

The Cubit

Volume 4, Issue 2

Rosh Hashanah 2001 / Heshvan 5762

These are the Generations of Noah

Thus saith the LORD of hosts:

In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying: We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.' : Zech. 8:23

From The Editor

B"H

This month sees the cycle of Torah readings come full circle to the portion for Noah. We have included a commentary on this portion – by now you must all have collected quite a collection of commentaries on the Parashat Noah but one more is bound to be welcome.

It is also a time to remember that this reading tells us again of HaShem's covenant with Noah and the B'nei Noah

Liz ❖

REWARDS ARE TO BE EARNED

A story for Shabbos from Ascent of Safed
www.ascent.org.il

All of Berditchev was in a quandary. Sukkos was just around the corner, and there was not a solitary esrog in the whole town. The Rebbe, R. Levi Yitzchak, told a group of his chassidim to wait at the nearby crossroads in the hope that they would encounter some passerby who owned an esrog. Sure enough, a wagon soon trundled by, and the man inside it had an unusually beautiful esrog with him. He was on his way home. The trouble was that his home was in some far-off town, and he was only bypassing Berditchev.

They brought the stranger to their rebbe, who immediately entreated him to spend the festival with them, and by lending his esrog enable the whole community, including the tzaddik himself, to carry out the mitzvah of pronouncing a blessing over the Four Species. The stranger would not agree. He was on his way home to spend Yom-Tov with his family. How could he suddenly upset their festive joy and his own? The tzaddik promised him the blessings of wealth and children, but even this did not help. He had wealth and children, thank G_d, and was in need of nothing.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Rewards are to be earned - a story for Shabbos
- 2 Parashat Noah - commentary on the weekly portion
- 3 Who needs G_d?
- 5 The thirty laws of the Ben Noah
- 6 Thoughts that count - musings on the parashat Noah
- 7 Thoughts for the soul - thoughts on Lashon Hara

continued on page 2

Then the tzaddik said: "If you will oblige, I hereby promise you that you will share my lot in the World to Come!"

The stranger immediately changed his mind, and agreed to stay on in Berdichev for the duration of the festival. The tzaddik was overjoyed, and so was the whole community and so was the stranger.

Now at this point a secret order was issued by the tzaddik to all the townsfolk of Berdichev: no one was to allow this guest to eat in their sukkah. Not a soul could guess what the reason could be, but it was an order from the rebbe.

On the first night of the festival that unsuspecting fellow returned from the synagogue to the room that he had rented in someone's house. There, indoors, he found everything prepared wine for Kiddush, two loaves, candles, and a festive meal. He was dumbfounded. Could it be that the householder, such an upstanding and observant Jew, did not have a sukkah?

He went out to the yard, and duly found a sukkah set up exactly as the Law requires. Inside it he could see his host and all his family sitting happily around the table. He asked to be admitted, but was refused. Why so? There was no answer.

Somewhat downcast, he proceeded to call on the neighboring families, each of which he found sitting happily in its sukkah. He begged to be admitted but in each case the response was the same baffling refusal.

It finally came out that behind all of this there was an order from the tzaddik. He ran off to his house in consternation, and asked: "What's this all about? How have I sinned to deserve this?"

Reb Levi Yitzchak replied: "If you will waive your claim to that promise I made you about the World to Come, then I'll

straight away give the order that you should be admitted to a sukkah."

The stranger was shocked but held his peace. What was there to do now? On the one hand there was this promise of the tzaddik that he would share his lot in the World to Come. On the other hand, there was a mitzvah waiting to be fulfilled to eat in the sukkah. The sukkah won the day. Unthinkable, that's what it was that a Jew like himself, who all his days had observed the mitzvah of the sukkah, this year shouldn't? All the House of Israel were sitting in their sukkos on this night and he would be eating like a goy, indoors, G_d forbid?

He told the tzaddik that he released him forthwith from his promise about the World to Come, and (at the tzaddik's request) even gave him his hand in confirmation. Then off he went and quietly ate his festive meal in someone's sukkah.

As soon as the festival came to an end, Reb Levi Yitzchak called for him.

Now," he said, "I hereby return my promise to you. I wanted you to learn, my son, that I didn't want you to pick up your portion in the World to Come cheaply, through an easy bit of bargaining. I wanted you to earn it, through your deeds. That is why I so arranged matters that you should be put to the test with regard to the mitzvah of sukkah. Now that you have withstood the test, and demonstrated the ultimate self-sacrifice for the sake of fulfilling that mitzvah, you truly deserve to share my portion in the World to Come!"

