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OHRNET *Special*

THE TOUCH OF ETERNITY

A Tribute to Rabbi Meir Schuster *zatzal*

by Rabbi Avraham Rockmill

There are moments of experience in time whose consequences reverberate throughout one's life. The quintessential tap on the shoulder: "Would you like to hear a class on Judaism?" is such a moment. It is etched into the spiritual consciousness of literally thousands of Jews whose lives and future generations were dramatically affected by a gentle touch of a caring Jew.

Reb Meir Schuster *zatzal* was a legend in his time, an iconic figure; the image of his plying the crowd at the Kotel is a part of the vision of the generation of the *teshuvah* movement. His accomplishments seem larger than life, a greatness in their purity and simplicity. Simply focused on caring for another Jew — a pristine caring that made an indelible mark for generations.

The Midrash says that if Aharon had known when he went out to greet Moshe Rabbenu that the Torah would have recorded that he was "*samach b'libo*" (glad in his heart) he would have done it with a "brass band" (Midrash Rabba Rut 5). Assuredly, Aharon was not interested in *kavod* (honor). However, as explained by Rav Weinbach *zatzal*, had he appreciated the impact his action would have had for generations, he would have done it differently; had he appreciated that he was indeed writing the Torah, his action would have embodied all the more *kavana* and intensity. Rabbi Schuster wrote his "Sefer" every day for close to 40 years, repeatedly reaching out to lost Jewish souls. I wonder, with a life which was totally dedicated to such a purpose, how could he have done more? His personal Sefer Torah was

surely written in the most profound and beautiful way.

Rabbi Schuster was an integral part of the inception of the *teshuvah* movement — the extended hand of the *kiruv* yeshiva beckoning our youth to return to their roots. He was a pioneer, a trailblazer, teaching an entire world. If one cares, one speaks — and there are those who will listen.

Today *kiruv* has evolved into a world-wide effort where numerous organizations and people are reaching out to our unaffiliated brethren. Rabbi Schuster was the first — the inspiration for all to follow. Without any professional title, he was a man motivated by a singularity of purpose, without the trimmings of honor and position.

The phenomenon of a shy and unassuming individual spending his life approaching and speaking to strangers challenges our sensibility with wonderment — "How?" The answer would seem to be that the combination of a purity of soul and an untainted concern is a sound which pierces profoundly through to the core of another Jew's *neshama*.

Reb Meir *zatzal* was loved by his students with the affection one has for a lifesaver who has pulled him out of the water. This loving affection also made him the subject of many a Purim play and song, which are integral facets of the students' *teshuvah* process.

His greatness will always be remembered and cherished by those, like the author, who have an eternal debt of gratitude. Their repayment can perhaps be partially fulfilled by personifying his wishes and dreams — that their lives embody and further the destiny of *Klal Yisrael*.

CLARITY AND CONNECTION

“And upon the completion of her days of purity” (12:6)

The greatest political blunder of the Feminist movement was its failure to allow men to have babies. Nothing sorts out the ladies from the boys more than nine months of gut-churning (literally) physicality.

Nothing is as physical in this world as the gestation and delivery of another life; from morning-sickness to afternoon sickness to plain-ol’ sickness, from the repulsion to all green vegetables and the craving for waffles drowning in maple syrup to the wholesale hijacking of the human body into a Mothership ferrying a precious cargo to a safe touchdown. Nothing compares with childbirth.

Take it from me. I’ve never done it.

In the Torah, the concept of *tuma* (spiritual impurity) is most often connected with death. The greatest source of *tuma* in the world is a cadaver and contact with it. Why then does a woman become *tameh* (spiritually impure) when she gives birth? Isn’t birth the polar antithesis of the granddaddy of all *tuma* – i.e. death?

Another question: Why does death frighten us so much? A Jew knows that this life is but a brief candle, and when it is snuffed out G-d reveals a great palace of eternal light beyond it.

