

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Tazria-Metzorah
March 17, 2021 *** 5 Iyar, 5781

Kol Rina – *An Independent Minyan*, is a traditional egalitarian community. We are haimish (homey/folksy), friendly, participatory, warm and welcoming. We hold weekly services in South Orange as well as holiday services and celebrations which are completely lay led. We welcome all to our services and programs from non-Hebrew readers to Jewish communal and education professionals.

Tazria-Metzorah in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/2879/jewish/Tazria-Metzora-in-a-Nutshell.htm

The Parshahs of Tazria and Metzora continue the discussion of the laws of tumah v'taharah, ritual impurity and purity. A woman giving birth should undergo a process of purification, which includes immersing in a mikvah (a naturally gathered pool of water) and bringing offerings to the Holy Temple. All male infants are to be circumcised on the eighth day of life.

Tzaraat (often mistranslated as "leprosy") is a supra-natural plague, which can afflict people as well as garments or homes. If white or pink patches appear on a person's skin (dark pink or dark green in garments or homes), a kohen is summoned.

Judging by various signs, such as an increase in size of the afflicted area after a seven-day quarantine, the kohen pronounces it tamei (impure) or tahor (pure).

A person afflicted with tzaraat must dwell alone outside of the camp (or city) until he is healed. The afflicted area in a garment or home must be removed; if the tzaraat recurs, the entire garment or home must be destroyed.

When the metzora ("leper") heals, he or she is purified by the kohen with a special procedure involving two birds, spring water in an earthen vessel, a piece of cedar wood, a scarlet thread and a bundle of hyssop.

Ritual impurity is also engendered through a seminal or other discharge in a man, and menstruation or other discharge of blood in a woman, necessitating purification through immersion in a mikvah.

Haftarah in a Nutshell: II Kings 7:3 – 20

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/877050/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This week's haftarah discusses the story of four men stricken by tzara'at, a skin ailment caused by sins — one of the main topics of this week's Torah reading. Haftarah's backdrop: King Ben-Hadad of Aram besieged Samaria (the Northern Kingdom of Israel). The resulting famine was catastrophic, reducing many to cannibalism. King Jehoram of Israel wanted to execute the prophet Elisha, considering that his prayers could have prevented the entire tragedy. Elisha reassured the king: "So has G-d said, 'At this time tomorrow, a seah of fine flour will sell for [merely] a shekel, and two seahs of barley will sell for a shekel in the gate of Samaria.'" One of the king's officers present scoffed at the prophecy: "Behold, if G-d makes windows in the sky, will this thing come about?" Elisha responded, "Behold, you will see with your own eyes, but you shall not eat there from."

Now, four men suffering from tzara'at dwelled in quarantine outside the city. They too were hungry, victims of the famine. They decided to approach the enemy camp to beg for food. They arrived only to find a deserted camp. For "G-d had caused the Aramean camp to hear the sound of chariots and the sound of horses, the sound of a great army. And they said to one another, 'Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us.'" The entire enemy army fled, leaving behind their tents, horses, donkeys and provisions.

The four men went to the city and reported their findings to the gatekeepers who, in turn, informed King Jehoram. Though originally thinking that this was an ambush planned by the enemy, the king sent messengers who confirmed the miracle. The people swarmed out of the city and looted the enemy camp, thus breaking the famine and fulfilling Elisha's prophecy. And the officer? The king placed him in charge of the city gates. He was trampled to death by the rampaging crowds — after seeing the fulfillment of the prophet's words...

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

How To Praise (Tazria-Metzorah 5781) by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l
<https://rabbisacks.org/tazria-metzora-5781/>

The Sages were eloquent on the subject of lashon hara, evil speech, the sin they took to be the cause of tsara'at. But there is a meta-halachic principle: "From the negative you can infer the positive"[1] So, for example, from the seriousness of the prohibition against Chillul Hashem, desecrating God's name, one can infer the importance of the opposite, Kiddush Hashem, sanctifying God's name.