[This story for Sukkot is taken from A Treasury of Chassidic Tales on the Festivals (Artscroll translations-adaptations by my esteemed colleague, Uri Kaploun).] ❖

Parashat Noah (Genesis 6:9-11:32), Commentary on the Weekly Torah Portion

by Rabbi Shmuel Weiss for The Roots & Branch organisation <http://www.rb.org.il>

Noach is one of the most fascinating characters in Tanach. Though his name is the shortest, his lineage is the longest - all of humanity descends from him. But strangely enough, Noach has always got a "bad rap" (is there any other kind of rap?). For while the whole world, in effect, was destroyed in order to keep Noach from being influenced by his evil neighbours, Noach is blamed for not having influenced those neighbours to do "teshuva" (repent), as did Abraham.

But this negative portrayal of Noach would seem to contradict the tone of the Torah itself, which refers to our hero as both "tzaddik" (righteous), as well as "tamim" (perfect). What a double-barreled compliment! Few, if any, Biblical personalities

merit such superlative description. So which is it? Was Noach great, or was he just, well, OK for his time?

One more question. Because HaShem (G_d) refers publicly to Noach only as "tzaddik", and keeps the "tamim" in the 3rd person, Chazal (the Sages) learn from here that "one should only mention a portion of another's praise in his presence, and not the whole praise." Why did HaShem choose to openly refer to Noach as "righteous", rather than "perfect?"

Darash Moshe offers a beautiful answer. "Tzaddik", he says, is a term used to refer to someone who is involved in communal life, someone who interacts with society and earns a glowing reputation. "Tam" is one who lives a more secluded, sheltered life and becomes completely holy. You cannot be totally perfect when you are a leader; someone will always resent or attack a decision you make; you will always ruffle some feathers sometimes. Even the best rabbi has his share of critics. Only a person who does not interface with others can remain pristinely unblemished.

Noach was not universally loved or respected; the outside world had little use for his wild predictions of the flood or his exhortations to repent. But Noach did not compromise his moral standards. He remained righteous throughout, and so became the progenitor of a brave new world. His being called "Tzadik" is the higher compliment, for it indicates that he fought the battle and won, though he surely emerged from that battle more scarred than one who never fought at all.

To be a leader, one must be prepared to climb down from the Ivory Tower, safe and secure as it is, and to do the right thing, despite the repercussions this will inevitably bring. Noach's willingness to live among people and stand his ground is a model for the ages.

Shabbat Shalom, Rabbi Shmuel Weiss, Ra'anana, Israel



WITHIN AND BEYOND

*Words of inspiration from the Rebbe – taken from
<http://www.chabadonline.com/magazine>*

There are two vantage points for G_d: Within and Beyond.

'Within' is the view of the created. Fixed within a defined reality, consumed with its own importance, where things matter and life is real.

'Beyond' is the view of the Creator, detached and transcendent. Where all that has begun has already ended, nothing can assert its significance, for all is nil.

There is also an Essence of both Within and Beyond, neither subject to the narrow view of a finite being, nor biased by the detachment of the Infinite.

Neither created nor Creator, neither below nor Above, neither existence nor its absence.

It is the Essence, both Beyond and Within all things. Beyond, because it needs no purpose. Within, because it nevertheless chose one.

Both Within and Beyond breathe with that purpose, the purpose of their very being: That the Essence be revealed from Within.

A Daily Dose of Wisdom from the Rebbe -words and condensation by Tzvi Freeman

MORALITY: WHO NEEDS GOD?

If there is an absolute standard of morality, then there must be a G_d. Disagree? Consider the alternative.

by Rabbi Nechemia Coopersmith

G_d's existence has direct bearing on how we view morality. As Dostoyevsky so famously put it, "Without G_d, everything is permitted."

At first glance, this statement may not make sense. Everything is permitted? Can't there be a morality without an infinite G_d?

Perhaps some of the confusion is due to a murky definition of morality we owe to moral relativism. Moral relativism maintains that there is no objective standard of right and wrong existing separate and independent from mankind. The creation of moral principles stems only from within a person, not as a distinct, detached reality. Each person is the source and definer of his or her subjective ethical code, and each has equal power and authority to define morality the way he or she sees fit.

Random acts of cruelty may not be your cup of tea, but who says your standards are for everyone?

The consequences of moral relativism are far-reaching. Since all moral issues are subjective, right and wrong are reduced to matters of opinion and personal taste. Without a binding, objective standard of

morality that sticks whether one likes it or not, a person can do whatever he feels like by choosing to label any behavior he personally enjoys as "good." Adultery, embezzlement, and random acts of cruelty may not be your cup of tea -- but why should that stop someone from taking pleasure in them if that is what they enjoy.

