

FATHERS AND SONS

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Sponsored by

Aaron and Rona Lerner

in memory of their fathers

Avraham ben Yaakov Hakohen a"h

and Yaakov Yonah ben Yisrael a"h

Martin and Michelle Swartz

on the yahrzeit of

Martin's grandmother

Eva (née Kalikow) Lichman a"h (17 Nissan)

Janet Rottenberg

Simi & Sammy Franco,

Jerry Rottenberg

and Mindy & Shmuel Tolchinsky

on the 8th yahrzeit of

their husband & father Melvin Rottenberg,

Menachem Mendel ben Tzvi Yehuda a"h

The Edeson and Stern families

in memory of mother-in-law and grandmother

Yehudis bas Shneur Zalman a"h (Julia Edeson)

The Haftarah that is read this week in honor of Shabbat Ha'gadol, the Shabbat before Pesach, concludes with the words: "Behold! I send you Eliya Hanavi, before the great and awesome day of Hashem. He will restore the heart of fathers to children and the heart of children to their fathers . . ." (Malachi 3:23-24). In an essay entitled "The Fathers and the Sons," R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap z"l (1882-1951; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz Ha'Rav) writes:

"There are many aspects to redemption, and each brings salvation in some form. However, if even

one aspect is missing, the redemption is incomplete. Moreover, a darker situation may arise as a result.

"Every division is a form of Galut (literally, 'exile'), and every coming together is a redemption. Certainly, however, the most dangerous division is the division between fathers and sons. Thus, when Hashem chooses a metaphor for the exile, He says (see Berachot 3a), 'Woe to sons who have been exiled from their father's table.' In contrast, the highlight of the redemption will be when the hearts of fathers will be restored to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers.

"The redemption from Egypt, the root of all redemptions, began by revealing the wonders of Bnei Yisrael's allegiance to their families. Just as 'with Yaakov, each man and his household came' (Shmot 1:1), so, when they left, the sons were attached to their fathers. 'And it shall be when your children say to you . . .' (Shmot 12:26 & 13:14). Even the wicked son, although he asks with Chutzpah, nevertheless bows his head to his father and grandfather and awaits an answer. (Mei Marom: Ma'ayanei Ha'yeshuah, Ikvita De'meshicha Ch. 2)

"When you arrive in the land of Canaan that I give you as a possession, and I will place a Tzara'at affliction upon a house in the land of your possession, the one to whom the house belongs shall come and declare to the Kohen, saying, 'Something like a Nega / affliction has appeared to me in the house'." (14:34-35)

The Mishnah (Nega'im 12:5) teaches: Even if the owner of the house is a Torah scholar and knows for certain that the Nega is Tzara'at, he should not say, "A Nega has appeared in my home." Rather, he should say, "Something like a Nega has appeared in the house." [Until here from the Mishnah]

Why? R' Gershon Shaul Yom Tov Lipmann Heller z"l (Central Europe; 1579-1654) explains in his Mishnah commentary: Only the Kohen has the Halachic standing to make a binding determination that the house has Tzara'at. Since the owner's statement that the house has Tzara'at would have no consequence, why should he make such a statement, when he could, instead, imitate the fine character trait of saying, "I don't know"? Alternatively, he writes, the owner should not declare that his house has a Nega so that the Kohen will not rush to judgment and declare the house Tamei. (Tosefot Yom Tov)

R' Chaim Zaichyk z"l (1906-1989; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Buchach, Poland; later in Israel) observes: The fear expressed by the Tosefot Yom Tov that the Kohen will be influenced by a homeowner saying, "A Nega has appeared in my home," rather than, "Something like a Nega has appeared in my home," reflects how much a person is influenced by the views of his friends, by his surroundings, and by popular opinion. Popular opinion puts tremendous pressure on a person's thoughts, and he is not easily or often liberated from that pressure. There are people with very refined natures [which would have influenced them to act a certain way], but who don't have the strength to go against the stream. There also are people who are simply afraid that: "What will

people say?"

R' Zaichyk continues: This is exactly why the Metzora is required to sit in seclusion outside of the camp or city. His sin of Lashon Ha'ra resulted from succumbing to the pressures that society places upon a person--i.e., competition, jealousy, and the desire for honor. Therefore, he is given an extended period to reflect on, and shake off, these negative impacts that his community has had on him.

