



CIRCLE TIME

AT YOUR
Shabbos Table

... FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN ...

TELL ME A STORY >>

A dvar Torah with a story.

THE TALL AND SHORT OF IT

וְצִוָּה הַכֹּהֵן וְלָקַח לְמִטְהַר שְׁתֵּי צִפְרִים חַיּוֹת טְהוֹרוֹת וְעֵץ אֶרְז וּשְׁנֵי תוֹלַעַת וְאַזְבֵּי. (ויקרא יד:ד)

The kohen gives an order, and he takes for the person becoming tahor two living, kosher birds, a stick of cedar wood, red strings, and an eizov plant. (Vayikra 14:4)

Rashi explains that the erez, the cedar wood that comes from a towering tree, represents the ga'avah that caused this person to sin until he deserved to get tzara'as, and the low-growing eizov represents the humility that he needs to acquire in order to correct this fault. But why does he need to bring these things now? His tzara'as has gone away; doesn't that mean that he already corrected his fault? If he is no longer haughty, why does he need to use the erez and eizov?

We will answer this with a mashal that is actually a true story.

The talmidim of the Maggid of Mezeritch did not all serve Hashem identically. For example, the famous brothers Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk and Rav Zusha of Anipoli each chose a different path. Rav Elimelech became the *rav* of his city and lived in a comfortable home and wore very respectable clothing. Rav Zusha suffered abject poverty, living in a broken-down shanty and wearing rags that were more patches than original cloth. Both of these pathways were correct; each tzaddik chose what was best for his *ne-shamah*.

Our story, though, is about the founder of the chassidic movement, the Baal Shem Tov. For many years he maintained secrecy, and very few people knew that he was a great tzaddik and talmid chacham. At one

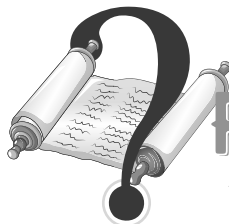


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פרשת מצורע- הגדול

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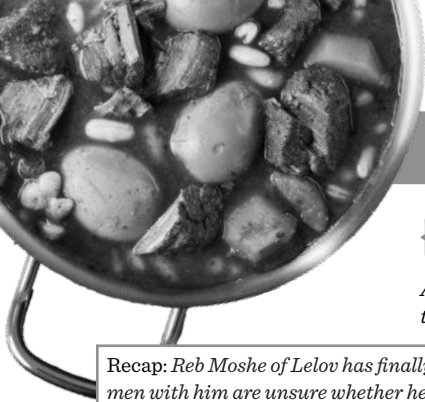
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PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles appear on page 3.

- 1 What applies to *tzara'as* of people and of homes but does not apply to *tzara'as* of clothes?
- 2 What applies to *tzara'as* of clothes and of homes but does not apply to *tzara'as* of people?
- 3 What applies to *tzara'as* of people and of clothes but does not apply to *tzara'as* of homes?
- 4 How does the process for becoming *tahor* differ between a *zav* and a *zavah*?
- 5 Why is this Shabbos called *Shabbos Hagadol*?



CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main course!

Recap: Reb Moshe of Lelov has finally reached the city of Yerushalayim, but he is very weak. The men with him are unsure whether he should rest or rush to the Kosel while he still can.

The men stared at each other for a long time.

Each understood the other's position very well. The rebbe was indeed very sick, and more travel might prove devastating to his health. On the other hand, he may have only a short time left to reach the Kosel. What to do?

At last, the men came to a decision. "Life and death are ultimately in the hands of Hashem," they agreed. "We have to do our part to try to accomplish our goal. Let us set out for the Kosel and try to get there. Hashem will ultimately decide whether we will be successful."

The group set out for the Kosel Hama'aravi, the remnant of Har Habayis and the Beis Hamikdash which had stood proudly, unabandoned by the *Shechinah*, for nearly 2,000 years. They walked slowly through the cobblestone streets, half supporting, half carrying Reb Moshe, whispering words of *Tehillim*.

The group was nearly halfway there when they spotted a Turkish soldier a few hundred yards ahead. "Do you think he'll start up with us?" one of the men asked nervously.

