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הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

SEFER VAYIKRA - THE CHOPP HOLDINGS EDITION

AS A ZECHUS FOR KLAL YISROEL DURING THIS GLOBAL PANDEMIC

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SEFER VAYIKRA

THE **CHOPP HOLDINGS** EDITON

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פרשת תזריע מצורע

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Returning To Normalcy

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*Part I. Gifts of Life*

**The Quarantined Man**

We begin with the *taharas haMetzora*, the purification process for the one who had been committed by the *kohen* to the state of leprosy. It had been an sad and unfortunate period in his life. *מחוץ למחנה מושבו* - He had to remain outside of his city (13:46). He was forbidden from living anymore in the *arei chomah*, the established residences of the *Am Yisroel*. And even though his family had lived in a house in that city for generations he now had to bid farewell to them. It was a heartbreaking scene to watch as this man made his way past the city walls out to the desolate fields. And it is there that he would stay, alone and secluded for weeks and maybe even months.

And then suddenly, after some time has passed, the unexpected happens. The whiteness on his skin begins to recede; the *tzaraas* becomes smaller and dimmer. "Could it be?" he hopes. "Is it really going away?" And so he sends a message to the *kohen* asking him to come out

and take a look at the tzaraas. וַיֵּצֵא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה – And the kohen goes out to where the metzora is secluded, וַיִּרְאֶה הַכֹּהֵן – and there he inspects the infected skin, וַהֲיָה נִרְפָּא נֶגַע הַצִּרְעָת, – and he sees that it's healed (14:3). “My friend,” the kohen declares to him, “I have good news for you. I'm happy to tell you that the tzaraas has healed and you are ready now to return to society.”

Ooh wah! It's a *techiyas hameisim*. A metzora is *chashuv k'meis*, it's as if he had died (Nedarim 64b), and now he will be restored to normal life again! And yet, the disappearance of the tzaraas is not enough; before he will be made *tahor* again he must undergo a special procedure, a *tahara* process. Now, there are many parts to this procedure and all of them are important, but right now we'll skip all the way to the end, to the bottom line, which is the greatest lesson for us. If there is time later we'll come back to some of the other lessons we can learn from the details of the *taharas haMetzora*.

### **The Mysterious Purification Process**

What was this man required to do? He must bring two healthy birds to the kohen who takes both birds from him and then *shechts* one of them over a clay pot. The other bird is kept on the side and at the end of the *tahara* process, וְשִׁלַּח אֶת הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיָּה עַל פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה – the living bird is set free upon the open field (14:7). And after watching the bird fly away to freedom, the metzora then goes to the *mikveh* to purify himself and his clothing, at which point he is allowed to return to the city and resume his life once again.

Now, this of course is included in what we call *chukim*, statutes of Hakodosh Boruch Hu for which no reason is offered in the Torah. And yet, we are justified if we follow the example of the great men of all generations in seeking to understand some of the reasons for the *chukim*. Never will we understand it thoroughly, yet we see that even *Tana'im* and *Amora'im* asked such questions: *Mipnei mah amrah torah* – Why did the Torah say to do this or to do that? And they give reasons. And therefore we walk in their footsteps and we'll try also – with our small minds – to understand something of what was taking place here.

### **The Great Escape**

This metzora was in a 'trap' from which he thought he might never escape. Tzaraas, especially in those days, was often a fatal malady. And so, he was living outside the city in sorrow, not knowing if he would ever

be healed. He sat there in the sorrow of his sickness, doomed to a life of misery; set apart from all of society, never to mingle with people again. Maybe he had found some hut, a dilapidated structure, where he could spend his days; but whatever it was, he was sitting all alone in the fields outside of the city limits in mourning – mourning for having to leave society and separate from normal living.

And then suddenly the news from the *kohen* came like a bolt of lightning: “You’re a free man now! You’ve escaped disaster!” And it was this great escape of the *metzora* that was symbolized by the two birds that he had trapped. Because after one of the birds is slaughtered, the second one, *which had been caught in that same trap*, is set loose and flies to freedom. You know, when an animal is caught in a trap and then it breaks free and escapes the claws of death it’s a big *simcha* for the animal; but it’s nowhere near as spectacular as when a bird breaks free from its trap. A bird that escapes is the symbol of perfect freedom because the bird flies up in the air out of the reach of people; now it’s really free.

נִפְשָׁנוּ בְּצִפּוֹר נִמְלְטָה מִפֶּחַ יוֹקְשִׁים הִפַּח נֶשֶׁבֶר וְאַנְחָנוּ נִמְלְטָנוּ - *We were saved like a bird from a trap; we were caught and now we escaped from that snare to freedom* (Tehillim 124:7). And so, as the *metzora* watched the bird flying away he’s reminded of the trap that he himself had barely escaped and he recalls the one bird that didn’t make it, the slaughtered bird that represented all those who did not get well – not everyone got well – and the healed *metzora* reminds himself what he escaped from. And that’s his happiness: “*Boruch Hashem, I was set free!*” he’s thinking as he watches the bird fly away.

