

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
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Shlita

Tazria - Hachodesh



בס"ד

# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Table of Contents

## *Torah Wellsprings - Tzria - Hachodesh*

<i>Lashon Hara</i> .....	4
<b>The Great Exchange</b> .....	6
<b>Kashrus</b> .....	8
<b>Between Purim and Pesach</b> .....	12
<i>Rosh Chodesh</i> .....	13
<b>Nisan</b> .....	14
<i>Shabbos HaChodesh</i> .....	17
<i>Zrizus</i> .....	25
<b>Pesach Preparations</b> .....	28
<i>A Segulah for Parnassah</i> .....	30

# Torah Wellsprings

## Tazria - Hachodesh

### **Lashon Hara**

This week's *parashah* discusses *tzaraas* (leprosy), the punishment for speaking *lashon hara*.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 155:) teaches, לית דעניא מכלבא ולית דעתיך מחזירא, "There is no creature poorer than a dog, and no creature wealthier than a pig." Rashi explains, "no creature is wealthier than a pig because it can eat any type of food. In addition to finding food on its own, people feed it plenty." Whereas a dog, Rashi explains, is poor. "No one has compassion on a dog to give it much food."

The Vilna Gaon *zt"l* says that the Gemara is hinting to the wealthiest and the poorest mitzvah. The wealthiest and best-kept mitzvah is the prohibition against eating חזיר. (Even

non-religious Yidden often keep this mitzvah.)

The poorest and least kept mitzvah is the dog, which represents the prohibition against speaking *lashon hara*. Despite its severity, people aren't cautious with this prohibition. The dog represents *lashon hara*, as the Gemara says, "Whoever speaks *lashon hara*, it would be proper that he be thrown to the dogs."

People's leniency isn't because the prohibition isn't severe. In fact, the Or Hachaim HaKadosh (14:9) writes, "Nothing distances a person from his Creator more than *lashon hara*." The Gemara compares *lashon hara* to the three cardinal sins: idolatry, adultery, and murder. Yet, people aren't careful with it. Every mitzvah has a *mazal*. *Lashon hara* has a poor

mazal as few people take it seriously. It's therefore called the poorest mitzvah.

The consequence of *lashon hara* is *tzaraas* (Rashi 14:4). *Tzaraas* can appear either on one's skin, clothing, or on the walls of his home, but the main *tzaraas*, Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* said, is on one's soul. We cannot see this aspect of *tzaraas*, but *tzaraas* is present in the *neshamah*.

Today people don't get *tzaraas*, yet it does still exist in the realm of the soul.

If someone sees *tzaraas* on the walls of his home, the owner of that home should go to a *kohen* and say, כִּנֹּעַ נִרְאָה לִי בְּבֵית, "I saw something that appears like *tzaraas* in my home" (14:35).

Rashi writes, "Even a Torah scholar who is certain that it is *tzaraas*, shouldn't tell the *kohen* with certainty that he saw *tzaraas*. He should say כִּנֹּעַ נִרְאָה לִי, 'It appears like *tzaraas*.'"

Why can't he say, "I saw *tzaraas* "? Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* explains that the *tzaraas* that's seen with the physical eyes is only a reflection of the primary plague deep within him on his *neshamah*. Therefore, one says, כִּנֹּעַ נִרְאָה לִי בְּבֵית, "I saw something that appears like *tzaraas*" because he hasn't seen the actual *tzaraas*, only a reflection of it.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* writes (quoting early scholars) that in our times, *tzaraas* doesn't show up as a white mark on the skin or as a red blotch on one's clothing. Today, the mark of *tzaraas* is poverty.

The Beis HaLevi *zt'l* would often open his *tabak pushkah* (snuffbox) and immediately close it. One of his students was curious about this, so when he had the opportunity, he opened the snuffbox, and he found the letters שִׁפּוֹ שִׁמּוֹן שְׁמוֹן written inside. He asked the Beis HaLevi about this. The Beis HaLevi replied that they are *roshei teivos* of שׁוֹמֵר פֵּיו



ולשונו שומר מצרות נפשו, "Someone who guards his tongue is protecting himself from troubles." The Beis HaLevi would open his snuffbox, read the message, and remember to be careful with his speech. You save yourself from a lot of trouble when you are careful with your speech.<sup>1</sup>

### The Great Exchange

The *Chovos Halevavos* (*Shaar HaKniah* 7) reveals that when a person speaks *lashon hara*, an exchange occurs. The speaker's mitzvos go to the person he spoke against, and the *aveiros* of the slandered person go to the speaker.

The *Chovos Halevavos* writes, "If someone speaks *lashon hara* on you, tell him 'Don't speak about me, my

brother. Have mercy on your good deeds, so you don't lose them.' It's been told about one of the chassidim who sent a bowl filled with fruits to the person who spoke *lashon hara* on him with a note attached that read, 'The gifts — your mitzvos — that you sent me [when you spoke *lashon hara* on me] have arrived. I express my gratitude to you with this bowl.' Another chassid said, 'Many people will come to their judgment (in heaven), and will be shown their good deeds, and they will find among them many mitzvos they never performed. They will say, 'We never did these.' They will be told, 'They were performed by the people who spoke *lashon hara* on you.' On the other hand, those who spoke *lashon*

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1. Rebbe Uri of Streisk zy'a said, "When a person has an urge to say something forbidden and he holds back it's as though he fasted eighty-four days. Rebbe Ahron of Belz zy'a added, "And I say, *nach un nach, un nach*," which means that it's like fasting for eighty-four days, and much, much more than that.

*hara* will discover that they are missing mitzvos. They will be told, 'You lost them when you spoke *lashon hara* on this person and that person...' Some people will find *aveiros* that they never committed. They will complain, 'We never did these *aveiros*.' They will be

answered, 'These were given to you because of *ploni* and *ploni* whom you spoke against. As it states, והשב לשכנינו שבעתים אל חיקם חרפתם... אשר חרפוך. "Return to our neighbors' bosom seven-fold the disgrace that they disgraced you...' (*Tehillim* 79:12)."<sup>2</sup>

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2. When Moshe saw that there are people who slander among the Jewish people, Moshe said, *אכן נודע הדבר*, "Now the matter is understood" (*Shemos* 2:14). Rashi explains, "Now I have the answer to the question that bothered me. I wondered what sin did the Jewish people do more than the seventy nations that they are punished with back-breaking labor? But now I see that they deserved it (because they speak *lashon hara*)."

