

פרשת מצורע/שבת הגדול

The usual practice when there are multiple readings on a particular Shabbos is to find the commonality between them. That practice is entirely sensible since there is a commonality in all parts of the Torah.

That commonality stems from that which we read in many sources, among them in B'midbar Rabbah Parshas Noso¹ (Parshata 13/15-16):

שדברי תורה שבכתב ודברי תורה שבעל פה כולם נתנו מרועה אחד כולם א...ל אחד
אמרן למשה מסיני:

The words of the Written Torah and the Words of the Oral Torah were all given from The One Shepherd; all of them The One G-d said them to Moshe at Sinai.

However, this Shabbos HaGodol that occurs on the week in which we read Parshas Metzora may appear to be an exception.

We read in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim Siman 430:

¹ This particular source, out of many, was chosen because it is relevant for these beginning days of the month of Nissan when there is a *minhag* to read from the last section of Parshas Noso (B'midbar Perek 7/P'sukim 1-83) during the first 12 days of the month.

During the first 12 days of Nissan in the year of the dedication of the Mizbeach and the Mishkan at Sinai, the Torah tells us there that each day a *Nosi* from a particular Shevet made an offering to the Mishkan and its service. The portion relevant to each Shevet is read on its respective day during those first twelve days of Nissan.

On the thirteenth day of Nissan there are those who read the final section of Parshas Noso (ibid. P'sukim 84-89) which summarizes all of the gifts that were offered and continues with the first section of Parshas B'haalosecha (Perek 8/P'sukim 1-4) which immediately follows Parshas Noso. In that section, we read of Aharon's task (a task that was shared with all of the Kohanim) of the daily lighting and cleaning the Menorah. See Rashi there, Posuk 2.

Mishnah Brura brings this Minhag in Siman 429/s'if koton 7).

Our siddurim include a special prayer-request to be recited following the reading of the daily *Nosi*. That prayer will be discussed subsequently.

שבת שלפני הפסח קורין אותו שבת הגדול מפני הנס שנעשה בו. הגה: והמנהג לומר
במנחה ההגדה, מתחלת עבדים היינו עד לכפר על כל עונותינו:

The Shabbos prior to Pesach we call 'Shabbos HaGodol' – the Great Shabbos – because of the miracle that occurred on it². *Ramo*- and the custom is to recite the Haggadah on that Shabbos afternoon from the beginning of 'Avodim ho'yinu to 'I'chaper 'al avonoseinu'³.

The Mitzvah of *Maggid* is a unique requirement of Pesach night.

All throughout the year we remember the Exodus, morning and night, when we recite in *Krias Shema* (B'midbar Perek 15/Posuk 41):

אָנִי ה' אֶלֶּלֶּיְכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְהִיּוֹת לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים אֲנִי ה'
אֶלֶּלֶּיְכֶם:

² Mishnah Brurah writes in s'if koton 1:

מפני הנס - שבשנה שיצאו ממצרים היה עשרה בניסן ביום שבת ולקחו כל אחד מישראל שה לפסחו וקשרו בכרעי המטה כמו שכתוב (שמות יב/ג) בעשור לחודש הזה ויקחו להם איש שה לבית אבות וגו' והמצרים ראו זה ושאלום למה זה לכם והשיבו לשוחטו לשם פסח במצות ה' עלינו והיו שיניהם קהות על ששוחטין את אלהיהם ולא היו רשאים לומר להם דבר. ומפני שאז היה עשירי בחודש בשבת על כן קבעו לקרות שבת שלפני הפסח לעולם שבת הגדול:

Because of the miracle – in the year of the Exodus, the tenth of Nissan was on a Shabbos and every Israelite took a lamb for his Korban Pesach and tied the lamb to the leg of his bed, this is as it is written, 'on the tenth of this month every man shall take a lamb for his patriarchal house'. The Egyptians saw this and asked the Israelites, 'What is this for?' They answered, 'to slaughter for the Korban Pesach that is G-d's commandment upon us.'