### **Leprosy, Viruses and Blockages**

And the truth is that’s how everyone should think. Although this procedure is specifically commanded for the *metzora*, we shouldn’t overlook the intrinsic lesson that applies to us too – how great should be our gratitude when we are healed from our illnesses. Anyone who was sick and then recovered should say the same thing: וְאַנְחָנוּ נִמְלְטָנוּ - *I’m like a bird that escaped from a trap*. You remember how you had a virus and you were lying in bed for days; you felt like you might never get better; and then finally you escaped. It’s a tremendous happiness! *Va’anachnu nimlatnu!* Anytime you escape, you should remember that forever.

So here’s a man, let’s say, who tries to use the bathroom one morning and he discovers that he can’t. He tried but nothing happened.

But he has to! Now, that's not a comfortable feeling at all; it's like finding tzaraas on your skin. You can't fool around with such a thing! So he calls out to his wife, "Something is wrong! Emergency! I have an emergency here!" So they take a taxi or an ambulance, whatever it is, and they rush to the hospital. And the nurses and doctors are rushing back and forth to different patients holding all types of instruments and each time he sees such tools he's panicked. But he's suffering terribly and he's thinking, "Oy, Ribono Shel Olam, מֵאֵיךְ יָבֵא עֲזָרָי – From which tool is going to come my salvation?"

And then finally they take a rubber pipe and smear it with vaseline and they force it in. Ah yah yay! It hurts like the dickens! Oh did it hurt! You can imagine the pleasure of such a thing! They're screwing in that rubber pipe and it comes up with blood as they force it in. He's screaming but then finally, blessed relief! He's able to urinate through that tube. The *yeshua* came! He's restored to normalcy and the doctors tell him that it was a temporary blockage and that he can go home.

### ***A Waste of an Experience***

You should know that this man just received a big gift. And it's not only the gift of being able to function normally. That's important of course, but the true gift is the opportunity to recognize how good Hashem was to him *before*, when all was normal. That entire experience was a hundred percent waste unless he understands from now on what a great stroke of fortune it is every time he's able to use the bathroom normally.

You know, those tubes in the body are coated with a sticky layer. And some of the tubes are very very thin and the fact that the two sides don't stick together is a miracle. Only that it happened in this case – the two sides of the tube stuck together and therefore he wasn't able to urinate. Why doesn't it happen all the time? It's a miracle.

Fifty years of relieving himself and this man had never even *thought* about such a thing; he never knew how lucky he was until he made this great escape. And therefore he should understand that this one incident was intended by Hakodosh Boruch Hu to teach him from now on he should be full of happiness whenever he can function normally. An entirely new dimension has been added to his life because from now on, every time he relieves himself painlessly, he's so happy. Now, his *asher yatzar* is not just a *bracha* anymore – it's a song of gratitude, a *hallel*. He's

so full of elation, so full of real joy, that his *bracha* is a song. גְּאֵלְתָּ חַיִּי – Hashem, You redeemed my life (Eichah 3:58). “You saved me!”

### **Real Happiness**

Now, if he would tell that to someone who never had that experience of escaping disaster, they would laugh at him. “Ha ha! You’re so silly! That’s fun?! That’s happiness?!” Happiness means traveling someplace, spending money. To go to a bowling alley or a restaurant, *that’s* happiness! But going to the bathroom *b’shalom* is a happiness?!

But you can’t fool this man anymore with your *leitzaanus*. Because he already learned what true happiness is. He himself was caught in that trap and he remembers the bird that didn’t escape, the bird that was slaughtered. Some people don’t go home. Sometimes the doctor comes in and tells him, “I’m sorry Mr. so and so, but we have to keep you here for more testing. There seems to be a growth and we have to do a biopsy.” And then it begins; doctors and specialists and tests and hospitals.

And that was the great benefit of being a *metzora*; he had gone through the school of hard knocks and now he was an educated man. How happy a person should be who doesn’t know anything wrong about his body! That’s what he learned. Health, that’s wealth! I remember I once went to a Russian shoe repair man. He said to me like this: “Az m’iz gezunt iz men reich.” I learned a piece of Torah from this shoe repair man. “If you’re healthy then you’re wealthy.”

### **The Original Social Distancing**

But it wasn’t only health that the *metzora* learned to appreciate. He received an education about appreciating normal living. The healed *metzora* has now learned that life in its most simple form, merely living among others *b’shalom*, being able to interact normally with others is the biggest *taanug*!

The *metzora* was all alone! עַל שָׂפְמֵי יַעֲטָהּ – He had to cover his mouth with his garment (13:45). Wherever he went he had his garment pulled up and wrapped around his mouth, the sign of a man who is cut off from society, forbidden from interacting with Mankind. And when someone would come close to him, וְטָמֵא טָמֵא יִקְרָא, he was obligated to cry out “Tamei, tamei,” warning people to keep far away (ibid.). People looked from a distance and shunned him – they didn’t want to come near to him because he might make them *tamei*. You couldn’t even be under the same roof together with him. So, let’s say there was a shelter out in the

countryside and some people were there under the shelter waiting for the rain to stop – he couldn't go under the shelter with them; they'd run away.