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* explains that Moshe understood that because of their slander, they lost their merits (as the *Chovos Halevavos* explains) and therefore they were punished with slavery.

Halachah teaches that if someone asks you for forgiveness, you shouldn't be cruel, and you should forgive them (see *Shulchan Aruch* 606:1). This also applies to *lashon hara*. If someone spoke *lashon hara* against you, and then asks you for forgiveness, you should forgive him.

The Ben Ish Chai *zt'l* asks: The *lashon hara* that was spoken against you redeemed you from all your *aveiros* and you received the speaker's mitzvos. Who would want to forgive and lose all that good? Wouldn't it be wiser not to forgive the speaker of *lashon hara*, so you can remain with his mitzvos, and he remains with your *aveiros*?

The Ben Ish Chai answers that you will also lose all your *aveiros*

Nevertheless, all his good deeds will be returned to him when he does *teshuvah*. As it states, זאת תהיה תורת המצורע ביום טהרתו (Vayikra 14:1). Reb Zvi Kaziglover zy'a explains, זאת תהיה תורת המצורע, the Torah and the other good deeds of the *metzora* will return to him, ביום טהרתו, when he does *teshuvah* and accepts upon himself to stop speaking *lashon hara*.

## Kashrus

*Parashas Tazria* begins with, אשה כי תזריע וילדה זכר, the

laws relating to childbirth. These *halachos* follow *parashas Shmini*, which speaks about the rules of *kashrus*. The Ramban explains that the juxtaposition of *kashrus* and childbirth hints that caution with *kashrus* results in good children.

The *Mesilas Yesharim* (11) writes, "One must be very careful with *kashrus* because people yearn for tasty foods and there is also the issue of cost. Those who are lenient when they should be stringent are

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by forgiving. Because the Gemara says, כל המעביר על מדותיו מעבירין לו על, "Whoever forgives others, his sins are forgiven" (*Yoma* 23). You lost your *aveiros* when someone spoke *lashon hara* on you, but if you forgive him, you will also lose all your *aveiros*. So, you may as well forgive your fellow man.

When people spoke *lashon hara* on you, they gave you their *mitzvos*. Nevertheless, you should forgive them. This is called *השבת אבידה*, returning lost items (because you are returning to the speakers of *lashon hara* all the *mitzvos* they lost due to their *lashon hara*). The reward for *השבת אבידה* is in accordance with the value of the item returned. So, when one forgives, and gives back all the *mitzvos* he earned from the *lashon hara*, he will earn a great *mitzvah* of *השבת אבידה*.

Therefore, *Shulchan Aruch* advises one not to be cruel, and forgive his fellow man because by forgiving you don't lose anything at all.



harming their souls. The *aveirah* of eating non-kosher foods is worse than other sins because the food enters the body and becomes part of his flesh. A person with intelligence will consider non-kosher foods like poison or like food that has poison mixed into it. If there is just a slight chance that poison is mixed into his food, would he dare eat it? Certainly not! If he would, people would consider him insane. Non-kosher food is the same; it's poison for the heart and soul. Therefore, how can an intelligent person eat something possibly not kosher?"

The *Shach* (*Yorah Deiah* 81:26) writes, "When a child eats food that is forbidden by rabbinic decree, according to halachah his father isn't required to stop him (see *Orach Chaim* 343). Nevertheless, the father *should* stop his child from eating such foods because it will harm the child later on in life. Non-kosher food

is מטמאם הלב, shuts off the heart, and גורם לו טבע רע, and generates a bad nature in the child."

The *Pri Chadosh* (*Yorah Deiah* 81:26) elaborates, "Chazal tell us that קטן אוכל and נבלות אין מצווין להפרישו, when a child eats non-kosher meat, we aren't obligated to stop him. Although this is the halachah, you *should* stop him because non-kosher food will harm him in his older years, and it will create a bad nature in him. The result will be that he will go out לתרבות רעה, and stray from religion. In our generation, we are not careful with these matters, and that is the reason children go off לתרבות רעה and most of them are עיי פנים שבדור, chutzpadik, and their hearts don't fear Heaven. Even if we rebuke them, they can't accept *mussar*... Who was greater than Elisha ben Avuyah (called Acher) who ended up sinning? The *Yerushalmi* (*Chagigah*) tells us that this happened because when

his mother was pregnant with him, she passed a house of *avodah zarah* and smelled what they were cooking there, and that smell entered the child's body like poison. Therefore, one must be careful with these matters."<sup>3</sup>

A mother complained to Reb Akiva Eigar *zt'l* that her son suddenly stopped understanding Torah. Reb Akiva Eigar asked her

whether the child ate something that wasn't kosher. She replied, "He only eats at home, and we are very careful with *kashrus*."

Reb Akiva Eigar asked to speak with the boy. In their conversation, Reb Akiva Eigar discovered that the boy ate at a certain wedding, which the rabbanim of that generation forbade people from attending.<sup>4</sup>

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**3.** *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yorah Dei'ah* 81:7) states, "Whenever possible, you shouldn't hire an Egyptian woman to nurse your child, because the milk of non-Jewish women clogs the heart and generates a bad nature in the child."

This is as Rashi (*Shmos* 2:7) writes, "[Basyah] brought the infant Moshe to many Egyptian women to nurse him, but Moshe wouldn't nurse from them because Moshe would eventually speak with the *Shechinah*."

The *Kedushas Levi* teaches that in the future, every Yid will be a prophet, as it states, *וַיִּבְרָא בְנֵיכֶם וּבָנוֹתֵיכֶם*, "Your sons and your daughters will prophesize," and therefore, every Yid must be careful to avoid non-kosher foods.