It therefore follows that alongside the grave sin of lashon hara, there must in principle be a concept of lashon hatov, good speech, and it must be more than a mere negation of its opposite. The way to avoid lashon hara is to practise silence, and indeed the Sages were eloquent on the importance of silence.[2] Silence saves us from evil speech but in and of itself it achieves nothing positive. What then is lashon hatov?

One of the most important tasks of a leader, a parent or a friend is focused praise. We first discussed this idea in parshat Vayeshev, where we examined the classic text on this – a Mishnah in Tractate Avot (2:11) in which Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai enumerates the praises of his five beloved students:

Eliezer ben Hyrcanus: a plastered well that never loses a drop. Joshua ben Chananya: happy the one who gave him birth. Yose the Priest: a pious man. Shimon ben Netanel: a man who fears sin. Elazar ben Arach: an ever-flowing spring.

Every Rabbi had disciples. The imperative, "Raise up many disciples"[3] is one of the oldest rabbinic teachings on record. What the Mishnah is telling us here is how to create disciples. It is not difficult to create followers. Often a good teacher will, over time, notice that they have developed a large following, students who are uncritical devotees – but how to encourage these followers to become creative intellects in their own right? It is far harder to create leaders than to create followers. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai was a great teacher because five of his students became giants in their own right. The Mishnah is telling us how he did it: with focussed praise. He showed each of his pupils where their particular strength lay. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, the "plastered well that never loses a drop," was gifted with a superb memory – an important ability in an age in which manuscripts were rare and

the Oral Law was not yet committed to writing. Shimon ben Netanel, the “man who fears sin,” may not have had the intellectual brilliance of the others but his reverential nature was a reminder to others that they were not merely scholars but also holy men engaged in a sacred task. Elazar ben Arach, the “ever-flowing spring,” had a creative mind constantly giving rise to new interpretations of ancient texts.

I discovered the transformative power of focused praise from one of the more remarkable people I ever met, the late Lena Rustin. Lena was a speech therapist, specialising in helping children who struggled with stammers. I came to know her through a television documentary I was making for the BBC about the state of the family in Britain. Lena believed that the young children she was treating – they were, on average, around five years old – had to be understood in the context of their families. Families tend to develop an equilibrium. If a child stammers, everyone in the family adjusts to it. Therefore if the child is to lose their stammer, all the relationships within the family will have to be renegotiated. Not only must the child change. So must everyone else.

By and large, we tend to resist change. We settle into patterns of behaviour as they become more and more comfortable, like a well-used armchair or a well-worn pair of shoes. How do you create an atmosphere within a family that encourages change and makes it unthreatening? The answer Lena discovered was praise. She told the families with whom she was working that every day they must notice each member of the family doing something right, and say so – specifically, positively and thankfully.

She did not go into deep explanations, but watching her at work I began to realise what she was doing. She was creating, within each home, an atmosphere of mutual regard and continuous positive reinforcement. She wanted the parents to shape an environment of self-respect and self-confidence, not just for the stammering child but for every member of the family, so that the entire atmosphere of the home was one in which people felt safe to change and help others to do so.

I suddenly realised that Lena had discovered a solution not just for stammering but for group dynamics as a whole. My intuition was soon confirmed in a surprising way. There had been tensions among the television crew with which I had been working. Various things had gone wrong and there was an atmosphere of mutual recrimination. After filming a session of Lena Rustin teaching parents how to give and receive praise, the crew likewise began praising one another. Instantly the atmosphere was transformed. The tension dissolved, and filming became fun again. Praise gives people the confidence to let go of the negative aspects of their character and reach their full potential.

