

filled me with tears. For when I was completely enveloped by those waters, I had realized that this birth was not of a new me alone. The still voice of the *mikvah* told me that this was the birth of "we." From now on, *mikvah* time would be counted by two. From now on, this merging with the collective Jewish soul would enable me to merge with the other half of my own soul, this man I love.

### Live & Laugh

Answering machine message, "I am not available right now, but thank you for caring enough to call. I am making some changes in my life. Please leave a message after the beep. If I do not return your call, you are one of the changes."

My wife and I had words, but I didn't get to use mine.

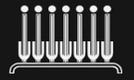
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## Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!



21 Apr 2018 Parshas Tazria-Metsora 6 Iyar 5778

### Speak Nicely, But Clearly

by: Rabbi Yossy Goldman

That the Torah speaks in refined language is a principle of Biblical studies. The classic example is back in the story of Noah. There, when G-d tells Noah to take all the animals into the Ark, he speaks of the "clean" animals (*batehora*) and the "animals which are not clean" (*asher einena tehora*). Although the Torah is generally exceedingly cryptic and sparse on words - every seemingly superfluous letter is expounded upon and interpreted by the Sages - here it uses an additional eight letters to avoid using the word *tame'ab* (literally, defiled or impure). From this, the Talmud teaches that we should never allow a shameful expression to pass our lips. If the Torah deliberately used eight extra letters that could have been avoided simply by saying the word *tame'ab*, then this sends a powerful message to us to watch our language.

laws of our Parsha deal with do's and don'ts that must be expressed in no uncertain terms. When a Rabbi is called upon to answer a *halachic* question, he should not beat around the bush. His response must be clear and unequivocal. And if it is *treif*, then he must pronounce it *treif!*

Now, generally speaking, Rabbis should be gentle, nice and soft-spoken. They should suggest, not demand. The old 'fire and brimstone' sermons don't work that well today. But sometimes Rabbis can be too gentle, too subtle, and too undemanding. And not only in *halachic* matters but even in counseling.

Psychologists and social workers will, in principle, never be directive with their clients. It is part of their professional code not to impose their opinions or personal values on those seeking their guidance. They will try to help them "see the wood from the trees" so they can make their own informed decisions. Rabbis, on the other hand, should have no qualms about giving direction. After all, it's their job!

A fellow once came to see me about his therapist. "She doesn't tell me what to do," he complained. I explained that therapists don't work that way. "You want someone to tell you what to do? Go to a Rabbi."

If a couple goes for Marriage Counseling, a counselor is likely to guide them based on their hopes and aspirations. Do they really want to work it out or are they going through the motions on the way to the divorce lawyer? And if it is the latter, the counselor may very well help them on their way. A rabbi will not hesitate to explain that marriage is

And yet, a cursory look at this week's readings reveals the word *tamei* occurring numerous times. Why is it that in the story of Noah the Torah goes out of its way not to use a negative word and here it uses it repeatedly, almost at whim?

The answer is that where it is a storyline one can afford to be subtler and not pronounce a negative word. However, when it comes to *halacha*, to determining Jewish Law, one cannot afford subtleties or flowery language; one must be crystal clear in laying down the law and, yes, we must call a spade a spade. The Law is sacrosanct and in matters of Law there may be no ambiguities. Noah and the Flood is essentially a historical narrative, whereas the

### What's Nu?!

The Barmy Boy  
Jacob Winik

Mazal Tov to Jason & Nicky and grandparents Stan & Jocelyn Friedman and Allan & Rene Winik.

### Calendar

- ♦ Shacharis: 8:30 am; Shtibl: 8:45 am
- ♦ Ladies Shmooze with *Rebbetzin Estee* 10-10:30 am
- ♦ Brocha in the Boma.
- ♦ Smorgasbord of Shiurim
- ♦ Mincha: 5:10 pm
- ♦ Pirkei Avos: Chapter 2
- ♦ Shabbos ends: 6:18 pm
- ♦ Mincha next week: 5:40 pm

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sacred and should be worked on and that divorce is an absolutely last resort when all else has failed. The counselor might ask “would you guys like to stay married?” while the rabbi might say “you must stay married.” Then, he may refer them to a professional counselor who is committed to saving marriages.

Remember the kleptomaniac who bumped into an old friend? The friend remembered how guilty he had felt because of his compulsive shoplifting and asked him whether he still had the problem. “No,” said the fellow. “I went to a psychologist and he helped me solve my problem.” “That’s great, so you don’t shoplift anymore?” asked the friend. “Sure I shoplift,” he replied. “I just don’t feel guilty anymore.”

Please G-d; rabbis will be soft, supportive, friendly, loving and gentle. And, please G-d; they will give clear direction when they must.

## Parsha Pointers

*Tazria-Metzora: Artscroll pg 608;  
Living Torah pg 537*

The Parshahs of Tazria and Metzora continue the discussion of the laws of *tumah v'taharah*, ritual impurity and purity.

A woman giving birth should undergo a process of purification, which includes immersing in a *mikvah* (a naturally gathered pool of water) and bringing offerings to the Holy Temple. All male infants are to be circumcised on the eighth day of life.

*Tzaraat* (often mistranslated as “leprosy”) is a supra-natural plague, which can afflict people as well as garments or homes. If white or pink patches appear on a person’s skin (dark pink or dark green in garments or homes), a *kohen* is summoned. Judging by various signs, such as an increase in size of the afflicted area after a seven-day quarantine, the *Kohen* pronounces it *tamei* (impure) or *tahor* (pure).