"Just continue saying *Tehillim*!" another whispered. "*Bezras Hashem*, he'll leave us alone!" The men pressed on, moving ever closer to the *makom haMikdash*.

Suddenly, a stone whizzed overhead.

"What was that?!" the *gabbai* cried. "Who is throwing rocks?"

"Look! There!" another man pointed. They all looked up just in time to see a head wrapped in a *kaffiyeh* disappear behind a wall.

"Watch out!" a man shouted, as another rock flew by, closer than the first. Then another, and another.

"Run! Run for cover! The Arabs are throwing rocks!" The men tried to move quickly, but the rebbe was too frail. The hail of rocks continued to fly.

"What should we do? Hashem, help!"

"Look, the Turkish soldier is coming. Maybe he will stop them!" The soldier approached the men at a run, waving his arms wildly.

"Um, it doesn't look like he's stopping them," the *gabbai* said. "It looks like he's stopping us." The men couldn't understand the soldier's language, but they got the point. He was telling them to run away.

"*Sakhar, sakhar!* (Rocks, rocks!)" the soldier shouted

The *minyán* of men knew they had no choice. Dejected, they turned and headed back to their lodgings, keeping close to the wall to avoid the flying stones. They were not going to make it to the Kosel this time. Would they get another chance?

THE END

Epilogue: That night, after spending 73 days in Eretz Yisrael, Reb Moshe of Lelov passed away. He never made it to the Kosel.

The woman he had blessed gave birth to a son. The boy lived to be 73 years old.

*And what about the cloth used by the rebbe to plug the leaky boat? It is still in the Lelover family and has been used as the *dek tichel* (veil) for generations of *kallos*.*

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MIDRASH

Rabi Alexandri went to the crowded marketplace of Tzipori and announced: "Who wants life? Who wants life?" Everyone ran over to see what he had for them, and he recited the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 34:13), "Who is the one who wants life, who loves days of seeing goodness? Guard your tongue from evil..."

The Chafetz Chaim explained that the people thought that he had some kind of potion that guarantees good health so that they could live longer. Rabi Alexandri wanted to show them that there was something much better. By avoiding forbidden speech and using their mouths exclusively for mitzvos, they would be rewarded with a long, healthy life in this world. Besides that, each day of that long life filled with that goodness would testify in *Shamayim*, "I am date so-and-so and during my time this person spoke no *lashon hara* at all," guaranteeing an infinitely great reward for that person in the World to Come.

The Torah says, *It will be when Hashem will bring you to the land of your possession...He will give you tzara'as in your homes.* Rabi Shimon bar Yochai points out that this is a strange choice of words—should *tzara'as* be considered a gift?

He explains that before Bnei Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael, Yehoshua sent a message to all the people of Canaan, warning them that he was coming to conquer the land. He gave them three choices. They could either move away and take all their belongings, stay where they were and stop worshipping *avodah zarah*, or fight to keep the land for themselves.

Almost all the Canaanite people chose to fight, even though they knew they would lose. To spite the Jews, they hid all their treasures deep inside the stone walls of their homes where no one would ever find them. When a Jew later found *tzara'as* on the stones, he had to remove them and replace them. Then he would discover the hidden treasure, a gift from Hashem.



PARSHAH RHYME



Review the main points of the parshah with younger children, while challenging your family to complete the rhymes (use the "grammen" tune). Answers on the side!

1. This Shabbos is great and large,
2. It is when the Jews learned Who's in _____.
3. Each Jewish person tied a sheep to his bed.
4. The Egyptians saw, their faces turned beet _____.
5. The rabbi's *drashah* is quite long,
6. So we will know what's right and _____.
7. The *erez* tree is very tall,
8. The *eizov* plant is very _____.
9. He takes some of each, together with red strings,
10. And ties them all to a bird with _____.
11. After sending the living bird away,
12. He can finally enter the city and _____.
13. He shaves his hair from head to toe,
14. A week later, he makes a rerun of the _____.
15. The next day, if the price isn't steep,
16. He brings to the *kohen* three nice _____.
17. Blood and oil on his ear, thumb and toe
18. Finish the process; now he can _____.
19. In Eretz Yisrael they found houses of stoneBuilt by the non-Jews; now they were their _____.
20. But if the stones turned red or green,
21. They asked a *kohen*, "What does this _____?"
22. "Empty the house, take everything out!
23. Next week I'll tell you what it's all _____."
24. If the spot comes back after the stones are replaced,
25. Then the house comes down; such a terrible _____!

