



The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

Tazria/Metzora 5781

God, Man, And State

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered April 23, 1966)

The conjunction of the two Sidrot we read today, Tazria and Metzora, is remarkable. The first speaks of birth, the second of a kind of death: *metzora harei hu ke'met*, a leper is considered as partially dead. Tazria describes the joyous acceptance into the fold of a new Jew by means of berit milah, circumcision, while Metzora tells of the expulsion of the leper from the community.

Yet, these two portions are read on the same Shabbat with no interruption between them. The tension between these two opposites, this dialectic between birth and death, between pleasure and plague, between rejoicing and rejecting, speaks to us about the human condition as such and the existence of the Jew specifically. Even more, this tension contains fundamental teachings of Judaism that are relevant to the problems of the State of Israel whose 18th birthday we shall be celebrating this Monday.

After delineating the laws of childbirth, the Torah in the first Sidra gives us the law of circumcision. The Midrash Tanhuma relates a fascinating conversation concerning this Jewish law. We are told that Turnus Rufus, a particularly vicious Roman commander during the Hadrianic persecutions in Palestine, spoke to R. Akiva, the revered leaders of our people. He asked R. Akiva: *ezei mehem na'im*, which is more beautiful: the work of God or the work of man? R. Akiva answered: the work of man. Turnus Rufus was visibly disturbed by the answer. He continued: Why do you circumcise your children? R. Akiva said: my first reply serves as an answer to this question as well. Whereupon R. Akiva brought before the Roman commander *shibolim* and *gluskaot*, stalks of wheat and loaves of good white bread. He said to the Roman: behold, these are the works of God, and these are the works of man. Are not the works of man more beautiful and useful? Said the Roman to R. Akiva: but if God wants people to be circumcised why are they not born circumcised? R. Akiva

replied: God gave the mitzvot to Israel *le'tzaref ba-hen*, to temper or purify His people thereby.

Here is the triumphant Roman commander, activist, arrogant, proud and power-drunk. In an attitude of contempt, he faces the aged Jewish leader of this conquered people, a man who proclaims that the greatest principle of life is the study of Torah. What can these other-worldly mystics know about the world, about reality, about life? So he taunts the old rabbi: how come you circumcise your children? Do you not believe that man, as God's creation, is already born perfect?

But the Roman pagan is amazed by the response: NO! All of Judaism--its philosophy, its Torah, its mitzvot--is based upon the premise that God withheld perfection from His creation, that He only began the task and left it to man, His *tzellem*, "image," to complete. In Genesis we are taught that God rested from creating the world *asher bara Elohim la'asot*, "which God created to do"--and R. Samson Raphael Hirsch interpreted that to mean that God created the world for man "to do." Therefore, R. Akiva shows Turnus Rufus the wheat stalks and the white breads, to teach him that God has created wheat because He wants man to do something with it. It is God's will that man make the created world more beautiful and more perfect. No wonder that in the Jewish view science and technology play such a positive role. No wonder that religious Jewry has contributed so mightily, throughout the ages and today as well, to the advancement of science and the control of nature.

Therefore, too, the mitzvot, and especially circumcision, were revealed to Israel to teach that man must act by himself in order to perfect his self and his world, and in the process, *le'tzaref ba-hen*, to purify himself and fulfill all his sublime potentialities.

Indeed, R. Akiva himself exemplified this great principle. He was, on the one hand, one of the saintliest spirits in all

our history. The Talmud, in imaginative grasp of the truth, tells us that when Moses ascended Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah and he saw the sacred soul of R. Akiva, he protested to God that Akiva was more worthy to be the bearer of Torah than he. And yet, on the other hand, it was the same R. Akiva who did not isolate himself in the academy, but became the sponsor of Bar Kochba, the great Jewish general who led the revolution against Rome.