The teeth of the Egyptians were set on edge because the Israelites were slaughtering their gods but they were not permitted [from Heaven] to say a word.

Since in that year the 10th of Nissan was on a Shabbos, therefore they established to always call the Shabbos before Pesach – *Shabbos HaGodol*.

³ This is the opening section of *Maggid* in the Haggadah Shel Pesach. The reading on Shabbos HaGodol concludes before the continuation of *Maggid* where we read the 'three things' that Rabban Gamiliel said that must be recited at the Seder.

See the Biur Halachah there (d.h. b'mincha b'haggada) who brings in the name of the Vilna Gaon that this *minhag* is incorrect.

I am Hashem your G-d Who took you out from the Land of Egypt to be G-d for you; I am Hashem your G-d.

That Mitzvah is learned from the verse in Parshas R'eh (D'vorim Perek 16/Posuk 3):

לֹא תֹאכַל עִלְיֹו חֶמֶץ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל עִלְיֹו מִצֹּת לֶחֶם עֲנִי כִּי בְּחֶפְזוֹן יֵצְאֶת מֵאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת יוֹם צֵאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:

Do not eat with the *Korban Pesach* chometz; seven days eat with it poor man's bread because with haste you went out from the Land of Egypt in order that you shall remember the day of your going out of Egypt all the days of your life.

On the Seder night, there is a special Mitzvah that requires us to elaborate and, hence, we have the elaboration of *Maggid*. Rambam (Hilchos Chometz u'Matzah Perek 7/Halachah 1) teaches us the source of that Mitzvah:

מִצֹּת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה לְסֹפֵר בְּנִסִּים וּנְפִלְאוֹת שֶׁנַּעֲשׂוּ לְאַבּוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּלַיִל חֲמִשָּׁה
עֶשֶׂר בְּנִיּוֹן שְׁנֵאמַר (שְׁמוֹת יג/ג⁴) זְכוֹר אֶת הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאֶתֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם:

It is a positive commandment of the Torah on the night of the fifteenth of Nissan to tell the miracles and wonders that were done for our fathers as it says, 'Remember this day that you went out from Egypt'.

Thus, the famous comment regarding the word פסח, *peh sach*, follows from this Halachah.

That is what the *Sh'loh HaKodosh* writes (in *his* Masseches Pesachim footnote to 161)

'פסח' רמז 'פה סח', שיהיה סח לספר, ואז יהיה נעשה מן 'סח' - 'סח', דחס רחמנא
ויפרקינן.

The word *Pesach* is a hint to the phrase *peh sach* – the mouth talks. The mouth should talk to tell [of the Exodus]. When that occurs the *sach* [can

⁴ The entire verse reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָעָם זְכוֹר אֶת הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאֶתֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים כִּי בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיא ה'
אֱתָכֶם מִזֶּה וְלֹא יֵאָכַל חֶמֶץ:

Moshe said to the people, 'Remember this day that you went out from Egypt from the house of bondage because with a strong hand Hashem took you out from this; chometz may not be eaten.'

reverse its letters and] become *Chas* – compassion. May The Merciful One have compassion upon us and redeem us.

How fitting for *Pesach* to be *Peh Sach*. How fitting for *Pesach* to lead to *Chas*, G-d's compassion that will bring us to the final Geulah.

Why should *Peh Sach* lead to the Redemption?

The Midrash that we find attached to the beginning of our Parshas Metzora is most instructive.

The Midrash focusses on three verses in Sefer Tehillim (Perek 34/P'sukim 13-15) that read:

מי האיש החפץ חיים אהב ימים לראות טוב: נצר לשונך מרע ושפתך מדבר מרמה:
סור מרע ועשה טוב בקש שלום ורדפהו:

Who is the man who desires life, one who loves his days to see good? Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it.

And, as its starting point, the Midrash quotes from the beginning of our Parshas Metzora (Vayikro Perek 14/Posuk 2) that reads:

זאת תהיה תורת המצורע ביום טהרתו והובא אל הכהן:

This will be the law of the *Metzora*-halachic leper on the day of his purification; he shall be brought to the Kohen.

