

BESURAS HAGEULO

occupy themselves with Torah, the Divine Presence dwells among them,"³⁵ there is a particular advantage when learning about Moshiach and the Redemption in public. Such public learning affects the excitement and the heart-felt joy through which comes an increasing desire and anticipation for the coming of Moshiach.³⁶

In addition -- and this is obviously most essential - one should increase the quality of one's observance of mitzvos; in particular one should enhance one's fulfillment of the mitzvah of tzedekah (comprehensive of all the mitzvos³⁷) with distinction, for it "draws near the Redemption."³⁸

It is proper and correct to connect the increase **in tzedekah** with an increase **in the Torah** concerning Moshiach and Redemption; by giving tzedekah with the **intention** to bring close and hasten the Redemption. This intention itself constitutes **learning Torah in matters of Redemption**. When one thinks of from time to time the saying of our Sages, of blessed memory, "great is tzedekah for it brings near the Redemption," it constitutes learning matters of Moshiach and Redemption.

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Tazria-Metzora, 6 Iyar 5751)

35. *Avos* chapter 3, mishneh 6. See *Iggeres HaKodesh*, section 23.

36. Therefore, those who want to learn in depth, and in the give and take fashion of scholarly discourse (and to even contribute original Torah ideas about Moshiach and Redemption) in a quiet and peaceful setting, and therefore prefer to learn by themselves or with a partner, should still try (from time to time) to also join the learning of ten; this way they will also have the advantage of learning with ten (as mentioned in the text).

37. See *Tanya*, chapter 27.

38. *Bava Basra* 10a.

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

the Torah of our Rebbeim, our Leaders, and principally in the Torah (Ma'amarim and Likkutei Sichos³⁰) of the Leader of our generation. Learning this material is a sample of and preparation for learning the Torah of Moshiach, "For a new Torah shall go forth from Me,"³¹ meaning he will teach to all the people the Inner Teachings of the Torah (the reasons of the Torah) and knowledge of G-dliness ("know the G-d of your fathers"³²). This accords with the halachic ruling of the Rambam³³ that "in that time... the Jews will be great sages and know hidden matters, attaining knowledge of their Creator, etc."

This increase in learning the Torah concerned with Moshiach and Redemption ("Malchus sh'b'Tiferes") is the "straightforward path" to actually cause the revelation and coming of Moshiach and Redemption.

My intention here is action³⁴ - and certainly the following will be publicized everywhere:

In order to realize the immediate revelation and coming of Moshiach - each and every Jew (the men, whether they are dwellers in the tent (Yisachar) or men of business (Zevulun), and the women and children, each one according to his ability) should increase their learning of Torah, particularly the subjects of Moshiach and Redemption.

It would be even better if they would learn (in public) with ten others because, in addition to the advantage that "ten who sit and

beginning.

30. [Ma'amarim are discourses of Chassidic philosophy; Likkutei Sichos are collections of talks on the Torah and holidays. Translator's note.]

31. Yeshayahu 51:4. Vayikra Rabba chapter 13:3.

32. Divrei HaYamim 1 28:9.

33. The conclusion and completion of his work, the *Mishneh Torah*.

34. [Literally: "I have come for action." Translator's note.]

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ע"ה
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** ה"ד
Shagalov
Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766
Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה
Ekman
Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765
Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** ע"ה
Marenburg
Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766
Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** ע"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)
Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.
AND IN HONOR OF
Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל
Shagalov
DEDICATED BY
Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y. and Gittel Rochel** שיחיי
Shagalov

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BESURAS HAGEULO

bring Moshiach through "**Malchus sh'b'Tiferes**"²⁵- can be understood in practical terms:

As a preface, since our righteous Moshiach is ready to come immediately, but he hasn't actually come, therefore the final effort required ("the edge of his clothes") of every Jew to bring Moshiach must be (not through Kingship in its purity, the concern of king Moshiach himself, but) through "**Malchus sh'b'Tiferes.**" That means, the subject of Moshiach (Kingship) as it is found in **Torah** (Harmony).

...Simply put: "Tiferes" refers to learning Torah, and "Malchus sh'b'Tiferes" refers to **learning the Torah concerning King Moshiach and Redemption** that are explained in many places.²⁶

These places are: the Written Torah (particularly "the words of the prophets... for all their books are filled with this matter"²⁷); the Oral Torah, in the Gemara (particularly the tractate Sanhedrin and the end of tractate Sotah) and in Midrashim; and especially the Inner Teachings of the Torah, beginning with the Zohar ("with this book of yours, the book of the Zohar, they will leave their exile in mercy"²⁸), through Toras Chassidus (that through the spreading of the wellsprings outward the master, king Moshiach, will come²⁹), to

25. [Literally, "*Kingship in Harmony.*" There are seven "emotional" Sefiros (emanations of G-dliness). These "character traits" such as kindness, severity or discipline, harmony, etc. are reflected in the individual's personality. Each of these also includes all the others. (There is a kindness within kindness, a discipline within kindness, etc.). Translator's note.]

26. They are easy to find - through indexes (which have proliferated in this generation), arranged alphabetically, in the appropriate entries: Redemption, Moshiach, etc.

27. Rambam, *Laws of Kings* chapter 11, halacha 2.

28. Zohar volume 3 124:2 - in *Raya Mehemna*. It is quoted and explained in *Igeres HaTeshuva* beginning of section 26.

29. *Igeres HaKodesh* of the Baal Shem Tov - *Keser Shem Tov* at the

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SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN THE JEWISH CALENDAR

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Volume VIII: *Vayikra*

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In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

T A Z R I A

HOW IMPORTANT IS TIME?

