

עֵטְרַת הַשָּׁבוּעַ

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Ruth & Hyman Simon High School

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GOODNESS MORE THAN GRACIOUS *Rabbi Yehuda Horowitz, 12th Grade Rebbe*

In this week's *parsha* we are taught the halachos of a *metzora*. The *tzoraas* was a skin disease which wasn't due to the physical deficiency of the body, but rather it was a heaven sent message of the spiritual shortcomings of the one who was *tomei*. He would have to leave the entire camp of Bnei Yisroel and remain alone until he was purified. Our Chazal relate that *tzaraas* was due to the *aveirah* of *lashon harah* and that since this person separated people through his behavior, he must now remain isolated.

Rav Avraham Pam *zt'l* would comment that *Baruch Hashem* our generation has made great strides in *shemiras hadibur*. The campaign against *lashon harah* has educated us to be careful of speaking improperly. However, we should actually focus more on the root of this *aveirah*. The person who speaks *lashon harah* is perceiving things in a negative fashion and his heart is filled with bad feelings. We must train our eyes and heart to see the good in everyone we come into contact with, so that the battlefield will never come to our lips. The Nesivos Sholom explains that a *metzora* sees things in a negative manner, as the word *metzora* implies "מצו רע," everything is found to be bad. Therefore, the *metzora* can't go to just any rabbi to determine his status. Only a Kohen can rule on the *tzoraas*. The tendency of Aharon HaKohen was to love peace and harmony, and to see the goodness in every Jew. He can teach the *metzora* how to be an optimistic, positive person who radiates joy and encouragement to others.

Rav Yitchock Hutner *zt'l* would say that our face is actually for others and therefore without a mirror we cannot even see our face. It has enormous potential to bring cheer to everyone else. HoRav Binyomin Kamenetzky *shlit"a* adds that it's interesting to note that the main thrust of our heart's ability to pump life and warmth into our bodies is on the left side of a person. Being that our right side is always considered to be more vital, this seems surprising. He explains that we must utilize our hearts to warm and encourage others and therefore our heart is situated facing the right side of those that we encounter.

The ability to have a positive effect on others depends very much on being optimistic and joyful. Rav Yonasan Rosenblum *shlit"a* relates that at his Shabbos table in Eretz Yisroel he had a couple who were Baalei Teshuvah. The husband

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ONLY ONE

Avi Lieberman, 12th Grade

בדד ישב מחוץ למחנה מושבו ויג:מו

HE [THE METZORAH] SHALL DWELL IN ISOLATION;
HIS DWELLING SHALL BE OUTSIDE THE CAMP

As we delve into the *parshiyos* that fall out during this time, we learn about different types of things or actions that cause a person to become *tomei*. In most cases, a required waiting period is inaugurated, which is followed by the impure person bringing a *korban*. What stands out most about the concept of *tzoraas* over other contaminations is the fact that the Jew is isolated outside the camp for a seven day period – do we find seclusion by any other type of *tumah*? Why is the person who is involved in *lashon harah* forced to humiliate himself by leaving the Jewish Camp, where the *halachah* by other situations is simply for the person to wait it out until his required period has passed?

Rashi quotes the *gemara* in *Maseches Erechin* [16:], and explains that this person afflicted with *tzoraas* caused fights and arguments between husbands and wives or one friend to another. Since the *metzora* caused separation between all these people, he himself must be punished with isolation from society. Being that the ultimate purpose of *midah kineged midah* is to make the sinner aware of what he did and what phase his actions have led him to, such separation from civilization should hopefully lead him to repent.

It is very possible that it is the concept of *lashon harah* that causes a protocol for such segregation. When a person speaks slander, what reasoning does he have for doing such a direct *aveirah*? If we delve into ourselves, we will most likely answer that our speaking *lashon harah* stems from a desire to be

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acknowledged amongst our friends, and to be part of the conversation. Another reason is to show our own greatness or another's faults through discussing a disparaging moment. Meaning, we can throw our *aveirah* of *lashon harah* onto the people we are speaking to, since it is them we are trying to please.

With this in mind, it seems that the concept of isolation is the best solution to show the slanderer the evil of his ways and the wrong assumption that he can blame his faults on those he is trying to please. Imagine this person noticing the blemish on his skin. Thoughts start racing through his head and everyone that forced him to speak slanderously

comes to mind as the people to blame. "If it weren't for him, I wouldn't have brought up that incident." "If Mottel wouldn't have gotten me so upset, I wouldn't need to tell others how terrible he is!"

Alas! The Kohen comes and after inspecting the blotch, declares the man to be *tamei* and must immediately leave the camp. His head is spinning as he ponders all the people mixed up in his exile – he surely can't be the one to blame with so many people involved! Yet as he spends so many days in isolation, he looks for someone to pour out his suffering to – but who's there to listen? He looks for someone to point at – yet there's nobody to blame.