Is having an intimate relationship with a twelve-year-old objectively wrong just because you don't like it?

Perhaps murder makes a serial killer feel powerful and alive. A moral relativist can say he finds murder disgusting, but that does not make it wrong -- only distasteful. Hannibal, the Cannibal, is entitled to his own preferences even if they are unusual and repugnant to most.

Popularity has nothing to do with determining absolute morality; it just makes it commonplace, like the color navy.

"But this killer is hurting others!" True. But in a world where everything is subjective, hurting an innocent person is merely distasteful to some, like eating chocolate ice cream with lasagna. Just because we may not like it doesn't make it evil.

Evil? By whose standard? No one's subjective opinion is more authoritative than another's.

INCONSISTENT VALUES

Although many people may profess to subscribe to moral relativism, it is very rare to find a consistent moral relativist. Just about everyone believes in some absolute truths. That absolute

continued on page 4

truth may only be that it is wrong to hurt others, or that there are no absolutes. The point is that just about everyone is convinced that there is some form of absolute truth, whatever that truth may be. Most of us, it seems, are not moral relativists.

Bertrand Russell wrote:

I cannot see how to refute the arguments for the subjectivity of ethical values but I find myself incapable of believing that all that is wrong with wanton cruelty is that I don't like it.

Not too many of us believe that killing an innocent person is just a matter of taste that can change according to whim. Most of us think it is an act that is intrinsically wrong, regardless of what anyone thinks. According to this view, the standard of morality is an unchangeable reality that transcends mankind, not subject to our approval.

THE INFINITE SOURCE

An absolute standard of morality can only stem from an infinite source. Why is that?

When we describe murder as being immoral, we do not mean it is wrong just for now, with the possibility of it becoming "right" some time in the future. Absolute means unchangeable, not unchanging.

What's the difference?

My dislike for olives is unchanging. I'll never start liking them. That doesn't mean it is impossible for my taste to change, even though it's highly unlikely. Since it could change, it is not absolute. It is changeable.

The term "absolute" means without the ability to change. It is utterly permanent, unchangeable.

Think of something absolute. Take for example an icon of permanence and stability -- the Rock of Gibraltar. "Get a piece of the rock" -- it lasts forever!

But does it really? Is it absolute?

No. It is undergoing change every second. It is getting older, it is eroding.

The nature of absolute is a bit tricky to grasp because we find ourselves running into the same problem of our finite selves attempting to perceive the infinite, a topic we have discussed in a previous article in this series. Everything that exists within time undergoes change. That's what time is -- a measurement of change. In Hebrew, shanah means "year," sharing the same root shinah, "change."

If everything in the finite universe is undergoing change, where can we find the quality of

which is constantly undergoing change. It must be beyond time, in the infinite dimension. Only G_d, the infinite being that exists beyond time, is absolute and unchangeable.

'I am G_d, I do not change.' (Malachi 3:6)

If everything in the finite universe is undergoing change -- since it exists within time -- where can we find the quality of absolute?

Its source cannot be in time,

Therefore an absolute standard of morality can exist only if it stems from an infinite dimension -- a realm that is eternal, beyond time, with no beginning and no end.

THE DEATH OF EDUCATION

In addition to the demise of morality, moral relativism inevitably leads to the death of education and genuine open-mindedness. The thirst for real learning comes from the recognition that the truth is out there waiting to be discovered -- and I am all the more impoverished with its absence.

Professor Alan Bloom writes in his book "The Closing of the American Mind,"

It is the rarest of occurrences to find a youngster who has been infused by this [liberal arts] education with a longing to know all about China or the Romans or the Jews.

All to the contrary. There is an indifference to such things, for relativism has extinguished the real motive of education, the search for the good life...

...out there in the rest of the world is a drab diversity that teaches only that values are relative, whereas here we can create all the life-styles we want. Our openness means we do not need others. Thus what is advertised as a great opening is a great closing. No longer is there a hope that there are great wise men in other places and times who can reveal the truth about life...

If everything is relative, then it makes no difference what anyone thinks. Ideas no longer matter. With no absolute standard of right and wrong or truth and falsehood, the pursuit of wisdom becomes nonsensical. What are we searching for? If no idea is more valid than another, there is no purpose in re-evaluating one's belief system and being open to exploring new concepts -- since there is no possibility of ever being wrong.

A common argument often heard for supporting relativism is that in the world at large we see a plethora of differing positions on a wide range of moral issues. Try to find one issue all cultures universally agree to!