The time for the *mitzvah* of circumcision is the eighth day after birth, as it is written:¹ “On the eighth day, you shall circumcise the flesh of his foreskin.”

If a child is not circumcised on the eighth day, the act may fulfill the *mitzvah* of circumcision, and a blessing is recited,² but the *mitzvah* lacks the distinction of a *mitzvah bizmano*, a *mitzvah* performed at the appropriate time.

When the *mitzvah* is performed at the appropriate time, it has a unique quality, as reflected by the fact that it (and all the activities necessary to perform it) supersede the prohibitions against labor on *Shabbos* as our Sages comment³ on the above verse. When circumcision is not performed on the eighth day, however, it does not supersede the *Shabbos* laws.

1. Vayikra 12:3.

2. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Lech Lecha* in this series, which explains that in addition to the positive dimension of the *mitzvah* of circumcision, there is another dimension: it prevents one from being uncircumcised.

We cannot, however, say that the blessing is recited because of this factor, because a blessing is not recited over an activity performed to prevent the violation of a prohibition. For example, there are authorities (see *Issur ViHeter*, *Shaar* 58, sec. 104) who explain that a blessing is not recited before *nikkur*, the removal of forbidden fats and blood vessels from meat, because the object of the activity is to prevent transgressions.

Accordingly, the fact that a blessing is recited in this instance indicates that the positive dimension of the *mitzvah* of circumcision is indeed fulfilled even when the circumcision takes place after the eighth day.

3. *Shabbos* 132a.

himself and brings honor from man." ...²⁰ This can be explained in light of what was previously said regarding the revelation and coming of Moshiach:

..."Rabbi said, which is the straightforward path that a man²¹ should choose for himself:"

"The man" - refers to "this man²² (who is 'at a high level... complete in everything') when his actions are proper and all things corrected... only the residue hasn't yet been cleaned from the edge of his clothes, etc." because of the exile - as was the case with Rebbe. In our generation - the last generation of exile, the footsteps of Moshiach, when we have concluded and completed all aspects of the service we had to do during the time of exile - it can be said that every Jew is at this level.

The question is: Since we've already completed "our actions and service throughout the duration of exile"²³ - what is the "**straightforward path**" (the easiest and fastest among all the paths of Torah) that all the Jewish people, who have concluded their service, should choose **to realize the revelation and coming of Moshiach**?²⁴

...The explanation of "the straightforward path" to reveal and

20. *Avos* chapter 2, *mishneh* 1.

21. [Literally, "the man," implying the ideal man. Translator's note.]

22. *Likkutei Torah* on our parsha, 22:2.

23. *Tanya*, beginning of chapter 37.

24. Beginning with the revelation and coming of **Moshiach within each and every Jew**, for it is known the verse, "A star will go forth from Yaakov, etc." that refers to *Melech HaMoshiach* (*Yerushalmi Taanis*, chapter 4, Halacha 5) also refers to each and every Jew (*Yerushalmi Ma'aser Sheni* chapter 4, Halacha 6), since in every Jew there is a spark of the soul of Moshiach (Me'or Aynaim, end of *Parshas Pinchas*).

long as the sun, may his name be perpetuated (Yinun)"; the School of Rabbi Chaninah said, Chaninah is his name, as it is written, "I will show you no favor;"¹⁴ others say Menachem ben Chizkiyahu¹⁵ is his name, as it is written, "for far from me is a comforter to revive my spirit."¹⁶

And we (Chassidim) follow their example¹⁷ (in regard to our Rebbeim, our leaders, in particular My sainted father-in-law, leader of our generation): Yosef is his name, as it is written¹⁸ "The L-rd will continue [Yosif] to apply His hand a second time, etc., and He shall gather the lost of Israel, etc." Yitzchak is his name, as it is written,¹⁹ "Then our mouths will be filled with laughter [s'chok]".

* * *

"Rabbi [Yehuda HaNasi] said, which is the straightforward path that a man should choose for himself? That which is honorable to

name" (and not that the students introduced the idea that his [Moshiach's] name is like that of their Rabbi).

14. [Literally, "I will not give you Chaninah." Translator's note.]

15. This is how it's written ("ben Chizkiyahu") in our editions, but in the *Yerushalmi* and *Eicha Rabbah*: just "Menachem. - Note that Rashi quotes the word "Menachem," and adds "ben Chizkiyah." It seems that Rashi's words should be amended thus: "The correct version is "ben Chizkiyahu, but the typesetter 'fixed' it and removed the words: "The correct version is..." This requires further study.

16. See also the *Yerushalmi Brochos* chapter 2, halacha 4. *Eichah Rabbah* 1:51. See *Likkutei Levi Yitzchak* on *Ma'amarei Razal*, p. 106, that "all the opinions are true and these and those are the words of the Living G-d." Note there. [The verse quoted literally reads: "Menachem the comforter of my soul is far from me." Translator's note.]

17. [The Rebbe here refers to the tradition of Chassidim to interpret the names of their Rebbe as a reference to Moshiach. This is in the tradition of the Talmudic sages. Translator's note]

18. *Yeshayhu* 11:11-12.

19. *Tehillim* 126:2. See *Brochos* 31a.