There is in praise a deep spiritual message too. We think religion is about faith in God. What I had not fully understood before was that faith in God should lead us to have faith in people, for God’s image is in each of us, and we have to learn how to

discern it. I then understood that the repeated phrase in Genesis 1, “And God saw that it was good,” was there to teach us to see the good in people and events, and by so doing, help to strengthen that goodness. I also understood why God briefly punished Moses by turning his hand to tsara’at – because he had said about the Israelites, “They will not believe in me.” (Ex. 4:1) Moses was being taught a fundamental lesson of leadership: It does not matter whether they believe in you. What matters is that you believe in them.

It was from another wise woman that I learned another important lesson about praise. Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck, in her book *Mindset*^[4], argues that it makes a decisive difference whether we believe that our abilities are innate and determined once and for all (the “fixed” mindset), or whether we may assume that talent is something we achieve through time by effort, practice and persistence (the “growth” mindset). People who take the former approach tend to be risk-averse, afraid that if they fail this will show that they are not as good as they were thought to be. The latter group embrace risk because they take failure as a learning experience from which they can grow. It follows that there is good praise and bad praise. Parents and teachers should not praise children in absolute terms: “You are gifted, brilliant, a star!” They should praise effort: “You tried hard, you gave of your best, and I can see the improvement!” They should encourage a growth mindset, not a fixed one.

Perhaps this explains a sad aftermath in the life of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai’s two most gifted pupils. The Mishnah immediately following the one quoted above states:

He [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] used to say: If all the Sages of Israel were in one scale of a balance and Eliezer ben Hyrcanus in the other, he would outweigh them all. However, Abba Saul said in his name: If all the Sages of Israel, including Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, were in one scale of a balance, and Elazar ben Arach in the other, he would outweigh them all. (Avot 2:12)

Tragically, Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus was eventually excommunicated by his colleagues for failing to accept the majority view on a matter of Jewish law.^[5] As for Rabbi Elazar ben Arach, he became separated from his colleagues. When they went to the academy at Yavneh, he went to Emmaus, a pleasant place to live but lacking in other Torah scholars. Eventually he forgot his learning and became a pale shadow of his former self.^[6] It may be that praising his students for their innate abilities rather than their effort, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai inadvertently encouraged his two most talented students to develop a fixed mindset rather than engage with colleagues and stay open to intellectual growth.

Praise, and how we administer it, is a fundamental element in leadership of any kind. Recognising the good in people and saying so, we help bring people’s potential to fruition. Praising their efforts rather than their innate gifts helps encourage growth, about which Hillel used to say: “He who does not increase his

knowledge, loses it” (Mishnah Avot 1:13). **The right kind of praise changes lives. That is the power of lashon hatov. Bad speech diminishes us; good speech can lift us to great heights.** Or as W. H. Auden said in one of his beautiful poems: In the prison of his days

Teach the free man how to praise.[7] [1] Nedarim 11a. [2] See for example Mishnah Avot 1:17; 3:13. [3] Mishnah Avot 1:1. [4] Carol Dweck, *Mindset*, Ballantine Books, 2007. [5] Bava Metzia 59b. [6] Shabbat 147b. [7] W. H. Auden, “In Memory of W. B. Yeats,” *Another Time* (New York: Random House, 1940).

The Values of a Jewish Home by Matthew Berkowitz
Tazria Metzora/Yom Hazikaron-Yom Ha'atzmaut
<https://www.jtsa.edu/the-values-of-a-jewish-home-israel>

In the precious days “Before the Coronavirus Era” (B.C.E.), the parshiyot of Tazria-Metzora seemed wholly disconnected from our lives, presenting the perennial challenge of relevance (or irrelevance) to even the most talented *darshan* (sermonizer). How are we to connect leprous plagues attacking both body and abode to our daily lives? And to what extent does the experience of quarantine resonate with our modern reality? These are only two of the many questions that we would have posed in a pre-Covid world.

And then the pandemic changed our lives, and transformed our relationship to these previously enigmatic Torah readings. What captured my attention as I turned to Parashat Metzora this year was the idea of the affliction of home. The idea of home, which many of us consider to be a place of refuge and sanctity, is turned on its head as Torah presents us with a case of domestic disease.