Professor Bloom addresses this contention:

History and the study of cultures do not teach or prove that values or cultures are relative ... the fact that there have been different opinions about good and bad in different times and places in no way proves that none is true or superior to others. To say that it does so prove is as absurd as to say that the diversity of points of view expressed in a college bull session proves there is no truth ... the natural reaction is to try to resolve the difference, to examine the claims and reasons for each opinion.

Only the unhistorical and inhuman belief that opinions are held for no reason would prevent the undertaking of such an exciting activity.

THE NATURE OF DEBATE

The plethora of disagreements demonstrates exactly the opposite point. If everything is relative, what on earth are we arguing

about?

Imagine walking down the street and you hear a ferocious argument taking place behind a door. People are yelling at each other in a fit of rage. You ask a bystander what the commotion is all about. He tells you this is a Ben & Jerry's ice cream store and they're fighting over what is the best flavor of ice cream.

Impossible.

Heated debates occur only because we believe there are right and wrong positions.

Real debates and disagreements occur only because we believe there are right and wrong positions, not mere preferences of flavors. Think of a time you experienced moral outrage. The

force behind that anger is the conviction that your position is the correct one. Matters of preference, like music and interior design, do not provoke moral outrage.

What provokes our moral outrage? Injustice? Cruelty?

Oppression? There is the sense that an absolute standard of morality is being violated, an objective standard that transcends mankind, that stems from an infinite and absolute Being.

Rabbi Nechemia Coopersmith is the Director of Research and Development for Aish HaTorah and is Managing Editor of aish.com. He lives with his wife and children in Jerusalem.

More articles can be found at Aish HaTorah's website: www.aish.com/

The Thirty Laws of the Ben Noah

These thirty laws of the Ben Noah can be found in the appendix to the Encyclopedia Talmudica, in the section concerning the Ben Noah.

The first list that we shall cite is that of Rabbi Menachem Azaria from Fano.

The commandments that are followed by an * are positive commandments, and those that do not are to be understood as prohibitions.

I. IDOLATRY: GENESIS 2:16.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| A. Passing a child through fire | Deuteronomy 18:10 |
| B. Soothsaying | " |
| C. Divining of times | " |
| D. Interpreting of omens | " |
| E. Sorcery | " |
| F. Charming | " |
| G. Counseling mediums | " |
| H. Counseling oracles | " |
| I. Necromancy | " |

II. SEXUAL SINS:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| A. Be fruitful. * | Genesis 9:1 |
| B. Multiply seed. * | " |
| C. Homosexual intercourse | Genesis 2:24 |
| D. Cross-breeding of animals | Genesis 8:20 |
| F. Castration | Genesis 5:17 |
| G. Grafting trees | Leviticus 19:19 |

III. MURDER: GENESIS 9:5-6.

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| A. Striking a Jew | Exodus 2:11-12;
cf. Bavli, Sanh. 58b. |
|-------------------|--|

IV. BLASPHEMY; GENESIS 2:16.

- | | |
|--|---|
| A. Honoring the Torah. * | Bavli, Chulin 92a. |
| B. Studying relevant parts of the Torah. * | Leviticus 18:5
cf. Bavli, Sanh. 59a. |

V. THEFT [INCLUDING KIDNAPPING]:

GENESIS 2:6;6:11.

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| A. No to study non-relevant parts of the Torah. | Deuteronomy 33:4 |
|---|------------------|

VI. ESTABLISHMENT OF A SYSTEM OF JUSTICE:

GENESIS 18:19.

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| A. No to observe the Sabbath | Genesis 8:22 |
|------------------------------|--------------|

VII. EATING ALL OR PART OF A LIVING

CREATURE: GENESIS 9:4.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| A. Blood of a living creature | Genesis 9:4 |
| B. Eating an animal that died (without slaughter). | Genesis 9:3 |
| C. Human flesh. | Bavli, Chulin 92b.
(Rashi) |

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Rav Saadiah Gaon adds:

- | |
|------------------------|
| A. Tithing * |
| B. Levirate marriage * |

Rav Nissim Gaon adds:

- | |
|-----------------------|
| A. Obedience to God * |
| B. Knowledge of God * |
| C. Worship of God * |

Ran and Rama add:

- | |
|--------------|
| A. Charity * |
|--------------|

Non Jews in Synagogues

By Rabbi Y Bindman ~ author of the Seven Colors of the Rainbow

If a non-Jew goes to the Jewish synagogue he can join in the silent prayer of the Jews, not necessarily standing as they do but not kneeling, and his prayer will be joined with theirs as a quorum of ten even though he is not numbered in the quorum. However he may not make the congregational responses aloud as they do, but should listen to them.