This seems to imply⁴ that when a child is circumcised after the eighth day — even when it was impossible to circumcise him earlier because the child was sick, for example, the circumcision is not considered to have been performed "at the appropriate time." Moreover, it would appear that circumcision after the eighth day affects only the coming days, and has no retroactive effect.

The father in such a case is not considered to have transgressed G-d's commandment. On the contrary, he is forbidden to circumcise a sick child, for *pikuach nefesh*, a threat to life, supersedes all the Torah's commands.⁵ Nevertheless, the actual performance of the *mitzvah* is lacking. As the *Rambam* explains, we are permitted to circumcise a child only when he is healthy, because: "A threat to life takes precedence over everything. It is possible to circumcise [a child] afterwards, but it is impossible to ever bring a Jewish soul back [to life]."⁶

The above conclusion is, however, unwarranted, as can be seen by a careful examination of the wording used by the *Rambam*, who alludes to two reasons for the delay of the *mitz-*

4. See the *Rambam's* Commentary on the *Mishnah*, the conclusion of Chapter 19 of *Shabbos* and the *Jerusalem Talmud*, *Rosh HaShanah* 1:1.

5. *Yoma* 82a.

6. *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Milah* 1:18.

Tosafos (*Shabbos* 131a) states that "Even if the time for circumcision passes, the *mitzvah* is not nullified. For the very same circumcision which he is obligated to perform on the eighth day is performed on the ninth." This reflects the view that all the advantages of performing circumcision at the appropriate time are retained even when the *mitzvah* is performed at a later date. Seemingly, this would apply even when one willfully delayed. But see footnote 11.

Nevertheless, this concept still requires consideration, for *Tosafos* concludes "If he had circumcised [the child] on the eighth day, he would not circumcise him on the ninth day." Seemingly, this is self-evident. It is possible to say that *Tosafos'* intent is that one attains the advantage of circumcising the child at the appropriate time, but does not retroactively amend the lack.

See the analysis of this concept in the letter of the Rogatchover (printed in the *miluim* to the *S'dei Chemed*, *Kuntres HaMetzitzah*, sec. 6, p. 2735 and *Tzofnas Paneach*, *Hilchos Milah*, the conclusion of ch. 1).

vah: a) “a threat to life takes precedence over everything,” and b) “it is possible to circumcise [a child] afterwards...,” i.e., the *mitzvah* is not nullified.

The first reason states the importance of *pikuach nefesh*. Even if there is no possibility of performing the circumcision afterwards, the threat to life takes precedence. By adding the second reason, the *Rambam* implies that the *mitzvah* which one fulfills afterwards makes up for the previous days, and even enables one to attain the advantages of circumcision “at the appropriate time.” If the *mitzvah* affected only the coming days, the rationale that “it is possible to circumcise [a child] afterwards” would not be sufficient in its own right, for the uncircumcised state of the initial days would not have been corrected, and the advantage of fulfilling the *mitzvah* at the appropriate time would be lacking.

This is somewhat difficult to comprehend: How can a *mitzvah* have a retroactive effect? True, there are instances in which the Torah states that an activity will affect a previous time, but such activities are not intended to effect a new status, but rather to clarify the nature of an existing situation, or cause an act that was performed conditionally to become binding.⁷ Because the later activity merely clarifies the previous situation, it is understandable that it can have a retroactive effect. But when an act brings about a new status, it seems logical that it can only affect the future. How then can circumcision affect the previous days?

Also, the order of the *Rambam*’s words raises a question: After stating “It is possible to circumcise [a child] afterwards,” the *Rambam* adds: “but it is impossible to ever

(As the Gemara states,⁶ "Rav said, if he is from the living, he is like our holy Rebbe [Yehudah HaNasi]."⁷ [And then it states,] "**If Moshiach is from those that are living now** he is certainly **our holy Rebbe**,⁸ who bears the afflictions and is a complete Chasid."⁹) And he waits impatiently and longingly¹⁰ to reveal himself (from the concealment of the time and situation of exile), for the King Moshiach redeems Israel with the complete and true Redemption, after which there will be no exile, according to the halachic ruling of *Rambam*,¹¹ "If there arises a king from the house of David, etc."

...And there¹² (at the beginning of the discussion): "the School of Rabbi Shilah said, Shiloh is his name, as it is written, "until Shiloh comes"; the School of Rabbi Yannai said, Yinun is his name (similar to Yannai, [thus] each one explained the name of Moshiach after his name¹³), as it is written, "May his name endure forever, as

6. *Sanhedrin* 98b.

7. According to the legal decision of the *Rambam* (*Laws of Kings* end of chapter 11), "If a king from the House of David arises, etc." - means that he is already a king.

8. [In the Gemara, Rav is referring to Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, compiler of the Mishneh and known simply as "Rebbe." Translator's note.]

9. The explanation of Rashi there. This is why Moshiach is referred to as "the leper of the house of **Rebbe**," "because of our holy Rebbe [Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi] who is called **Rebbe**... because he bore the afflictions and sufferings like him" (*Chidushei Agadah* of the *Maharsha* there). [The term "Chasid" here refers to one who is pious and kindly. Translator's note.]

10. Therefore "he loosens one and binds one (he loosens the bandage on one wound, cleans it and rebinds it, then loosens the next bandage, and proceeds thus; he does not loosen two wounds together (as do the others afflicted with illness among whom he sits). He says, if I am called, I won't be detained (If I am asked to go and redeem Israel, I won't detain myself in order to bind two wounds)" *Sanhedrin* there and *Rashi*'s explanation.