This, then, is what milah teaches us: *maaseh basar va-dam na'im*, the work of flesh and blood is beautiful indeed. The world is an uncompleted creation; man's fate is to finish it. It is the principle of activism. The State of Israel was built by people who perceived this Jewish principle. They were the ones who refused to stand aside, outside of the stream of history, but who actively took it upon themselves to rebuild Jewish statehood. Their activity was in full keeping with the Jewish tradition as taught by the law of milah. More than enough Jewish blood was spilled in the effort, and the sweat and tears invested in the State shall never be forgotten.

Yet, this is only half the story. There is an opposite danger. If man is indeed a creator, then there is the peril that he will become intoxicated with power and self-delusions, that he will begin boasting and bragging and proclaiming bombastically: *kohi ve'otzem yadi*, my own power and my own strength have performed all this. When he circumcises his child, he tends to forget that a healthy child is the gift of God. When he bakes his bread, he does not always realize that the wheat came from God's earth. When he builds his state, he ignores the fact that without the divine promise of Abraham and divine guidance throughout the ages there would be no Jews to build the Jewish state. When he is self-completing, he tends to become, in his imagination, self-creating. He is self-finishing and thinks that he is therefore self-made; and God spare us from the self-made men!

To help us avoid this dangerous delusion, we have the teachings of Metzora. Just as Tazria and milah warn us to avoid the passivism that issues from a misunderstanding of faith, so Metzora and the law of *shiluah ha-mahaneh*, the banishing of the leper outside the camp, teach us to avoid the fatal illusion that issues from faithlessness. Just as one Sidra tells us to circumcise the flesh and assert our manhood, so the second tells us to circumcise the heart and serve our God.

The great medieval scholar, R. Elazar of Worms, explains the law of Metzora and his banishment outside the camp

by means of a comment on a famous verse in Psalms: *ve'adam bi-yekar bal yalin nimshal ka-behemot nidmu*, man does not abide in his glory, he is compared to the animal. Man, says R. Elazar, is born naked and ignorant, without understanding and intelligence. But God puts him on his feet, grants him wisdom and insight, feeds him and clothes him and makes him great. But then man forgets and does not understand that this glory came to him from his God. Therefore, he becomes like a *behemoth*, a mere animal. An animal is not kept at home, but sent out to pasture; he is unfit to live in a truly human community. So man who forgets God is a *metzora*, he is morally sick, and must be sent outside the camp of his peers. The leper symbolizes the man who acquired self-confidence at the cost of fidelity to God and he therefore is reduced to the role of a beast.

Man, then, must be co-creator with God. Tazria teaches that man must imitate his Maker; Metzora reminds him not to impersonate his God, not be an imposter. One Sidra stresses the virtue of human commission; the other--the virtue of human submission.

Indeed, in an insight brimming with tremendous significance, the eminent Italian-Jewish thinker, Rabbi Mosheh of Trani, finds this second principle in the commandment of milah itself. Just as circumcision teaches that man must act, so its particular designation for the eighth day teaches that his actions must not lead to the mere amassing of power and self-importance. Rather, man must acknowledge and reach out to the Creator of all the world. The number seven, R. Mosheh teaches, is the symbol of Nature. Seven is the number of days in the week, the unit of time which establishes the rhythm of our lives. The earth itself agriculturally follows a seven year cycle in Judaism--that of the Shemittah. The number seven, therefore, stands for this world in its fullness. The number eight, however, is beyond seven: it teaches that you must transcend what seven symbolizes, you must go beyond Nature and reach out for the supernatural, for God, He who creates Nature. Were milah on the seventh day, then the duty of man would be to correct the imperfections of Nature, but forever to stay within it as nothing more than a clever animal.

But milah was commanded for the eighth day, to teach that the purpose of all man's activity, the purpose of his work on Nature, is to elevate himself beyond the perfection of body and mind, beyond the conquest of the world, beyond technology. When man controls his environment, he fulfills the number seven; when he controls his instincts,

he reaches number eight. His technology is symbolized by the number seven; his theology by eight. Milah on the eighth day teaches that man must not only complete himself but must grow beyond himself; he must yearn and aspire to something higher. It signifies not only milah but berit; not only a surgical cut, but the sign of the covenant, a contract with God sealed in blood. It means that if a human being will not strive to be more than human, he must become less than human, an animal, *nimshal ka-behemot nidmu*. Then, man becomes a metzora, and like an animal, must be sent out *hutz la-mahaneh*, outside the camp of human beings.