There is no requirement for the content of his prayer, only on condition that he prays to G-d alone for his own needs and those of others, without any intermediary at all. He need neither cover his head nor refrain from doing so.

If the Jews there do not understand what he is doing, or there is no space where he can be there and not be taken for a Jew, as is likely, then there is no loss in his not attending, as prayer is accepted at any time.

If he does not attend then he should only be particular to pray in a clean place, without physical or moral unpleasantness. There is no significance to any quorum for non-Jews praying together to G-d alone, and men and women may pray in the same room. Jewish holy places such as the burial place of a righteous man or the Western Wall are helpful for non-Jewish prayer also.

Rabbi Y. Bindman

CHEMICAL REACTION

THE ANCIENT NAPKIN

> From: Ben of Graham USA - texastrophy@netscape.net
I'm not Jewish, but am interested in ancient Jewish customs. I've heard that there is a custom of folding a napkin and placing it at a certain place around the plate that gives the host a certain message after eating a meal. Can you tell me if this is true and if so, what message does it convey?

THE AISH RABBI REPLIES:

Hmmm... we've never been asked this question before!

Actually, there is something mentioned about napkins vis-a-vis guests in the Talmud Baba Batra 93b. In ancient Jerusalem, there was a custom to have a cloth hanging on the door, as some kind of flag. When it was hanging, guests would know that it was meal-time and they could come in and eat. When it was removed, it was a sign that the meal had ended.



THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

Taken from L'Chaim the weekly newsletter published by the Lubavitch Youth Organisation - L.Y.O. of Brooklyn, NY

Noach was a perfect, righteous man in his generations (Gen. 6:9)

The Torah uses the plural "generations" because Noach's lifetime actually spanned two of them: the generation of the Flood, and the generation that replenished the earth afterward. Compared to the immoral people who lived before the Flood, Noach was righteous in deed. Compared to those who built the Tower of Babel and who were intellectually dishonest, he was perfect and without blemish. (Beit Yosef, quoted by Magid Meisharim)

Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood (Gen. 6:14)

If the purpose of the ark was "to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth"-to make sure that each animal species continued to propagate-why did G_d instruct Noach to make it "for himself"? Because man's place in the universe is unique and crucial to all of creation. If he conducts himself according to G_d's will, he raises up and elevates the entire world; if not, he drags down the entire planet with him. (Sefer HaMaamarim 5699)

And only Noach was left (Gen. 7:23)

In previous verses Noach is referred to as "perfect" or "righteous," yet after the Flood he is simply "Noach," the name he was given at birth. For it was only in relation to the wicked people around him that he was deserving of such complimentary titles and descriptions. (Ketav Sofer)

And Noach...planted a vineyard...and drank of the wine and became drunken (Gen. 9:20-21)

Why does the Torah relate such an unsavoury story about Noach? Because despite his relative greatness, Noach's character and true nature was coarse and pleasure-seeking. For this reason, the people of Noach's generation didn't consider him any better than they were. By contrast, the conduct of Abraham both privately and publicly was that of a holy man, prompting everyone who saw him to declare, "You are a prince of G_d in our midst." (Tal Shechakim) ❖



"LAWS OF THE FOUR SPECIES"

by Rabbi Shraga Simmons of Aish HaTorah <http://aish.com/holidays/>

This article was written for a Jewish Audience and whilst the mitzvot mentioned do not apply to B'nei noach the information provided on the elements of Sukkot will be of interest to all readers.

The Torah says:

"You shall take... the beautiful fruit (Esrog), a palm frond, myrtle twigs and willow branches of the stream (Lulav) -- and rejoice for seven days before the Lord your God." (Leviticus 23:40)

On Sukkot, we bind all the branches together -- two willows on the left, one palm branch in the center, and three myrtles on the right.

We hold this bundle

in our right hand, and then lift them together with the Esrog. We then shake them all together, three times in each direction: front, right, back, left, up and down. (Sefardim and Chassidim have a different custom for the order.) This mitzvah should be performed during the daytime, each of the seven days of Sukkot (except for Shabbat).

Before waving the four species, we say the following blessing:

"Baruch ata Adonoy, Elo-heinu Melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu bi'mitzvo-sav, vi'tzivanu al ni-tilas lulav."

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who sanctified us with His mitzvot, and instructed us to raise up the Lulav.

To be valid for the mitzvah, the four species must meet certain requirements. Since the details are many and technical, it is not recommended to search through the forest on your own for these species! (Particularly the Esrog, which can easily be confused with a lemon.)