R' Zaichyk adds: Excessive deference to peer pressure stunts a person's Torah study and spiritual growth. Improving one's Middot / character traits requires courage, which means bucking peer pressure and stepping outside one's comfort zone. Similarly, relearning the stories of Tanach as adults and shedding the childish conceptions of those events that was taught in Cheder or elementary school requires stepping outside one's comfort zone. Worrying about "what people will say" prevents this growth. (Torat Ha'nefesh)

One of the elements of the Metzora's sacrifice described in our Parashah is an Ezov, a type of grass. Our Sages teach that it must be a plain Ezov, not an "Ezov Romi," nor an "Ezov Kuchli," and not any other type of Ezov that has an adjective modifying its name.

R' Moshe Sternbuch Shlita explains that the lowly grass represents humility. True humility is "plain," with no conditions (i.e., the adjectives). It is not "Romi" ("high"), i.e., a false humility. It is not "Kuchli" ("makeup"--from "Kechol," a type of eye shadow), i.e., something that one "puts on" for others to see. (Ta'am Vada'at)

Shabbat Ha'gadol

"You have spoken harshly against Me, says Hashem, yet you say, 'How have we spoken against You?'"

"You said, 'To serve Elokim is useless, and what did we gain from keeping His charge or from walking submissively before Hashem, Master of Legions?'" (Malachi 3:13-14 -- from today's Haftarah)

R' Ben Zion Neshet shlita (one of the senior rabbis in Tel Aviv, Israel) asks: How could the Jews referred to in this verse not know that they had spoken harshly against Hashem? If they actually said, "To serve Elokim is useless," that is outright heresy!

He explains: The Jews referred to in this verse made the same argument that the Rasha / wicked son makes in the Haggadah, saying: "Of what use is this work to you?" He means: I am a Jew in my heart, and that's what's important! What difference does it make whether or not I observe all of these Mitzvot? Jews who make this claim do not realize that what they are saying is heresy, that they are speaking harshly against Hashem. Thus, even when the prophet rebukes them in G-d's Name, they

respond, "How have we spoken against You?"

R' Nesher continues: Why is the Rasha (and anyone else who has this attitude) wrong? We say in response to the Rasha, "It is because of this that Hashem did so for me when I went out of Egypt." What is "this"? It is the Mitzvot. Specifically, our Sages teach that the Exodus occurred in the merit of the Mitzvot of Brit Milah and Korban Pesach. We say in the Haggadah that had the Rasha been in Egypt, he would not have been redeemed. He would have refused to perform these Mitzvot--claiming instead that his Judaism was in his heart; therefore, he would not have merited to leave Egypt.

R' Nesher adds: We read (Bemidbar 15:39--in the section about the Mitzvah of Tzitzit), "You shall not wander after your hearts . . ." Our Sages interpret "wandering after one's heart" as a reference to heresy. At first, the connection between the heart and heresy is not apparent, but, in light of the above, it is clear. We now understand, as well, how the next two verses fit in (Bemidbar 15:40-41): "So that you may remember and perform all My commandments . . . I am Hashem, your Elokim, Who has taken you out from the land of Egypt . . ." The Exodus occurred in the merit of Mitzvah observance, not because our ancestors felt Jewish in their hearts. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Shir Tziyon p.53)

Tehilim

Siddur Avodat Yisrael cites a custom to recite Psalm 120 on the Shabbat on which Parashat Metzora is read. Accordingly, we present here verses from, and commentaries on, that Psalm.

"Hashem, rescue my soul from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue." (Verse 2)

R' Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter z"l (1847-1905; second Gerrer Rebbe) writes: Our Sages say that Yaakov Avinu prayed in these words when he needed to say (Bereishit 27:19), "It is I, Esav your firstborn." The Gerrer Rebbe explains: There is an expression, "Falsehood has no legs." [The three Hebrew letters that make up the word "Sheker" / falsehood are all pointed on the bottom; they are not stable.] But, when people cling to falsehood, they give it stability and enable it to exist in the world.

In contrast, a Tzaddik clings to the truth. Sometimes, even a Tzaddik must tell a lie [as Yaakov did], but he is still firmly rooted in the truth. How so? This world is called "the world of falsehood" because it conceals the truth, i.e., the revelation of Hashem. Sometimes, it takes falsehood to fight the world of falsehood [like "fighting fire with fire"]. But, since it ultimately leads to the revelation of Hashem, it is part of the "world of truth." The important thing is not to cling to falsehood. Therefore, Yaakov prayed: Do not allow me to cling to the falsehood that necessarily must come out of my lips. Allow me to continue to cling to truth. (Sefat Emet Al Tehilim)