We now may read (Vayikro Rabbah Metzora (Parshata 16/2)⁵ :

זאת תהיה תורת המצורע הדא הוא דתימא (תהלים לד/ג) מי האיש החפץ חיים מעשה ברוכל אחד שהיה מחזיר בעיירות שהיו סמוכות לציפורי והיה מכריז ואומר מאן בעי למזבן סם חיים אודקין עליה, רבי ינאי...שמעיה...אמר ליה תא סק להכא זבון לי אמר ליה לאו אנת צריך ליה ולא דכוותך אטרח עליה סליק לגביה הוציא לו ספר תהלים הראה לו פסוק מי האיש החפץ חיים מה כתיב בתריה (שם יד-טו) נצר לשונך מרע ועשה טוב...אמר רבי ינאי כל ימי הייתי קורא הפסוק הזה ולא הייתי יודע היכן הוא פשוט עד שבא רוכל זה והודיעו מי האיש החפץ חיים לפיכך

⁵ See *Emes L'Yaakov*, from Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky ZT"l to this Parsha where we read a detailed analysis of this Midrash. The note to that long passage says it is a *drasha* that he gave to his *kehilla* on Shabbos HaGodol 5687.

משה מזהיר את ישראל ואומר להם זאת תהיה תורת המצורע תורת המוציא שם
רע.

This will be the law of the Metzora – this is what it says, ‘Who is the man who desires life’. It occurred that a peddler was going among cities that were near *Tzipori*. The peddler called out and said, ‘Who wishes to buy the balm of life?’ People crowded near him. Rabi Yannai heard and said to him, ‘Come up here and sell it to me.’ The peddler replied, ‘You do not need it, nor does anyone similar to you need it⁶’. Rabi Yannai prevailed upon him and he went up to Rabi Yannai. The peddler took out the Book of Tehillim and showed

⁶ See *K'sav Sofer* to Parshas Metzora. He explains why the peddler told Rabi Yannai that the Rav did not need his ‘balm’.

Certainly, Rabi Yannai would enter *Olom HaBo*. That promise did not need to be stated. The righteous Rabi Yannai certainly didn’t speak gossip or slander and so, even with his humility, he did not see himself as wicked and thus it is inconceivable that he would need the peddler’s ‘medicine’ for that reward.

Additionally, how can we understand that only at that moment did Rabi Yannai understand the verses fully? What about those verses could have been too difficult for him

However, *K'sav Sofer* writes, Rabi Yannai understood that the peddler was advertising that which would promise life, good life, in this world as well. That was what Rabi Yannai was seeking from the peddler.

It was to that request that the peddler replied that Rabi Yannai would receive his proper reward in this world too without the peddler’s goods.

‘Whom am I addressing?’, the peddler said. ‘I am addressing those who seek the pleasures of this world. In their quest for the pleasures of this world they will want to be supreme and they will undoubtedly treat others with disrespect and slander them and gossip about them and thus will lose their enjoyment in this world. I am telling them that if they want a good life in this world – let them guard their tongue. However, you, Rabi Yannai, your entire life is *לשם שמים*, you live to serve G-d. You are not seeking the ‘good life’ in this world and therefore you do not need my balm; slander and gossip do not cross your lips.’

It is to that explanation that Rabbi Yannai said that he had read these verse multiple times but now he understood them for the first time.

him the verse, 'Who is the man who desires life' and the following verses, 'Guard your tongue from evil, turn from evil and do good.'

Rabi Yannai said, 'All of my life I have read this verse and I did not know how straightforward it was until this peddler came and told me, 'who is the man who desires life'.

[The Midrash concludes] Therefore Moshe warns Israel and says to them, 'This is the law of the Metzora – the law of the one who slanders.

And this is the contrast between Parsha Metzora and Shabbos HaGodol. The contrast is stark. Parshas Metzora teaches about evil speech, speech that kills. Shabbos HaGodol which heralds the coming of Pesach speaks about speech that is holy and sacred, speech that brings Redemption closer.