But it sure doesn’t look that way when we are confronted by a lifeless corpse. It looks like “THE END”.

The reason that death is the greatest source of *tuma* in

the world is that a dead body shakes to the core our belief in the resurrection of the dead.

In Hebrew, the word *tuma* is connected to the word meaning sealed – *satum*. The elevation of the soul to its place on High is sealed from us. All we are left with is the frightening physical reality. The opposite of *tuma* is *tahara*. *Tahara* is connected to the word *Zohar* – shining transparency; the ability to see through the barrier to a life beyond. The most exposed part of the Holy Altar was called the *Tohoro Hamizbe’ach*; the brightest part of the day is called *Tzohora’im*. Everything is clear.

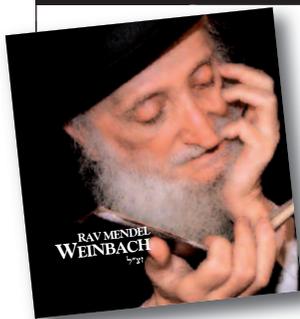
Giving birth is almost as physical as dying. Maybe even more so.

Just as contact with death can cause a great disconnect with the spiritual reality of our elevation to another world, so too can nine months of total involvement with the body, hormones, fluids, tests, scans and all the other physical features of childbirth, lead to a very large disconnect with the spiritual reality of G-d bringing another soul to the world.

It is for this reason that the *tuma* of disconnection requires a mother to bring a *korban* — an atonement — as part of the process of returning to the world of *tahara* – of clarity and connection.

• Sources: based on Sforno; thanks to Rabbi Mordechai Perlman

A Memorial Tribute on the First Yahrzeit



THE MEMORIAL TRIBUTE BOOK FOR RAV WEINBACH ZT”L

is available in print at Ohr Somayach* as well as in PDF format on www.ohr.edu

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. When does a woman who has given birth to a son go to the *mikveh*?
2. After a woman gives birth, she is required to offer two types of offerings. Which are they?
3. What animal does the woman offer as a *chatat*?
4. Which of these offerings makes her *tahor* (ritual purity)?
5. Which of the sacrifices does the woman offer first, the *olah* or the *chatat*?
6. Who determines whether a person is a *metzora tamei* (person with ritually impure *tzara'at*) or is *tahor*?
7. If the *kohen* sees that the *tzara'at* has spread after one week, how does he rule?
8. What disqualifies a *kohen* from being able to give a ruling in a case of *tzara'at*?
9. Why is the appearance of *tzara'at* on the tip of one of the 24 "limbs" that project from the body usually unable to be examined?
10. On which days is a *kohen* not permitted to give a ruling on *tzara'at*?
11. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow (e.g., the head or beard), what color hair is indicative of ritual impurity?
12. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow, what color hair is indicative of purity?
13. If the *kohen* intentionally or unintentionally pronounces a *tamei* person "*tahor*," what is that person's status?
14. What signs of mourning must a *metzora* display?
15. Why must a *metzora* call out, "*Tamei! Tamei!*"?
16. Where must a *metzora* dwell?
17. Why is a *metzora* commanded to dwell in isolation?
18. What sign denotes *tzara'at* in a garment?
19. What must be done to a garment that has *tzara'at*?
20. If after washing a garment the signs of *tzara'at* disappear entirely, how is the garment purified?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 12:2 - At the end of seven days.
2. 12:6 - An *olah* and a *chatat*.
3. 12:6 - A *tor* (turtle dove) or a *ben yona* (young pigeon).
4. 12:7 - The *chatat*.
5. 12:8 - The *chatat*.
6. 13:2 - A *kohen*.
7. 13:5 - The person is *tamei*.
8. 13:12 - Poor vision.
9. 13:14 - The *tzara'at* as a whole must be seen at one time. Since these parts are angular, they cannot be seen at one time.
10. 13:14 - During the festivals; and ruling on a groom during the seven days of feasting after the marriage.
11. 13:29 - Golden.
12. 13:37 - Any color other than golden.
13. 13:37 - He remains *tamei*.
14. 13:45 - He must tear his garments, let his hair grow wild, and cover his lips with his garment.
15. 13:45 - So people will know to keep away from him.
16. 13:46 - Outside the camp in isolation.
17. 13:46 - Since *tzara'at* is a punishment for *lashon hara* (evil speech), which creates a rift between people, the Torah punishes measure for measure by placing a division between him and others.
18. 13:49 - A dark green or dark red discoloration.
19. 13:52 - It must be burned.
20. 13:58 - Through immersion in a *mikveh*.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah commands a woman to bring a *korban* after the birth of a child. A son is to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. The Torah introduces the phenomenon of *tzara'at* (often mistranslated as leprosy) — a miraculous affliction that attacks people, clothing and buildings to awaken a person to spiritual failures. A *kohen* must be consulted to determine whether a particular mark is *tzara'at* or not. The *kohen* isolates the sufferer for a week.