11. As in note 5.

12. *Sanhedrin* there.

13. *Rashi*'s explanation there. - And the wording of *Rashi* is precise: "each one explained [the name of Moshiach] after his

7. E.g., conditional agreements, alternatively, a situation similar to that described by *Chullin* 72b: "Anything which will surely be cut off is considered as if it is cut off already." See also commentaries to *Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer* 124:1; *S'dei Chemed, Klallim* 20, 142.

The Announcement Of The Redemption

22

In recent times we have spoken about and emphasized strongly the necessity for each and every Jew to do everything that depends on him to actually bring our righteous Moshiach immediately.

Since in these days (with the conclusion of the month of Nissan of the year "it will be a year in which I will show him wonders") **"all the appointed times have passed"** ("the end of Yamim (days)" and "the end of Yamin (days)"¹)² **in the simplest sense**,³ certainly our righteous Moshiach will come immediately. And [then] each and every one will point with his finger and say, **"Here he** (King Moshiach) **has come."**⁴ This means that actually he already came in the moment before this one, for the past tense is used.⁵

* * *

Moshiach is found in the world in the time and place of exile, and in the situation of exile, for he bears the afflictions of the exile.

1. See *Or HaTorah*, beginning of *Parshas Mikeitz*. And further references there.

2. [The word for "days" in Hebrew can be spelled with either the letter "mem" or a "nun": "Yamim" or "Yamin". The former, "Yamim," is connected to the left, the end of exile and removal of the negative. The latter, "Yamin," is a phrase from the end of the Book of Daniel, connoting the right, and the revelation of the positive. Translator's note]

3. In addition to the fact that already, in the time of the Gemara "all the appointed times have passed" (Sanhedrin 97b).

4. *Shir HaShirm* 2:8 and *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* on the verse (chapter 2:8(2)).

5. [In Hebrew, vowels are not usually written; rather they are understood either from the structure of the word, the grammar of the sentence or the context of the idea. Thus, in this case, the written form of the word for "come" can be read as present tense or past tense, depending on the pronunciation. Translator's note]

bring a Jewish soul back [to life]." The latter phrase seems to relate more to the first reason stated by the *Rambam* — the preeminence of *pikuach nefesh*. For once it is explained that through circumcision at a later date, one can rectify the lack in previous days, it is seemingly unnecessary to state: "It is impossible to ever bring a Jewish soul back [to life]."

REVEALING OUR INHERENT POTENTIAL

The above questions can be clarified based on a passage in *Likkutei Torah*⁸ which states that circumcision draws down a level of Divine light which transcends the levels attainable by mortal efforts. Such a light is drawn down only on G-d's initiative. Nevertheless, the act of circumcision is necessary because it is only when the foreskin is removed that this light will reveal itself.

Similar concepts apply with regard to the fact that the entry of the holy soul into the body takes place through the *mitzvah* of circumcision.⁹ This refers to a level of soul which transcends our powers of understanding.¹⁰ There is no way we can tap this level through our own efforts. Instead, every Jew shares an inherent, essential bond to this level. Nevertheless, it is through circumcision that this inherent connection is revealed.

On this basis, we can understand how circumcision affects the past. For it, like the situations mentioned

8. *Vayikra* 21a; see also *Derech Mitzvosecha* 9b.

9. *Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Mahadura Basra* 4:2. See the *sichos* to the *parshiyos* *Lech Lecha* and *Yud-Tes Kislev* in this series, where the concept is explained.

10. See the *maamar* entitled *Basi LeGani*, 5713.

previously, is not bringing about a new development; it is revealing something which existed previously.¹¹

To cite another example: *Teshuvah* motivated by love has a retroactive effect, transforming one's earlier sins into merits.¹² For *teshuvah* does not bring about a new situation.¹³ Even at the time a person sins, his soul remains faithful to G-d,¹⁴ though its connection with Him is hidden. Since *teshuvah* brings this inner bond back to the surface, it has a retroactive effect, elevating one's previous conduct.

Similarly, with regard to circumcision, if one does not perform the deed afterwards, the child's inherent connection to G-d remains hidden. This runs contrary to the intent of creation as a whole, and to the purpose of that particular soul's descent. For the purpose of creation is that a Jew should — by virtue of his Divine service — reveal the G-dly nature of his soul.¹⁵ But when a Jew who was not circumcised

as it is said:³⁵ "Israel and the Holy One, blessed be He, are all one."

(Adapted from *Sichos Yud-Tes Kislev*, 5715)



11. To refer to the expression cited in note 7: "Anything which will surely be cut off is considered as if it is cut off already." For this reason, circumcision has a retroactive effect.

It must be clarified whether this also applies when one neglected to circumcise the baby at the appropriate time, for it is unclear whether the foreskin would be considered "surely [to] be cut off" in such a situation.

12. See *Yoma* 86a and *Rashi's* commentary.

13. Indeed, this concept is implied by the very word *teshuvah*, which means "return," coming back to one's essence, as explained in *Likkutei Torah* (Beginning of *Parshas Haazinu*, see also *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. I, p. 409).

On this basis, a distinction can be drawn between the repentance of non-Jews (for example, the inhabitants of Ninveh) and the *teshuvah* of Jews. With non-Jews, the concept of returning to an essential bond with G-d does not apply. Therefore their repentance effects only the future.

