children, and to devote time to our children, even more than under ordinary circumstances.”

I think the above quote from the Hallel takes on new meaning. We hope and pray that Hashem will cure all of the people who are sick, and we will come back bigger and better, Amen. Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Reuven Semah

Kohen...Kohen...Gone!

Parashat Tazria deals primarily with the physio-spiritual plague that affects gossips and rumor mongers with the plague of *sara'at*. *Sara'at* appears as a white lesion on various parts of the body, and the status of the afflicted depends on its shade of white, its size, and its development. The afflicted does not go to a medical clinic nor does he enter a hospital. If afflicted he is quarantined and then reevaluated; if condemned he is sent out of the Jewish camp until he heals, a sign that he has repented his slanderous ways. A physician or medical expert does not evaluate him. In fact, the entire ordeal is evaluated, reevaluated, determined, and executed by non-other than the *Kohen*. Moreover, the Torah does not keep that detail a secret. In the 47 verses that discuss bodily affliction of *sara'at*, the *Kohen* is mentioned no less than 45 times! “He shall be brought to the *Kohen*,” “The *Kohen* shall look”, “The *Kohen* shall declare him contaminated,” “The *Kohen* shall quarantine him,” “The *Kohen* shall declare him pure.”

Why must the Torah include the *Kohen's* involvement in every aspect of the process? More so, why does the Torah mention the *Kohen's* involvement in almost every verse? Would it not been well enough to have one encompassing edict: “The entire process is supervised and executed according to the advice of the *Kohen*.”

The parents of a special needs child entered the study of Rabbi Shlomo Auerbach. They decided to place their child in a special school in which he would live; the question was which one.

“Have you asked the boy where he would like to go?” asked the sage.

The parents were dumbfounded. “Our child cannot be involved in the process! He hasn't the capacity to understand,” explained the father.

Reb Shlomo Zalman was not moved. “You are sinning against your child. You are removing him from his home, placing him in a foreign environment, and you don't even consult with the child? He will feel helpless and betrayed. I'd like to talk to him.”

The couple quickly went home and brought the boy to the Torah sage.

“My name is Shlomo Zalman,” smiled the venerable scholar. “What's yours?”

“Akiva.”

“Akiva,” exclaimed Rabbi Auerbach, “I am one of the leading Torah sages in the world and many people discuss their problems with me. Now, I need your help.

“You are about to enter a special school, and I need someone to look after all the religious matters there. I am giving you *semicha*, making you my official Rabbinical representative. You can freely discuss any issue with me whenever you want.”

Reb Shlomo Zalman gave the boy a warm handshake and hug. The boy entered the school and flourished. In fact, with the great feeling of responsibility, he rarely left the school, even for a weekend; after all, who would handle any questions that would arise?

Part of the *mesorah's* (leper's) healing process is dismissal from the Jewish camp. However, it is a delicate ordeal, one wrought with trauma, pain, and emotional distress. The *Kohen*, a man of peace, love, and compassion must be there for every part of the process. He must be there to guide him through the tense incubation period as well as his dismissal. Moreover, he is there again to ease him back into society.

The Torah teaches us, perhaps more than 50 times, that every traumatic decision needs spiritual guidance. It can turn a cold-hearted punishment into a process of spiritual redemption. It can turn a tough, seemingly dispassionate decision into a beautiful experience.

For when the *Kohen* holds your stricken hand, even if you're leaving for somewhere outside the camp, you are definitely not gone. (Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky)

Ethics of the Fathers

It is customary to study *Pirkei Abot* (Ethics of the Fathers) during the six weeks between Pesah and Shabuot, one chapter every Shabbat.

“רַבִּי יוֹסִי אָמַר, יְהִי כְמוֹן תְּכַרְבֵּךְ הַיָּדָיִם כְּעֵצֶיךָ”

“Let the money of your friend be as dear to you as your own” (*Abot* 2:12)

What love does one have for his own money that he should also have for his friend's money?

A story is told of a group of people who were discussing the extent of the wealth of a certain Mr. Stein. Each one in turn put it at a figure far above the amount said by the previous one. None of them was aware that sitting nearby was the Mr. Stein whose money they were counting. Hearing their argument, he apologetically said, “I see you seem to know Mr. Stein. Perhaps you can tell me how many sons and daughters he has?” The all laughed at him and said, “Do you expect us to know this information?”

Mr. Stein then said to them, “I do not understand. When people are blessed with a son, they make a *berit milah*, which is a big *simhah*, and inform many people of it. When they have a daughter, they make a *mi sheberach* in shul to give her a name in the presence of many people. No one keeps the birth of a child a secret. On the other hand, human nature is to keep money in secrecy and people do not go around talking publicly about their wealth. Yet, concerning Mr. Stein's children, who are not a matter of secrecy, you have no idea, and you know exactly how much money he has although this is his personal secret information?!”

The advice of Rabbi Yose is that just as your money is dear to you and you do not tell others about it or appreciate their discussing it, likewise, do not count your friend's money. (*Vedibarta Bam*)

All Good

“כִּי תִבְאוּ אֶל-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן...וְנִתְתִי נֶגַע צָרַעַת בְּבֵית אֶרֶץ אֲחֵיכֶם וְבָא אֲשֶׁר-
לוֹ הַבֵּית וְהִגִּיד לְכֹהֵן לְאֹמֵר כְּנָעַת נִרְאָה לִי בְּבֵית”