If the malady remains unchanged, confinement continues for a second week, after which the *kohen* decides the person's status. The Torah describes the different forms of *tzara'at*. One whose *tzara'at* is confirmed wears torn clothing, does not cut his hair, and must alert others that he is ritually impure. He may not have normal contact with people. The phenomenon of *tzara'at* on clothing is described in detail.

Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT TAZRIA

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

In this week's portion the Torah teaches us that a woman is required to bring two sacrificial offerings after childbirth — an elevation offering, which is totally consumed on the Altar, and a sin offering to atone for her transgressions. Abarbanel questions why she has to bring an elevation offering at all, and also asks what her sin was, which required atonement after childbirth. In terms of the sin offering, Abarbanel mentions first the *gemara* in Tractate Niddah which explains that the pain of childbirth causes a woman to swear to abstain from relations with her husband in the future. Such an oath is considered to be taken in vain since a woman is prohibited from voluntarily abstaining from relations.

Abarbanel then offers a different insight. Although a sin offering normally precedes an elevation offering, the order is reversed here as a result of the unique experience of childbirth. An elevation offering expresses an individual's desire to come closer to G-d, to ele-

vate oneself spiritually. A woman who has experienced childbirth recognizes that her Creator has wondrously saved her from the enormous danger of the experience. She naturally wants to express her total gratitude by drawing nearer to G-d with an offering which is totally consumed. On the other hand, we are taught clearly that no one experiences any pain or suffering in this world unless he has in some way transgressed. Abarbanel posits that even if the woman does not transgress blatantly by swearing never to have relations with her husband again, the sin offering still functions as atonement for transgressions of which she is not aware. The difference between the two offerings is indicated by the language of the Torah. In reference to the elevation offering the Torah states, "...and he (the *kohen*) shall offer it up (bring it near) before G-d..." — whereas in reference to the sin offering the Torah states "...and it will atone for her."

PRAYER *Essentials*

by Rabbi Yitzchak Botton

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

"My Master, Open my Lips, and my Mouth will Relate Your Praise."

The Sages instituted the recital of this verse from Psalms at the outset of the *Shemone Esrei* to help remind the worshiper that speaking to G-d is a very serious matter. Ideally, one should pause momentarily before beginning his prayers so as to properly focus one's thoughts and emotions on what he is saying. Since its function is to help enhance the quality of one's prayers it is considered as part of the prayer itself, and is therefore not considered an interruption (Levush).

Humility

Asking for something as simple as opening our lips expresses our utter dependence on G-d for everything we do. Meditating on this idea before beginning to pray can help bring a person to feel humble and insignificant. Humility is praised as one of the ideal attitudes to have when approaching G-d and can enable one's prayers to be accepted.