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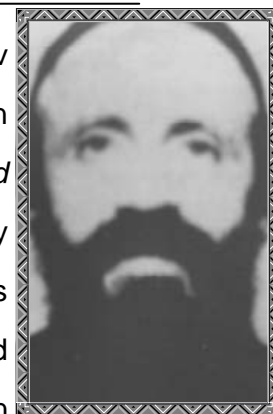
FOCUS ON GREATNESS

by Yishai Kadry

Harav Yaakov Yosef Twersky zt'l
The Skverer Rebbe

5659 / 1899 - 2 Nissan, 5728 / March 31, 1968

- Yaakov Yosef was born in 5659 (1849) in the town of Skver, Ukraine.
- At age 16, Yaakov Yosef became engaged to the daughter of the Belzer Rebbe; Rav Pinyele of Ostillah.
- The wedding took place in Belz in 5685 (1925), and Reb Yaakov Yosef was then supported by the Belzer Rebbe for two years.
- Reb Yaakov Yosef gained a reputation as a perceptive, wise budding *talmid chacham*.
- Reb Yaakov Yosef merited surviving the war through nothing less than heavenly assistance.
- After the war, the Rebbe transformed a house into a hotel, as a safe haven for Jews crossing the border and going into Romania.
- When communism took over Romania, Reb Yaakov Yosef moved to the United States in 5708 (1948).
- The Rebbe spent two weeks in Williamsburg, two years in Borough Park and then went back to Williamsburg.
- The Rebbe felt that Urban America was not an ideal place to raise true generations of Torah, and therefore in 5718 (1958) built New Square, a Chassidic Hamlet in the village of Spring Valley, near Monsey.
- It was only through the Rebbe's will and indescribable *mesiras nefesh* that the New Square project was crowned with success.
- New Square began with only a few families occupying the area, and the roads were originally swamps that required wooden boards to simply cross the street. Today, New Square is residence to thousands of families, a home to yeshivos and to a beautiful shul that resembles a great castle.
- The Skverer Rebbe passed away on 2 Nissan 5728 (1968). His son Reb Dovid *shlit"a* is the present Skverer Rebbe, a beloved leader to thousands of Chassidim all over the world.



Someone once approached Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky zt'l many years ago when open-heart surgery was still in its beginning stages. He was in need of such a procedure, and was inquiring whether he should go through with the operation or not. Reb Yaakov replied that he should seek council from the Skverer Rebbe, Reb Yaakov Yosef Twersky. His reasoning for relying on whatever the Rebbe tells him, was that "*shomayim* won't disappoint the Rebbe."

The man went to the Skverer Rebbe who encouraged him to go through with the surgery. In the end, the man went through with the operation and everything was successful. This was deemed remarkable, being that the other five people who went through the same procedure did not make it through.

When Reb Yaakov zt'l was very sick, Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l said that it is worthwhile to go to Reb Dovid Twersky *shlit"a*; the present Skverer Rebbe for a *bracha* on his behalf. Those who heard this were amazed, since the present Rebbe was at that time crowned 'Rebbe' for only a few years.

In fact, he himself was very young, being that he was appointed at the age of twenty-eight! Why go to such a young scholar on Reb Yaakov's behalf?

Reb Moshe replied that the 'Alter Rebbe' (previous Rebbe) had an amazing *koach hatefilah* (power of prayer), and this potency was passed onto his son. Anyone with the *Alter Rebbe's* great strength is beneficial to receive a *bracha* from.

When Reb Shneur Kotler went to be *menachem ovel* upon the passing of Reb Yaakov Yosef, he spoke to his family about something he deemed absolutely amazing about the Rebbe. He explained that he knows many people who are able to feel other people's *tzaar* and anguish in their times of pain – but it is rare for someone to truly feel the *simcha* another person feels at their time of joy. "The Rebbe was truly amazing at this, and shared everyone's emotions in all situations."

Reb Aharon Kotler zt'l once called the Skverer Rebbe's home, and was received by Reb Dovid *shlit"a*, who is

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RABBI HOROWITZ (continued from page 1)

was very prominent in the world of Hollywood shows and Rabbi Rosenblum asked him how he was inspired to be *chozer b'ishesuvah*.

He responded that on a Shabbos morning in Hollywood he and two Jewish friends were sitting in a restaurant when they noticed a couple and their children walking home with remarkable togetherness and happiness. One of the young men asked, "What's their secret?" Another one answered that they're Orthodox and are returning from Synagogue. This really touched him and that night he contacted an organization that offers learning partners on the

telephone. Eventually, all three became religious and are raising beautiful families. One is in Yerushalayim spending time in Mir Yeshiva, another is in Baltimore near Ner Yisroel, and the third one returned to L.A. after having studied in Mir Yeshiva. The remarkable thing is that the family that is responsible for generations to come doesn't even know how much they accomplished by just being so joyful and united!