### **Normal Is So Much Fun**

And now, *boruch Hashem*, he can be with people again! It's all over! But the lessons he learned are forever. The *metzora* gained a tremendous benefit from his experience that he couldn't get otherwise because when he was well he didn't appreciate what a blessing it was. He never thought about how much fun it was to be able to live normally. It was worth the experience – all the trouble was a small price to pay for the very great achievement of gaining an attitude of gratitude to Hakodosh Boruch Hu for normal living!

Everything is normal again! Normal is so much fun! It's so good to be back again accepted by society, together with his family. He has company, he has friends, he's back at his work. "How good it is to walk the streets of the city *b'shalom* without people running away from me," he thinks. "How good it is to be able to live normally among people, to be able to go to work." He's learned now to be grateful just for that alone!

He's not wearing a covering over his mouth and nobody runs away when he comes close. He belongs with everybody else – he's accepted back into society again! "I can go to *shul* again!" It's fun to be able to walk into *shul*! It's fun to daven with a *minyan*! And now, all of his life he sings in happiness just because he recalls those dark days of despair. He is full of joy that he is the bird that escaped!

### **Missing the Busy Streets**

As he walks in the street, he sings to Hashem. To be able to walk the streets of your city, that's the happiness of life! You remember when Dovid was hiding from Shaul in the caves. He was afraid for his life and he was praying to Hashem to be rescued: אֶתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי הַשֵּׁם בְּאַרְצוֹת הַחַיִּים – How I wish I could walk again before Hashem in the lands of the living (Tehillim 116:9). "Oh, Ribono Shel Olam!" cried Dovid. "Please bring me back into the city of Yerushalayim and let me once again walk *b'artzos hachaim*."

What is this *artzos hachaim*, this land of the living, that Dovid was praying for so much? So the *gemara* in *Mesichta Yuma* (71a) tells us, *zeh mekom shvakim* – It's the place where there are markets. And Rashi

explains that Dovid was talking about the streets where there are stores and you can buy everything you need.

Now, that seems to be a little queer. Dovid is hiding in a cave, deprived of everything, and he's praying to be restored to a place of markets?! He's yearning once more to go shopping?! You have to understand what that means.

### **Everything Is Available**

The answer is that Dovid understood what a tremendous *simcha* it is to have everything available; to know that whatever you need you can go out to the street and buy it. "Hashem, please let me walk down the avenues again." That's what Dovid was looking forward to – just to be able to walk the streets of Yerushalayim where the wares were on sale; the produce, the grapes, the dates, the olives, the figs, the wheat, the barley, clothing, and all the things that make life a pleasure. You can buy food and toilet paper and soap. You can buy a shirt and underwear. Whatever you need! You pass by a store, a meat shop, there's a whole variety of cuts of meat. This kind of cut, that kind of cut. This organ, that organ. Everything is available! It's a big *simcha*!

It's a big subject to learn how to enjoy walking in the streets, how to enjoy the stores and the markets, and the *metzora* learned that *sugya* the hard way. And now he appreciates the stores when he is restored to the streets again. "Thank You Hashem for letting me walk *b'artzos hachaim* again, where everything I need is available to me."

## *Part II. Gifts of The World*

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### **The Taharah Process**

Now, in order to put some more understanding into the lessons the *metzora* was expected to learn, it pays for us to study the details of his *tahara* process. Like we said earlier, we're expected to ask: *Why did the Torah say to do this?*

So we look into the *pesukim* and we see that besides for the two birds that were taken, the *metzora* had to bring other things to the *kohen* as well. He must find the branch of a cedar tree – those tall imposing trees – as well as some *ezov*, a tiny little moss plant that grows out of the

walls of the houses. And then he takes a piece of thread that is dyed with a deep red color, and he uses that thread to tie together the cedar branch and the little moss plant. And then the *kohen* takes the bird that was left to live, together with the bundle of the cedar wood and moss, and he dips them into the pot containing the blood of the slaughtered bird, and he sprinkles seven times on this man who is becoming purified of his *tzara'as*.

### **What's It All About?**

Now, this *metzora* wasn't expected to ignore what was happening or to imagine that it was merely some purification ritual. What's this all about? The *kohen* is sprinkling blood on him with a bundle of cedar and moss tied together with a red thread?! What lesson is the *metzora* – and we who study the *parsha* – supposed to learn from these details of his *tahara* process?

So, the first thing we do is to look into the *Tanach* and see where we might find some kind of a meaning for these two things, the cedar tree and the hyssop – especially when they come together. And if we look, we'll find.