**4.** The Baal HaTanya wrote a *teshuvah* in reference to that wedding (*Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, vol.4, *teshuvah* 39) and he states there that the meat at this wedding will be considered *neveilah*.

The following is the Baal HaTanya's responsa:

"I was frightened to hear what happened nearby. Matters that

Reb Akiva Eigar told the boy that this was the root of his problem and urged him to be more careful in the future. Reb Akiva Eigar blessed him to be able to understand the Torah once again.<sup>5</sup>

should never happen among Yidden have occurred. A *get* that was *pasul* from the Torah was used [because it didn't state the wife's correct name]. Even if when she was in her crib, she was named רחל, nevertheless, now everyone calls her ראשי. Furthermore, it isn't even certain that she was ever named רחל. Therefore, you must prevent the one who gave the *get* from remarrying, *chas veshalom*, until he gives a kosher divorce to his wife, according to the Torah. The *get* shouldn't be given against her will, *chas veshalom*, and all money matters between them should be settled with a good agreement before the divorce. Send forth a decree that there may be no *chuppah*. [The husband may not remarry until the divorce is given]. Use all the rights and freedoms that the government has given us [to enforce this]. Also, set forth a decree to the *shochtim* that they mustn't *shecht* cattle or poultry for the wedding, *chas veshalom*. If they won't obey, *chas veshalom*, their *shechitah* will have the din of גבילה, as this is the law of those who transgress [see *Yorah Dei'ah* 1:11]. And for those who obey, everything shall be good for them. They shall receive good blessings from the good Hashem."

5. The Or HaChaim HaKadosh (*Vayikra* 18:2) writes, "I heard that Reb Yitzchak Luria (the Arizal) said that sometimes a person changes and he doesn't know the reason. He wonders, "How did I change so much?" The Arizal teaches that it happened because he ate food that had bad in it or that carried an evil soul of a *gilgul*... When one eats this bad spark or this bad soul, it changes him from being good to being bad. Corruption will increase in him. In contrast, when one refrains from eating forbidden foods, he will desire those matters that are important for the *neshamah*. As it says, לעשות, רצונך אלקי הפצתי, "I want to do you will, Hashem," and the reason is תורתך בתוך מעי, 'Your Torah is in my stomach' (*Tehillim* 40:9) and I am careful only to eat kosher foods.

## Between Purim and Pesach

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Adar* 4:10) writes:

"Chazal tell us that we must inquire about and teach the laws of Pesach thirty days before Pesach. The *poskim* point out that the thirty days begin on Purim. This certainly isn't a coincidence." Clearly, there is a connection between these two holidays.

Bnei Yissaschar explains that on Purim, we begin the process of *mechiyas Amalek*, and during the next thirty days we are occupied with the mitzvah of *biur chametz*. When we complete this mitzvah on *erev Pesach*, we have completed the mitzvah of eradicating Amalek.

The Bnei Yissaschar writes:

"I think this can be explained with a lesson written by the holy tzaddik, the author of *Chesed l'Avraham*. He explains that

every year, thirty days before Pesach, Hashem compassionately redeems His children. Their souls have sunken into *tumah* because of their sins, and during these thirty days Hashem takes them out, each day a little more. On the fourteenth day of Nisan, they have exited from *tumah*, and on the night of the 15th they are totally freed.

"We can now explain why we begin studying the laws of Pesach on Purim. It is because Purim is the day of *mechiyas Amalek*. Furthermore, we have heard from scholars of previous generations (and it is written in the *Zohar*) that the war and the destruction of Amalek will occur on *erev Pesach*.

"Now it is understood: The destruction of Amalek begins on Purim and is completed on *erev Pesach*. These thirty days have 720 hours, which is *gematriya* three times עמל"ק. This is because we destroy Amalek

on all three planes: Amalek's thoughts, speech, and deeds.

"This explains why *bedikas chametz* is on the fourteenth of Nisan, and the Mishnah calls it *אור לארבע עשר*, 'the light (night) of the fourteenth.' It is called light because during this time we leave the darkness and come into the light.

"The *rishonim* ask why we don't say *Shehechyanu* on the mitzvah of *biur chametz* (see *Tur, Orach Chaim* 432). According to our conversation, it is understood. We say *Shehechyanu* at the beginning of *biur chametz*, which is on Purim."

The *Shehechyanu* that we say on Purim is the *Shehechyanu* for *biur*

*chametz*. The process of *mechiyas Amalek* begins on Purim and is completed on erev Pesach.

These are profound lessons, but at a minimum, we understand that these are holy days, a time when we become purified from our *tumah*. And *b'ezras Hashem*, a time when we will merit the complete eradication of Amalek.<sup>6</sup>

### **Rosh Chodesh**

The Midrash (*Shemos* 15:2) states:

*Malachim* ask Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "Ribono Shel Olam, when will You make *yom tov*?"

Hakadosh Baruch Hu replies, "I and you will

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6. The *Zohar* (vol.2 183:) calls *matzah*, *מִיכְלָא דְאִסְוִיתָא*, which means food that heals. Rebbe Meir of Permishlan *zt'l* said that before a surgery, doctors tell their patients to fast. Similarly, Pesach is like an surgery because we consume *מִיכְלָא דְאִסְוִיתָא*, the *matzah* that heals us. We have to prepare ourselves for this operation, and the preparation begins during these thirty days before Pesach.

agree to whatever the Jewish nation decides."

Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to Bnei Yisrael, "In the past, it was in My hands, from now on it is in your hands. When you say yes, it is yes. When you say no, it is no. החודש הזה לכם, the new month is up to you. If you decide to have a leap year, I accede to your judgment."

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l taught this Midrash and expressed, "Everything was given over to us! Everything is in our hands! If a would appreciate who he is and his potential, he wouldn't waste a moment."

החודש הזה לכם teaches us a fundamental concept. Hashem gave over *rosh chodesh*, leap years, and ultimately everything into our hands. Hashem and the *malachim* take counsel from and hearken to the decisions of Klal Yisrael.