Indeed, this is the crucial problem concerning the character of the State of Israel. Is it to be the symbol of seven, or the symbol of eight? Will it be just a natural state, or something higher, something nobler? If Israel will be only natural, a state like all others, a small sliver of real estate on the shores of the Mediterranean, considered nothing more than the creation of the Haganah and Sabra ingenuity, then it has no special claim on Jewish communities throughout the world--no more than its population warrants. It has no right to Messianic pretenses. Such a conception places it *hutz la-mahaneh*, outside the purview of authentic Jewish history, an aberration. It is then in defiance of the covenant; it is the way of tum'ah, impurity. Only by fulfilling the symbol of eight, of loyalty to the covenant of God, of Torah, lies the way of taharah, of purity and rebirth, of joyous fulfillment of the historic dreams and prayers and prophecies of our history.

This, then, is the real problem on this eve of the eighteenth birthday of the State of Israel: Will it be milah or *berit*? Surgery or covenant? Tazria or Metzora? Taharah or tum'ah? Striving to be more than a natural human political entity, or falling to a mere natural group which, under the impress of secular nationalism, often becomes beastly; *nimshal ka-behemot nidmu*?

Such decisions are never made all at once. They involve

Dead or Alive?

Rabbi Joshua (*The Hoffer*) Hoffman z"l

The Talmud (Nedorim 64a) tells us that a person afflicted with tzora'as, or leprosy, is considered as if he dead. Although we have discussed the reason for this in Netvort in the past (see Netvort to parshas Metzora, 5765, available at Torahheights.com), I would like to suggest a different explanation now, as an outgrowth

of long processes measured in historic time, certainly more than eighteen years. Many facts will determine the answer, and not the least of them will be the spiritual leadership in the state under the resolute stewardship of our distinguished and revered guest, His Eminence, Chief Rabbi Unterman, may he live and be well.

Their enormously difficult task is to be both responsive to their fellow Israelis, and responsible to our Heavenly Father. Like the Kohanim in our Sidra, they must confront all Jews, the perfectly pure and the perilously impure. Sometimes it is their unhappy and tragic task to say to a man: *tamei*, impure, you must go out! Yet their greater and nobler task is to teach this same *tamei* to return, to bring Jews back into the historic community of Israel, to train all Jews in the way of the Torah's taharah. It is by no means a simple duty; it is, in fact, unenviably difficult. Our hopes and good wishes and our prayers for divine guidance and blessings go to Chief Rabbi Unterman and his distinguished colleagues in this historic mission.

We have spoken of berit milah in relation to the State of Israel. The eighteenth birthday also has another significance: *shemoneh esreh le'huppah*, the eighteenth year is traditionally the year of marriage. Let us conclude, then, by extending our wishes to Israel in a manner appropriate to both events. Let us all wish the State of Israel divine blessings: *le'Torah le'huppah u-le'maasim tovim*. May it be a future of Torah--in which Israel will accept the divine word and turn to its Father in heaven. May it be the time of huppah, the marriage of hearts between Israel and Jews throughout the world. And then, having returned to God and to Jews throughout the world, may Israel become the shining beacon of maasim tovim, of good deeds and noble living, throughout the world and for all mankind. *Le'Torah, le'huppah u-le'maasim tovim*. Amen.

Read more at www.yu.edu/about/lamm-heritage.

of an approach presented by Rav Chaim Shmulevitz in his Sichos Mussar, no. 63. Rabbi Shmulevitz suggests that since, as part of his cleansing process, the metzora must keep out of all three camps, he is unable to perform acts of chesed. Therefore, his life is really meaningless. King David tells us (Tehillim 89:3) that the world was built with

chesed, meaning, as Rav Saadia Gaon explains, as an act of lovingkindness by God, to provide Him with avenues through which to perform chesed. As part of our duty to walk in God's ways, then, we must also perform acts of chesed towards others. A person who lives only for himself has an empty life, and is considered as if he is not really living. I would like to demonstrate that there are wider implications for this approach to the metzora's status, based on a statement of Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto, or Ramchal, in his *Mesillas Yeshorim*, or Path of the Just.

