



THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

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Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Metzora/Shabbos Hagadol

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A Taste of Torah Home Sweet Home

By Rabbi Eli Mozes

What is the difference between a house and a home? I found this question posed to the online editor of Merriam-Webster by one Hamza of Pakistan. Now, one might think that the definition of home is the place where you unwind, the location of your bed and fridge. It would appear, however, that the reality is otherwise.

Hyatt Hotels has a brand of lodgings called Hyatt House. The idea behind Hyatt House is to offer all of the amenities and furnishings of an apartment. Yet, nobody would ever call a Hyatt House suite “home.” Although the Hyatt House suite may be identical to the traveler’s bachelor pad, the former is appropriately named a house while the latter is “home.”

Back to Merriam-Webster. The editor replied, “The main difference between them is that “house” is concrete. House refers to a building in which someone lives. In contrast, a home can refer either to a building or to any location that a person thinks of as the place where she lives and that *belongs to her* (emphasis added).” Based on the opinion of the Merriam-Webster online editor, were we to sum up the definition of home in two words, it would be “my space.” This definition, while workable for many, is antithetical to the Torah way, as we will demonstrate.

The Talmud (Arachin 16a) discusses the seven sins which are the cause for *tzara’as*, and their scriptural sources. The final one is *tzarus ayin*, stinginess. The source for this is from a verse in the Torah in regard to one who finds *tzara’as* in his house: “Then he, whom the house is his, shall come and inform the *kohen* (priest).” (Metzora 14:35) The Talmud infers from the words “whom the house is his” that one who dedicates his home to himself only will find his house stricken with *tzara’as*. In Tractate Yoma (11b) the Talmud spells out the punishment a bit more graphically: “One who doesn’t want to lend out his items and says, ‘I don’t have (a requested

item)’ - Hashem will publicize (his stinginess) when he will have to empty out his house.” The meaning of this is that before the *kohen* would come to the house to inspect the *tzara’as*, everything would first be removed from the house, lest the items inside become *tamei* (spiritually impure) due to the house being designated as afflicted. When all the items were placed outside, all would see that this person did, in fact, possess a lot more than he was willing to admit.

This may strike one as rather extreme. “Am I not entitled to my own space?” “Why can’t I just donate some money to a soup kitchen - why must I open up my home to others?”

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) addresses this head-on in his commentary to the Chumash. He states, “The Halacha clearly shows that the *tzara’as* is not directed at the building per se, but, rather, addresses the personality of the building owner. What is afflicted by the *tzara’as* is not the house, but the home. The life of the individual as distinct from the life of the community - that is what is represented here by the house, and that is what is afflicted with the *tzara’as*”.

With this, Rabbi Hirsch answers the question of the difference between a house and a home. House is a mere physical structure, while a home is a location where the owner manifests his personality. It may be true that one’s personality may cause him to define “home” as “mine,” but that is only a reflection of his selfish personality; this need not be the case in other situations.

Rabbi Hirsch goes on to explain the ills of the “mine” attitude: “He acts as though his house were meant exclusively for himself. He follows the ways of the Sodomites, conducting human relationships on the basis of strict rights. He says ‘What I have is mine and what you have is yours.’ He forgets that to *tzedek* (strict justice) must be added *tzedakah* (charity) - to the exclusiveness

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Stories For The Soul

Does It Hold Water

Dr. Schreiber was an assimilated Jew living in Bialystok, Poland in the 1930s. His reputation as a talented doctor spread, and the waiting room was usually crowded with patients. His success won him much admiration among the local populace, and he was part of the upper echelons of society in his locale.

One day, Dr. Schreiber received a visitor - the local district attorney, Andrzej Maritus. Maritus brought with him a glass of dirty, putrid water, and placed it on Schreiber’s desk. He then informed the doctor that the water had come from the city mikvah, and he wanted it analyzed. “It’s simply a health concern,” he explained. “We cannot allow our citizens to immerse in such dirty water. If it is indeed dangerous, we will shut the mikvah down.”

The date of the hearing over the fate of the mikvah was set, and the Jews anxiously wondered what would happen. The rabbi came to visit Schreiber, imploring him to remember that the mikvah was a vital part of Jewish life. “The water is quite dirty,” noted Schreiber.