A better idea is to purchase a complete set from a reliable distributor Your local Jewish bookstore may have a "Four Species Set" with a rabbinical seal certifying their validity. To be an informed consumer, here are some basic requirements to

look for:

ESROG

- Should preferably be turning yellow rather than green.
- The peel cannot be punctured through in any spot, nor can it lack any of its inner skin.
- The peel cannot be overly soft, cracked, dry or peeled.
- Even a small black dot on the upper part invalidates it.
- The shape should preferably be like a tower - wider at the bottom and narrow at the top.
- If this particular Esrog grew with a protruding stem (called a pitom), then that stem cannot be broken off. (However, if the Esrog grew in the first place without a pitom, it is still kosher.)



MYRTLE

- You will need three myrtle branches.
- A kosher myrtle has a pattern of three leaves coming out from the same point in the branch. This three-leaf pattern must be repeated over at least half the length of the branch.
- Each branch should be at least 11 inches (29 cm.) long.
- The branch cannot be dried out.



WILLOW

- You will need two willow branches.
- The stem should preferably be red.
- The stem should be at least 11 inches (29 cm.) long.
- The leaves should be oblong, not round in shape.
- The leaves should have a smooth edge, not serrated.



LULAV

- Look at the very top of the branch and make sure that the center-most leaf is not split, but rather is closed (at least half-way down).
- The top cannot be cut off.
- The branch cannot be dried out.
- It should be at least 16 inches (39 cm.) long.
- The straighter the branch, the better.



Food for the Soul

Thoughts on Lashon Hara from the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation [chofetz@chofetzchaim.com]

One who guards his mouth and tongue, guards his soul from tribulations (Mishlei 21:23).

Which man desires life, which loves days of seeing good? Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit... (Tehillim 34:13-14).

Why do the above verses single out shmiras haloshon, guarding one's tongue, as the key to a good life in both worlds? The human body is composed of 248 organs and 365 sinews. Corresponding to this are the 248 spiritual organs and 365 spiritual sinews of the soul. As Scripture states: "You clothe me with skin and flesh, cover me with bones and sinews" (Iyov 10:11). The various parts of the body are referred to as "clothing" and "covering" for they clothe and cover the soul within man. Each physical organ corresponds to a specific aspect of the soul. HaShem has given us 248 positive commandments and 365 negative commandments which relate to the particular parts of the body with which they are performed.

By performing a given mitzvah through a given organ, a spiritual light comes to rest upon the corresponding component of the soul; it is from this light that this component draws eternal vitality. Thus, when a person fulfills all the Torah's commandments, he transforms himself into an adam hashaleim, man of spiritual perfection, whose every fiber is sanctified unto HaShem. The converse is true as well. If a person commits a transgression and does not repent for it, then the component of the soul which corresponds to that prohibition will suffer accordingly.

Believing Loshon Hora - "Innocent" Remarks

There are times when halachah accepts as fact "innocent" remarks, i.e. statements made in passing without the speaker being aware of the consequences of his words. As a rule, people do not lie unnecessarily, so that when a person does not realize that he is saying something of significance, it can be assumed that he is telling the truth. Halachah grants such statements the status of testimony in two instances:

- (1) Where it is certain that ultimately the true story will be revealed to all.

People do not fabricate tales when it is clear that their lies will be revealed as such.

- (2) To establish that an individual is no longer alive.

"Innocent" negative statements are not granted any such legitimacy.

They are loshon hora and one is not permitted to believe them.



Growth Through Tribulation

The Sages teach:

Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov said: One should feel a sense of gratitude toward the Holy One, Blessed is He, when suffering comes upon him. Why? Because suffering draws a person close to Him, as it is written, "HaShem reproves the one whom He loves" (Mishlei 3:12). When suffering comes upon a person, he should accept it and withstand [the test], for its reward is infinite (Midrash Tanchumah, Parashas Ki Seitzei 2).

"Wait silently for [the salvation of] HaShem, and wait longingly for Him" (Tehillim 37:7). Place your hope in the

Holy One, Blessed is He. If He brings afflictions upon you, do not demonstrate disdain; rather, accept your lot like [one would accept] musical instruments [kij/v, wait longingly, can homiletically be related to yikkj, flutes] (Yalkut Shimoni, Tehillim 729).

To accept insult without bitterness, with the knowledge that all that transpires is an expression of Divine will, is to accept a form of affliction, as the passage above states: [Those who are insulted and do not insult ...], who act out of love and are glad in their affliction.¹ The reward for such acceptance is without measure.