Yirmiyahu HaNovi (Perek 9/Posuk 7) writes:

חַץ שְׁחוּט לְשׁוֹנֵם מִרְמָה דִּבֵּר בְּפִיו שְׁלוֹם אֶת רַעְיוֹ יִדְבֵּר וּבִקְרָבוֹ יִשִּׁים אָרְבוֹ:

Their tongue is a slaughtering arrow; he speaks deceit in his mouth; he speaks peace with his neighbor and in his inside he places a trap.

Slandering speech kills and the punishment for the slanderer is akin to the death punishment.

When Miriam and Aharon spoke about Moshe Rabbenu, as we read at the end of Parshas B'ha'alozecha, Miriam was stricken with *tzora'as*-Halachic leprosy. The Torah writes (B'midbar Perek 12/Posuk 10):

וְהִעֲנָן סָר מֵעַל הָאֹהֶל וְהִנֵּה מִרְיָם מְצֻרָעַת כַּשֵּׁלֶג וַיִּפֹּן אַהֲרֹן אֶל מִרְיָם וְהִנֵּה מְצֻרָעַת:

The Divine cloud turned away from above the tent and behold Miriam was leprous as snow; Aharon turned towards Miriam and behold she was leprous.

The Torah continues and teaches us (Posuk 12) that Moshe Rabbenu offered a prayer for his sister's healing:

אֵל נָא תְהִי כַמֵּת אֲשֶׁר בְּצִאתוֹ מִרְחֹם אִמּוֹ וַיֵּאֱכַל חֲצִי בִשְׂרוֹ:

Please let her not be like a dead person who when he comes out from the womb of his mother and half his flesh is decayed.

Then we read in Masseches Nedorim (64 b):

תניא, ארבעה חשובין כמת:...ומצורע....- דכתיב: אל נא תהי כמת:

The B'raisa taught, 'Four are considered like they are dead. [Among them is] the *metzora*-leper. [We know this] as it is written, 'Let her not be like a dead person'.

The reason why we are able to make such a strong statement regarding the *Metzora*-leper and not just attribute his situation to a serious medical infirmity is clarified by Rambam at the very conclusion of Hilchos Tum'as Tzora'as (Perek 16/Halachah 10) where he writes extensively:

הצרעת הוא שם האמור בשותפות כולל עניינים הרבה שאין דומין זה לזה...אינו ממנהגו של עולם אלא אות ופלא היה בישראל כדי להזהירן מלשון הרע, שהמספר בלשון הרע...משתנה עורו ויצטרע ויהיה מובדל ומפורסם לבדו עד שלא יתעסק בשיחת הרשעים שהוא הליצנות ולשון הרע, ועל עניין זה מזהיר בתורה ואומר השמר בנגע הצרעת זכור את אשר עשה ה' א...ל'קיך למרים בדרך, הרי הוא אומר התבוננו מה אירע למרים הנביאה שדיברה באחיה שהיתה גדולה ממנו בשנים וגידלתו על ברכיה וסכנה בעצמה להצילו מן הים והיא לא דברה בגנותו אלא טעתה שהשותו לשאר נביאים והוא לא הקפיד על כל הדברים האלו...ואף על פי כן מיד נענשה בצרעת קל וחומר לבני אדם הרשעים הטפשים שמרבים לדבר גדולות ונפלאות. לפיכך ראוי למי שרוצה לכוין אורחותיו להתרחק משיבתן ומלדבר עמהן....

Tzora'as-Halachic leprosy is an inclusive term that refers to many matters that are not similar one to the other. *Tzora'as* is not part of nature but a sign and wonder in Israel to warn them against *Lashon Hara*. One who speaks *lashon hara* - his flesh changes and becomes leprous and he is separated and publicized and alone until he will not be involved [any longer] in the discussions of the wicked which are mockery and gossip.