See also the commentary of the *Tzemach Tzedek* (*Or HaTorah, Nach*, Vol. II, p. 1062) to the verse (*Eichah* 1:8): "Israel has surely sinned." He writes: "It is with regard to Israel alone that the concepts of sin and *teshuvah* are relevant." See also the *Jerusalem Talmud*, *Nazir* 9:1; *Tikkunei Zohar*, *Tikkun* 21 (54b); *Minchas Chinuch*, the conclusion of *Mitzvah* 364.

14. *Tanya*, ch. 24.

15. See the opening phrases of *Eitz Chayim*, which states that the ultimate purpose of creation is that G-d's potentials will be revealed and recognized by mankind.

35. See *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 93b.

Admittedly, the evil connected with a prohibition does temporarily interrupt a Jew's connection with G-d. But when there is only a *question* as to whether a prohibition has been violated, this does not interfere with the connection between the Jews and G-d.³²

With regard to the second support cited above: The difference between one witness and two witnesses can be explained as follows. The significance of the testimony of two witnesses depends on a court, for it is the power of a court which gives weight to their testimony. For that reason, as long as witnesses do not make their statements in the presence of a court, they can retract them.³³

The acceptance of the statement of one witness, by contrast, depends on his *chezkas kashrus*, the assumption that he is an acceptable witness. This is a reflection of the influence of his G-dly soul. Why is he believed? Because every Jew has a *chezkas kashrus*.³⁴

With regard to the *chezkas kashrus*, the acceptability of the woman (the Jewish people) to her husband (G-d), there is no need to take the matter to court, neither an earthly court nor a heavenly court. One can rely on the Jews' G-dly souls.

When a Jew heaves a genuine sigh because of his undesirable conduct, he does not need a court to clear him of culpability. And then, as is required of a husband, G-d provides him with sustenance and clothing, and unites with him,

32. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Vayikra* in this series, which explains that with regard to the soul's encompassing powers, a questionable violation of a prohibition is more severe than an instance in which a prohibition was definitely violated. This, however, relates to the concept of impurity and not prohibition.

33. *Jerusalem Talmud, Kesuvos* 2:3; *Tosefta, Sanhedrin* 6:6; *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat* 29.

34. See *Sanhedrin* 3:1.

at the appropriate time circumcises himself afterwards, he reveals this inherent, [timeless] connection. Therefore this has an effect on the previous days.¹⁶

G-D'S ONLY SON

On this basis, we can understand why, after giving the two reasons spoken of previously, the *Rambam* adds: "It is impossible to ever bring a Jewish soul back [to life]." In addition to the obvious meaning of the phrase, it also explains why, when a child is circumcised after the appropriate time, the act has a retroactive effect.

A Jew's connection with G-d continues at all times, regardless of his conduct, as it is said:¹⁷ "Regardless, they are My children; to exchange them for another nation [heaven forbid] is impossible."

With the words "It is impossible to ever bring a Jewish soul back," the *Rambam* alludes to another act that can never be retracted: G-d's covenant with the Jewish people. Moreover, this covenant does not merely involve the nation as a whole; it affects every individual Jew. G-d has bound Himself to every individual Jew with a bond that cannot be retracted, for G-d loves every Jew with essential love. As the *Baal Shem Tov* would say:¹⁸ "Every Jew is cherished by G-d like an only child born to his parents in their old age; indeed, he is even dearer to Him."

16. To cite another parallel: Although a bill of divorce must be given willingly, if a Jew is compelled to divorce his wife by a Jewish court, the divorce is considered to have been given willingly because the true desire of every Jew is to perform G-d's will. If a gentile forces him to divorce his wife, the divorce is void (*Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Gerushin* 2:20). Nevertheless, even when he is compelled to divorce by a Jewish court, he must make a statement that he wants to divorce his wife, for his true desire must be given expression.

17. *Kiddushin* 36a (see *Rashba, Responsum* 194); *Pesiktah, Rus Rabbah*, sec. 3; *Pesachim* 87a.

18. *Kesser Shem Tov, Addenda*, sec. 133.

The universe was created “for the sake of the Jews, who are called ‘first.’”¹⁹ This applies not only with regard to the Jewish people as a whole, but with regard to every individual.²⁰ The intent of the creation as a whole depends on every individual Jew, and therefore “everyone is required to say: ‘The world was created for me.’”²¹ This is why someone who saves one Jewish soul is considered to have saved the entire world.²¹ For when a lack is experienced by one Jew, the entire world is effected.

“It is impossible to ever bring a Jewish soul back,” and the bond between G-d and every Jew is always completely intact; all that is necessary is that it be revealed. For this reason, “It is possible to circumcise [a child] afterwards,” and there will be a retroactive effect, because circumcision reveals the connection to G-dliness which exists at all times, even before the circumcision.