Confirming Suspicions

The Torah does not accept circumstantial evidence as proof of a person's guilt. Thus, when one suspects an individual of improper behaviour, he may not decide that his suspicions are correct based on the person's reaction to accusations or other strange behaviour that strongly points to his guilt. Nevertheless if, in addition to the circumstantial evidence, such suspicions are subsequently supported by someone else's claim to have actually witnessed the person engaging in such behaviour, one does have the right to believe that his suspicions are correct.

However, to whatever degree possible, the listener is still obligated to judge the perpetrator favourably; he must seek to understand his motives and should not be swift to condemn him. Moreover, one may not pass on the

continued on page 9

information without fulfilling the preconditions for relating negative information for a constructive purpose.



Dealing With Humiliation

The author of Sefer Chareidim writes:

Whenever someone insults or humiliates me in public, I place a scale before my eyes: On one side are my sins, on the other side are the insults and humiliations which have been directed toward me. I see the side of my sins weighing down lower and lower, and I choose to bear my disgrace in silence and tell myself that I deserve it. I do this whenever faced with any sort of distress, be it through another's word or deed (Sefer Chareidim 4:5).

The average person would prefer to suffer humiliation if this will prevent him from suffering monetary loss, as when his property is threatened by fire or other means of devastation. How much more should one be willing to suffer humiliation if this will save his soul from punishment. Certainly, then, one should react to humiliation with silent acceptance.

If a person consistently talks about the faults of others, he will usually overlook even the most obvious positive attributes of those same people.

Today, think of someone that you often degrade, and try focusing on one positive quality of that person.

The Torah tells the story of how Joseph was in prison in Egypt. This is a model of how anyone in any situation can grow. After Joseph was released from prison he became a powerful ruler. That is because in prison he used his mental ability to train himself to master the attribute of total self-discipline. In prison he ruled over himself, and he went on to rule over the Egyptian nation.

Today, think of a difficult situation you are in, and consider how you might use this to develop mastery over self.

A speaker's tone of voice is a key factor that will make a major difference whether he will have a positive effect or not.

Matters pertaining to cold logic do not need a special tone of voice. However, when your goal is to arouse elevated spiritual feelings in someone, it is important to speak in a tone of voice that will inspire the appropriate elevated state.

Today, when speaking to someone about a personal matter, be conscious of how your tone of voice can enhance your message.

(see Rabbi Yitzchok Blauser; Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian - Lev Eliyahu, vol.1, Rabbi Chaim Zaitchik - Maayanai Hachaim, vol.3 and Rabbi Pliskin's "Consulting the Wise")

FROM AISH HA'TORAH'S DAILY LIFT

Acquiring Health According to the "Way of G_d"

From A Mystic's Perspective : R' Meilech (Michael)

DuBrow Havienu L'Shalom <http://www.havienu.org>

"If you see blessings from G_d, then expect to see more. If you don't see blessings from G_d, then look harder."

Among the blessings which accompany our life when we live according to the "way of G_d," and to which we are entitled to "an unbounded degree," is health. As the verse says [Shmos 15:26], "And if you certainly heed the voice of G_d... all of the disease with which I afflicted Egypt, I will not afflict you." And as our Sages comment [quoted in Kuntres Etz HaChaim, III], "It is your option that sickness not affect you."

The explanation of the matter is as follows: All sickness comes from klipas nogah. As the Alter Rebbe explains [Tanya I:7], klipas nogah is an intermediate category between Holiness and the three completely unclean (evil) klipos called sitra achra ("other side"). Therefore, klipas nogah, on its own, involves a mixture of good and evil. Whether we draw the good or evil from klipas nogah, i.e., whether it is absorbed and elevated to the Holiness, or is absorbed within the sitra achra [Etz Chayim, Portal 49, 4], is dependent upon our actions.

Disease and sickness are associated with the evil in klipas nogah - that is, as it is absorbed within the three impure klipos [sitra achra]. In the above verse, "...the disease with which I afflicted Egypt," Egypt refers to physical desire. Disease is the result of excess indulgence in material desire, as represented by Egypt. Also "One who set himself apart seeks desire [Mishlei 18:1]": when we indulge our physical desires, we set ourselves apart from G_d and the source of health, "For I am G_d your Healer [Yeshayahu 58:8]."

This may be made clearer through the example of eating food. The material and physical nature of food - and we are speaking here only of permitted (kosher) food - derives from klipas nogah. Therefore, as explained above, it involves a mixture of good and evil.

