

The Shul
at the Lubavitch Center
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April 9, 2016

Tazria - Rosh Chodesh Nisan

1 Nisan, 5776

Spring Is In the Air

You know that spring is here when you get up one morning and there's that special spring scent in the air. It's not the crispness that bounces off of a person who has walked in from the winter cold, nor is it the dampness we inhale from the leaves and earth in the fall, and neither is it the heat that you can literally smell in the summer. It's that special spring aroma.

We associate scents with a lot of different things. But can you imagine someone telling you that there's such a thing as a "Jewish scent"?

It's not unusual for us to expect to "see" signs of a home being Jewish – starting with a mezuzah on the front door (and hopefully on all of the required doors therein) and from there to Jewish artwork, Jewish objects and Jewish books.

But how many of us ever considered it important for a Jewish home to "smell" Jewish? Yet, many of us do associate certain scents and aromas with Jewish holidays or observances!

Who can resist the urge to smell the etrog-citron when blessing the lulav and etrog on the Sukkot holiday?

The Rosh Hashana aromas of brisket and tzimmes, challa and gefilte fish help us fondly recall previous family gatherings of years gone by to welcome the New Year.

Chanuka brings with it the scent of frying potato latkes or donuts and burning wicks in the Chanuka menorah.

And in the weeks preceding the holiday of Passover, as soon as the first person notices that "spring is in the air," many Jewish homes are filled with the smells of Lysol and Windex, ammonia and bleach.

These scents, of course, are just a prelude of the much more enticing fragrances to come: the sweet charoset; the charred, roasted bone; wine in abundance; crispy matza; soup; gefilte fish; fruit compote.

Judaism teaches, "Which sense does the soul enjoy but not the body? This is the sense of smell." In other words, smell is spiritual.

Thus, we attempt to revive a person who has fainted with smelling salts, because scent reaches the essence of the soul, which is never unconscious. The soul, which is revitalized by the scent, then infuses new life into the body. At the Havdala ceremony performed after Shabbat has ended, we make a blessing on aromatic spices, and then smell them, to refresh our souls which are saddened by the loss of the special Shabbat dimension.

Whereas other senses convey only a partial impression of that which the sense perceives, the sense of smell symbolizes the ability to reach to the essence of all things.

It's not surprising, then, that when we really want to get to the bottom of a particular matter, we speak in terms of "sniffing around" or "smelling" the situation out. The sense of smell is truly, very deep.

This year, with the approach of Passover, let's fill our homes with Jewish scents. As they reach to the essence of our souls, they will make more and more sense!

(from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

Eyeing the Eye

In this week's Torah portion, the Torah deals with various types of tzoraas, commonly mistranslated as leprosy. Tzoraas is a Heavenly affliction that strikes a person for various transgressions he committed, most commonly for slandering a friend.

Embedded in this form of Divine retribution are miraculous properties, one of which is that it targets not only a person but his belongings-his house, clothing and possessions.

The verse at the end of this week's Torah portion instructs the kohein how to treat tzoraas when it afflicts clothing. The posuk uses a singular expression; "vehinei lo hofach hanega es eino. If the kohein sees that the garment even after being washed remains unclean-still contains signs of tzoraas-it must be destroyed.

The language vehinei lo hofach hanega es eino is laden with symbolic meaning. Ayno, literally means "its eye," which means the blemish [tzoraas] has not changed its eye. This unusual choice of words contains profound insights into human nature, and the working of Divine justice, explains the saintly Chidushei Harim.

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He notes that punishment of tzoraas is brought about by tzoras hoayin, literally narrowness of the eye. [Note the similarity between tzoraas and tzoras.] Narrowness of the eye refers to a person's tendency to view another through negative, critical lenses. His is not the benevolent, charitable gaze of a tov ayin, who sees the good in others, who hopes and prays for his neighbor's well-being. The "tzar ayin" perceives only another's shortcomings and flaws; he begrudges his neighbor's good fortune and is preoccupied with his own ego.

The Chidushei Harim explains that when the verse says 'vehinei lo hofach hanega es eino,' the tzoraas did not change its appearance, a double meaning is implied. The affliction didn't change because the ayin, (eye)-the person's negative outlook -did not change. Since the person failed to do teshuva for his callous view and behavior toward his fellow Jew, the tzoraas continues to attach itself to his clothes.

We explain that the word "nega" (affliction) is really the same word as "oneg" (pleasure), and is spelled with identical Hebrew letters except for one difference-the location of the ayin. In oneg, the ayin is at the very beginning of the word; in nega, the ayin is at the end.

Everything is dependent on our hofach es eino, changing the eye. If we have a "good eye," taking a positive approach to others and to life, life then becomes a pleasure and a delight. We are connected to the Divine for we see the innate goodness and Divine energy within one another. However, the metzora who continues to demonstrate mean-spiritedness remains with the nega; he has not been able to change his "eye." He is preoccupied only with himself and therefore, is appropriately afflicted.

Most of us have a bit of tzar ayin in our nature. A Jew's responsibility is to convert that trait and become a tov ayin, a person with a benevolent eye.

In Biblical times, only when the metzora succeeded in uprooting his negativism toward others did the affliction disappear. Today, we do not have that powerful incentive to spur us to change. Yet it is still incumbent on us to try to improve our character. When we have "a good eye," we are happy with our lot and judge others charitably. We walk with a spring in our step and uplifted spirit. We are at peace.

If we harbor feelings of being shortchanged and look at others begrudgingly, however, then we are truly afflicted. Although highlighting others' shortcomings may be temporarily gratifying, keeping a jaundiced eye will prove toxic in the end-to ourselves.

(by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Yahrzeits This Week:

Mitch Mayer 2 Nisan - Saturday night/Sunday for father Israel ben Meyer

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Davening and Shiurim Schedule

Friday, 4/8— 29 Adar II
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

Shabbat, 4/9 — Rosh Chodesh Nisan — 1 Nisan
 Shacharit — 8:40 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:51 a.m.
 Berachot Gemara Shiur — 6:10 p.m.
 Minchah & Seudah Shilishit — 7:10 p.m.
 Ma'ariv — 8:21 p.m.

Sunday, 4/10 — 2 Nisan
 Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
 Shulchan Aruch Shiur — 8:45 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:25 p.m.

Monday, 4/11 — 3 Nisan
 Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:25 p.m.

Tuesday, 4/12 — 4 Nisan
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:25 p.m.

Wednesday, 4/13 — 5 Nisan
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:25 p.m.

Thursday, 4/14 — 6 Nisan
 Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:25 p.m.
 Tanya Shiur — 9:00 p.m.

Friday, 4/15 — 7 Nisan
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
 Candles — 7:26 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.