Let us truly find the good in everyone, and use that as a foundation for friendship and inspiration against the terrible effects of *tzoraas*. May we be *zoche* to use this friendship as a path towards the *geulah shleimah, bimheirah biyameinu*.

FOCUS ON GREATNESS (continued from page 2)

today the Rebbe. Reb Aharon simply asked for a message to be relayed to the Rebbe, stating, "I did what you told me." This curious message raised interest into what matter this was referring to, and after some probing the true story surfaced.

The Skverer Rebbe had heard that Chinuch Atzmai in Eretz Yisroel was forced to have in its possession improper secular books, in order to receive funding from the Israeli Government. The Rebbe was very bothered by this, and sent a substantial amount of money to Reb Aharon Kotler *zt"l* whom he knew was shortly heading to Eretz Yisroel. The Rebbe sent him the money to give the organization so they could buy their own books, and not have to rely on the funding of the government. It was this accomplished mission that Reb Aharon was referring to.

Reb Dovid Twersky later explained that had Reb Aharon not called, he would have never heard about this amazing act of *chesed*.

• During his last years, Reb Aharon Kotler found himself very weak and lying in bed during the holy days between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. Reb Aharon called to the bachur assisting him, Chaim Kahn, and asked him to dial the Skverer Rebbe's number. When the Rebbe was on the line, Reb Aharon stood up in honor of the Rebbe as he was handed the receiver.

Furthermore, it was known to those close to Reb Aharon that when davening *shemone esrei*, his face used to turn a deep shade of red. This bachur attending to Reb Aharon was thus amazed to see that as he asked the Rebbe for a bracha, Reb Aharon's face was that same shade of red!

• When Reb Yaakov Yosef was still residing in Brooklyn, there was a certain man who was going through terrible anguish and pain. His daughter wanted to marry a non-Jew, and he was running around to many different people for advice and the ability to convince his daughter not to go

through with this terrible wrongdoing. Someone finally suggested that there was a great Rebbe that recently came over from Romania, who was known to be a great *baal mofes* (miracle worker), and someone who might be able to help.

The man brought his daughter to the Rebbe, and cried out his heart as he told over his daughter's terrible plans. When the Skverer Rebbe heard the tale, he screamed, "What? She thinks she's going to marry a non-Jew?" The Rebbe spit on the floor, and repeated his words of disbelief.

When this happened, the man's daughter began crying out, "No! No! I won't marry a non-Jew! There's no way I will wed someone not Jewish!" Father and daughter left the Rebbe together, as the daughter went on to eventually build a *bayis ne'eman biYisroel*.

• An unfortunate tale follows the previous, as it is known that the Rebbe had a terrible stroke, which caused his tragic passing. It is said that the Rebbe was involved in trying to prevent a young woman from marrying a non-Jew, but alas with no success. When the Rebbe heard that this lady married a non-Jew, it was this that caused his stroke, eventually leading to his death. May the Skverer Rebbe's *ahavas Yisroel* and devotion to Klal Yisroel be a source of inspiration and merit to all of us, guiding us *ad biyas go'el*.



Reb Dovid Twersky *shlit"z*; The present Skverer Rebbe speaking at our Mesivta

AVI LIEBERMAN (continued from page 2)

This *metzora* slowly comes to realize that there is nobody to blame but himself, and the one who spoke slander was no one. . . but himself. The Chofetz Chaim explains that the reason we have teeth and lips rather than one or the other, is to act as a gate to make us think before letting the words escape our mouth. In other words, this time of isolation is for us to reflect and realize that when the time for reprimanding comes, there is no one else to blame for our own actions.

How appropriate this message is for the end of days. As we go through life, we can turn to everyone around us and say, "He's to blame for my actions." When we think about why we didn't grow in Torah and work on our *midos*, we think to ourselves, "If I would've grown up in a different community, I could've been different." As we advance in years, our neck is flexible enough to turn back and forth as we blame the world for our faults and misdemeanors.

Yet the time will come when we will find ourselves in a place that will not allow us to call upon others to take the blame for our errors. We were all blessed with the motivation and ingenuity to accomplish whatever we want to accomplish, and the proper resources to grow in whatever era Hashem placed us in. Can we really fault others for our own misbehavior? *בדד ישב* - he will dwell in isolation after 120 years with nobody to blame but himself! Let us appreciate the opportunities granted to us by the *Melech Malchei HaMillochim*, and use all the obstacles in our path as steppingstones to strive and grow higher, becoming the greatest Jew we can be.