This Midrash is also a lesson in the Jewish nation's power of tefillah. As the

says, "When you say yes, it is yes. When you say no, it is no." Immense power and influence were given to the Jewish nation.

We say in *Ashrei* (*Tehillim* 145:12), להודיע לבני האדם גבורותיו, "To inform the humans of His mighty deeds." Literally, גבורותיו, "His mighty deeds" refers to Hashem. We should reveal to the world Hashem's wonders and mighty deeds. However, the Yesod v'Shores HaAvodah zt'l says that גבורותיו refers to the Jewish nation. The *pasuk* is saying that we must reveal to them their own strengths, abilities, and potential (גבורותיו). We must tell them that they have the power of tefillah and, as the Chidushei HaRim expressed, "Everything was given to us! Everything is in our hands!"

## Nisan

*Shulchan Aruch* (429:2) writes, "We don't say



*tachanun* the entire month of Nisan."

The *Mishnah Berurah* explains, "The twelve *nesi'im* brought *korbanos* [on the first twelve days of Nisan], and the day one brings a *korban* is his *yom tov*. Then there's *erev Pesach*, *Pesach*, and *isru chag* when we don't say *tachanun*. And since most of the month is holy, we make the rest of the month holy [and don't say *tachanun* the entire month]."

The *Shlah HaKodesh* writes another reason we don't say *tachanun* during the month of Nisan. It is because each day in Nisan is like *rosh chodesh*. This is

alluded to in the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 12:2), החודש הזה לכם ראש חדשים, "This month is for you *rosh chodeshim*." The entire month is holy like *rosh chodesh*.<sup>7</sup>

The *Agra d'Kala* (*Pikudei*) teaches (in the name of Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zt'l*) that the first twelve days of Nisan represent the twelve months of the year. א ניסן represents the month of Nisan, ב ניסן represents Iyar, ג ניסן represents Sivan, and so on.

The following story is renowned among the *Chozeh's* students (and is written in *Agra d'Kalah*, *Pikudei*):

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7. The *Ahavas Shalom* *zt'l* writes, "Don't think that it is only in Nisan [that the entire month is like *rosh chodesh*]. It is the same with all months. Because when one observes *rosh chodesh* properly the entire month becomes like *rosh chodesh*. As [the saying goes], גופא בתר רישא אזיל, the body follows the head. [If the head, *rosh chodesh*, is good, this influences the entire month]. Therefore, it is proper for the wise to serve Hashem properly on *rosh chodesh*, for that will make the entire month good. Even if just one hour on *rosh chodesh* is kept properly, the entire month will be good [and imbued with the holiness of *rosh chodesh*].

The first twelve days of Nisan, which corresponds to the twelve months of the year, the Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* would perceive what would happen that year, and he would make a note of it. On א ניסן he would write what will happen during the month of Nisan. ב ניסן he would write what will happen that year in Iyar, ג ניסן he would write what will happen in Sivan, and so on. Understandably, his predictions were always correct.

The final year of his life, he wrote what he perceived with his *ruach hakodesh* would occur that year until the month Av, but he didn't write what would happen after that. His students wondered about that. But when he was *niftar* that year in Av, his students understood why he didn't write past that month.

We must know that Nisan is a very holy time, and we should strive to use these days well to fill

them with Torah, tefillah, and good deeds.

The Avnei Nezer *zt'l* writes in a letter (see *Avnei Nezer, Orach Chaim* 336):

"Shalom to you, my honored friend, the renowned *gaon* and genius, Reb Chaim, who was previously the *rav* of Moscow:

"You asked that I answer some of your questions regarding Pesach. That isn't a small request because these are priceless days — each hour is like a day. Nevertheless, since you expressed your strong desire that I reply to you and you wrote that it will be your *simchas yom tov*, I devoted some time to write this letter."

In the Avnei Nezer's words, אם כי הקשה לשאול כי ימים, "You asked me for something difficult because these days are extremely valuable. One hour is like a day."

The Avnei Nezer's son, the Shem MiShmuel *zt'l*, testified that in Nisan, "My father was, מסובב והולך בעולמות, העליונים, walking about in the upper worlds." He was more in heaven than on earth (*Avir HaRo'im* 264).

The Shem MiShmuel once heard his father say that he doesn't need to sleep in Nisan due to the holiness of those days (*Avir HaRo'im* 299).

While the entire month of Nisan is special, there is special importance to *rosh chodesh Nisan*. Rebbe Tzaddok HaCohen *zt'l* (*Pri Tzaddik, HaChodesh* 6) writes, "The holiness of the entire month lies in *rosh chodesh*."

In the year 5747, on the night of *rosh chodesh Nisan*, I attended a family *chasunah*, and I expressed my surprise to a relative that the wedding was scheduled so close to Pesach. "It is a difficult time. People are very busy now."

My relative replied, "The *mechutanim* asked [your grandfather] Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov to suggest a date for the *chasunah*, and he said '*Rosh chodesh Nisan* is the most beautiful day of the year.'"

### **Shabbos HaChodesh**

Shabbos HaChodesh can be translated as "The Shabbos of Renewal." It is a time to improve our ways and become like new again.

Chassidim of the Shinover Rav *zt'l* often came to him for Shabbos Parah. One year, Reb Eliyahu Lazar *zt'l* was with the Shinover Rav for Shabbos Parah. On Sunday, he went to the Rebbe to *gezegebenen* (to ask permission to go home/take leave), the Shinover Rav commented, "You are leaving already? So soon?"

The *gabai* understood that the Rebbe wanted Reb Lazar to stay longer, so he quickly spoke up for Reb Lazar. "No, Reb Lazar will

still be here for a few more days."

"That's good," the Shinover Rav replied. "Because next Shabbos is Shabbos HaChodesh, and it is very important for a chassid to be with his rebbe on Shabbos HaChodesh. On this Shabbos, one has the potential to become a new person."

Reb Lazar would speak nostalgically of that Shabbos. He said it's impossible to describe what he saw that Shabbos. He only revealed one thing: When he davened אהבה רבה in *Shacharis*, he was suddenly overcome by emotion. He left the beis medresh and cried profusely from *deveikus*. He felt that he had become a new person.

