

with "sh")

Daughter-in-law: *Shnur*

In-laws: *Mechutonim*. This term has two uses. Narrowly defined, people whose children are married (or even engaged) refer to each other as *mechutonim* (the male is a *mechuton* and the female is a *mechuteniste*). In a broader sense, entire clans that have been joined through matrimony can be called *mechutonim*.

Live & Laugh

Ira Kaplan, hadn't returned to the old neighborhood since he went off to fight in Vietnam. During a business trip to New York he visits his old neighborhood on Kotler Avenue in the Bronx. Everything has changed over the years. Where once there was Edelstein's Delicatessen, there is now a McDonald's; where Fleischman's Dry Cleaning (One-Hour Martinizing) used to be, a Korean nail salon and spa now is; where Ginsberg's Department Store was, there is now a Gap.

Nothing is the same, except for the narrow storefront of Klonsky's Shoe Repair, which, dimly lit as ever, is still in business. As Kaplan passes the shop, he recalls (such are the quirks of memory that he does not know how) that just before he was drafted to go off to Vietnam, he had left a pair of shoes with Mr. Klonsky that he never bothered to pick up. Could they, he wonders, possibly still be there?

A small bell tinkles as he enters the dark shop. Mr. Klonsky, who seemed old 40 years ago, shuffles out from the back. He is hunched over, wearing a leather apron, one eye all but closed. "Excuse me, Mr. Klonsky," Kaplan says, "but I used to live in this neighborhood, and 40 years ago I left a pair of shoes with you for repair that I never picked up. Is there any chance you might still have them?" Klonsky stares at him and, in his strong Eastern European accent, asks, "Was dey black vingtips?"

"They were indeed," Kaplan only now recalls. "And you wanted a halv sole, mit rubber heels?" "Yes," says Kaplan. "That's exactly what I wanted." "And you wanted taps on the heels only?" "Yes, yes," says Kaplan. "Amazing! Do you still have them?" Mr. Klonsky looks up at him, his good eye asquint, and says, "Dey'll be ready Vendsday"

What's Nu?!

Choson Kallah Mazal Tov
Anthony Sarak & Sheree Epstein

Calendar

Shabbos Mevorchim Shevat
Molad: Wed 17 Jan 02:25:02

- ◆ Shacharis: 8:30 am; Shtibl: 8:45 am
- ◆ Brocha in the Seeff Hall sponsored by the **Sarak & Epstein Families.**
- ◆ **Sushi & Black Label Farbrengen.**
- ◆ Mincha: 6:30 pm
- ◆ Shabbos ends: 7:39 pm
- ◆ **Rosh Chodesh:** Wed 17 Jan

All SydShul Shiurim
resume this coming week.
Join a Shiur now!

- Sunday morning 9 am—**Mishna (Brochos)**
Rabbi Goldman (boardroom)
- Tuesday 1 pm—**Ladies Shiur**
Rabbi Goldman (Elk Hall)
- Tuesday 7:45 pm - **Gemorra Sotah**
Rabbi Goldman (Rabbi's home)
- Wednesday 8:00 pm - **Gemorra Ta'anis**
Rabbi Stern (Rabbi's home)
- Thursday 9:15 am (alternate) - **Young Mother's Torah Class** *Rabbi Stern* (Elk Hall)
- Shabbos 8:15 am - **Soulful Study**
Rabbi Stern (Shtibl)

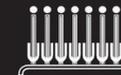
**Go to the Shiur of your choice,
but go to a Shiur!**

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Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!

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Parshas Vaeira

26 Teves 5778

Throw Small Stones

by: *Rabbi Yossy Goldman*

Gratitude is an attitude; some wise man must have surely said once upon a time. The Bible in this week's Parsha demonstrates just how far Jewish tradition teaches us to be grateful and to remember our benefactors.

Seven of the ten plagues occur in this week's reading. Moses, messenger of G-d, is busy bringing down these terrifying plagues on Pharaoh's Egypt. Yet, interestingly, he calls upon his brother Aaron to be the agent for the first three plagues – Blood, Frogs and Lice. Why did Moses not do it himself as he would do the others?