Answers: 2. change 4. red 6. wrong 8. small 10. wings 12. stay 14. show 16. sheep 18. go 20. own 22. mean 24. about 26. waste

RIDDLE ANSWERS:

1. When *tzara'as* of people or of homes is cured, it is necessary to perform the process of the two birds, *erez*, *eizov*, and red strings. This process is not needed for *tzara'as* of clothes.
2. The *tzara'as* of houses and clothes is red or green spots. The *tzara'as* of people is always some shade of white.
3. The process of determining the status of a person or garment that has *tzara'as* can take up to two weeks. For a house, it takes three weeks.
4. A *zavah* can become *tehorah* by immersing in a *mikveh* or in the ocean. A *zav* cannot; he must immerse in *mayim chaim*, like a spring or a river.
5. One reason is because of the special miracles Hashem performed for Bnei Yisrael in the final days before they left Egypt. Another is because large crowds of people are supposed to come to the shul to hear the *rav's* special *drashah*. A third reason is because the Shabbos Hagadol *drashah* is exceptionally long since there are so many *halachos* to teach about Pesach. A fourth reason is because the *haftorah* refers to the day of the future Redemption as *hayom hagadol*. Do you know any other reasons?

You may be surprised to find something familiar in every haftorah.

HAFTORAH: YOU KNOW NAVI

BACKGROUND

Malachi lived in the last generation of *nevi'im*, during the first years of the second Beis Hamikdash. *Chazal* debate who he really was – one opinion is that he was Mordechai, another is that he was Ezra, and others say that his real name was Malachi. The book of *Malachi* is appropriately placed at the end of the Prophets, and the words we read in the *haftorah* are assumed to be the very last words of *nevuah* ever recorded.

SUMMARY

Malachi scolded the people for ignoring their obligation to give *ma'aser* to the *levi'im*. Many people were afraid that if they gave away so much, they would not have enough for themselves. Malachi told them that it was just the opposite—if they gave away the *ma'aser*, they would become very wealthy. In fact, he gave them permission to test Hashem, telling them that Hashem would open the “windows of Heaven” and pour out so much blessing on them that they would get tired of saying, “We have enough.”

CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH

In the final *pasuk*, the *Navi* refers to the day of the *Geulah* as *hayom hagadol*, the great day. Moshe Rabbeinu, the first of Klal Yisrael's prophets, announced to the people on Shabbos Hagadol that Hashem was about to redeem them from slavery and take them from Egypt. This was his first message to them in Hashem's Name. In the same way, the very last message of the very last prophet was the promise that one day we will be redeemed and gathered from our *galus*. As we prepare for celebrating the first *geulah*, we are reminded of the final *Geulah*, which we hope will take place during this month of Nissan.

YOU KNOW NAVI

The final two *pesukim* of the haftorah, which are the last *pesukim* of the *Nevi'im*, are the words of a popular song (*Hinei ano-chi sholei'ach lachem es Eliyahu Hanavi... V'heishiv lev avos al banim...*). They tell how Hashem promised to send Eliyahu Hanavi one day to announce the arrival of the Mashiach. The *pasuk* there calls him Eliyah, without the *vav*. The midrash teaches that Yaakov Avinu took the *vav* away from Eliyahu and told him that he could have it back only after he fulfills this mission.

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point, though, he revealed himself to the world. From then on, he conducted himself in a princely fashion. He wore immaculate robes and rode in a fancy carriage pulled by sturdy horses with a driver dressed in fine livery.

Once, the Baal Shem Tov traveled to Polonye to spend Shabbos with his *talmid* Rav Yaakov Yosef. In that city there were some Jews who were against the chassidic movement, and they found an excuse to complain when they saw the Baal Shem Tov arrive in his splendid carriage. “A real tzaddik does not parade his importance for everyone to see,” they said. “A true tzaddik behaves with great humility.”