Everyone can renew themselves, no matter the level one is at. The Beis Avraham *zt'l* points out that the mitzvah החודש הזה לכם was given to the Jewish nation when they were still in Mitzrayim, at the 49<sup>th</sup> gate of impurity. From that lowly place, Hashem told them, החודש הזה לכם, that they can start fresh and become like new again.

Another hint to this concept is from the moon itself. The moon becomes smaller and smaller until it disappears. And then a new moon emerges. This teaches us that a person can fall to very low levels, and from there, he can begin again.<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, the moon constantly renews itself. Each month the moon disappears and gets

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8. The Beis Avraham *zt'l* writes, "החדש הזה לכם ראש", means the month of Nisan is *mesugal* to correct one's ראש, thoughts. Even if his thoughts were filled with temptations or lacking *emunah*, *rachmana litzlan*, he can become like a new person this month."

renewed again. This teaches us that we cannot expect to renew ourselves just once and think that this will be enough. Change is difficult, and people tend to revert to their old ways. Therefore, when we fall, we must pick ourselves up and try again.

Avodas Hashem should also be new. As Chazal tell us, "Each day, the Torah [and mitzvos] should be in your eyes like brand new."

On the *pasuk* (Tehillim 71:9), אל תשליכי לעת זקנה, "Don't cast me away in my old age" the Baal Shem Tov zt'l explains that Dovid HaMelech prayed that the mitzvos shouldn't become "old" to him. He shouldn't feel, "been there, done that." Rather he should approach each mitzvah like it is his first time performing it.

People get into routines: this is the way they daven, and this is the way they act. But, the Torah says, החדש, the ability to become like new, לכם, is in your

hands. You don't have to remain the same forever.

The Gemara tells the story of Reb Elazar ben Arach, who forgot his Torah (until the *chachamim* prayed for him that he should remember). It seems that he even forgot how to read. When he read, החודש הזה לכם, החרש he accidentally read it, החרש "Their hearts were deaf."

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l explains that a "deaf heart" represents falling to low levels until the heart becomes deaf, emotionless. Nevertheless, from that fallen state, the Torah encourages us, החודש הזה לכם, you can renew yourselves.

Chazal (*Brachos* 4:) teach us, "whoever says *Ashrei* three times daily is a בן עולם; he will merit Olam HaBa. Reb Zalman Brizel zt'l explained that this is because we conclude *Ashrei* with the words, ואנחנו נברך י"ה "We will praise Hashem from now..." The keyword is מעתה, to begin

from now. When one starts anew three times each day – always seeking to serve Hashem better than before – he will certainly merit Olam HaBa.

Hashem creates the world anew each day, as we say in the tefillah, המחדש בטובו בכל יום תמיד מעשה בראשית. And just as the world is created anew, a person can tell himself that he is also a new person, and therefore, he doesn't have to act today as he did yesterday.

Reb Shimshon Pinkus zt'l explained this concept with a *mashal*:

There was a *baal chesed* who loved giving people rides in his car. He lived in a small village where the general population was poor. Very few people owned cars. The village's only supermarket was located on top of a steep hill, and it was difficult to get there by foot. This *baal chesed* would spend a lot of time driving people up and down the mountain, to

help them go to the supermarket.

Eventually, due to wear and tear, the car needed several significant repairs. People had to get out and push the car to get it started, and the air-conditioning wasn't working either.

One day, the townspeople decided to pitch in to restore the car. One evening, they gave the *baal chesed* some excuse why they wanted to borrow the car, and in the morning, the car was back in his garage, all restored.

Later that morning, people came to get a ride with him up the hill to the supermarket. "Everyone, please go out and begin pushing the car," he announced.

"We don't have to," they told him. "Just turn the ignition."

He did so, and lo and behold, the motor hummed.



"Now turn on the air-conditioning," they told him.

"The air-conditioning doesn't work," he reminded them. But he tried anyway, and this time it worked.

Externally, the car looked the same as before, but it wasn't the same. The inside was completely repaired.

The *nimshal* is that when we wake up in the morning, we are new people. We aren't the same as last night. But we don't realize it, so we live in the manner we had lived in the past. We don't realize that we have strengths and potential that we didn't possess the day before. Perhaps yesterday you couldn't daven well, and today you can. Maybe yesterday you didn't understand Torah, and now you do. So try again and discover your new strength.

At nighttime, elephant trainers tie the elephants to wooden poles to prevent them from escaping. The elephant is strong enough to pull free from the pole, but it doesn't try. And that is because when it was a young, small calf, it tried to pull away from the wooden pole, and it couldn't. It has never tried again since then. It doesn't realize that now it is much greater, larger, and has strengths that it didn't have in the past.

We are similar because we tried to do things in the past and failed, and since then, we don't try again. We don't realize that we have grown since that time. Past letdowns shouldn't prevent us from trying again. Perhaps this time we will succeed.

An old wheelchair-bound Lubavitzer chassid was at a *farbrengen* with chassidim, and after the *farbrengen* he tried to stand up. Friends ran over to

him, "Do you need something?"

"No. I'm fine," he replied and then tried to stand up again.

The elderly chassid explained, "I don't need anything, but this I know: after a *farbrengen* we can't stay in the same place. It's time to move on."

The lesson for us in Chodesh Nisan is to move on. We can't be the same as before.

A poor man stayed at the home of a wealthy man for Shabbos. During the meal, the poor man said, "Reb Berel, you know how hard my plight is. Perhaps you can give me some money?"

The wealthy Reb Berel replied, "We can speak about it. But now it's Shabbos. Come to me tomorrow."

The poor man saw that his host was in a benevolent

mood, so he added, "A loan would help me a lot."

"That is also possible. Let's speak about it tomorrow."

"I have an idea. Perhaps you can make me a partner in your business."

"That is also an option. We'll speak tomorrow."

The poor man left the home feeling like a millionaire. He couldn't wait for the next day when they would discuss these ideas.