In the first chapter of *Mesillas Yeshorim*, Ramchal writes that the rabbis taught us that we were created in order to delight in God and enjoy the radiance of His presence. Although the place to enjoy this pleasure is the world to come, this world serves as a vestibule in which we prepare to enter the banquet hall. Clearly, however, one who does not have any relationship with God in this world can scarcely be considered to be preparing himself to delight in God in the next world. The midrash mentions seven sins for which a person is afflicted with tzara'as. Prominent among these sins are *leshon hora*, or evil talk, and *gasus ho-ruach*, or arrogance. *Leshon hora*, too, can be seen as an example of arrogance, in that the person who engages in it is building himself up by tearing someone else down. The Talmud in *Sotah* (42a), tells us that God says of the arrogant man that He cannot live with him in the same world. Thus, the metzora, who became afflicted with this condition because of arrogance and is therefore expelled

from all three camps surrounding the holy ark, is not only being excluded from society, and thereby unable to engage in acts of chesed which can serve as an avenue to relate to God. He is also being excluded from God's presence in the camp, because he has developed his personality in such a way that he cannot live together with God in the same world. Since man's purpose in this world is to work to develop his relationship with God, the metzora, who has been excluded from the three camps, is, truly, tantamount to being a dead man.

The explanation we have suggested in understanding the comparison of a metzora to a dead man really is of one piece with the explanation of Rav Chaim Shmulevitz. *Rabbeinu Bachya ibn Pekudah*, in his *Chovos HaLevovos*, or *Duties of the Heart*, writes that man is able to connect to God through interacting with his fellow man. After all, although we believe in God, we do not actually see him. How do we then train ourselves to develop a relationship with Him? Through interacting with people, who bear God's image, we are able to take the further step and relate to God. The metzora, who dwells alone outside all three camps, is unable to do acts of chesed, and, therefore, is unable to develop his relationship with God. Without this relationship, he is really unable to prepare to delight in God's presence in the next world either. As a result, he is considered as if he were a dead person, since he cannot fulfill the purpose for which he was created.

Mussar from a Stick of Cedar and Some Grass

Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted by a talmid from a shiur given in the Gruss Kollel)

In the beginning of Parshas Metzora, the Torah describes the purification procedure after being stricken with tzara'as. The penitent brings two tziporim, one of which is sheched and one of which stays alive, as well as an eitz erez, shni tola'as, and agudas eizov. Why use these specific items? Rashi says that the Torah tells us to bring specifically these things because they symbolize the causes of tzara'as and suggest how we can fix those flaws in our character. The birds chirp all the time, signifying *lashon hara*. A stick of a very tall cedar tree typifies arrogance. The Torah describes the tuft of red wool as a tola'as (lit. a worm), while eizov is a small, bent-over herb. Both convey a sense of humility. The Kohen is thus teaching the penitent a lesson that he has to be humbler.

Ba'alei Mussar point out that arrogant people tend to speak *lashon hara* because they think they are better than others and can pass judgment about them, and therefore the antidote to *lashon hara*, which is the most common cause of tzara'as, is humility. However, if the lesson is to be humble, why use an eitz erez, a stick of a cedar tree? Why not only use the symbols of humility, not pride?

Ba'alei Mussar give two answers. In real Mussar, it's not enough to know what you have to do correctly—how you need to behave. In real Mussar, you need to make sure that you will not fall into the same trap. To change your behavior, you need to know what triggered the wrong behavior in the first place. If you only know the ideal behavior, you will inevitably fall prey to temptations and

distractions, or you will make a mistake. Mesilas Yesharim talks about all those things that you have to avoid in order to have good midos. So, the first answer of Ba'alei Mussar is that it's not enough to know that you have to be humble. You also need to know what got you to be proud like an eitz erez in the first place —what made you a ba'al ga'avah. And if you analyse the source of your ga'avah by seeing a stick of a cedar tree—which reminds you of your ga'avah—you will make sure not to repeat your mistake in the future.