*Sefer Melachim* tells us that Shlomo Hamelech was a king who made it his job to be a teacher to the *Am Yisroel*: וַיְדַבֵּר עַל הָעֵצִים מִן הָאֲרָז וַיְדַבֵּר עַל הָאִזּוֹב אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא בְקִיר מִן הָאֲרָז וְעַד הָאִזּוֹב אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא בְקִיר - He spoke to the people about the trees; from the cedar trees in the *Levanon* to the hyssop that grows on the wall (5:13). Ahh! We found something! Shlomo is speaking about the *eitz erez*, the tall beautiful cedar trees, and the *eizov*, the small hyssop plant that grows out of the cracks in the wall.

### **The Secret of Cedar and Moss**

Now, why did Shlomo choose to speak only about these two things? The answer is that he didn't. מִן הָאֲרָז אֲשֶׁר בְּלִבְנוֹן וְעַד הָאִזּוֹב. *Ad!* He spoke about those towering trees *ad*, all the way down to the moss growing on the walls. He started with the cedar tree but he spoke about *all* the trees; about apple trees and fig trees and date trees and olive trees. And he didn't speak *b'kitzur*; no, he spoke *b'arichus*.

He spoke about their fruits, and about the leaves. He spoke about the wonderful arrangement of the branches. "Stand underneath the tree," he said, "and look up!" Not one branch is directly beneath the branch above it. Every branch is underneath an open space because the

branch wants sunshine. How did that happen? Who told the tree to do that?

And the tree drops seeds into the ground. And from that seed comes out another tree. That's such a *neis* that all the scientists together can't explain it. Where did this tree come from? If you dig down, will you find a forest? All you'll find is dirt. How do cedar trees and apple trees come from dirt? It all comes from a little seed – every seed has in it at least a million bits of information inscribed on its DNA molecule telling it how to produce a tree – and that tiny seed contains all of the major machinery to make sure it happens. It's a very complex operation – with *chochma*, with *tachbulos*, with tricks, with scheming, cooperation and arrangement, one step after another. It's *nisei nissim!* Anybody who sees that comes to recognize Hakodosh Boruch Hu just as if he was present at *Kriyas Yam Suf*. No less than any other miracle that the Torah talks about, you can see in the trees wherever you look.

### **The Metzora Wasn't Looking**

Now, that's exactly what the *metzora* didn't see when he used to walk the streets. He walked down the avenue and he never noticed the trees. He was too busy shooting off his mouth; *lashon hara*, *devarim beteilim*, *leitzanus*. That's how this whole mess began. The *gemara* (*Eirechin* 15b) says, "Someone who speaks wrong words, he uses his mouth in the wrong way, he'll be stricken by leprosy."

Now how does such a thing happen that a man should run off his mouth without thinking? The answer is, he's not aware of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Hashem is in the *shul* maybe, during *mincha*. And even then, He's only in the *siddur*. But on the street?! He doesn't think about Hashem at all. He walks with his friends and wags his tongue – he ridicules and belittles people; even just to talk *d'varim b'teilim* means that you're not aware of Hashem.

Shlomo Hamelech tells us in *Koheles* (5:1): אַל תְּבַהֵל עַל פִּידָּךְ – Don't be in a hurry to express yourself, וְלִבְךָ אַל יִמְהַר לְהוֹצִיא דָּבָר לְפָנֵי הָאֱלֹקִים, – Your heart, your mind, shouldn't be in a hurry to say something in the Presence of Hashem. When you're walking on the avenue, Hashem is present. So keep quiet! כִּי הָאֱלֹקִים בְּשָׁמַיִם וְאַתָּה עַל הָאָרֶץ – Hashem is in the heavens and you're down below on the earth, עַל כֵּן יִהְיֶה דְבָרְךָ מְעֻטָּם – and therefore your words should be few.

Oh, now something else comes into the picture; *Elokim* is now in the picture! You're not on the street alone or with friends; *Elokim* is in

shomayim, above you, and He's looking at you. על כן יהיו דבריך מעטים – That's why your words must be few.

### **Presence of The President**

If a man opens up his mouth and words flow out without restraint, so it means he doesn't feel like he's in anybody's presence! Let's say you were standing in the presence of the mayor, or in front of the president of the United States – he's not such an important person today – but still you wouldn't talk too much in his presence. You definitely wouldn't be shooting off your mouth.

But when a person recognizes that Hashem is right in front of him, so he keeps his mouth closed. When you possess a sensory perception of the closeness of Hashem – when it's not merely words and theories – so you don't open your mouth in His presence. You keep quiet, at least as quiet as you would be in front of the President. At least that! If the President of the United States was standing here, you'd be careful with every word that comes out of your mouth! That means you believe in the President more than you believe in Hashem!

### **The Cedar Branch Reminds You**

And that brings us back to the *eitz erez v'eizov* and to everything in between. Because the best way, the surest way to become aware of Hashem all the time is by means of His creations. When you see His trees, His plants, His everything, so there's no bigger proof that Hashem exists. You see clearly with your eyes there's a Hashem. So you'll tell me, "Who needs proofs? I'm a *frum* Jew." No, it's not proofs; it's *tangible awareness!* We want to see Hashem in action – we want to see demonstrations of His greatness and His kindness because that's going to make us aware of Hashem in the most tangible way.