Leviticus 14:34–35 teaches, “When you enter the land of Canaan that I give you as a possession, and I inflict an eruptive plague upon a house in the land you possess, the owner of the house will come and tell the priest . . .” This triggers a series of directives in which the priest examines the plague; if the plague is determined to be serious, the house is quarantined for seven days; another examination takes place; and then a process of remediation occurs. What are we to make of this curious phenomenon and ritual?

Basing his commentary on Leviticus Rabbah 17:6, Rashi, the prolific medieval commentator, writes, “This was because the Amorites concealed treasures of gold in the walls of their homes during the whole forty years that the Israelites were wandering in the desert; and in consequence, the plague was sent so the Israelites would pull down their walls and discover the hidden treasure.” Far from being a punishment then, this domestic leprosy is, at its heart, a blessing. It strikes homes with the aim of helping their inhabitants discover treasure that the Canaanites tried to conceal.

The Sefat Emet, Rabbi Yehudah Leib Alter of Ger, has a visceral reaction to Rashi’s

commentary. He responds,

Now really! Did the Creator of the universe need to resort to such contortions? Why would God have given the Canaanites the idea of hiding [things in the walls] so that Israel would have to knock down these houses!

*The real meaning of these afflictions of houses is in fact quite wondrous; a demonstration that Israel's holiness is so great that they can also draw sanctity and purity into their dwelling places. Scripture tells us, "A stone will cry out from the wall and a wooden beam will answer it" ([Hab. 2:11](#)), regarding a person's sin, to which the walls of the house bear witness (Arthur Green, *The Language of Truth*, 173–174).*

According to the commentary of the Sefat Emet, our moral and ethical behavior affects our surroundings, and, more intimately, shapes the physical structure of our home. The walls of our sacred dwelling places potentially absorb the consequences of unethical and immoral behavior.

The Sefat Emet teases out a beautiful message: Torah demonstrates a higher level of holiness that is accessible to the Israelite people upon entering the Land of Israel. I would call it the "sensitivity of sanctity." We are called to live up to our greatest morals and principles. It is through this virtue that we acquire and maintain possession of the Land of Israel. As inhabitants of Israel we must be attentive, vigilant, and caring.

And apropos Yom HaShoah, Arthur Green goes even further, writing,

. . . [A] Jew living after 1945 cannot hear this RaSHI comment quoted without recalling the tales of Jews in Poland and elsewhere being asked by their gentile neighbors, as they were led out to the slaughter: "Where did you hide the gold?" In the face of this horrible memory, the aggadic tradition underlying RaSHI here serves to protect us from any moral superiority that our status as victims might give us. Under different circumstances, we are reminded, we might have been the ones to go searching for other people's treasures (ibid.).

Indeed, it is a poetic commentary on the idea of home. In Judaism, we consider home to be a *mikdash me'at*, a sanctuary in miniature. And if so, it should be a place where we try harder—where we have aspirational visions of being the best we can be. Home is not just built of construction materials such as wood, stones, and steel; a home is also built with compassion, love, and an ethical compass. Without soulful work, our home will indeed be plagued with argument, corruption, and isolation. This holds true for both our personal, private home as well as our national home.

As we celebrate Yom Ha'atzma'ut, Israeli Independence Day, and Israel engages in the hard work of putting together a stable government in the coming weeks and months, may the moral, aspirational vision of Torah guide our blueprint. (*Matthew Berkowitz is Director of Israel Programs at JTS*)

A journey through Tazria-M'tzora in a time of COVID-19 is revelatory. Things that never resonated before, things that seemed incomprehensible – perhaps even reprehensible – suddenly make sense.