When the Baal Shem Tov heard this, he answered by telling a story: There was once a king who decided to search for an elixir that would enable him to live forever. A wise man came to the king and told him, “You don't need to go far or spend a lot of money. The secret elixir is to wipe away your arrogance and become a humble person.”

The king took this advice to heart and began to behave with incredible humility. He wore pauper's clothing and instead of riding in his royal carriage, he walked behind it. The more he did this, the more he felt pride in his heart. He said to himself, “Not only am I the mighty king of this land and the leader of a great army, and not only am I richer and better educated than anyone in the kingdom, but I am also the most humble person in the kingdom!”

One day, the wise advisor came by and saw how the king was behaving. He approached the king and told him, “I beg your pardon, Your Majesty, but this is not what I meant. You are the king and you should dress the way a king dresses. You should be riding around in your royal carriage while your subjects bow down to you as you pass. But in your heart, you should be the humblest of men. It is a lot harder to practice that kind of humility, but this is what it really means to be humble.”

This is why the newly healed *metzora* needs to bring both *erez* wood and an *eizov* plant. He might be an *erez*, taller, stronger, smarter, and more talented than others, and he should continue to use those gifts for good things. But he must remember that these attributes and accomplishments are gifts from Hashem; they are not reasons for him to act proud and arrogant toward others. In his heart, he must be an *eizov*, the perfect example of unassuming humility.

The *Avnei Nezer* answers our question with a different approach: Of course the *metzora* became humble after seeing that he was afflicted with ugly *tzara'as* spots and he was humiliated by being forced to leave his home. But what will happen now that he has been cured and he is about to go back to normal life? Will he once again become proud and arrogant? The Torah helps prevent that by having him bring *erez* wood and the *eizov* plant, reminding him that he might once again become haughty as the *erez* and that he has to work on himself to remain humble as the *eizov* even when he goes back to his regular routine.



= המצורע = וישפט = א-ל רחום וחנן
 לכל הערים = ישבו אחים יחדו
 = 405

The word **המצורע**, from which this *parshah* gets its name, equals the number 405. Hashem judged this person (וישפט) and gave him *tzara'as*. After he did *teshuvah*, Hashem had mercy on him (א-ל רחום וחנן) and healed him. Now that he has been healed, he will be able to enter any city (לכל הערים) he wishes, and he can once again associate with everyone (ישבו אחים יחדו).

TREATS FROM TARGUM

So much more than just translation – quick insights into Targum Onkelos!

כי תבאו אל ארץ כנען אשר אני נתן לכם לאחזה ונתתי נגע צרעת בבית ארץ אחזתכם. (ויקרא יד:לד)

When you come to the land of Canaan that I am giving you as a possession, I will place a blight of tzara'as in a home that is in the land of your possession. (Vayikra 14:34)

The version of Targum that we call *Targum Yonasan* adds an extra phrase in the middle of this *pasuk*. The Targum states: *And a person is found who built a home through robbery, I will place a blight...*

This corresponds to the midrash (*Vayikra Rabbah* 17:3) teaching that *tzara'as* comes as a punishment for the sin of stealing public property or stealing someone else's property.

By all the other forms of *tzara'as*, the Torah says *ki yihiyeh* – “when it will be that...” Only by *tzara'as* of homes the Torah says *v'nasati* – “I will place a blight of *tzara'as*.” This is because, in this case, not only has the person sinned, but the house itself has something terribly wrong with it and must be destroyed.

THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



The Torah tells us to bring the *Korban Ha'Omer* on the day after Pesach, meaning the first day of Chol Hamoed. The words used in the Torah are “the day after Shabbos,” and Moshe Rabbeinu taught us that this word “Shabbos” in this *pasuk* means Yom Tov. The wicked Tzedukim, who did not believe in *Torah sheb'al peh*, said that this meant that the *Korban Ha'Omer* has to be brought on Sunday no matter what day Yom Tov fell out. This caused a big fight, and the Tzedukim went around teaching people that our *Chachamim* don't know what they are talking about.

The *Chachamim* challenged the Tzedukim to a debate, and they succeeded in showing everyone that they were right and that the Tzedukim were the ones who didn't know what they were talking about. This happened on today's date, 8 Nissan, and for many years afterward this day was celebrated like a mini-Purim in honor of the Torah's victory.