The Midrash, quoted by Rashi, teaches us that because it was through the agency of the waters of the river that Moses was saved as an infant when he was put in the basket. It would have been insensitive and inappropriate for him to strike those very life saving waters to bring on the plague. Seeing as the Blood and the Frogs both dealt directly with the water, it was Aaron who stuck the water rather than Moses. Similarly, with the third plague of Lice. The lice came from out of the ground and the earth, too, had helped Moses to cover the body of the Egyptian taskmaster he had killed defending the Jewish slave. Therefore, it would have been wrong for Moses to strike the earth and so for this plague, too, Aaron was the agent.

What a monumental lesson to each of us on the importance of gratitude. Firstly, do water and earth have feelings? Would they know

the difference if they were struck and who was doing the striking? How much more so should we be considerate of human beings who do have feelings when they have done us a kindness. How scrupulous we ought to be not to offend people, especially those who have come to our assistance.

Secondly, Moses was a man of 80 years old at the time of the plagues. These incidents with the water and earth occurred when he was a mere infant and when he was a very young man. Yet, all these years later he is still sensitive not to strike the objects that had helped him. He did not say as so many have after him, "So what have you done for me lately?"

There are many theories as to why human beings seem to have this psychological need to tarnish the image of their past benefactors. Perhaps it is because we are inherently uncomfortable with the notion of being eternally indebted to anyone. It cramps our style and diminishes our independence. So if we find fault with those who have helped us previously, we absolve ourselves of any moral indebtedness. Now we're even. I don't owe you anything any more.

The story is told of the Chasam Sofer (Rabbi Moshe Schreiber, 1762 – 1839) that he once did an enormous favour for someone. Later, the fellow asked him, "Rabbi, what can I ever do to repay you for your kindness?" The Chasam Sofer replied, "one day, when you get upset and angry with me, please remember what I have done for you today and rather than pelting me with big stones, please throw small stones instead." Sad, but oh so true. In

a similar vein, I remember hearing my own Zayde say of someone, “Why does he hate me so much? I never did him any favours!”

This little story of Moshe, which is only an aside to the main body of the Biblical narrative, teaches us to remember the kindnesses that are bestowed upon us – when they happen and forever. If one who has been good to us in the past does wrong and needs chastising, let someone else volunteer for the job. He may need rebuking, but I am not the one to do it. Yet again, the Torah teaches us not only religious ritual but how to be better people, more sensitive and yes, eternally grateful human beings.

Parsha Pointers

*Vaaira: Artscroll Chumash pg 318;
Living Torah pg 281*

G-d reveals Himself to Moses. Employing the “four expressions of redemption,” He promises to take out the Children of Israel from Egypt, deliver them from their enslavement, redeem them, and acquire them as His own chosen people at Mount Sinai; He will then bring them to the land He promised to the Patriarchs as their eternal heritage.

Moses and Aaron repeatedly come before Pharaoh to demand in the name of G-d, “Let My people go, so that they may serve Me in the wilderness.” Pharaoh repeatedly refuses. Aaron’s staff turns into a snake and swallows the magic sticks of the Egyptian sorcerers. G-d then sends a series of plagues upon the Egyptians.

The waters of the Nile turn to blood; swarms of frogs overrun the land; lice infest all men and beasts. Hordes of wild animals invade the cities; a pestilence kills the domestic animals; painful boils afflict the Egyptians. For the seventh plague, fire and ice combine to descend from the skies as a devastating hail. Still, “the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he would not let the children of Israel go, as G-d

Sydenham Shul 24 Main Street, Rouxville, 2192.

Telephone: 640-5021, Fax: 485-2810

E-mail: sydshul@sydshul.co.za

Website: www.sydshul.co.za

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had said to Moses.”

Is G-d Vengeful?

By Rabbi Nechemia Schusterman

This week's Torah portion recounts the beginning of the end of the Egyptians. The first seven of the ten plagues are wrought on the Egyptians: Blood, Frogs, Lice, Wild Animals, Pestilence, Boils, and hail.

I am often asked about G-d's treatment of the Egyptians: why hit them so hard? If G-d's purpose is to redeem His people from Egyptian slavery, why not simply take them out! G-d certainly could have liberated the Israelites "Gandhi style"... why all the violence? Why is the Torah, G-d's blueprint for "healthy living," so violent?

First we must dispel a common misconception:

The prophet Isaiah writes that G-d's ways are not the ways of flesh and blood; He works on a completely different plane. When a human is hurt by another, physically or emotionally, the instinctive reaction is a desire to react, to lash out in response. At times we restrain ourselves, and at times we do not, but we are not in control of our innate instinct of self-protection — and its immediate partner, the desire to respond to a threat to our wellbeing.