The second answer that Ba'alei Mussar give is even more profound. Humility can be a very tricky issue. Everyone knows that you shouldn't be a ba'al ga'avah and that you should be humble like eizov and the tola'as. Maybe the remez here is that even when someone fixes himself, they need to use the eitz erez as well. If someone wants to develop a healthy sense of humility, they should also recognize how great they are. If you only tell someone to be lowly and humble like a worm or grass, they will not be able to do teshuva. And why would someone who is feeling worthless do teshuva—they have nothing to strive for! Therefore, even at the time when we remind this person of the need for humility, we also convey that you could be as great as a cedar tree, you could be amazing and terrific,

you truly have amazing potential. However, you have to realize that having great potential is not a reason to be prideful. One still needs to be humble and modest about it. At the same time, to be humble and modest doesn't only mean to be lowly and self-abnegating. You can't only think that you are nothing. No! You are Great! But you must realize this greatness with humility and modesty—without pride. Therefore, to act and accomplish, a person needs to be aware of their great potential—as symbolized by the cedarwood. This point is very relevant be-zman hazeh in Chinuch, Kiruv, and Mussar. It would not be productive to only tell people how bad and worthless they are. It's the wrong kind of Mussar to teach them that they are a big failure. If you do, they won't improve—why should a failure improve? Rather, a good Ba'al Mussar should tell people how great they are. But they also have to be taught to recognize that they are wrong sometimes, identify their failures and mistakes, and correct them—in order to realize their greatness. Then, you could get them to improve, to metaher themselves, and to remove all negaim and negativity. And that way, they will be able to live with the kedusha and taharah that we all strive for.

With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility

Rabbi Yossi Katz

The biblical affliction of Tzaraat (leprosy), is not merely a punishment for the individual who spoke lashon hara, but rather is an elaborate process of atonement.

The Midrash makes a puzzling connection between the Metzarah (leper) in our parsha and Noach in his ark. The Midrash writes that just as the birds that the Metzarah brings as part of his purification process grant him atonement, so too the Ark provided atonement for Noach. This is surprising because where do we find that Noach sinned? Moreover, what relationship does the Midrash see between Noach and the Metzarah in order to draw this comparison?

The Ateret Shalom offers a profound answer: We know the Metzarah is punished because he did not exercise control of his speech. He spoke Lashon Harah, and therefore must isolate himself from people and

contemplate the power and the dangers of negative speech. But Noach, writes the Ateret Shlomo, was the opposite. The Midrash describes how Noach failed by neglecting to speak up: He failed to pray for humanity and therefore his lengthy confinement in the ark served as an atonement for this shortcoming.

Of course, we must control the urge to speak in a negative way, to speak lashon hara and to spread rumors. However, there is another side of the coin. At times, our power of speech tasks us with the responsibility to speak up, to protest and to cry out when we see injustice, unfairness and Chillul Hashem—especially when we feel an urge to remain silent and on the sidelines. We must be responsible using our power of speech, but we also must remember how much we can accomplish when we use it responsibly.

Uncovering Hashem's Hidden Love

Rabbi Dr. David Shabtai

Many Modern mefarshim go out of their way to explain that tzara'at is not leprosy. Tzara'at is a spiritual malady and is not infectious; it doesn't sicken a person and there isn't any cure for it. Most importantly, it can even show up on clothing and even houses. For all three types of tzara'at, the Torah gives extensive details on how to determine that it's really there and how to get rid of it.

It therefore comes as somewhat shocking that the Gemara (Sanhedrin 71) states quite emphatically, that there never was and there never will be a בית המנוגע — a house with tzara'at. The Torah included these halakhot solely to דרוש וקבל שכל — learn about them and be rewarded for the Torah learning.