This is what the Torah warns against and says, 'Guard yourself from the plague of *tzora'as*-halachic leprosy. Remember what Hashem your G-d did to Miriam on the way. That is the Torah says contemplate what happened to Miriam the Prophetess who spoke about her brother Moshe. [Even] though she was older than him and she raised him and she endangered herself to save him from the sea, nonetheless [although she did deprecate him and did not intend to speak against Moshe, she was immediately

punished with *tzora'as*. How much more so is it for the wicked fools who speak with grandeur and wondrous [falsehoods]!

Therefore it is proper that anyone who wishes to direct his ways [properly] to distance himself from their abodes and from speaking with them.

All of this opposition between the nature of the *Metzora* and its evil speech and the 'mouth that speaks' of G-d's miracles and wonders would seem, at first, to create an impassible breach. Rambam has taught us that we are to stay far away from slanderers and gossipers – and such is the clear implication of the Torah when it writes regarding the Metzora in last week's Parshas Tazria (Vayikro Perek 13/Posuk 46):

כָּל יְמֵי אֲשֶׁר הִנָּגַע בּוֹ יִטְמָא טְמֵא הוּא בְּדָד יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה מוֹשְׁבֹו:

All the days when the plague is upon him he shall certainly be impure; he shall dwell alone; outside the camp shall be his dwelling.

However, when I learn our Parshas Metzora and read that even this serious punishment is not final, that one can turn back from the abyss of impurity and be purified, even after receiving the Divine punishment, we are able to return and re-examine the seeming opposition between the Metzora and our service to Hashem on Pesach and see how the gap between them can be overcome.

We read this week (Vayikro Perek 14/P'sukim 4-7):

וְצִנֹּה הִכְהֵן וְלָקַח לַמִּטְהָר שְׁתֵּי צִפְרִים תְּחִית טְהָרוֹת וְעֵץ אֲרֶז וְשֵׁנִי תוֹלַעַת וְאַזְבִּי: וְצִנֹּה הִכְהֵן וְשָׁחַט אֶת הַצִּפּוֹר הָאֶחָת אֶל כְּלֵי חָרָשׁ עַל מַיִם חַיִּים: אֶת הַצִּפּוֹר הַתְּחִיָּה יִקַּח אֹתָהּ וְאֶת עֵץ הָאֲרֶז וְאֶת שֵׁנִי הַתּוֹלַעַת וְאֶת הָאֲזֵב וְטָבַל אוֹתָם וְאֶת הַצִּפּוֹר הַתְּחִיָּה בְּדָם הַצִּפּוֹר הַשְּׁחֻטָּה עַל הַמַּיִם הַחַיִּים: וְהֵזָה עַל הַמִּטְהָר מִן הַצִּרְעָת שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים וְטָהָרוּ וְשָׁלַח אֶת הַצִּפּוֹר הַתְּחִיָּה עַל פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה:

The Kohen will command and he will take for the person being purified two *tahor* live birds and wood from a cedar tree and golden-dyed wool and a hyssop. The Kohen will command and slaughter⁷ one bird into a clay vessel

⁷ It is appropriate to note that this bird is not considered a *korban*. Birds that are brought as a *korban* do not have *shechita*. The process of *shechita* is to cut the front of the neck with a knife.

over spring water. The live bird – the Kohen shall take it and the cedar wood, the golden-dyed wool and the hyssop and he shall immerse them in the blood of the slaughtered bird over the spring water. He shall sprinkle over the one being purified from the *tzora'as* seven times and he shall purify him and he shall send the live bird out over the face of the field.

There is more to this process than we are writing here but we can gain much from this excerpt.

Rashi writes here:

טהרות - לפי שהנגעים באין על לשון הרע, שהוא מעשה פטופטי דברים, לפיכך הוזקקו לטהרתו צפרים, שמפטפטין תמיד בצפוף קול:

Pure – because these plagues of *tzora'as* come because of gossip which is an act of chattered talking, therefore the *Metzora* requires birds for his purification because birds chatter always with chirping voices.

ועץ ארז - לפי שהנגעים באין על גסות הרוח:

Wood from a cedar tree – Because these plagues come about because of coarseness of spirit.