Leviticus 13 goes into excruciating detail about the diagnosis of and response to various afflictions of the skin. These infestations, whose cause is unknown, render human beings and clothing ritual impure. The priest who examines the afflicted individual cannot identify the cause of the outbreak; he can only determine whether the symptoms necessitate isolating the individual from their community. At times, the priest cannot determine whether early symptoms indicate a contagious illness; in such a case, a follow-up visit may be required before a diagnosis can be confirmed.

If the priest pronounces the individual impure, the following steps are taken:

As for the person with a leprous affection, the clothes shall be rent, the head shall be left bare, and the upper lip shall be covered over; and the person shall call out, “Impure! Impure!” That person shall be impure as long as the disease and shall dwell apart in a dwelling outside the camp (Lev. 13:45-46).

Who could fail to empathize with the stricken individual of our Torah portion? We live in a time when a cough, a sense that food is less savory than it was yesterday, or a slightly elevated temperature leaves us uncertain as to whether we have a mild cold, the seasonal flu, or whether we have contracted a terrifying virus. Imagine the reaction to the symptoms detailed in Tazria-M'tzora.

In a year when every person whom we encounter, no matter how healthy they appear, could be a source of contagion, imagine the reaction of those around the afflicted person described in Leviticus. Consider the restrictions imposed on the person. Dressed in clothes that indicate mourning, wearing a mask over their mouth, they walk alone, signaling their condition by appearance and speech. They are forced into isolation, kept apart from family and friends during what must be the most anxious and frightening time of their life. No visitors, no words of comfort from loved ones, no way of knowing what the next day will bring.

However, the Torah offers hope. Leviticus 14 begins: “This shall be the ritual for a leper at the time of purification... the priest shall go outside the camp. If the priest sees that the leper has been healed... he now leads the individual through a ritual of purification” (Lev. 14:2-3). This ritual is not a cure, a rite to banish disease; it is enacted only after the physical symptoms of the illness are gone. It allows a person returning to the community to experience catharsis, to symbolically cast away the pain and fear of illness. The ritual itself may strike us as bizarre – a bird is slaughtered and its blood is mixed with water and sprinkled over the person who has recovered. A second bird is set free. The individual washes their clothes and

bathes but must remain outside their home for another week. Then after a second round of bathing, the individual offers sacrifices and is anointed with blood and oil. Tazria-M'tzora confirms what we have learned in the past year: The workings of the human body are wondrous and mysterious. Despite all of our knowledge and medical expertise, we can't always explain why some people become ill while others do not. We often take our bodies for granted when they function as expected and are then shocked and dismayed when they don't. We feel a sense of betrayal when we experience illness. Even when we know what causes a disease, that knowledge often offers no reassurance and does not allay our fears.

The writers of the Torah and the rabbis who interpreted it in the early centuries of the Common Era possessed none of our medical knowledge. The workings of the body that have been explained by modern science were a mystery to them. The Talmud acknowledges this sacred mystery in words that have become part of our morning liturgy: "Blessed [are You]... who formed human beings wisely, creating within them openings and channels. You know that if one of them opened or closed [at the wrong time] it would be impossible to stand before You" (Berakhot 60b). In Leviticus Rabbah, commenting on the opening verse of Tazria, rabbinic discussions of pregnancy and birth reflect the sense that the formation and sustaining of the fetus in the womb is miraculous.

It is expected that if a person carries a bag of coins with the opening facing downward that the coins will fall out. But when the fetus rests in the mother's womb and the Holy One protects it so that it will not fall out and die...

(Leviticus Rabbah 14:2)

How does the child rest in the womb? It is rolled up like a writing tablet, its head between its knees, its hands at its sides, its heels against its buttocks, its mouth closed and its navel open. It eats and drinks what its mother eats and drinks, but expels no waste, lest it kill its mother. When it comes into the world, that which was closed, opens, and that which was open, closes.