ONE’S EFFORTS WILL BE MAGNIFIED

As mentioned previously,²² the *mitzvah* of circumcision alludes to our Divine service as whole. It teaches that work must be accomplished. One may not be content with the promise that ultimately “No one will ever be estranged from Him,”²³ and thus decide that his conduct today is of no

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19. *Osios d’Rabbi Akiva, Os Beis; Seder Rabbah d’Bereishis*, sec. 4; *Vayikra Rabbah* 36:4; *Midrash Tanchuma, Bereishis* 3; *Rashi and Ramban*, commentary to *Bereishis* 1:1.
20. Therefore when the Torah was given — which is the purpose of the world — the entire Jewish people, 600,000 souls, had to be present, (*Mechilta, Shmos* 19:11, *Yalkut Shimoni*, sec. 280).
21. *Sanhedrin* 4:5.
22. See the *sichah* of *Parshas Lech Lecha* in this series.
23. *Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Hilchos Talmud Torah* 4:3; *Tanya*, ch. 3. The wording is based on *II Shmuel* 14:14.

ment of one witness would be accepted with regard to matters of impurity.²⁹

THE ANALOGUE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH G-D

Every particular regarding a Torah concept is precise, and the laws that apply in the realm of *Nigleh*, the revealed dimension of Torah law, have parallels in *P’nimiyus HaTorah*, the Torah’s mystic teachings. This also applies with regard to the fact that the *niddah* state is considered to involve a prohibition and not a matter of ritual impurity.

The Jews are described³⁰ as “one nation on the earth.” This implies that even as they are involved with matters of this earth, they remain within G-d’s domain, where His oneness is expressed. As mentioned above, even while sinning, a Jew’s soul remains faithful to Him.

Because a Jew’s soul is close to G-d, one might think that even when there is a *question* of evil, one should be judged impure. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the spiritual parallel to the *niddah* state, a Jew’s distance from G-d, is not a matter of impurity, but can be likened to a prohibition, i.e., the lack and the distance from G-d involves only one’s conscious powers, intellect and emotion. As our Sages say:³¹ “A person will not commit a sin unless he is possessed by a spirit of folly.” At that time, he neither understands nor feels G-d’s greatness.

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29. The question whether we accept the statements of one witness with regard to questions of impurity in a private domain is discussed by the *Shev Shemaita, Shemaita* 6. (It is questionable if the doubt raised by the *Shav Shemaita* applies in the matter under discussion. Note the development of this concept by the *Tzemach Tzedek, loc. cit.*)
30. *II Shmuel* 7:23.
31. *Sotah* 3a; see also *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 121a.

followed.”²⁴ *Tosafos*²⁵ notes that with regard to questions of impurity in a private domain, we find that even when several doubtful factors are involved, the more stringent ruling is followed. Why then is the more lenient ruling followed with regard to questions regarding the *niddah* state?

Tosafos answers that the leniency is granted only with regard to relations between a woman and her husband. This indicates that the laws governing those relations are matters involving prohibitions and not impurity.

b) On the verse:²⁶ “And she shall count seven days,” our Sages comment:²⁷ “by herself;” she alone is responsible. From this, our Rabbis²⁸ derive the concept that the statements of one witness are accepted with regard to the Torah’s prohibitions.

This supports the argument that the prohibition against sexual relations with a *niddah* involves a prohibition, not impurity. For laws regarding impurity cannot be derived from laws regarding prohibitions. This applies even when the state-

significance. For the inner connection must be revealed, and this can be accomplished only through work.²⁴

This work involves both *milah*, cutting the thick foreskin, and *priyah*, ripping open the thin membrane, which on a spiritual plane alludes to the subduing of our material desires.²⁵ Afterwards, one must perform *metzitzah* (sucking out the blood), thus removing the excitement generated by material things from one’s body as a whole.

On the other hand, a person must appreciate that his efforts to “circumcise the foreskin of [his] heart”²⁶ will have far greater effects than could be brought about through his own labor. These endeavors will lead to a revelation from above, and the fulfillment of the promise:²⁷ “And G-d your L-rd will circumcise your heart,” which in a complete sense will be manifest at the time of the ultimate Redemption to be led by *Mashiach*; may it take place in the near future.

(Adapted from *Sichos* 10 Shvat, 5713)



24. As explained by the *M'lo HaRoyim*, *Mareches Sefeika d'Oraisa*, sec. 10, and others according to *Tosafos* (whose view is under discussion), this applies even with regard to Scriptural law. There are also more stringent views which include the *Tzemach Tzedek* (Responsa to *Yoreh De'ah*, Responsum 71; see also the conclusion of the *maamar* entitled *Mitzvas Tumas Metzora* in *Derech Mitzvosecho*), which maintains that according to Scriptural Law, in a case of doubt, one should follow the more severe opinion. Nevertheless, even according to these authorities, the fact that with regard to a *sefek safeika* — a situation where the doubt is compounded — a more lenient ruling is followed with regard to prohibitions, in contrast to the laws regarding impurity, indicates that even one doubt has an effect according to Scriptural Law.

25. *Bava Kamma* 11a, entry *D'ein*.

26. *Vayikra* 15:28.

27. *Kesubos* 72a.

28. *Tosafos*, *Gittin* 2b. See also the *Tzemach Tzedek*, *Shaar HaMiluim*, *Chidushim L'Yevamos* (17d-20b).

24. See the *sichah* of *Parshas Lech Lecha* in this series, which states that this is the lesson implied by the fact that the *mitzvah* includes the actual deed of circumcision.

25. *Rambam*, *Guide to the Perplexed*, Vol. III, chs. 35 and 39; see also the *sichah* of *Parshas Lech Lecha* in this series, where this concept is discussed.

26. *Devarim* 10:16.

27. *Ibid.* 30:6. See the *maamar* entitled *B'Etzem HaYom HaZeh* in *Torah Or*, and in *Toras Chayim*, *Parshas Lech Lecha*.