But this man didn't know how to walk the streets and see the demonstrations of Hashem around him and therefore he is told, "No more walking the streets for the man who doesn't know how to walk the streets." It's like the people who walk down Ocean Parkway and don't notice the variety of trees; they can't tell you the difference between the linden trees and cottonwood trees that line the walkway. They are two different kinds of trees altogether, each one with its own *nisei nissim*. You never noticed that? How could you pass by trees and not pay attention to such a thing? That's the only reason Hashem made it – for you to notice.

## **Who Needs Waterfalls...**

People call me on the telephone and ask me if they should travel to Niagara Falls to see the *niflaos ha'Borei*. To travel ten hours to see Niagara Falls?! When you finish with the *niflaos ha'Borei* on Ocean Parkway, then call me up again and we can talk about Niagara Falls. Meanwhile, you didn't even start!

That's what the *metzora* was supposed to be thinking when he was searching through the forest outside the city for a branch of the cedar tree: "Chaim'l, you fool!" he says to himself. "Why didn't you keep your eyes open and see these trees before you got sick? Why didn't you see *yad Hashem* by means of different kinds of trees that He planted for you to see?"

## **An Exhibition**

And so, when the *metzora* finally returned to normal living, he knew how to walk the streets. As he walks to the *kollel* or to work he looks at the different leaves and pays attention to what Hashem was showing him. Sometimes he sees an "ordinary" leaf so he picks it up and he studies the *chochmas Hashem*.

Look at the fact that every leaf, of the millions of leaves on Ocean Parkway every leaf has two sides; a dark green side where there's a lot of chlorophyll and a light green side where there's not much chlorophyll. And in every case the light green side is turned away from the sun and the dark green side faces the sun! Millions and millions of leaves! How did that accident happen? Because chlorophyll needs the sun and that's why the dark green side faces the sun. So it's an exhibition of Hakodosh Boruch Hu right here on Ocean Parkway.

## **Airplanes and Parachutes**

Other times he sees a different kind of leaf, a seed leaf; it's an airplane that carries three or four passengers, the seeds, in the middle of the leaf. The seed leaf falls down from the tree early in the season and it's carried by the wind – it carries its passengers out of the shade of the parent tree and it falls where it can grow more successfully, where it won't have to compete with the parent tree for the nutrients.

A different day he'll see the seeds of the sycamore tree. And instead of ignoring it, he'll pick one up and see how the balls are composed of hundreds of little seeds. And each seed had a wing attached to the end

so that it should blow in the wind and blow everywhere and scatter everywhere and plant some more trees.

Now isn't that a remarkable accident, that a seed should have wings on it? And although the wing is a fluffy thing, it's packed so efficiently that the wings don't take up any space in that sycamore ball. On the outside you see only the dots of the seeds. It's a wonderful arrangement – the seeds are on the outside and inside are the parachutes. And when it fell to the ground and gets crushed, the winds begin blowing, and the seeds fly far, far away and plant many new sycamore trees.

### **Shlomo Saw Hashem**

That's how Shlomo Hamelech looked at the world. He saw the *yad Hashem* everywhere he looked and because of that he always felt that he was standing in front of Hashem. מן הארז אשר בלבנון, *In the tall imposing tree, down and down בקיר יצא אשר יער האזוב, until finally he reached the moss, he saw Hashem. He gave a shiur klali about the moss. What does moss come from? How did the moss get there, on the side of a wall? The answer is that when the moss begins to germinate it gives out spores into the air, tiny spores. You don't see it but the spores fly in the air and the wind carries the spore and it lodges into a crack in the wall – a crack so small that you couldn't even put your fingernail into it. And still the spores get in there and take root. And finally this little spore produces an eizov plant sticking out of the wall.*

And so when the *metzora* was scraping off that piece of moss from the side of an old wall for his *tahara*, he was rebuking himself, “Chaim'l; it's not enough to see Hashem in the trees. Why didn't you notice this moss when you weren't a *metzora*?” And he understands that because he kept his eyes closed to the *niflaos ha'Borei* around him, to the opportunities for Awareness of Hashem, so now he must search out the trees and the plants in other, more painful, ways.

And the *metzora* now understands all of this; when he's well again, when he'll be back in the city again, when he sees grass peeking its way out from between a crack in the sidewalk, he'll pay attention to these things, and he'll be reminded of Hashem all the time. When he passes the neighbors gardens he'll stop to look at the flowers. Of course he will; he doesn't want to learn the lesson again the other way. He reminds himself of the *possuk* in *Melachim*: *And Shlomo Hamelech spoke about the trees; about the cedar trees in the Levanon all the way down to the hyssop that grows on the wall* (5:13), and he says, “I'm going to do that too.”