A person afflicted with *tzaraat* must dwell alone outside of the camp (or city) until he is healed. The afflicted area in a garment or home must be removed; if the *tzaraat* recurs, the entire garment or home must be destroyed.

When the *metzora* (“leper”) heals, he or she is purified by the *kohen* with a special procedure involving two birds, spring water in an earthen vessel, a piece of cedar wood, a scarlet thread and a bundle of hyssop.

Ritual impurity is also engendered through a seminal or other discharge in a man, and menstruation or other discharge of blood in a woman, necessitating purification through immersion in a *mikvah*.

## Good Gossip

*By Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum*

Sickness stalked the streets of Vilna in 1848; an epidemic had struck, and dozens of townsfolk had succumbed. Every house was filled with the dead and dying. Depression and despair were rampant.

In times of sickness and sorrow, the mind craves answers. People want to know why things are going so spectacularly wrong, and if there is anything they can do to change the situation. People look for someone to blame.

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter, the great ethicist and scholar, was approached by a congregant with grave accusations against the family of one of the leading citizens of the town. The informer was privy to certain distasteful details about a respected family, and he was determined to share his knowledge with the rabbi.

“After all,” he argued, “who knows if the plague isn’t divine retribution for their sins. Perhaps if they can be made to repent, many lives might be saved.”

Rabbi Yisroel refused to listen. “It’s too easy to point the finger,” he said, “blaming everyone else for the tragedies and hardships of life. But tattling and negativity is not the Jewish way. Far better to direct our efforts towards self-improvement and correcting one’s own conduct than to focus on the failing of others.”

We learn in this week’s Torah reading about the *metzora*: During Temple times, a man or woman who had gossiped or spoken negatively about

others would often develop symptoms of *tzaraat* – a leprosy-like condition that renders the sinner ritually impure. As part of the purification process, the *metzora* would be exiled from home for some time and forced to live alone, outside the city borders, until the symptoms dissipated.

Rabbi Yisroel continued to explain that the sin of *lashon hara*, speaking negatively about others, is not necessarily the same as lying. Gossiping is evil, and honesty is no defence. You could be saying the unvarnished, absolute truth, but it’s still a sin. The *metzora* is sent to solitary confinement not just to wait for his *tzaraat* to cure, but to reflect on the lack of judgment that caused the sickness in the first place.

Before rushing to blame others or to indict someone else, do an honest analysis of your own behaviour. Spend some time in the company of your own thoughts, and you may very well come to realize that the cause of your troubles is yourself.

## Mikvah Time

*By Roni Loeb Richter*

I am writing these words from a different time.

The year is the same, the days are the same, but the months are different.

The time in which I exist today is neither solar nor truly lunar. It is a time quite individual—created by G-d especially for me.

Today is one cyclical month since my first immersion in the *mikvah*. This day, this time, is shared among only three: G-d, my husband and me. Today I am brought back to the very moment of recreation of self that took place for the first time on the day of my wedding.

In the excitement and anticipation that preceded the wedding, I had counted the days, checking them against G-d’s calendar and my own body’s. The rebirth for which I was preparing would take place in a home of sorts, under the *chuppah* (marriage canopy). My fiancé and I, often swamped with the details of wedding plans, finally began to focus more on the spiritual preparations we needed to make in order to escort the *shechinah* (divine presence) to our wedding and into our lives.

The most important part of this self-preparation was gaining the ability to slip ourselves into *mikvah* time. This step would prove monumental, for within the entire planning process there was nothing so full of potential and meaning for me as *mikvah*. Somehow I felt that only after I had experienced this immersion would I be able to understand the oneness that defines the relationship between husband and wife.

I walked to the *mikvah* on a beautiful Thursday, on a *rosh chodesh* (first of the month). I had spent the early part of the day preparing my body for immersion. Filing, trimming, scrubbing, soaking, combing and inspecting, I realized that this was the first time I had ever spent such concentrated time focused on my body. Yet, inherent in this moment of complete physical absorption was a palpably electric surge I felt run through me as I connected, for the first time, the spiritual and physical aspects of myself.

As I walked up the hill to the *mikvah*, a song came into my head and I stopped short. The song was *Shir Hamaalot*, a Song of Ascents, originally sung by the Levites as they stood on the stairs that led to the Holy Temple. The words of the psalm speak of the Jews returning to Jerusalem as if in a dream, filled with laughter and singing. And here I was, a modern Jewish woman, feeling that the boundaries of time had blurred. I walked on smiling, simultaneously there at that moment and a part of all time.

I approached the *mikvah* alone, and as I reached it, I saw the smiling face of a friend who said, “You shouldn’t have to go to the *mikvah* alone the first time.” My joy and nervousness blended with the comfort I took in the familiarity of her presence, and with a sense that I would never really be alone at the *mikvah*. I felt, as we entered, that there exists a collective *neshamah* (soul) shared by all Jews throughout history. The *mikvah* is the link of all those years, the container of that soul. The waters of the *mikvah* today are the same waters that have filled *mikvahs* since the beginning of time. I imagined that by immersing myself in those waters, I could, in that silence under water, hear the voices of my ancestors.

Later, as the *shomeret* (*mikvah* attendant) held my shaking hands in hers, the power of this process

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