Embarrassment

Another idea: As a result of the first sin man dwells in a coarse and unrefined physical body, which is the root of all the negative attributes to be found in him (See *Derech Hashem*, part I section

3, by the Ramchal). When a person stands in the presence of his Maker with all of his shortcomings, he will feel shame and embarrassment to the point where even opening his lips to speak becomes difficult.

Fear of Heaven

Another explanation: Most of the day, we are involved in casual conversation with co-workers, friends and acquaintances. These situations are hardly intimidating. But how would we feel when pleading with a judge, or when being interrogated by an officer or prosecutor. Even asking our boss for what we feel to be a well-deserved raise would intimidate the average person. How much more should the idea of facing the Omnipotent Creator arouse great fear and trepidation within us. By meditating on the fact that we are now standing before G-d, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, great fear and awe will be aroused within us, rendering us unable to speak.

This is why we refer to G-d in the first person, as if we are speaking directly to Him. The term "Adonai" relates to G-d as our Ruler, and that we are His subjects. This idea should further enhance the intensity one should feel when uttering these words. This explains why we ask G-d for help to open our lips.

MINNEAPOLIS-WISCONSIN-JERUSALEM-CHICAGO

Ari Baumwald - Age 23 - Minneapolis, MN
University of Wisconsin - Accounting
Shoresh and Center Programs Alumnus

Ari, 23, grew up in Minneapolis, MN and attended University of Wisconsin in Madison where he majored in accounting. He spent eight months in the Shoresh Program of Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, followed by four months in the Yeshiva's Center Program. Following this he transferred to Hebrew Theological College in Skokie, IL.

Ari describes his experience at Ohr Somayach as "just what the doctor ordered". Although Ohr



Somayach classes are obviously of a weighty nature, challenging and thought-provoking, he was happy that there was a good deal of humor sprinkled all the way through as well. Besides the major effect that his experience had on his relationship to his Judaism, he has kept in close contact with the friends that he made there. The skills that he acquired have enabled him to succeed at Skokie, and he has plans to return to Ohr Somayach in the near future.

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

BEROR CHAYIL – THE SECRET SIGNAL

The name of a kibbutz in the northern Negev recalls two milestones in Jewish history. Beror Chayil was the seat of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai who negotiated with the Romans for the survival of the Sanhedrin in Yavneh at the time of the destruction of the Second Beit Hamikdash.

It was there too where Jews, banned by the Romans from circumcising their sons, came up with a way to



secretly publicize a *brit mila* feast. They would light some candles in their windows during the day or an excessive amount at night to let their neighbors know of the celebration. It thus became common knowledge that if there is "*Ohr Haneir b'Beror Chayil*" (the light of a candle in Beror Chayil), there is going to be a feast there.

Interestingly enough, right next to Kibbutz Beror Chayil is Kibbutz Ohr Haneir.

The Ohr Somayach Family extends tanchumim to our beloved

RABBI DOVID WEINBERGER, *shlita*

and to his family on the tragic loss of his wife.

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

*Please daven for Rabbi Weinberger for a complete and speedy recovery,
Avraham Dovid ben Chaya Tzivia.*

The Ohr Somayach Family extends tanchumim to our beloved

RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR, *shlita*

and to his family on the tragic loss of his sister, Esther bas Dovid Sinclair ע"ה.

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

DIVINE RELATIONSHIP

From: Mordechai

Dear Rabbi,
How does one develop a relationship with G-d? Aside from the technical aspect of learning and doing the mitzvot, how does one actually infuse the connection with content?

Dear Mordechai,

This is a very sensitive and perceptive question. I admire your sincerity and spiritual integrity.

The Jewish belief is that, ultimately, G-d's relationship with the world is based on love. Love, therefore, is the basis of G-d's relationship with every person.

The Hebrew word for love is *ahava*, whose root means "giving". From a Jewish point of view, love is based, nurtured and expressed through mutual giving.

Thus, one of the major ways of developing a relationship with G-d is through giving.