He came to Reb Berel's office early Sunday morning and said, "Now, further to our discussion yesterday, we should discuss your generous gift, loan, and me becoming your partner. Which do you want to discuss first?"

Reb Berel replied, "We spoke about it on Shabbos, but it isn't Shabbos anymore, and all the deals are off."

This is how it appears when we make *kabalos tovos* on Shabbos, or other holy times. The next day, it is all but forgotten. We must make sure that (*Esther 9:13*), ינתן גם מחר ליהודים, also "tomorrow" we should keep the *kabbalos*.

The Klausenberg Rebbe *zt'l* once spoke asked the *mashgiach* of his yeshiva why he threw out a certain *bachur*. The *mashgiach* described the *bachur*'s behavior to the Rebbe, and added, "It's impossible to keep him in the yeshiva if he acts like that."

"That's true," the Rebbe agreed, "but I spoke to the *bachur*, and he told me that he's prepared to change."

The *mashgiach* replied, "He promised me about a thousand times he will

improve. But, so far, he never kept his word."

The Rebbe grabbed his white beard and said, "I promised Hashem more than a thousand times that I will improve. I haven't done so yet. In your opinion, should I give up? *Chas veshalom!* As long as a Yid lives, there's hope that he will improve his ways."

It states (*Devarim 16:22*), ולא תקים לך מצבה אשר שנה ה' אלקיך. A מצבה is something that is fixed and doesn't change. אשר שנה ה', Hashem hates that. Hashem loves those who are ready to take action and improve their ways.<sup>9</sup>

People asked Rebbe Ben Tzion of Bobov *zt'l*, "How long does a person remain young?"

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9. When the Pnei Menachem of Gur *zt'l* was *niftar*, people found approximately 200 siddurim in his possession. He changed siddurim often, apparently to bring freshness into his *tefillos*. The depths of the Pnei Menachem's ways are beyond us, but it is a reminder to constantly seek renewal in *avodas Hashem*.

He replied, "As long as one is prepared to change his ways, he is still young."<sup>10</sup>

Rabbeinu Nisim Gaon (quoted in *Seder HaDoros, Tana'im and Amaro'im*, letter 'i) tells the following story:

Nosson, a sinful man, once had the opportunity to commit a terrible sin, but he controlled himself. A few days later, Rabbi Akiva saw him riding a donkey, and Rabbi Akiva

perceived that Nosson's face shone like the midday sun, and above his head was a halo of holiness. Rabbi Akiva asked his students, "Who is that man?"

"It's Nosson, the lowly sinner."

"Do you see anything above his head?"

"No. We don't see anything."

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**10.** Fins and scales are the signs of a kosher fish. Fish use them to swim against the current. Also, the *Yerushalmi* (*Taanis* 4:5) says that a sign of a kosher fish is that can swim against the current kosher fish.

This teaches us that the description of a kosher Yid is someone who can go against the current.

People are influenced by their surroundings. Therefore, fortunate are those who spend their days among good influences.

But even in the best environments, there will be some things that aren't perfect. You have to be able to discern between the good and the bad, and when necessary, swim against the current in order to do Hashem's will.

Also, a person has his own habits. Changing them is like swimming against the current. It isn't easy, but keep trying, because it is possible. You can turn over a new leaf, go against the current, and do as you know you ought to.

"Bring him to me, quickly."

Rabbi Akiva said to Nosson, "My son, an aura of light is glowing on top of your head, so I know you will merit Olam HaBa. Tell me, what special deed did you perform?"

Nosson answered that he had recently refrained from committing a grave sin.

Reb Akiva exclaimed, "Indeed, because of this great deed, Hashem placed an aura of light above your head. This is your reward in this world. But, in the next world, it will be much more than that. Now, my son, listen to me. Sit before me, and I will teach you Torah."

Nosson became Rabbi Akiva's student. His heart opened for Torah, and within a short time, he became a scholar, the holy *tana*, Reb Nosson Tzutzisa, mentioned in Chazal.

We can learn many things from this story. One is that it is never too late to begin. Despite his late start, Nosson Tzutzisa made a turnaround and became a great tzaddik and scholar.

We should take this lesson from Shabbos HaChodesh: A person can change. And now is a good time to do so.

### **Zrizus**

It states (Shemos 12:17), *ושמרתם את המצות*, "You shall safeguard the matzos." Rashi explains that caution must be taken while preparing the matzos that they shouldn't become chametz.

Rashi brings another explanation, "Don't read the word 'matzos.' Read it 'mitzvos.' Just as we must guard the matzah from becoming chametz, so too must we guard the mitzvos that they shouldn't become chametz. This means that when a mitzvah comes your way, do it

immediately, and don't procrastinate."

A poor man came to the door of Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zt'l* and asked for matzos for Pesach. The only matzos in the house were the *shemurah matzos* which Rebbe Dovid Lelover planned to use for the Seder. Reb Dovid didn't hesitate and gave away those special matzos.

When the family found out, they were shocked. "What will you use for the Seder?"

"I will use regular matzos."

"But you wanted *shemurah matzos* for the Seder!"

Rebbe Dovid replied, "There are two explanations for *שמרתם את המצות*. One is to guard the matzos from chametz. The other explanation is to perform mitzvos right away. This time, I kept Rashi's second explanation, and I helped the poor man right away."

As we discussed above, Nisan is an auspicious time for new beginnings, a time for change. To succeed, you need the *middah* of *zrizus*. There is a lot to achieve in life, but to do so, we need *zrizus*.

The Shlah (*Shaar HaOsiyos* ו' זריזות, quoting *Maalos HaMiddos*) writes, "Know, my son, *zrizus* is very important. Man was created to be a *zariz*. It states (*Vayikra* 18:5), 'ושמרתם את חקתי... וחי בהם', 'You shall observe My decrees... by which he shall live.' וחי means that you should keep the mitzvos with *חיות* וזריזות, vivacity and agility and not with laziness... In *Masechta Brachos*, where it discusses the laws of *כוס של ברכה*, the cup of wine used for mitzvos, one of the criteria is that it should be *חי*. Rashi translates, *פרישקא*, fresh. This means it should be hale and hearty wine, fresh wine, not sour."