אמת ליעקב

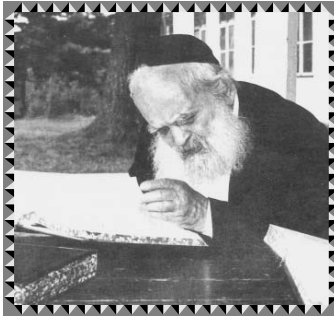
Weekly Insights from Moreinu HoRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l

The first *halacha* brought in the *Shulchan Aruch* in *hilchos Pesach* tells us that we are required to begin discussing the *halachos* of Pesach thirty days in advance of the Yom Tov, in order to ensure that we are properly prepared when Pesach starts. This Sunday, *Rosh Chodesh Nisan*, is a time when the anticipation for the fast approaching *chag* significantly increases. Therefore, it seems most appropriate to dedicate this week's *Emes L'Yaakov* to concepts that relate to Pesach, in order to ready ourselves for Yom Tov.

The Torah tells us, "וכי יגור אתך גר, ועשה פסח לה' המול לו כל זכור ואז יקרב לעשתו והיה כאזרח הארץ וכל ערל לא יאכל בו [ספר שמות יב:מח], AND IF A CONVERT LIVES AMONGST YOU, AND HE WISHES TO BRING A KORBAN PESACH, HE MUST FIRST CIRCUMCISE EVERY MALE IN HIS FAMILY, AND THEN HE MAY BRING THE KORBAN PESACH AS ANY CITIZEN OF BNEI YISROEL." Rashi on this *pasuk* explains that had the Torah not written that the *ger* brings the *korban Pesach*, "like any citizen of Bnei Yisroel," one might have thought that he must bring it as soon as he converts. Therefore the Torah wrote that he brings it like any other member of Bnei Yisroel, meaning that he waits until the time that everybody else brings the *korban*.

HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l asks a question on Rashi. Why would one ever have thought that the *ger* should bring the *korban Pesach* as soon as he converts? No one would ever assume that a *ger* must listen to *shofar* or take the *arba minim* immediately after conversion, but rather it is obvious that he must wait until Rosh HaShanah and Succos respectively. Why should the mitzvah of *korban Pesach* be any different?

Rav Yaakov answers this question based on a Midrash earlier in *parshas Bo*. When Hashem gave Bnei Yisroel the mitzvah of *korban Pesach*, the *pasuk* says, "משור וקרו לכם צאן, למשפחותיכם [יב:כא], SEPARATE, AND TAKE FOR YOURSELVES A SHEEP, AND SLAUGHTER THE KORBAN PESACH." The Midrash interprets this *pasuk* as a command to Bnei Yisroel to separate from *avodah zarah*, and instead take a sheep to fulfill the mitzvah of *korban Pesach*. We see from this Midrash that the *korban Pesach* serves as a means of separating from the nations of the world and their practices, and drawing close to Hashem. Indeed we find that in the times of *Chizkiyah HaMelech* and *Yoshiah HaMelech*, when Bnei Yisroel as a whole started to do teshuvah, the first *korban* that they brought was the *korban Pesach*. Similarly, when *Ezra* led Bnei Yisroel back into Eretz Yisroel after the end of *galus Bavel*, thus once again separating Bnei Yisroel from the nations of the world, the first *korban* that Bnei Yisroel brought was the *korban Pesach*. As such, one might think that when a person joins Bnei Yisroel, he should immediately offer a *korban Pesach*, no matter what time of year it is, in order to mark his separation from the nations of the world and his former life, and to celebrate his newfound closeness to Hashem. The Torah, therefore, had to tell us that he must wait until the rest of Bnei Yisroel is offering the *korban Pesach* as well, before he can offer his own *korban Pesach*.



The *Yom Tov* of Pesach is an opportunity to achieve new levels in our *d'veykus b'Hashem*. May we be *zoche* to seize these opportunities, and take full advantage of them, so that we may merit the coming of *Moshiach*, at which point we will once again be able to bring the *korban Pesach*.

A chassid of Reb Menachem Mendel of Kotzk asked for the rebbe's blessing that he merit sons who would study Torah with devotion. Reb Menachem Mendel replied, "I suggest that you study Torah with devotion so that your sons will follow your example. For if not, then your sons will do the same - request that their sons will study with devotion while they occupy themselves with other matters. . ."

In *Masechtas Brachos*, Chazal give the following advice for one who has experienced misfortune. "If a person suffers afflictions, he should examine his deeds. . . If he examines his deeds and finds nothing to warrant Divine punishment, he should attribute his punishment to having neglected the study of Torah."

The Vilna Gaon asks, since learning Torah is equal in value to all the other *mitzvos*, why is a person not told *first* to consider that he has neglected *Talmud Torah*? The Gaon answers that a person only finds himself blameless with respect to the other *mitzvos* because he has not learned enough to know what he has done wrong! Thus, if he finds no faults in himself, he surely has not learned enough. The root of sin, accordingly, lies in lack of Torah Study.

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