(Leviticus Rabbah 14:8)

In a world filled with mystery, there is awe and wonder when the body functions as expected, and there is also fear. Tazria-M'tzora, with its discussions of bodily fluids and skin ailments, reflects both the awe and the fear that the body's function and dysfunction evoke. Its rituals, strange as they seem to us, allowed individuals to mark the highs and lows that are part of physical existence. These rituals marked their restoration not only to health but also to communal life.

This parashah, read thirteen months after we began living through a pandemic, reminds us that life is fragile and that illness may result in a sense of disruption and isolation. It also reminds us that rituals, while sometimes as mysterious as the inner workings of the human body, may offer comfort at the end of an illness. The conditions discussed in Tazria-M'tzora had physical manifestations, but they may also have taken a social and emotional toll. The rituals described in the parashah

are performed on the body of people, but they are also intended to act upon their minds, to reassure them that they are once again whole.

Perhaps we too should think about how ritual could help us recover from the physical and emotional toll of the past year. (*Dvora Weisberg is the Rabbi Aaron D. Panken Professor of Rabbinics; HUC-JIR Rabbinical School Director and Rabbinical Program Director in Los Angeles*)

Sacred Space, Sacred Time by Rabbi Yitz Greenberg

https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh_torah_source_sheets/GreenbergParashatVaYakhelPekudei5781.pdf?utm_campaign=Dvar%20Torah%205781&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=114934473&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9PtbyAn7venIA0XHqj3kc0W_4YPWzJOWnuxkouN_Nc93qEmllhwfOsSfxHFipw6ZC_9WZ-cGc1D6Ff7knWIRFSHEO8tQ&utm_content=114934473&utm_source=hs_email

Our double Torah portion concludes the tabernacle section of the Book of Exodus. It tells how the various parts of the tabernacle were fashioned, then it describes the erection of the building, the placing of all its appurtenances in their proper places, and finishes with a financial report on the amounts of precious metals used and an inventory of the special textiles incorporated.

Surprisingly, the Torah “interrupts” the account to instruct the Israelite on laws of Shabbat observance. The Torah tells us that labor (melakhah, dignified, creative work), that is, creation, is prohibited on the Shabbat (Exodus 35:2-3). The traditional commentaries scramble to explain the insertion of a seemingly unrelated set of laws. In his commentary Rashi suggests that the Shabbat instruction is inserted here—before the construction is described—to underscore that the work of building the tabernacle is prohibited on Shabbat.¹ The holy work of building a house in which to meet and serve God, nevertheless, must stop on Shabbat. Getting the sanctuary done faster is not religiously significant enough to interfere with the global Shabbat instruction to live a day of pure being, dedicated to internal reflection and relationship. (Only *pikuah nefesh*, saving a life, is weighty enough to override the Shabbat prohibition of labor, because life is Judaism’s highest value).

There is another possible approach. These Shabbat laws are not an interruption but a juxtaposition. Shabbat represents **sacred time**. The tabernacle represents **sacred space**. These two phenomena are closely related. They are parallel to each other and they play an identical role in the ecology of Jewish religion. Hence they appear together in our Torah portion.

The key goal of Judaism, as I have argued in this series, is to repair and perfect the world so life will flourish to its fullest degree. In the Messianic age, human honor

and dignity—the infinite value, equality, and uniqueness of every individual—will be upheld on a daily basis in real life. Living the Jewish covenant involves working in every generation to overcome the inequalities inflicted by poverty, oppression or discrimination, as well as to end the life-degrading effects of hunger, war, and sickness. We work on the present reality in an effort to improve it. There is a real tension between the ideal we strive for and what can be done in the present status quo. This tension is the dynamic which generates the energy to pursue our activities at an intense (covenantal) level and strive to live by the higher values in our daily lives. Given that the pace of covenantal improvement is incremental, we spend our whole lives in this work and the task is passed on to the next generation.

The challenge is: How do we keep up the present impact of the ideal, when its actual realization is so far away? The covenantal process generates a real danger, that one will participate in—and then accommodate—the present reality, so as to slip into its routine. One may even unconsciously come to accept the norms and expectations of the status quo. How can we avoid selling out the dream and the mission?