The *Avnei Nezer zt'l* taught, "All *tzaros* and poverty among Yidden are because they learn Gemara



with laziness, almost like they are ready to fall asleep. If people listen to me and study Torah with *chiyus* and joy, I guarantee that everyone in Klal Yisrael would have *parnassah*" (*Avir HaRo'im* 113).

Rebbe Tzadok HaKohen (*Pri Tzaddik, Sivan* 4) writes, "People say in the name of the Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* that he was jealous of the inspiration that young people have when they enter the gates of chassidus. As the Rokeiach writes, איז חזק בחסידות בתחלתו, 'Nothing is stronger than chassidus at its early stages.'" The *zrizus* and the vigor these people have is admirable and something to emulate.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 6:) states, "One should run to learn Torah, even on Shabbos, as it states (*Hoshei'a* 11:10), אחרי ה' ילכו כאריה שאג, "They will follow after Hashem like a lion will roar.'" The Chidushei HaRim asks that the *pasuk* states, ילכו, which means walking. Where is it

implied that one should run?

The answer is, the final words are, כאריה שאג, "Like a lion will roar." An older person walking slowly in the snow with his stick who suddenly hears a lion roaring will drop his stick and start running. The *pasuk* teaches us that one should follow Hashem as though there's a lion nearby. He should run to keep the mitzvos and run away from sin like someone running away from a lion.

The Shlah HaKadosh (beginning *Misechta Pesachim*) writes, "In my humble opinion, it is a good custom to read the *nasi* of each day." The Mishkan was erected Rosh Chodesh Nisan, and the *nesi'im* brought *korbanos* to inaugurate the *mizbeiach*. During the first twelve days of Nisan, it is a good custom to read the *korban* the *nasi* offered up that day.

The Torah calls them נשאים (*Shemos* 35:27) without a י"ד. Rashi explains that they lost the י"ד because they weren't זריזים, swift to bring their donations to the Mishkan. When Hashem told Bnei Yisrael to donate to the Mishkan, the *nesi'im* said, "Let everyone donate what they want, and we will give whatever is missing." But that isn't the way of *zrizim*. They should have been quick to donate right away. They, therefore, lost a י"ד from their title and are called נשאים. To correct that error, they were the first ones to bring *korbanos* for the חנוכת המזבח.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* said that specifically the letter י"ד is missing from their title because they weren't *zrizim*, and that means they lacked the

essence and foundation of being a Yid (י"ד).

## Pesach Preparations

Rebbe Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev *zy'a* once saw women cleaning and scrubbing their homes for Pesach. He said, "May the *malachim* that come forth from קשר"ק, which is an acronym for קראצין שאייערין רייבן קערין (different terms for cleaning and scouring) go up before Hashem's throne and arouse mercy for the Jewish nation."<sup>11</sup>

Reb Shimshon Ahron Polanski, the Tepliker Rav *zt'l*, once came into his beis medresh in Yerushalayim a few days before Pesach and found a full beis medresh. Everyone was learning with *hasmadah*, as though they had no worries or obligations. He went up

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11. In the Rosh Hashanah *machzorim*, it states, "May all the *malachim* that came forth from קשר"ק (which stands for תקיעה שברים תרועה) (תקיעה) go up before Hashem's holy throne to say kind words about us, so our sins will be atoned for."

to the *bimah* and announced, "Rabboisai! There are many *almanos* (widows) in Yerushalayim; they need help cleaning for Pesach."

Everyone got up, eager to help. The Tepliker Rav explained that he was referring to their own wives. "Your wives need your help. Why are you letting them struggle alone at home as if they were widows? Why aren't you helping them get ready for *yom tov*?!"

The Kav HaYashar (90) writes, "I received a *kabalah* that for every exertion one invests in honor of Pesach, and as he toils, he becomes tired and exhausted, this kills all *mazikim* called נגעי בני אדם. Therefore, when one works for Pesach, it rectifies

very severe sins. The heart knows the bitter truth that almost none of us are clean from severe sins, therefore, everyone is obligated to fix what he can, and Hashem, with His immense mercy and kindness, will accept the thoughts of the Jewish people, His nation, and redeem us quickly."<sup>12</sup>

Rebbe Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev *zy'a* said, "By cleaning for Pesach, one should be able to attain *ruach hakadosh*, only anger (which is prevalent while cleaning for Pesach) ruins it."

The *pasuk* states, אלֹהֵי מִסְכָּה לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לָךְ אֶת חֵג הַמִּצּוֹת תִּשְׁמֹר, "Don't make molten gods. Be cautious to keep the Pesach holiday ..." (*Shemos* 34:17-18). What is the connection between the

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**12.** Rebbe Ahron Leib of Permishlan *zy'a* compared cleaning for Pesach to surgery prep. Before surgery, doctors tell their patients not to eat anything, so their bodies will be clean for the operation. Pesach can be compared to a great surgery, as our bad tendencies will be extracted, and instead, we will be imbued with holiness. Before this "surgery" we prepare and cleanse ourselves, by cleaning our homes from chametz.

prohibition against *avodah zarah* and keeping Pesach? Rebbe Asher of Stolin *zt'l* explained that people often become angry when preparing for Pesach, since they are very concerned and tense, lest there be chametz in their homes on Pesach. Chazal (*Shabbos* 105) say, כל הכועס כאילו עובד עבודה זרה, "Whoever becomes angry it is as if he worshiped idols." Thus, the *pasuk* is saying, אלהי מסכה לא תעשה לך, don't become angry, את חג המצות תשמור, even when preparing and cleaning your home for Pesach.<sup>13</sup>

### **A Segulah for Parnassah**

Many Yidden follow the custom, established by the Kozhnitzer Magid *zt'l*, to

say the following three stories on Shabbos HaChodesh as a *segulah* for *parnassah*, and specifically to have all their needs for Pesach:

#### Story #1

A precious ring was stolen from a king, and the king announced that anyone could help in the search, and the king will provide them with the money they needed to search for the stolen ring.