METZORA

CAUSES OF IMPURITY

This week's Torah reading speaks about the ritual impurity imparted by a woman in the *niddah* state. Our Sages explain¹ that this impurity came as a result of G-d's curse after the Sin of the Tree of Knowledge. This implies that the *niddah* state is not a natural phenomenon, but a result of sin, a sin so severe that it is considered the source of all subsequent sins.²

A deeper appreciation of this concept can be gained by understanding the nature of Divine retribution. Consider another punishment humanity suffered because of the Sin of the Tree of Knowledge: our expulsion from *Gan Eden*. This punishment was not merely the penalty meted out for the sin, but instead — as are all expressions of Divine retribution³ — a direct result of the sin itself. The Garden of Eden was a place which could not bear the existence of evil. By eating from the Tree of Knowledge, Adam internalized evil within his being. In this state, he could no longer remain in the Garden.

1. *Eruvin* 100b.
 2. See *Shabbos* 146a; *Zohar*, Vol. I, 52b. Note the explanation of this concept in the *maamar* entitled *Al Kein Yomru HaMoshlim*, 5691.
 3. See the introduction to the section *Beis Acharon* in the *Sheloh*, where this subject is discussed.

Although the evil associated with a prohibition can be appreciated more readily than the evil associated with impurity, there is a more severe dimension associated with impurity. For since the evil associated with impurity is not easily discerned, one will not eradicate it through *teshuvah* as quickly as one would correct error involving those matters specifically forbidden by the Torah.²²

Moreover, as reflected by the fact that ritual impurity is a quality which cannot be grasped by mortal intellect, it mars the levels of soul that transcend reason and understanding.²³

In this context, it is explained that with regard to the relationship between the Jews and G-d, the evil generated through sin — and on a more general level, the Sin of the Golden Calf, which parallels the Sin of the Tree of Knowledge — is comparable to a prohibition and not to a matter of impurity, i.e., it affects our conscious powers, and not the essential powers of the soul. The essence of the soul remains vigorously united with G-d.

TWO SUPPORTS

Support for the notion that the ban on sexual relations during the *niddah* state involves a prohibition and is not a result of impurity can be drawn from the following:⁹

a) With regard to the laws of *niddah*, we employ the principle: “In a case of doubt, the more lenient view is

trated by the fact that the *Mishnah* (*Berachos* 1:1) associates the time for the recitation of the *Shema* — a declaration of *kabbalas ol* — with the time the priests partake of *terumah*. Since the priesthood serves such a purpose, it is necessary to take into consideration even the more sophisticated levels of evil associated with impurity.
 22. See the discussion of related concepts in the *sichah* of *Parshas Vayikra* in this series.
 23. See *Likkutei Torah*, *Devarim* 43c, and the conclusion of *Parshas Acharei*.

Impurity, by contrast, refers to a dimension of evil which cannot be appreciated by mortal hearts and minds. Instead, it is as the *Midrash* states:¹⁸ “It is a statute which I (G-d) ordained, a decree that I instituted.”

For this reason, most of the Torah’s prohibitions remain pertinent in the present era, while the laws of ritual impurity by and large applied only in the time of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Whenever one can appreciate evil, one must take precautions against it. Evil which we cannot detect, however, and which is deemed evil solely by virtue of G-d’s decree, conflicts only with the high levels of holiness revealed in the era of the *Beis HaMikdash*. It does not disrupt the reduced levels of holiness revealed in the present era.¹⁹

For this reason, most of the few laws concerning ritual purity which are practiced today²⁰ pertain to priests. Since they are endowed with an extra measure of holiness, they must protect themselves from ritual impurity. Moreover, even priests are not enjoined against contact with all forms of ritual impurity.²¹

rather than *hutra*, “lifted.” (The comments of the Rogachover Gaon to that *halachah* require further analysis.)

There is a slight difficulty with the above thesis based on *Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 26, which states that when our Sages permit non-kosher food because of a threat to life, it becomes “absolutely permitted.” It must, however, be noted that in that Epistle, the word “absolutely” is surrounded by parenthesis, and is lacking in certain of the early printings of the *Tanya* [indicating that perhaps the Alter Rebbe felt the matter required reconsideration].

18. *Bamidbar Rabbah*, the beginning of *Parshas Chukas*; see also *Rambam, Mishneh Torah*, the conclusion of *Hilchos Mikvaos*.
19. To cite a parallel: one may not partake of the sacrificial offerings while in a state of ritual impurity. One may, however, partake of ordinary foods. See *Kuzari*, Discourse 3, Sec. 49.
20. Among the other laws of ritual impurity relevant today are those which apply to the water used for a *mikveh* and the *schach* used for a *sukkah*.
21. Moreover, the priesthood is associated with *kabbalas ol*, a commitment which transcends intellect; this is the foundation of our Divine service. This is illus-

Similarly, with regard to Divine retribution as a whole, it is written:⁴ “Your evil will chastise you,” i.e., the suffering visited upon man is a natural consequence of sin.

This principle also applies with regard to the punishment Chavah received, the *niddah* state. This punishment is a direct result of the Sin of the Tree of Knowledge. The evil created through the Sin of the Tree of Knowledge becomes the blood which renders a woman a *niddah*. Therefore the woman becomes ritually impure.