When learning and doing the *mitzvot*, in addition to viewing them as technical duties we perform, we should view them as ways in which we give to G-d, so to speak. Although G-d certainly has everything and doesn't need anything from us, insofar as serving Him involves on our part sacrifice, effort, time, energy, resources etc., we are giving of ourselves to Him, as it were.

And even though in truth we are only giving Him what is His and what He has shared with us, still this conscious effort of giving to please Him should infuse our relationship with Him with the love generated through giving.

And of course, focusing on and reflecting upon the myriad ways in which G-d is constantly giving to us, also engenders within us appreciation and love for Him - similar to the way we grow close to one who demonstrates his love, concern and benevolence to us.

Another idea to consider is that in addition to learning Torah or doing *mitzvot* in order to know and do, intellectually and technically, we should be using these opportunities to become aware of, and palpably feel, G-d's presence in our lives.

Torah study should not be just learning to understand and know, but to actually connect to G-d. When learning, a person should have in mind that he's actually communicating with G-d, and that in these words of Torah, G-d Himself is revealing His will and Divine intelligence. G-d Himself is present in these words and reveals himself to us while we learn.

The same is also true regarding doing *mitzvot*. Rather than viewing them simply as good acts that we do, we should always be recalling to ourselves the way in which G-d Himself is "present" in the *mitzvot* and how doing them connects us to Him.

During prayer, one must really internalize the fact that G-d is right there, and we are engaged with Him in a personal, face-to-face conversation. In wearing *tefillin* we are literally binding ourselves in betrothal to Him. By keeping kosher we are ingesting the physical and spiritual fiber which vitalizes us with the sanctity of G-d and which becomes incorporated within us. By keeping Shabbat we enter the glowing abode of G-d and serenely share this time with Him in intimacy. The list goes on and on...

In summation, two main ways of infusing our connection with G-d with content is through reflection on the mutual giving in the relationship, and through actively and creatively seeking His presence in all that we do.

TALMUD Tips

ADVICE FOR LIFE

Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

SUCCAH 55 - BEITZA 6

"What a child says in public was heard either from his mother or father."

This is the "folk saying" that Abaye cites in our *gemara* in order to explain the negative speech of Miriam bat Bilga, who was the daughter of the leader of one of the 24 shifts of *kohanim* who served in the Beit Hamikdash. She spoke derisively about the Altar, and as a result her entire family was penalized regarding their service in the Beit Hamikdash since her negative talk was a result of hearing this negative type of talk at home.

• Succah 56b

"It is something that will be permitted ('davar she'yesh lo matirin') and anything (forbidden) that will be permitted is not nullified even in a mixture of a thousand (permitted objects)."

Our *gemara* states this rule to explain why an egg laid on Yom Tov is still forbidden to eat on Yom Tov even if it became mixed with a very large number of eggs that were laid before Yom Tov and otherwise permitted to eat. But why is this so since according to Torah law such a forbidden object should be nullified and permitted in a mixture of a majority of permitted objects? The reason is because our Sages were strict to make a special prohibition not to rely on this nullification, since it is something that will be permitted later on without nullification. "Why eat it now as something in a state of 'prohibition' when it can be eaten later in a state of 'permission' (Rashi)."

• Beitza 4b

“CHACHAM HA’RAZIM”

A Rare *Beracha* and a Unique Opportunity

Anyone who attended the recent mass prayer gathering in Jerusalem recently could not help but be moved and awed at the incredible display of unity while listening to the directives of our Torah leaders. With masses packed in, “*anashim, nashim, v’taf*”, all the way from the city’s entrance until past Shefa Mall (and that’s only in one direction!), conservative estimates of the attendees were well over the “magic number” of 600,000 Jews. In fact, many remarked that is what “*Aliya L’Regel*” must have felt like!