A poor Yid realized that this was his opportunity to get the money he badly needed to buy his yom *tov* needs.

He told the king's secretary that he wanted to devote himself to finding

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**13.** Why is anger compared to idol worship? We can explain that it's because just as *avodah zarah* doesn't accomplish anything, neither does anger. One doesn't gain anything from idol worship, as we say in *Hallel*, פה להם ולא ידברו, "They have a mouth, but cannot speak..." Those who worship idols receive nothing in return. Anger is similarly futile, as Chazal (*Kiddushin* 41.) say, "Whoever becomes angry, all that he gains is anger." Nothing else was accomplished. Thus, they are similar.

the thief and that he needed money to search. The secretary gave him a bundle of money.

The Yid used that money to buy matzos, wine, meat, and everything his family needed for *Pesach*.

A priest called Dayeinu, who was also a sworn anti-Semite, told the king, "The Yid isn't using the money for the search. A Jewish holiday is approaching, and he will undoubtedly use the king's money for his own needs.

"He is guilty of two offenses," Dayeinu explained to the king. "He is stealing the king's money, and he also deserves to be punished for deceiving the king."

The king replied that he wouldn't punish the Yid without evidence.

Dayeinu said, "On the night the Jews celebrate the Seder, we will go to this Yid's home, and you will

see for yourself how your money is being spent."

The night of the Seder arrived. The king and Dayeinu went to the Jewish quarter, and from a distance, the priest pointed out the illuminated house of the Yid.

"The candles to illuminate his home were bought with your money. Now, let's go inside to see the expensive foods he prepared."

The king said, "Before entering his home, I want to eavesdrop from outside the window."

At that time, the family was singing *Dayeinu*. The father recited each stanza, and the family answered loudly, "*Dayeinu*."

The king told the priest, "You have it all wrong. The Yid is speaking with his family about who stole the ring. And they all agree that you, Dayeinu, stole the ring!"

Then the king shouted, "Soldiers! Quick! Arrest Dayeinu!"

Dayeinu's home was searched, and the diamond ring was found. Dayeinu was hung; so shall all the enemies of Yisrael be lost forever.

"And this Yid had all his Pesach needs in abundance."

### Story #2

A *poritz* said to one of his Jewish tenants, "You are fortunate that I rent my tavern to you, so you can earn your livelihood from people who visit the tavern for a meal or a drink. What would you do without my help? Your family would all be hungry. You should thank me."

The Yid replied, "My *parnassah* comes from Hashem. Right now, it is coming via the tavern that you lease to me, but Hashem has other ways to support me. Therefore, my gratitude goes to Hashem

alone. Hashem feeds the entire world, from the largest animals to the smallest creature, and He supports me as well."

The *poritz* replied, "I never saw anyone so ungrateful. I do so much for you, and I don't even receive a thank you. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll rent out the tavern to someone else. If it's Hashem who is supporting you, let's see if He can support you without the tavern!"

This happened shortly before Pesach, and the Yid didn't know how he would have money for *yom tov*. But he trusted that Hashem would provide for him and his family.

The *poritz* had a pet monkey that was always by his side. The *poritz* would sit in his office counting gold coins, with the monkey right next to him, watching.

As the *poritz* counted each gold coin, he would



bite it to test if it was gold. The monkey thought he was eating the coins.

Once, when the *poritz* wasn't around, the monkey ate one gold coin after the other until the monkey died.

The *poritz* was very upset when he heard that his monkey died because he loved his monkey dearly. He didn't know why it died. He told his servant, "Throw the dead monkey into the home of the Jew that used to run the tavern." This was to express his anger at the Yid, who refused to admit that the *poritz* was helping him with his *parnassah*.

The Yid heard something crash into his house and went to see what it was. He found the dead monkey on the ground, and near it were many gold coins. When the monkey was tossed into the Yid's home, its stomach split, and the gold coins spilled out.

At the night of the Seder, the *poritz* said to his servants, "Let's go to the Yid's house. I want to see how he is faring. I'm certain he is sitting in the dark, eating almost nothing because I'm not helping him with his *parnassah* anymore."

They were amazed to find the house well-lit, and fish, meat, and all kinds of tasty foods on the table. The *poritz* couldn't contain his curiosity. He knocked on the door and asked the Yid where he had the money to buy all of this.

The Yid related the story; a dead monkey came crashing through his window, and out of the monkey's belly fell many gold coins. Hakadosh Baruch Hu sent me this fortune, so I should have money for *yom tov*, and there's enough money left over for the rest of the year."

The *poritz* replied, "Now I know that you were

correct. Hashem supports you and the entire world with His kindness."

### Story #3

There was a very high tax on imported alcoholic beverages in Poland. A Yid was once bringing barrels of spirits into Poland, hoping that he could pass the border without declaring the spirits.

But he was caught, and the barrels were confiscated. A date was scheduled for his trial.

The Yid went to Rebbe Elimlech of Lizhensk and expressed his worries regarding the upcoming court case.

"You have nothing to worry about," the Rebbe told him. "Tell the court the barrels are filled with water."

At the court case, he said, "Honorable Judge, I don't know why I'm on trial, and I don't understand why I'm being suspected of

committing a crime I never committed. The barrels are filled with drinking water."

The judge was surprised to hear this. The barrels' contents were tested, and they saw that it was true; there was only water inside. So they let the Yid take the barrels and continue on his way.

He returned to Rebbe Elimelech and said, "I was freed from imprisonment and saved from paying a significant fine, but now I have a great loss. I invested a lot of money to buy the spirits, and now there is nothing in the barrels other than water.

Rebbe Elimelech *zy"a* told him, "You have nothing to worry about. The barrels have spirits in them." The Yid sold the spirits and earned a lot of money.

"He had all his needs for Pesach, in abundance."

So shall Hashem grant us *parnassah b'harchavah*,

and we should merit seeing  
the materialization of the  
prophecy (*Michah* 7:15) "As

you left Egypt, so shall I  
show you miracles,"  
speedily in our days, amen.