There is a second danger. “What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?”² How do we not lose the intensity and drawing power of the dream? This is the Achilles heel of the covenantal method, with its commitment to function in the present reality while working to change it.

The Jewish tradition deals with this challenge by creating sacred time and sacred space. The future perfected world is brought forward into the present in the form of a “mini-cosmos,” a miniature version of the ultimate goal. In the realm of time, the Torah carves out one day of the week, Shabbat. A. J. Heschel calls it an “island in time.”³ During these twenty-five hours, one experiences the ultimate reality-to-come. On Shabbat, there is no labor (*melakhah*), i.e. dignified creative work to upgrade the world. This is not so much a prohibition as it is an imagined future fantasy, turned into a present experience. On this day, the world is complete, so there is nothing left to do.⁴

In a perfect world, one needs only to be, to live, to relate to family and friends, to self-develop, to learn Torah, to make love, to have family meals with time for conversation, to sing songs, to learn, as well as to enjoy company and guests. On Shabbat, good food and wine is provided to deepen the pleasure. On Shabbat there is no war, no deprivation, no public mourning. In effect, one lives in Messianic time and experiences the joys of a completely repaired world and the delight of a fully human experience with no distraction or anxieties to mar the day. For now, this is only twenty-five hours and the peace and perfection are artificially created in that the rest of the world is not keeping Shabbat. But for the practitioner, the promised future perfection is present, vivid, and real.⁵

The same function is carried out in the creation of sacred space. In this building—be it tabernacle or temple—one carves out a mini-world. It is made of precious, permanent, non-decaying metals, like gold and silver, to symbolize eternity and the absence of decay and death. In this space, no human death is present. Even people who have been in proximity to death and as a result become ritually impure, cannot enter until they have undergone a purification and rebirth-to-life ceremony. In this space, the priests are perfect physical specimens, foreshadowing the Messianic era with full cure of disabilities that handicap people.⁶ Everyone is ethically on their best behavior.⁷ There is no war, no strife, no clashing interests. One feels the presence of God in the absence of evil and in the unity of the divine and human in common cause. Again the Messianic reality is only inside this one building. But the experience is vivid and real.

This is the covenantal method of keeping the dream alive. A mini-redeemed world is set up and experienced deeply in time and space now. The encounter is so powerful that the participant knows that this is real - not just an idle fantasy. Thanks to this present experience, the future is not some distant star that is too far away to exercise gravitational pull. Then when one walks out of the Temple or re-enters the weekday, one sees with fresh eyes all the flaws, the missing qualities, the compromises of the present. Energized by the taste of the messianic, the religious celebrant determines not to settle for the status quo but to change it.

This is the covenantal method of world transformation which the Torah portion holds up as twin tracks on the way to tikkun olam, world repair. Start by redeeming one day, then widen the liberation steadily into Sunday, Monday—until all seven days are perfected. Start with one ideal building, then extend it to one city, then into one country. Keep on extending the zone of life, freedom, perfection, get some allies along the way, and some day the whole world will be redeemed, a Garden of Eden with liberty and justice, love and peace for all.

Shabbat Shalom. ¹ *Rashi's comment on Exodus 35:2, based on the Mekhilta.* ² The first lines of Langston Hughes' poem, *Harlem* (1990). ³ Abraham J. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, ch. 1, pp. 12-25.

⁴ For another exploration of this theme, see Shai Held's essay on Parashat BeHar, "Another World to Live In: The Meaning of Shabbat," available here: <https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/another-world-live>, and published in Shai Held, *The Heart of Torah*. ⁵ For a fuller exposition of Shabbat as Messianic pre-enactment, see I. Greenberg, *The Jewish Way*, especially pp. 149-163. ⁶ On this theme, see my previous essay on Parashat Teztaveh, "On the Priesthood, Or: Holiness is Living in the Fullness of Life," available here: <https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/priesthood>. ⁷ "Who will dwell in your holy mountain (Temple)? One who walks uprightly, acts justly, speaks the truth... does not slander..." (Psalm 15:2ff). For more on the model of the Temple as a place of perfection / a paradise, see Jon Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, pp. 137-142.