ושני תולעת⁸ ואזב - מה תקנתו ויתרפא, ישפיל עצמו מגאותו, כתולעת וכאזוב:

Golden-dyed wool and a hyssop – What is the corrective measure that the *metzora* can apply and be healed? He should lower himself from his conceit like the worm and the hyssop.

That is, the *Metzora* brings a combination of objects that symbolize haughtiness and lowliness and that which represents haughtiness is 'lowered' by that which is humble.

However, what we wish to focus on at this point is the two birds.

The birds are 'chatterers'; that is why they were chosen according to Rashi's explanation.

Birds brought as a Korban are killed by מליקה. *Melikah* is accomplished by the Kohen puncturing the back of the bird's neck with his forefinger.

⁸ The word תולעת also means a worm – the lowliest of creatures.

It was the ‘chattering’ of the *metzora* which brought him into such dire situations – physical and social.

Physically, the *metzora* has a terrible affliction. Socially, the *metzora* is ostracized. He is an outsider.

What was the underlying cause? The conceit and haughtiness that led to gossip and slander which diminishes and demeans the other.

What is the act of gossip? Foolish and empty chattering.

The birds chatter and thus they represent the *metzora*.

All this would be understood if both of the birds that were taken for the purification of the *metzora* were to be slaughtered. That act of slaughtering would make the point most clear – rid the world of this harmful chatter that causes pain and suffering and terrible punishments.

However, two birds are taken but only one is slaughtered. The other bird, which the Torah writes as ‘the living bird’, is sent free. If the chattering is so bad, why is that bird which is part of the purification of the *metzora* set free?

Furthermore, even when the first bird is slaughtered, the Torah requires מים חיים –literally ‘living waters’ as part of the process. *Mayim chaim* is spring water which provides the highest level of purification by water⁹.

Lashon hara is dangerous – it victimizes. Why should spring water, ‘living waters’ be used in this purification process?

Let us seek understanding.

During the first days of the month of Nissan there is a custom to read the offerings of each of the Shevatim when the Mizbeach was dedicated in the month of Nissan in the *midbar*.¹⁰

After that reading, we recite a prayer that seems most mystical, if we are successful in translating it from its mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic. The text is:

⁹ See the first Perek of Masseches Mikvaos. Spring water is mentioned in Mishna 8.

¹⁰ See footnote 1.

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א...ל"קי וא...ל"קי אבותי שתאיר היום בחסדך הגדול על נשמתין קדישין דמתחדשין כצפרין ומצפצפים ומשבחין ומצלאין על עמא קדישא ישראל. רבונו של עולם תכניס ותעיל הנך ציפרא קדישא לאתר קדישא דאיתמר עליהו (ישעיה ד/ג¹¹) עין לא ראתה א...ל"ים זולתך.

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' א...ל"קי וא...ל"קי אבותי שבאם אני עבדך משבט _____ שקראתי בתורתך פרשה של הנשיא היום אזי יאירו נא עלי כל ניצוצין קדישין וכל האורות הקדושות הכלולות בזה השבט להבין ולהשכיל בתורתך וביראתך לעשות רצונך כל ימי חיי אני זרעי זרעי זרעי מעתה ועד עולם.

May it be Your Will before You Hashem, my G-d and the G-d of my fathers that You should shine with Your great compassion upon the holy souls that are renewed¹² like the birds and chirp and praise and pray for Your holy People Israel. Master of the world, bring the holy bird to the Holy Place about which it is said 'No eye has seen it, G-d, besides You.'

May it be Your Will before You Hashem My G-d and the G-d of my fathers that if I, Your servant, am from the *Shevet* that I read the section of its *Nosi* in Your Torah today, then it should shine upon me all of the holy sparks and all of the holy lights that are included in this *Shevet* to understand and to

¹¹ The entire verse reads:

וּמְעוֹלָם לֹא שָׁמְעוּ לֹא הִאֲזִינוּ עֵין לֹא רָאָתָה אַ...ל"קים זולתך יַעֲשֶׂה לְמַחְכֵּה לּוֹ:
Never did they hear and never did they listen; an eye did not see it, G-d, besides You; do it for the one who awaits You.