Once a gathering of Jews in one place reaches that number, halacha dictates that an extremely rare blessing is recited: “*Chacham Harazim*”. In this exceptional *beracha* we refer to G-d as the “*Chacham Harazim*”, loosely translated as the One Whose knowledge encompasses the wisdom of the secrets.

The source of this halacha is the *gemara* in Berachot, as well as the Midrash Rabba, which states that “One who sees “*Ochlosei Yisrael*” (the population of Bnei Yisrael, defined by the Talmud as meaning 600,000)” makes the *beracha* of *Chacham Harazim*. The *gemara* and commentaries explain that when we see so many people in one place we become cognizant that although their mentality and features are not the same, still G-d knows exactly what is in each and every one’s hearts and minds. Only when we actualize such an awareness can we make this unique *beracha*.

Some commentaries add another reason for the distinctive wording of the *beracha*. When 600,000 Jews come together it creates a “dwelling of the Divine Presence” similar to what took place at Sinai when the Torah was given, and the Jewish People become worthy of receiving the Torah and its secrets (*razim*).

An interesting dispute related to this *beracha* is whether it is recited only in Eretz Yisrael upon seeing that many Jews together, or if it is applicable even outside of Israel. The Talmud’s example of when this *beracha* would potentially be said is when one sees 600,000 Jews on *Har HaBayit* (during *Aliya L’Regel* on the *Shalosh Regalim*). Some authorities, including the Rambam and Rabbeinu Manoach, as well as the Elya Rabba, understand this to mean that this halacha pertains exclusively to Eretz Yisrael. However, the Beit Yosef rejects the logic, explaining that the *gemara* was merely citing a practical example of when one could possibly be able to say this rare *beracha*. Therefore, when he codified this halacha in the Shulchan Aruch he made no restrictions on the location of the recital of this *beracha*. This is also how the

halacha is cited by the Aruch Hashulchan and Mishna Berura. The Kaf Hachaim suggests that to fulfill all opinions as a compromise resolution, if one sees 600,000 Jews together outside of Eretz Yisrael he should still make the *beracha*, albeit without G-d’s Name.

Back to the recent *Atzeret Tefillah*. Prior to the event, the question was raised whether the *beracha* can be recited if unable to ascertain whether there truly are 600,000 in attendance. Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein *shlit”a* came up with a brilliant solution: to read the halacha out of the Shulchan Aruch, as it contains the entire text of the *beracha*! That way even if the full amount was not present, in no way would one have possibly recited a “*beracha levatala* (a blessing without reason).

Another one of the main questions pertaining to this *beracha* was if it may be recited if one cannot see all of the people together. Certainly a helicopter pilot or one standing on a tall building might be able to witness 600,000 people together at one time, but anyone on the ground surely would not be able to perceive that amount. Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky *shlit”a* reportedly ruled that provided we are certain that there are 600,000 people present, even if each individual cannot see the full amount, as long as one can see part of the crowd the *beracha* is still recited.

It should be noted that the fact that this halacha is not mentioned by many later authorities, such as the Chayei Adam, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, and Ben Ish Chai, implies that they felt that the ability to have that many Jews gather together to mandate such a *beracha* in their times was a near impossibility. *Baruch Hashem*, on this past Rosh Chodesh Adar Sheini, this topic in Jewish law became a reality.

Ultimately, at the end of the day, it was obvious to all that indeed 600,000 Jews in Eretz Yisrael had listened to the voices of the *gedolim* and gathered for the *Atzeret Tefillah*, and after accepting ‘*Ohl Malchut Shamayim*’ with 600,000 present, the unique *beracha* of *Chacham Harazim* was recited over the loudspeakers loud and clear (by Rabbi Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi *shlit”a*), and was answered with a thunderous ‘*Amen*’. Truly a fitting testament to Torah Jewry’s unwavering commitment to the “*Einei HaEidah*” Torah leaders.

This author wishes to thank his daughter Avigayil for her help with this article.