Today is the *yahrtzeit* of the Darshan of Prague, Harav Eliyahu Shapiro. He is the author of the *Eliyahu Rabbah*, an important halachah *sefer* that is quoted countless times in the *Mishnah Berurah*. Today is also the *yahrtzeit* of Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky. He was born in Lithuania, but after his father died, he moved to Yerushalayim to live with his grandfather. He grew up to become Rosh Yeshivas Etz Chaim and author many important *sefarim*.

HALACHAH

Bedikas Chametz and Bi'ur Chametz

We are all busy these days cleaning, sweeping, and dusting so not a trace of *chametz* is left by the time Pesach begins. Hashem gave us a mitzvah of *tashbisu*, to destroy all the *chametz* in our possession by midday of Erev Pesach. The Torah also gives two mitzvos to make sure that no *chametz* will be in our possession during Pesach – *bal yeira'eh* and *bal yimatzei*.

The final steps we are supposed to take to fulfill these mitzvos are *bedikas chametz* and *bi'ur chametz*. We are supposed to perform *bedikas chametz*—inspecting all our property to make sure that no *chametz* is left anywhere—this Thursday evening. We fulfill the mitzvah of *bi'ur chametz*—destroying the last *chametz* we own—this Friday morning.

1) As soon as the stars come out on the evening before Pesach, we must perform *bedikas chametz*. Once that time comes, we are not allowed to eat or do any other work until this mitzvah has been fulfilled. In fact, we may not begin a meal or any task within a half hour of that time.

2) We search for *chametz* using a wax (or paraffin) candle to light up any dark corners or crevices where *chametz* might be hiding. We must not use two or more candles twisted together

like a Havdalah candle, since the bright fire makes it hard to see things beyond it, and because we will be afraid to move it around our furniture since it is more likely to start a fire.

3) We must search in every room where we might have taken *chametz* during the year, including cellars, basements, and attics. If there are children at home, that means everywhere! If we have a store, we must search through it also. Before we can conduct the search, we must clean up and dust the corners so that we will be able to search easily and quickly. Since people sometimes put food in their pockets, we must check for *chametz* in the pockets of clothes worn recently.

4) Before we start *bedikas chametz*, we must wash our hands and recite the *brachah* of *Al Bi'ur Chametz*. You might think that we should recite this *brachah* the next day when we burn the *chametz*, but *Chazal* taught us that the mitzvah of destroying *chametz* begins with the search—you can't say that you have destroyed all your *chametz* until you find all the *chametz* to destroy.

5) After reciting the *brachah*, begin the search right away without speaking. If possible, those conducting the search should not converse until they finish the mitzvah. If someone needs to search more than one house, he recites the *brachah* only once.

6) In some communities, the custom is for the family to hide a number of small pieces of *chametz* in the house. The rationale for this is that the family has already cleaned the house thoroughly so the person searching will not find anything and the *brachah* will be recited for nothing. Therefore, they purposely hide some *chametz* to validate the *brachah*.

It is a good idea to make sure that each of the hidden pieces of *chametz* is smaller than a *kazayis*. That way, in case one is not found, it won't be necessary to keep searching until it's found and the *bitul chametz* will take care of it.

7) Once *bedikas chametz* has been completed, the *baal habayis* recites the text of *bittul chametz*, declaring that in case he didn't find all the *chametz*, he now considers that *chametz* to be absolutely worthless, as if it did not exist. The text of *bittul chametz* is in Aramaic. Anyone who does not understand the words must recite the declaration in a language that he does understand. In English, it is: "Any leavening or *chametz* in my possession that I have not seen or destroyed is considered nonexistent, *hefker*, and no more valuable than the dirt on the ground."

8) In the morning, after burning the last *chametz*, the *baal habayis* recites *bittul chametz* again. This time he includes all *chametz*, whether he has found it or not.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

"NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF A TZADDIK. HIS SLIGHTEST ACTION CAN AFFECT THE ENTIRE WORLD, AND FOR GENERATIONS!"

– The Shpola Zeide



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