Rashi writes:

...רבתינו שאמרו כל הנביאים כולם לא נתנבאו אלא לימות המשיח אבל לעולם הבא עין לא ראתה וגו' משמעו עין שום נביא לא ראתה את אשר יעשה הקדוש ברוך הוא למחכה לו זולתי עיניך אתה א...ל"קים:

...Our Rabbis who said that all of the prophets only prophesized about the Days of Moshiach, but regarding *Olom HaBo* 'no eye has seen etc.'

The implication is that no eye of any prophet saw that which Hashem will do for the one who awaits Him. Only Your eyes, You G-d.

¹² We have followed the text cited by the *Aruch LaNer* later on that the correct text here is דמתחדשין – that are renewed.

In many Siddurim, however, the text is דמתרחשין which means 'that swarm'. Based on the explanation of the *Aruch LaNer*, the term 'renewed' seems an easier fit by far. However, I have not done sufficient research to verify support for either text.

know Your Torah and Your awe, to do Your Will all the days of my life, I and my seed and my seeds' seed from now and forever.

We will be appropriately modest in explaining this passage that certainly has ideas beyond our understanding.

But we can find its source as we read in *Tikunei Zohar* (*Tikuna Chamisha'a* 20 a)

(דברי הימים א פרק כט/יא¹³) לך ה' הגדולה והגבורה והתפארת וגומר לך ה' הממלכה דא מלכות דאיהי בכלא ואיהו צפצוף עופין קדישין דאתמר בהון (קוהלת י/כ¹⁴) כי עוף השמים יוליך את הקול צפצופא דכל צפרין דאינון נשמתין קדישין דמצפצפין בכמה צלותין:

'To You Hashem is the greatness and the might and the beauty etc. To you Hashem is the reign.' This reign is over all and it is the chirp of the holy birds about which it says, 'the bird of the heaven shall carry the voice'. The chirp of all of the birds that are the holy souls that chirp multiple prayers.

We learn from this passage that the holy souls are termed 'birds' and their chirping is the prayer that they offer to HaKodosh Boruch Hu.

In a lengthy passage in *Aruch LaNer* to Masseches Niddah (30 b), Rabi Yaakov Ettlinger¹⁵ touches upon our subject. Part of that passage reads:

¹³ The entire verse reads:

לך ה' הגדולה והגבורה והתפארת והנצח וההוד כי כל בשמים ובארץ לך ה' הממלכה והמתנשא לכל לראש:

To You Hashem is the greatness and the might and the beauty and the eternal and the glory because all that is in heaven and on earth is to You Hashem the reign and He Who rises above all.

¹⁴ The entire verse reads:

גם במדעך מלך אל תקלל ובתדרי משכבך אל תקלל עשיר כי עוף השמים יוליך את הקול ובעל כנפים יגיד דבר:

Even in your thoughts do not curse a king; in your inner sanctum of your bed, do not curse the rich because the bird of the heavens will lead the voice and your angel will tell your word.

¹⁵ Perhaps this name is not familiar to the reader. Rabi Yaakov Ettlinger was among the Gedolim of Germany in the nineteenth century. Among others, Rabi Shimshon Rafael Hirsch was his student.

...במנחות (צט ב)...רבי אליעזר ורבי יהודה דאמרי תרווייהו תורה נתנה בארבעים יום ונשמתו נוצרה לארבעים יום כל המשמר התורה נשמתו משתמרת וכל שאינו משמר את התורה אין נשמתו משתמרת תני דבי רבי יהודה משל לאדם שמסר צפור דרור לעבדו אמר לו כמדומה אתה שאם אתה מאבדה איסר אני נוטל ממך בדמים נשמתך אני נוטל ממך עד כאן לשונו.