When we eat only what is necessary to maintain our bodies and our health, and do so in order to serve G_d (i.e., to derive energy from the food to study and pray), then the food becomes refined - that is, the good that is intermingled in it is extracted from the bad and is included in the realm of Holiness. Eating in this manner is in the category of heeding "the voice of G_d," leading to "I will not afflict you" with the disease of klipas nogah. On the contrary, such eating

increases our vitality in holy matters.

When, by contrast, we eat in excess and to indulge our physical desires, we violate one of the Torah's prohibitions [see Sefer HaChinuch, Parshas Shelach, Mitzvah 387; also the Rambam, Sefer HaMitzvos, Negative Commandment 47], and the spiritual potential of the food is absorbed within the sitra achra. In such a manner, we draw evil and death to ourselves, G_d forbid.

[Even eating permitted food for the sake of maintaining one's health, but without the intent of serving G_d, and yet also not with the intent of indulging one's physical desires, is not proper, as it will lead to eating in excess and indulgence].

The remedy for the above is the study of Torah, as it is written [Mishlei 3:8], "It will serve as remedies for all your navel," and "It will be a cure for all your flesh [ibid, 4:22]." [See Eruvin 54a which advises studying Torah to deal with headaches, stomach problems and other physical discomforts].

In specific, to rid yourself of illness, our Sages have advised [Bava Metzia 107b]:

"Disease, this is the gall bladder (marah)... All of these can be nullified by bread (dipped) in salt, and a pitcher of water." "Bread" refers to the Torah, "salt" to P'nimiyus HaTorah [the Torah's inner, mystic dimension], and "a pitcher of water" to the Oral Law (e.g., Talmud and Halachah). These nullify and heal disease.

It is possible to add that there are two types of healing [see the maamar Borei Niv Sifasayim, 5748). When healing is accomplished by human beings, i.e., via the "way of nature" through the use of medications and the like, it is healing only with regard to the future; even afterwards, a trace of the disease remains.

When, by contrast, the healing comes from "I G_d am your healer," i.e., via the "way of G_d," the disease is removed as if it never was, without leaving a trace. This healing comes about through Torah study, as alluded to in the verse [Yeshayahu 57:19], "says G_d, 'I will heal him.'" That is, the healing comes about through "says G_d," having G_d's speech - the letters of Torah - engraved in one's memory.

[In truth, all healing emanates from G_d. Thus it is also possible for the first type of healing, which comes through the agency of a human being using medications, to leave no trace of disease, wiping it away as if it never took place. This occurs when the healing is accomplished through the memorization of words of Torah, i.e., "says G_d."].

Thus we see that it is our option whether or not we are healthy. When we live according to the "way of G_d," engaging in the study of Torah, and, especially P'nimiyus HaTorah, until it is engraved in our memory, then the knowledge that there is nothing separating or holding us back from G_dliness permeates our consciousness. We can expect "to see more" and to merit blessings which are "beyond all bounds and limitations." Thus even illness which came about through inappropriate behavior (i.e, eating in excess and to indulge our physical desires) can be cured without leaving a trace, as if it never occurred.

When we labor in the above, we will certainly discover new plateaus of success, as our Sages said [Megillah 6b], "I labored and I discovered." And this will lead to the ultimate discovery, "I discovered David, My servant [Tehillim 89:21]," referring to Moshiach. And, "He will not delay them for even the blinking of an eyelash," may this take place immediately in our days. Amen. ❖

When you meet a master swordsman, show him your sword.
When you meet a man who is not a poet, do not show him
your poem.

Lin-Chi

Work is love made visible. And if you cannot work with
love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave
your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of
those who work with joy

Kahlil Gibran

We think in generalities, but we live in detail

Alfred North Whitehead

When hungry, eat your rice; when tired, close your eyes.
Fools may laugh at me, but wise men will know what I mean.

Lin-Chi

Truth is a heavy burden; therefore its bearers are so few.

Mishlei 3

No monument need be raised to the pious; their deeds are
their monuments.

Yerushalmi Shekolim

As I grew up I became increasingly interested in philosophy, of
which they [his family] profoundly disapproved. Every time
the subject came up they repeated with unfailing regularity,
"What is mind? No matter. What is matter? Never mind."
After some fifty or sixty repetitions, this remark ceased to
amuse me.

Bertrand Russell

Let me suffer and be wise rather than be tranquil and remain a
fool.

The Kotzker Rebbe

The archer is shot with his own arrow and is repaid with his
own action.

Pesachim 28

I'm astounded by people who want to "know" the universe yet
find it hard enough to find their way around Chinatown

Woody Allen

If you have to ask what Jazz is, you'll never know

Louis Armstrong

Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself

Chinese Proverb