YAHRTZEITS

Al Gottlieb remembers his mother Gertrude Gottlieb on Monday April 19th (Iyar 7).
Steve Kissner remembers his mother Mollie Kissner on Wednesday April 21st (Iyar 9).

On behalf of Susan Marx, we remember her mother Belle R. Marx (Beila Rivka Bat Reb Bezallel ve Sarah) on Friday April 23rd (Iyar 11)

Coming Up At Kol Rina

Friday Torah Study and Service, April 16, 2021

Friday night services on Zoom will commence at 5:15 with Torah study led by Len Levin. Len will also lead Kabbalat Shabbat, beginning at 5:45, and followed by Maariv led by Rebecca Greene. This week's guest d'varist will be Leslie Blatt, who will speak on "Disappearing School Libraries and Librarians." Leslie Blatt is a retired school librarian and past president of NJ Association of School Librarians. We hope you will join us!

Use the following Zoom link to attend:

<https://zoom.us/j/533517572?pwd=dVFHR2NGZFBCYWp1Yzd6ald0bzFRdz09>

Meeting ID: 533 517 572

Password: 003293

Brunch-and-Learn: Teaching the Holocaust in the Public Schools, Sunday, April 18 at 10:30 am

Kol Rina's April Brunch-and-Learn program will feature a panel of educators speaking on the topic "**The Challenge (and Necessity) of Teaching About the Holocaust in the Public Schools.**" The three educators – all adjunct professors in the Kean University Holocaust Resource Center's certificate program in Teaching the Holocaust and Teaching Prejudice Reduction – also have extensive experience themselves teaching students about the Holocaust in public school settings. The panel will be moderated by Kol Rina's own Marianne Sender, also a public school teacher with years of experience teaching about the Holocaust to middle school students and a graduate of the Kean University certificate program.

Please [click here](#) to register for this event and obtain the free Zoom link.

Remember & Tell: SOMA Interfaith Holocaust Service, Sunday, April 18 at 4:00 pm

All of us have watched with dismay as hate crimes have escalated over the past several years. It is so important now to remember the lessons of the Holocaust and to continue to fight discrimination, prejudice and hate wherever we see it.

This year's Holocaust Remembrance Service will be broadcast live on YouTube on **April 18th, beginning at 4:00 pm**. Our own Rachel Levin is the primary creator/editor of this moving and important presentation. [Click here](#) to watch Rachel's trailer. If you click on "subscribe" at the end of the trailer, it will be helpful to the Planning Committee, of which Margie Freeman is a member. And be sure to save the date and time for the service.

Use the following YouTube link to attend the service: [Rememberandtell.org/2021](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rememberandtell.org/2021).

Monday evening minyan, April 19

Our regular weekday evening minyan will take place on Monday, April 19, beginning at 8:00. Your presence allows mourners and those observing yahrzeits to say Kaddish. Please support your Kol Rina friends by attending.

Use the following Zoom link to attend:

<https://zoom.us/j/97663987468?pwd=NjFhaVZUZkpSZ3pxQWJjOU5UWFR4QT09>

Meeting ID: 976 6398 7468
Password: 080691

Coming soon: R. Jehiel Orenstein z"l Memorial Lecture, May 2

Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson is this year's guest lecturer for the Rabbi Jehiel Orenstein z"l Memorial Lecture in honor of our beloved rabbi of 35 years. Rabbi Artson will be speaking on the topic "Too Important to Leave to the Believers: Judaism as World Wisdom."

The event will be held on May 2 at 7:00 pm. [Click here](#) for the Zoom link.