ויפורש דהנשמה נקרא צפור שטהורה היא וצפור נקרא עוף הטהור וזה ידוע בלשון הזוהר שהנשמות בגדר צפרים בגן עדן וידוע בלשון היהי רצון נשמתין קדישין דמתחדשין כצפרין ונוסף להקרא צפור דרור כי כמו שהצפור המוסגר כשיפתח לו מסגרו אז בשמחה ינוס למרחב לו כן נשמת הצדיק ולכן נמשל הנשמה כצפור דרור שנותן לעבדו...

We learn in Masseches Menochos: Rabi Eliezer and Rabi Yehuda said together 'Torah was given over forty days and the soul is created at the fortieth day¹⁶. One who guards the Torah will have his soul guarded. One who does not guard the Torah will not have his soul guarded.

A Braisa was taught in the Yeshiva of Rabi Yehuda: The above passage can be understood in a parable when a person gives a free-roaming bird to his servant and says to him, 'You think that if you lose this bird I will charge you its cost – a small coin? [No. If you lose this bird,] I will take your life.'

The explanation is that the soul is termed a *tahor*-pure bird. The term *tzipor*-bird refers to one that is *tahor*-pure. And this is known from the Zohar that souls are considered like the birds in Gan Eden. And it is known in the text of the '*Yehi Ratzon*' that 'holy souls are renewed like pure birds.' And the Braisa added to the term 'pure bird' to call it a 'free-roaming pure bird'.

The meaning of this is that when a bird is kept in a cage – when the cage is opened then with happiness the bird flees to the open space. So it is with the soul of the righteous [that when they are freed from the body they are free to happily praise and pray to Hashem.] That is the meaning of the

¹⁶ We read in Masseches Yevomos (69 b):

ואי מיעברא - עד ארבעים מיא בעלמא היא.
If a woman is pregnant – until forty days the fetus is like regular water.

parable of soul as the free-roaming pure bird that the King gave to his servant.

When we recite this short prayer every morning during the first twelve days of Nissan, we are asking Hashem to empower the righteous souls of the particular tribe which was the subject of that day's reading to inspire us to praise Hashem and to pray to Him with the happiness of the unencumbered *neshama* that can express itself fully and completely before its King.

The Metzora has sinned. He has sullied his neshama. But the neshama was given to him by G-d. When it was given, the *neshama* was טהורה, pure and now it has become dirtied and encumbered almost completely.

However, the *neshama* is redeemable because its source is the highest level of purity – as represented by the מים חיים that is part and parcel of the purification process of the *metzora*.

There are two birds, representing two *neshamos* –souls. The soul that has been dirtied is represented by the bird that will be slaughtered. If the *metzora* wishes purification he must totally rid himself of his sullied neshama.

But there is a second bird that is set free. That is the הצפור החיה, the living bird that is sent free. That free bird represents the soul that has shaken off the dirt that has tarnished it. It is now free to be among the נשמתין דמתחדשין, the souls that are renewed, that have found their freedom from their bonds and now can serve G-d with happiness.

And in that way, Parshas Metzora does not stand in opposition whatsoever to Shabbos HaGodol and the Yom Tov of Pesach that it announces.

Maggid tells of G-d's praises in an unencumbered fashion and *Maggid* concludes with a prayer for Redemption when we ask:¹⁷

אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו ממצרים...כן ה' א...ל'קיננו וא...ל'קי אבותינו יגיענו
למועדים ולרגלים אחרים הבאים לקראתנו לשלום שמחים בבנין עירך וששים
בעבודתך...

¹⁷ This Bracha is found in Masseches Pesachim Perek 10/Mishnah 6.

He Who redeemed us and redeemed our fathers from Egypt, so Hashem our G-d and the G-d of our fathers enable us to reach other holidays and festivals that come to greet us with peace when we will be happy with the building of Your city and rejoice in Your service.

That is, we can free our souls in this world to praise G-d and to serve Him with joy.

Is there a better antidote for the sin of slander?

This Pesach, *Peh Sach*, and throughout the year, may our mouths speak what they should and may our *sach* turn into *chas* as we rejoice in G-d's compassionate care when we will celebrate His full and complete redemption of His People.

Shabbat Shalom

Chag Kosher V'sameach

Rabbi Pollock