## Part III. Gifts and Alternatives

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### **The Secret of Red**

Now, these words will have little effect unless you practice living them. In order that the words should make an impression, when you walk out of here you should make it your business to learn how to walk the streets. Even if you live in the city, in Flatbush, in Boro Park, if you keep your eyes open you'll see all types of trees and flowers, all types of phenomena that are intended to remind you about Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

And that brings us to the next part of the *metzora's tahara* process. וְטָבַל אוֹתָם בְּדָם הַצִּפּוֹר הַשְּׁחֻטָּה - "And he dipped the red wool into the blood of the slaughtered bird" (ibid. 14:6). You see right away that Torah here is stressing the color red – the red-dyed wool dipped into the red blood. What is this? What are we supposed to understand over here?

And the answer is like this: It symbolizes two kinds of redness – one is natural dye and the other is blood; and Hakodosh Boruch Hu is saying that you have a choice to make: Are you going to notice Me by means of the colorful world I'm giving you, or *chas v'shalom*, by means of another more painful red?

Hakodosh Boruch Hu created in the *briyah* a way of producing a beautiful red dye – other colors too – and you can take a plain piece of wool and give it a beautiful color. And Hashem wants you to notice that color – He wants you appreciate the colored world He made for you. And that's why you dip the scarlet-red wool into a different type of red, into blood. It's a different type of redness. It's a pity to use such redness, but what could you do already? Hashem says, "If you don't use the first method, then you're going to have to use the other one, the blood, to remind you to appreciate the color in life that I'm giving you."

### **Color War**

You know there was a big riot last year in Attica; it's one of the prisons in upstate New York. The murderers revolted – look, nobody came to Attica because he was a traffic violator; the people there are murderers. So these hoodlums came together and they killed a couple of guards and made a big revolution. They broke windows and smashed gates and set fire to the building.

And so the state sets up a commission to inquire what are the demands of these murderers. The hoodlums have demands; they're not satisfied. So finally a special commission came, a state board of inquiry. A committee of wise men sat down together *b'koved rosh* and they concluded that the felons are right! And so the state listens to them and they respectfully promise these demonstrators that they'll give serious attention to their demands.

Why were the prisoners so upset? Because they only had ordinary TV; black and white TV. Other things they wanted too, but on the list of demands was color TV. Black and white TV is an *inuy*, an affliction, they said. Such cruelty they won't stand for. And the liberals in The New York Times raise a howl – you have to be compassionate to the murderers! How can you deprive human beings of color TV?! And they got what they wanted. Colored TV for the murderers.

### **The Only Kosher TV**

But Hakodosh Boruch Hu gives us “color TV” all the time. And it's *kosher* TV. Wherever you look it's all color. And it's a great happiness to look around and see the variety of sights and colors. Seeing color is a pleasure. Imagine for a moment, as you look around, as you walk through this world, that everything was black and white; no color. It's still good; it's still a pleasure to see. It's better than not seeing at all, *chalilah* , and we wouldn't break windows and smash gates because of that. But life wouldn't be the same – we can see in color and that adds a zest to our lives. I look in your face right now and I see a little red in your cheeks, I see the color of your shirt, the color of your eyes. It's a pleasure to see things in color!

### **Grass and Dandelions**

Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants you to pay attention to the red roses you pass on the street. Not only the red. When you see the green grass, that's also a color you should pay attention to. Green grass is beautiful. First of all it's a carpet. That's how you should look at the grass; as a beautiful green carpet. You know how beautiful the color green is?! It's a pleasure. It's a sweet color, it's soft on the eyes, and that's why Hashem chose it for the grass and the leaves that are in abundance.

And then you notice a dandelion, a bright yellow dandelion, sticking up from the grass. Where did the yellow color come from? And what's it for? So you'll say that it's meant to attract the bumble bee – the bee

should alight on that yellow dandelion and start sucking out the nectar. But more important is to attract your attention – to delight the eyes of people and to make our minds full of wisdom, full of awareness of Hashem. That's the most important purpose of the yellow of the dandelion.

### **Two Types of Color**

Only that the *metzora* *didn't* notice that. He didn't see the green grass and the yellow dandelions. He walked past colorful gardens and never thought once about Hakodosh Boruch Hu. He saw the blue sky and the green grass and the yellow sunlight and he kept on walking like a *k'sil holech ba'choshech*, like a fool walking in a black and white world. And so Hashem sent him away – “No more walking the streets for you if you don't know how to think.”

And when he finally did *teshuva* and his *tzaraas* was healed, so he had to dip the beautiful red wool into the red blood to remind him of the choice that he has: “Don't forget to pay attention to all of the beautiful dyes, all the wonderful colors that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is painting for you in His world! And if you don't, if you ignore it all, then you have to be reminded in other, more painful ways, with the blood of the *shechted* bird, the bird that doesn't escape.”

### **Apples and Traffic Lights**

And so when the *metzora* comes back again, this time his eyes are wide open. Why should he be worse than the bums in Attica who love color! And so when he walks past a fruit stand he remembers the lesson of the choice – the red dye or the red blood. And so he stops; “What's doing here?! Red apples?! How did they become red?! Red is a dye! Where does the red dye come from? Why is it that when it's unripe it's green and then when it ripens it turns a beautiful red color?”