“Nobody has ever become ill from using the mikva!” exclaimed the rabbi. “And it’s not just the mikvah,” he continued. “Next they’ll close down the kosher slaughterhouse, claiming it’s inhumane...” Schreiber listened dispassionately, and respectfully bade the distraught rabbi farewell.

The date of the hearing arrived, and the Jews gathered in the courthouse to witness the proceedings. The district attorney called a number of witnesses to the stand, but their testimony was inconclusive; the case rested with Dr. Schreiber.

Maritus called Schreiber to the stand, and Schreiber, glass of water in hand, stood at the podium.

“What were your findings regarding the mikvah water?” asked Maritus with a smirk.

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Kollel Happenings

ESTATE PLANNING AT MAY 4TH TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Mr. Theodore Z. Gelt, Of Counsel, BakerHostetler, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they discuss Torah-true, lawful and legally binding estate planning. May 4th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

RAV SCHWAB ON CHUMASH AVAILABLE FROM KOLLEL

The Denver Community Kollel is pleased to announce the publication and distribution of Rav Schwab on Chumash. The book is available through the Denver Community Kollel at a special discount rate of \$24. To order, call 303-820-2855, email info@denverkollel.org, or go to www.denverkollel.org.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch-and-Learn class on the weekly parsha at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. at 12:00 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact rmf@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

Program is on Passover break and will resume on May 9th.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What is the longest time span during the year when *Hallel Shalem* (the complete Hallel) is not recited?

A: This depends on whether the year is a Jewish leap year or not. If, like this year, it is, the period between Chanukah and Pesach (on both of which *Hallel Shaleim* is recited) is 129 or 130 days (depending on whether Chanukah ends on 2 or 3 Teves, which depends on whether the month of

Kisleiv has 29 or 30 days). Otherwise, the longest period is between Shavuot and Sukkos, totaling 125 days in the Diaspora, or 126 days in Eretz Yisroel, where Shavuot is only one day.

This week's question: When do communities differ regarding the recital of *mashiv haruach u'morid hageshem*, not including alternate vowelization?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi – the Rif

Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi, known by the acronym of his name, the Rif, is one of the most influential Torah leaders of the last thousand years. Virtually all of the great Spanish Torah scholars and leaders who appeared after him were directly or indirectly his students. His halachic codification of the Talmud became the classic model of subsequent codifications of Jewish law.

Rabbi Yitzchak was born to Rabbi Yaakov in Kila Chamad, Algeria, early in the 11th

century. There is a lack of clarity regarding the exact year of his birth – some have it as 1003, others at 1008, yet others say 1013.

In his youth, he relocated to Fez, Morocco. His last name, Alfasi, or al-Fasi, means “of Fez.”

Rabbi Yitzchak studied under the great Rabbi Chananel ben Chushiel, probably best known for his commentary on much of the Talmud that graces the margins of the modern-day edition of the Talmud.

A Taste of Torah

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of rights must be added the inclusiveness of love. Only thus will the society become a Jewish national society, and will the private existence of each household within it be justified.”

The Torah demands that at the very core of how we define our personality, in our home, it can't just be about me. If one spends six months poring over the blueprints for his dream home, without once giving a thought to how this home might benefit others, then the proper address for this “dream home” is

1 Main St., Sodom, Canaan.

As Rabbi Hirsch continues, “He must remember that selfishness is a justified motive only for organic life – for all stages of development in the vegetable and animal world. But man's right to a social existence begins with self-sacrifice, through which he gains eternal life. And in his home, too – in his private life – he must strive with unflinching energy and without selfish motives to reach the moral ideal of devotion to duty.” Only then is it truly “Home Sweet Home.”

Stories For The Soul

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“The water is very dirty,” replied Schreiber.

“Would you say it is a health hazard for people to use such water for immersion?” said Maritus confidently, ready to close his case – and the mikvah.

Schreiber lifted the glass, looked at it, pondering. He then brought the glass to his lips and, to the shock of the district attorney and all those present, downed the entire

contents. “Are there any more questions?” he asked courteously.

In this week's parsha, the Torah discusses many of the sources of *tum'ah*, spiritual impurity, and the laws of the mikvah needed to cleanse one of this malady. The importance of a mikvah as part of Jewish life cannot be overstated.

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