The Jewish people are “a holy nation”;⁵ and each individual is entirely good. This applies not only with regard to the G-dly soul, but also with regard to the animal soul. By nature, the animal soul has no desire for forbidden things. (On the contrary, its inherent desires focus only on things which are permitted.⁶) Therefore as soon as bodily evil becomes a significant entity,⁷ a Jewish body cannot hold it within itself and discharges it.⁸

Nevertheless, the very fact that evil exists within a Jewish body is a sign that something is lacking (the lack having been caused by the Sin of the Tree of Knowledge). Therefore the person is deemed impure.

THE ULTIMATE ANALOGY

There is a debate among the Rabbis as to whether the prohibition against marital relations while a woman is in the

4. *Yirmeyahu* 2:19.

5. *Shmos* 19:6.

6. *Tanya*, ch. 8.

7. For until menstrual blood reaches the vaginal channel, a woman is not rendered impure (*Niddah* 5:1).

8. There is a slight difficulty reconciling these statements with those of the *Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Mahadura Basra*, at the conclusion of sec. 4.

niddah state is a side effect of her impure status or a separate prohibition. There is strong support for the second approach.⁹

Man and woman, all the elements of their being, and all the laws applying to them, are a manifestation of the relationship between G-d and the Jewish people.¹⁰ For they, like every other entity in this world, are an echo of their spiritual source.

Extending the above analogy, the *niddah* state refers to Jews in a state of sin, when they are banished from their natural home.¹¹ While in this state, there are aspects which relate to the concept of impurity. Nevertheless, with regard to establishing a connection with G-d — the fundamental desire of every Jew¹² and the objective of his observance of the Torah and its *mitzvos* — the obstacle is not one of impurity,¹³ but rather a prohibition.

DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN PROHIBITIONS AND IMPURITY

The distinction between a prohibition and impurity can be explained as follows: Prohibitions guard against a type of evil that can be appreciated by mortal intellect or emotion. For example, forbidden foods¹⁴ dull the sensitivity of the heart

9. See *Asvin d'Oraisa*, sec. 21. See also *Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Yoreh De'ah*, sec. 183 (*Mahadura Basra, Hagaah*, 789a); the responsa of the *Tzemach Tzedek, Yoreh De'ah*, Responsa 138, sec. 1; 139, sec. 3.

10. See our Sages' interpretations of *Shir HaShirim*.

11. This is reflected in the word *niddah*, which relates to the term *nad*, meaning "wander." See also the *Targum* which renders it as "removed."

12. See *Tanya*, ch. 41.

13. Even impurity does not prevent this connection, as it is written (*Vayikra* 16:16): "He who dwells among you amidst your impurity."

14. Even when the prohibition is not indigenous to the food, but rather results from a person's thoughts or speech — for example, a person who slaughters an animal in worship of a mountain (*Chulin* 39b) — it breeds undesirable tendencies in a person's character. For example, the *Midrash (Rus Rabbah* 3:13) relates that when the mother of Elisha ben Avuia (*Acher*) was pregnant with him, she passed by a temple of pagan gods. She smelled the fragrance of the

and mind.¹⁵ Even when exceptions are allowed, e.g., a pregnant woman who smells the fragrance of forbidden food and is aroused, and is therefore granted permission to taste it,¹⁶ partaking of such food still imparts undesirable tendencies.¹⁷

meat roasted as a sacrifice and had a powerful desire for the food. Fearful for her health and that of her child, the Rabbis permitted her to eat. And the influence of that food later gave rise to *Acher's* negative tendencies.

These negative tendencies were not endowed as a punishment for the deeds of *Acher's* mother, for she did not commit a transgression; in such an instance, a woman is permitted to partake of forbidden food. As the wording of the *Midrash*: "they gave her from this food, and she ate" implies, she was granted permission by the Rabbis. It is unlikely that because the worship of false gods was involved, the Rabbis would have ruled that she should die rather than transgress.

{The *Jerusalem Talmud (Chagigah* 2:1) states that she smelled incense offered to a false deity, and this gave rise to *Acher's* negative tendencies. According to that source, it is possible to say that *Acher's* negative qualities came as a punishment for his mother's deeds. See, however, *Tosafos (Chagigah* 15a), who maintains that the text in the *Jerusalem Talmud* follows that of the *Midrash* cited above.}

Based on the above, we can appreciate the interpretation offered by the *Shach* and the *Taz* to the *Ramah's* ruling (*Yoreh De'ah* 81:7) that a woman who eats forbidden foods should not nurse a child. This applies even when the nursemaid is permitted to eat the forbidden foods because of a danger to her life.

In this instance, it would be wrong to make a distinction between a severe prohibition like food offered to an idol, and pig's meat. On the contrary, it is apparent from this ruling that although the food offered to idols was forbidden only because of man's intent, even when one is allowed to partake of it, it brings about undesirable tendencies. Surely this concept applies with regard to eating pork and the like, when the undesirable tendencies are indigenous to the meat itself.

15. See the commentary of the *Ramban* to *Vayikra* 11:13, and *Sefer HaChinuch (mitzvah* 73).

16. See *Yoma* 82a, *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 617:2.

17. Although partaking of forbidden food imparts undesirable tendencies, when a threat to life is involved it is a *mitzvah* to partake. To cite a parallel, when necessary, one limb is amputated in order to save a person's life.

This reflects the concept that the undesirable nature of the food remains unchanged, although it is permitted in this instance. This concept is also reflected in the *Ramban's* ruling (*Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Shabbos* 2:1) that a threat to life causes the Torah's prohibitions to be *dichuyah*, "suspended,"