You must say that the apple understands that *green* apples are to be hiding in the tree among the leaves - they're not ready yet to be eaten. But when they ripen, when they're sweet and ready to eat, they turn red. A red apple is conspicuous, easy to spot. That's why the traffic lights are red, because red is conspicuous. It says, “Stop! Stop and look at me.” The apple in the fruit stand is calling out to you, “Stop and look at me. Stop and admire the handiwork of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.”

## **Repeating Simple Ideas**

Not only red apples! There are big bins of fruits. Ahh, fruits! Red fruits, golden fruits, purple fruits, green fruits, yellow fruits. Take a look inside and you'll see a cut watermelon with deep red flesh. Such beautiful colors – where did they come from? How did it happen? Take your time, walk slowly by and look at the orange. See how beautiful it is! It looks almost as if it were natural. Such beautiful colors just couldn't be natural! The answer is, they're *not* natural. They're made by a Manufacturer who made it His business to put into the fruit beautiful tints that are delectable to the imagination. It's more fun eating a fruit with color. You know that, don't you? Suppose oranges were the color of potatoes. It wouldn't be as much fun even if they tasted the same.

And when the healed *metzora* finally finishes his *avodas Hashem* in front of the fruit store – he can't stay there all day after all; the owner would expect him to come in and buy something – but he's not done yet. Now, he's walking past a garden. Let me tell you something; I enjoy the gardens of my neighbors more than they do. They pay a lot of good money to the gardener but I'm the one enjoying it most! I was passing by a little garden a few weeks ago and I saw white tomatoes. Now, a tomato is not supposed to be white. But then one day I saw that they turned green. Then later they turned red. Now why three colors? The answer is, white tomatoes mean keep away. They're not fit at all for eating. Green tomatoes, it's already a stage that you can pickle them. And red tomatoes are ready to be eaten.

I was thinking, "This is such a simple idea; I've thought about this many times and I said it in the lectures many times already." So I said to myself, "Should I repeat it in public again?" Absolutely! I don't care what the public thinks. They're tired of hearing it? I'm not tired of hearing it! What I'm saying is for my own benefit! I let you listen too, but I'm talking for myself.

## **Dirt Of Many Colors**

Why should there be red tomatoes? Red is an artificial color that Hashem brings out of the brown dirt. Try to make red by yourself. Take earth and mix it around – try to make red. You can't do it. But Hakodosh Boruch Hu puts into the seeds the machinery that they should be capable of taking carbon dioxide and other materials and transforming them into red pigment. It's a miracle!

And the red pigment only comes when the tomato is ripe to eat and not before. So the tomato is actually doing more than feeding you with nourishment. It's feeding your mind with awareness of a Borei.

Why should it turn red? On the contrary – why shouldn't it be red when it's entirely unfit to eat and then when it's ripe, it should lose its color entirely? Why shouldn't apples be colorless when they're ripe? As soon as apples grow on a tree, they should turn bright red and after they become sweet and soft, they should turn colorless. Why should bananas turn yellow only when they're completely ripe? They should be yellow at the beginning – only when they're ripe, they should turn green. So you see that there's a plan and purpose here – to let you know, "Come, my child. We're ready for you. You can come now and pluck us off the tree and enjoy yourself."

### **The Sky is Being Painted**

And once we train ourselves to appreciate the colorful world that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is giving us so we'll see that there's no end! We walk down Ocean Parkway in the morning and the sun is coming up and we see golden sunlight filling the world. Ahh, what a beautiful pleasure! And when you look up and we see the beautiful blue sky there's no harm in saying "Thank You Hakodosh Boruch Hu. *Ich hub der lieb*, I love You for putting such beautiful colors in this world." The gold orange glory of sunrise and sunset, the magic of the moonlight – so many beautiful things to see! Now, that's the right attitude. Once you get that attitude, then you're looking at the universe in the true perspective: Hakadosh Baruch Hu is painting a blue sky for you to enjoy and to be reminded of Him always!

Suppose you walk out tomorrow morning and the sky is overcast with gray clouds – oooh! That's a different opportunity! **הַמְכַסֶּה שָׁמַיִם בְּעָבִים** – *He who covers the skies with clouds*, **מֵטֵר לְאֶרֶץ מִטֵּר** – *because He's preparing rain for the earth*. What does that mean? Who cares what He prepares? The fact that He *prepares* rain is important?! Let the rain come down first – then we'll thank Him. *Halevai*, we should thank Him even then.

No; the *possuk* is telling us that He's preparing rain because we're supposed to notice that! Tomorrow morning if you walk out and there are gray skies overhead, you have to love that beautiful color. And when the rain comes down, that gray is going to turn into red raspberries and blueberries and green grapes and purple grapes and golden oranges and

red cherries and red-cheeked peaches and everything else. The gray clouds means that soon watermelons will be coming down. The only difference is that you don't have to dodge them – they come down in drops. It's a big benefit. Had watermelons come down from the clouds, it would be unsafe. And so if we'll see the sky is covered with heavy gray clouds, we should understand that this is **הַמְכִּין** – He is *preparing*, **לְאֶרֶץ** **הַקָּדֹשׁ** – *rain for the earth* so that we could enjoy all the beautiful colors in the world.