The act of a mere mortal, however, doesn't pose any "threat" to G-d. Acts perpetrated "against" G-d cannot penetrate or hurt Him. Thus there is no instinctive reaction, no natural desire to punish. True, our good deeds gratify G-d, and our sins distress Him. But that is only because G-d freely *chose* to be gladdened or upset by certain behaviours. An action or deed is relevant in G-d's eyes only because He allows it to be relevant, but ultimately, as it relates to G-d's essence, it is an act of a mortal, and cannot delight or offend Him.

The same is true with the system of reward and punishment, checks and balances, which G-d instituted in His creation. G-d decided that a mitzvah is a way to connect with Him, and thus, by fulfilling a good deed one opens a spout releasing the flow of Divine energy to oneself. When one does otherwise, one closes that spout, as it were. It's not that antagonizing G-d elicits a harsh response; rather, when you do a positive action, you generate a spiritual (and often physical) reaction. When you do good, good is the reaction. When you do bad, the reaction is bad. It's a matter of cause and effect.

When the Egyptians hurt G-d's people, they caused a reaction that was, and is, embedded in the nature of creation. Good deeds are responded to with goodness, and bad deeds are responded to as well. It is the person himself who triggers the response, activating, as it were, the mechanism that G-d Himself created.

Fire and Ice

By Rabbi Michoel Gourarie

In this week's Torah reading we read the story of the ten plagues that punished the Egyptians.

The seventh plague that G-d sent upon the Egyptians – the plagues that made way for the final exodus from Egypt – was hail. Enormous hailstones rained down, destroying Egyptian crops and damaging their fields. But then the Torah adds a miraculous detail that is somewhat puzzling. It tells us that each hail stone contained a flame of fire that burned inside the ice. What purpose did that fire serve?

The Zohar explains that the ten plagues were not sent just to dismantle Egypt's infrastructure. They were powerful forces that provided the Jews with strategies for spiritual rehabilitation. Each plague carried with it an important lesson in the journey of growth and true freedom.

Hail is cold and icy and symbolizes insensitivity and indifference to other people and their needs. The "hail" personality is someone that appears to lack the capacity to care, to be compassionate or to love. This is someone that seems totally cold and couldn't care about anyone or anything. Is this person beyond hope? Can a spark of love be ignited?

With this plague the Torah declares that even the stone hearted can be aroused. *Every* person has a flame of love and compassion within them. But with some that flame is a love of self, driven by ego and channelled inwards rather than towards others. The result is selfishness and care for one self, with insensitivity to others. The fire burns, but it is hidden inside the ice.

All that needs to happen is for the ice to melt, and the fire of love and compassion will be visible to all. To achieve this, the "hail" individual needs to do two things:

a) Chip away at his/her ego by developing a sense of humility.

b) Begin to do acts of kindness and love even in the absence of motivation. The deeds themselves will stoke the fire.

The flame always burns. It is up to the individual whether it will be hidden by hail or burn openly.

What Does “Shvigger” Mean?

Shvigger: (SHVI-gehr) n. Yiddish for mother-in-law

Many see this word is a built-in insult. It's really anything but.

In Jewish tradition, it is forbidden to call one's parents by their names. Rather, they are respectfully referred to as “Mother” and “Father.” Honoring our parents is actually one of the Ten commandments, so it ranks right up there with revering G-d's name and not murdering.

This reverence extends to in-laws, who are called “*shvigger*” (mother-in-law) and “*shver*” (father-in-law) respectively.

How do we know this? We take our cue from King David, whose father in law (and primary tormentor) was King Saul. David called Saul, *avi*, “my father.”

Yet generations of Borscht Belt mother-in-law jokes and the insulting ring of the word have conspired to make “*shvigger*” anathematic to many English-speaking women, who just can't imagine the term referring to them.

Note that “*shvigger*” bears no relation to “*shveig*,” the Yiddish word for “be quiet.” For that matter, neither does “*shver*” have anything to do with its homonym, “*shver*,” which means “heavy” or “difficult.” So even if you have a mother-in-law who you wish would be quiet and a father-in-law who is both difficult and overweight, rest assured that: a) you are not alone, b) this has nothing to do with their Yiddish titles, which they can still bear with pride. While we're on the subject, here are the Yiddish terms for the other in-laws:

Brother-in-law: *Shvogger*

Sister-in-law: *Shvegeren*

Son-in-law: *Eidim* (the only one not to begin