And yet, an almost contradictory tradition is recorded in the Midrash (VaYikra Rabbah 17:6), where Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai explains that house-tzara'at is really a blessing in disguise. When the Canaanite nations heard that Bnei Yisrael were coming, they hid many of their possessions and valuables inside the walls of their homes, to keep them away from the Jews. So as to benefit His people, Hashem afflicted their homes with tzara'at so that in the course of dealing with the problem, people would have to dismantle the walls of their homes and thereby find the hidden treasure within.

So which one is it? If Hashem wanted to actually reward Bnei Yisrael, then arranging for planting treasure within walls that would never be opened — since according to the Gemara, house-tzara'at never happened — doesn't make much sense. Clearly, Hazal are trying to teach us something. But what?

Interestingly, another Midrash compares and homiletically interprets the details about house-tzara'at as describing the destruction of the Beit Ha-Mikdash. Picking up on cleverly ambiguous phrases, the Midrash compares the tzara'at to warnings Hashem sent to the people through a messenger (Yirmiyahu - parallel to the Kohen), eventually resulting in the destruction of the Beit Ha-Mikdash (compared to dismantling the home if the tzara'at continues to spread).

In describing the destruction of the Beit Ha-Mikdash, the Gemara (Yoma 54b) describes how the enemies entered the Kodesh Kodashim and took out the keruvim that hovered above the Aron. They Keruvim were found

embracing each other, which the Babylonians summarily ridiculed.

Elsewhere, the Gemara (Bava Batra 99b) compares and contrasts pesukim that describe the Keruvim as both facing each other or facing away from each other. The Gemara explains that the Keruvim reflected the current state of the Jews' relationship with Hashem. When they were following the mitzvot, Hashem would display His love for them by having the Keruvim facing each other. When they would be less meticulous in their mitzvah observance, Hashem would have the Keruvim face away from each other — symbolically indicating that Hashem's love was momentarily diminished.

The Ri MiGash therefore wonders why the Keruvim were embracing at the time of the destruction of the Beit Ha-Mikdash since Bnei Yisrael were clearly not following the mitzvot! He explains that Hashem was in fact displaying His love for Bnei Yisrael by taking His wrath out on the bricks and stones of the building of the Beit Ha-Mikdash and not utterly destroying the Jewish people.

The Shvilei Pinhas explains that while the Babylonians were trying to ridicule the Jews by showing off the embracing Keruvim, what they really did was demonstrate to the Jewish people that what was always important about the Beit Ha-Mikdash was Hashem's love for them that lurked within. It wasn't the building that was the focus — but what was contained therein — a demonstration of Hashem's love for His people. When the Beit Ha-Mikdash is no longer standing, the Gemara (Berakhot 8a) explains that the way to achieve closeness to Hashem, to feel His love, is through learning Torah.

What was true during the destruction of the Beit Ha-Mikdash is a similar lesson to be learned from house-tzara'at. Hashem was trying to teach Bnei Yisrael that what's important, the essence of His love is not always obvious, but is sometimes hidden. It's what Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai meant when he said that house-tzara'at never occurred but was recorded in the Torah to דרוש וקבל שכל — the way to access Hashem's love, that love that is sometimes hidden behind walls, is to דרוש — study Torah and thereby merit the Eternal reward.

A Shared Mitzvah

Rabbi Yossi Goldin

At the beginning of this week's parsha, the Torah outlines the Mitzvah of Brit Milah, commanded to take place on day 8 to a boy's birth. While Milah was already commanded to Avraham in Sefer Bereishit, our parsha marks the first time that it is commanded to the entire nation.

Much has been written about the importance and significance of Brit Mila within Jewish thought, and its centrality to the identity of the Jewish people. However, I would like to highlight one fascinating aspect of this mitzvah that I believe underscores a couple of poignant lessons for us as parents.