### **Prepared To Face The World**

And so we come back now to the *metzora b'yom taharoso*, the leper on the day of his purification, as he prepares to return to normal living once again. But this time he will be prepared; he knows what's expected of him. He's healthy again! Boruch Hashem! He watches the one bird fly to freedom and he decides right then, "I'll never stop thanking Hashem for saving me, for helping me escape the trap of sickness! Every day, I'll thank Hashem for my health." And he means it! He was so worried and finally they gave him the good news that he recovered and he should never forget now – all of his life he should remember the great happiness of being healthy.

But it's not only health and being able to live normally; it's what you do with that. And so the *metzora* is commanded to bring forth the *eitz evez* and the *eizov* as a reminder of what went wrong. Hashem is saying to him: "You have a choice; you have two ways of recognizing Me. One way is the way of Shlomo Hamelech, the way of **מִן הָאֵרֶז וְאֶשֶׁר בְּלִבְנוֹן וְעֵד** **הָאֵזוֹב אֶשֶׁר יֵצֵא בְקִיר**. Had you spent your life studying these things - and everything in between - you wouldn't have needed the *tzaraas*. You could have spent your days enjoying My creations and appreciating the *chesed Hashem* in the *briyah*. If you'll choose the dye of scarlet, if you'll enjoy the beautiful color of life that I surround you with, then you won't have to bother with dipping the red wool into the blood of the slaughtered bird."

### **Choose Life!**

That's the choice that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gives. He says to the *metzora*: "Choose!" And He says to all of us: "Choose!" The healthy bird that escapes the trap or the opposite *chalila*? What do you want? The dipping of the *eitz evez* and *eizov* into the blood *chalila*? Or do you prefer the *eitz evez* and *eizov* of Shlomo Hamelech?

It's a choice and it's up to you. But one or the other you must have. Because otherwise you can't live in this world, you can't be part of us, if you're forgetting what Hakodosh Boruch Hu is doing for you. But if you'll see on all sides the kindness of Hashem - if wherever you walk, wherever you go, you see Hashem - then you don't need anything else to remind you.

### **The True Good**

And that's the purpose of life - to learn to recognize the kindness of Hashem. *Tov; l'hodos laHashem* - "Do you know what is the good?" says Dovid Hamelech. Not merely good, but *the best good* in the world. What's the best good in the world? Ask somebody that question - go ahead and ask - and you'll get all different types of answers. "It's good to be a *lamdan*," one will say. Or "It's good to be a *midakdeik b'mitzvos*." Everything is good! And of course you have to do all the things. But Dovid Hamelech said, "Do you know what is the *best tov* in the world? *Tov l'hodos la'Hashem!* The greatest good in the world is *li'hodos la'Hashem*, to give thanks to Hashem.

That's our function in this world - to utilize our health and all of normal living to become aware of Hashem by means of thanking Him. To use all of the colorful *briyah* that Hashem made, from the tall cedar trees all the way down to the lowly moss plant, for the great purpose for which they were created - and that purpose is *tov l'hodos*, to thank Hashem, *lihagid baboker chasdecha*, and to speak always all the days of our lives about His kindness and to thereby become more and more aware of Him.

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# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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Q:

**What should I think about on Rosh Chodesh Iyar?**

A:

You know, on Rosh Chodesh Nissan you were asking Hakodosh Boruch Hu, “Oy Hashem, please give us life.” We’re worried every Rosh Chodesh; who knows what’s going to be. The people who passed away last month weren’t expecting it. Now, suppose someone would tell you, “My friend, I have a secret to tell you. I was listening in to the *Beis Din Shel Ma’alah* and they said that you’re going to get a whole month of life for the coming month.” Oh, what a happiness it would be! If someone would know for sure he’s going to live the whole month, it’s a happiness. A month of life is a gift. A month of life?! It’s diamonds.

Are we happy? Sure; that’s why we say Hallel. We’re wild with happiness! We lived a month already! We look back at the past month, the month of Nissan – all the *hachonos* for Pesach, and then the whole Yom Tov, and then after Yom Tov – we were busy all month and now the month came to an end. Boruch Hashem, no big troubles came during the month. So what’s the question?! It’s a happiness, certainly it’s a happiness. It’s the happiness of being alive.

And now we ask Hashem for the next month in *ya’aleh v’yavo*. I want to tell you something. Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, “You’re asking for another month? It depends on how your attitude was to the past month. Did you appreciate the month of Nissan?”

First you have to say to Hashem: “*Hodu lashem ki tov ki l’olam chasdo*,” in Hallel. “We thank You Hashem, how good You were to us this past month. Now please give us another month.” “Oh,” Hashem says. “That’s what I want to hear.” And if that’s the case so He’ll give us another month. So therefore Rosh Chodesh in itself is the biggest gift. Life is the biggest gift. The *pashtus* of what Rosh Chodesh means is enough for us to spend the day in gratitude to Hashem for having lived another month.

TAPE # E-106

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