The Rabbis engage in a great deal of discussion regarding who is obligated in the mitzvah of Brit Mila. The apparent conclusion that emerges from the Gemara and the Rishonim is that the mitzvah is an obligation on both the father and the son- depending on the time. While the child is young, the father is obligated to have his son circumcised. While the child is young, the father is obligated to have his son circumcised. If the boy reaches age 13, however, and has not yet been circumcised; he is now obligated to ensure his own circumcision. Some authorities maintain that, under such circumstances, the son alone is obligated, while others suggest that both father and son are now obligated in this mitzvah.

Brit Mila therefore emerges as an extremely unique commandment- a shared mitzvah between father and son. We are not referring to a mitzvah in which both father and son are each independently obligated, as there are many examples of such mitzvot. Rather, it is a single act that is incumbent upon both father and son. Initially, it is the obligation of the father, and a later point, that same mitzvah becomes the obligation of the son- perhaps even the joint obligation of both father and son. This unique aspect of Milah highlights two beautiful lessons that I believe are valuable for us to consider.

Firstly, there is tremendous significance in the fact that the first mitzva a father is commanded to perform is a mitzvah that is shared with his child. This reality emphasizes to us, from the very beginning of fatherhood, the importance of creating shared experiences with our children, particularly in the world of mitzvot and spirituality. We must not take the position that "I have my

mitzvot and my child has his." Instead, Judaism must be seen as a journey that we share, a sacred spiritual mission upon which we embark upon together. As we have noted in the past, it is important to take advantage of all available opportunities to spend time with our children. Shared time and experiences build an extremely powerful bond between people- and certainly between parent and child. When we are privileged to have such shared experiences and opportunities within the realm of Torah, mitzvot, and avodat Hashem, we can learn from each other, as we deepen our connection with each other and with Hashem as well.

Secondly, this unique aspect of Milah underscores a crucial message regarding Jewish and familial continuity. With Brit Mila we are presented with a mitzvah that is incumbent upon a father- but if, for some reason, the father is unable to do carry out the obligation, the son is then charged with fulfilling the commandment instead. This highlights the crucial role that children play in continuing the legacy of their parents. As parents, we have many dreams and hopes as to how we wish to impact upon the world around us. Our children certainly have their own personal hopes and dreams, as well. On some level, however, all children are also charged with continuing the legacy of their parents and grandparents before them. Our successes are not simply defined by what we ourselves are able to accomplish, but by the accomplishments of our children and grandchildren as well. Just as our ancestors live on within us and our accomplishments, we will continue to live in through the accomplishments of those who follow us. If we are unable to achieve something ourselves, but we enable our children to do so; then we share in that achievement, as well. If a father is unable to perform the mitzvah of milah on his son for whatever reason, his son is charged to ensure the fulfillment of the commandment himself. In doing so, he allows his father to share in the completion of the mitzvah on some level, as well.

On a personal level, this message carries particular significance for me and my wife, as adult olim to Eretz Yisrael- especially as we celebrate Yom Haazmaut this week. Having grown up in a different society and culture during our childhood, formative teenage years, and

young adult years, we often find ourselves feeling a bit like “outsiders” within the larger Israeli community. Although we are both relatively fluent Hebrew speakers and are relatively integrated into Israeli society- there are always certain aspects of the language and culture that do not come naturally to us. This is no one’s “fault” - and in no way does it cause us to question our decision to make Aliyah- it is simply a reality of circumstance. We have always felt, however, that despite the “in between” stage we sometimes find ourselves to be in, our success as olim will be defined by our children. If our Aliyah enables us to raise children in Eretz Yisrael who can fully integrate into Israeli society in a meaningful way, then we will have accomplished our goal- our children’s success will have become our own. And we could not be happier.

The mitzvah of Milah has become a foundational mitzvah in Jewish law and thought- fundamental to each and every male Jew. A unique aspect of the mitzvah- its status as a shared mitzvah between father and son- highlights meaningful messages for us as parents as well. On the one hand, it encourages us to seek shared experiences with our children in the arena of Torah and Mitzvot- to strengthen our connection specifically through enhanced spirituality and meaning. On the other hand, it reminds us that our success as parents will not be defined solely by what we are able to accomplish within our lives, but by the successes of our children and future generations as well.