

AT THE ARTSCROLL
SHABBOS TABLE

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PARASHAH

THE HOLINESS OF CHILDBIRTH

Rabbi Frand on the Parashah

אִשָּׁה כִּי תִזְרִיעַ וַיֵּלְדָה זָכָר וְטָמְאָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים — *A woman who conceives and gives birth to a son shall be unclean for seven days.* (Vayikra 12:2)

Birth is one of the transcendent moments in life. After a long period of anticipation, the mother releases a new and glorious life into the world. It is a miraculous moment, an occasion of sheer magic. One would think that at such a time the mother would be elevated and exalted, but in fact, she becomes *tamei*, ritually impure. Why is this so? Ordinarily, we associate *tumah* with defilement, death, *tzaraas* and other negative experiences. How does childbirth fit into this list?

Furthermore, we find a distinction between the birth of a son and the birth of a daughter. A woman that gives birth to a son is *tamei* for seven days, while a woman that gives birth to a daughter is *tamei* for fourteen days. Twice as much! Why should this be so? What is wrong with a girl? Why should her birth cause more *tumah* than the birth of a boy?

The first child ever born was Kayin, the son of Adam and Chavah. Why was his name Kayin? Because Chavah said (Bereishis 4:1), "*Kanisi ish es Hashem. I have gained a man with Hashem.*" Chavah felt that by bearing a child and giving birth to him she had literally become a partner "with Hashem."

The Talmud identifies (Nidah 31a) three partners in the creation of a person: his father, his mother and Hashem. Chavah felt this very keenly. Until then, she had been a creature, and now, she had become a creator. She had brought a life into this world, and she memorialized this exalted feeling in the name she gave her son. She had come as close to being like the Creator as a human being can possibly come. She had created a new life, and in doing so, she gained a touch of the Divine and became sanctified.

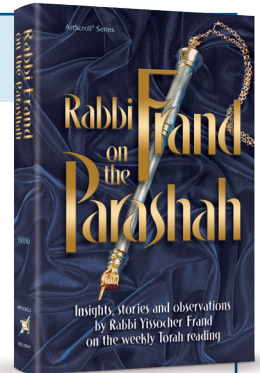
But this state of heightened sanctity does not last long. It builds and grows as the months of pregnancy progress. It reaches its climax at the moment of childbirth. And then it is gone. The mother, that exalted creator of human life, returns to an ordinary existence. She is just another human being, another creature on this earth. She is no longer a creator. Her sanctified state is all history, a thing of the past.

What is *tumah*? How do we define this state of spiritual impurity? The Kuzari defines *tumah* as the void left by the absence of *kedushah*, holiness. Whenever *kedushah* is withdrawn from the world, the void it leaves behind is filled with *tumah*.

In this light, we can understand how a blessed event such as childbirth brings *tumah*. During her pregnancy and through the moment of delivery, the mother achieves a spark of the Divine. She is a creator of human life, a facsimile of the Creator, and this gives her a great *kedushah*. But right after childbirth, this additional *kedushah* leaves her, and the void it leaves behind was filled with *tumah*.

Following this line of reasoning, it seems that the greater the *kedushah*, the greater the void its withdrawal leaves behind, the more *tumah* rushes in to fill it. The higher the level of *kedushah* the mother achieves during pregnancy, the more *tumah* she will experience afterwards when the *kedushah* departs.

Perhaps when pregnant with a girl, a woman rises to a much higher level of *kedushah* because the child she is carrying is *also* a potential creator. Consequently, the *tumah* attained at the loss of that *kedushah* is greater than that of a boy. 📖



Reb Baruch Mordche by Yisroel Besser

In R' Baruch Mordche's yeshivah, the Slabodka ideal of *gadlus ha'adam* flourished. Every *bachur* was taught that he was inherently great — not because of his lineage, not because of his accomplishments, and not because of his prestige. He was great simply because he had a *neshamah*, with infinite potential and holiness, and thus was expected to carry himself with nobility, elevated in speech, and conduct.

Once the *talmidim* accepted this, the challenge was to live up to their exalted title: *adam*!

Every *shmuess* presented the challenge to have *musagim*, a concept of the dimensions of greatness and aspirations for greatness. For this reason, reflects one of the rebbeim in the yeshivah, there was very little competition between the *talmidim*.

"If every *bachur* is being pushed to be his personal greatest, then they aren't judging themselves against others, but against themselves!"

The Rosh Yeshivah had his own creative way of expressing this idea. "This yeshivah is for *metzuyanim*, for superior *talmidim*, and every *bachur* here is a *metzuyan*," he would say. "Some are greater *metzuyanim*, and some are lesser *metzuyanim*, but there is no *bachur* here who is not exceptional."

A motto he repeated again and again in various contexts was, "*Hamaksimum ha'efshari zeh haminimum hanidrash*." The most you can possibly do is the minimum that is required of you.

One summer, a *talmid* of one of the *yeshivot tichoniyot* made the decision to learn in Ateret. He did nicely there, but his diligence and drive didn't match that of the other *talmidim*. A few months after his own marriage, he was at the wedding of a fellow Ateret *talmid*, and he met the Rosh Yeshivah. R' Baruch Mordche asked him about the *kollel* he attended and what he

was learning.

"Nu, do you have something to share?" the Rosh Yeshivah asked.

The young man, who had recently prepared a *chaburah*, replied that in fact, he did. "Let's hear," the Rosh Yeshivah said, leaning forward with anticipation.

The *avreich* spoke for several minutes, the Rosh Yeshivah listening intently, when they were suddenly interrupted by one of the Rosh Yeshivah's *gabbaim*, who told R' Baruch Mordche that a certain prominent *baal tzedakah* was at the wedding, and he wanted to speak with the Rosh Yeshivah.

The Rosh Yeshivah made a motion with his hand, dismissing the *gabbai* and urging the *avreich* to continue with his *shtickel Torah*.

Five minutes later, the *gabbai* returned. "Rosh Yeshivah," he said with urgency, "We have been trying for so long to get a meeting with this man, and now we have the chance — but he is waiting here just for the Rosh Yeshivah,

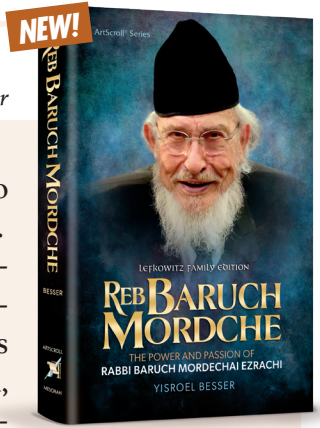
and he is clearly in a rush!"

Now, the Rosh Yeshivah turned to look up at the *gabbai*. "Please tell him that I said that whatever he has given us in the past, and whatever he will give us, is wonderful and appreciated, but it is still less valuable than this *shtickel Torah* that I am in the middle of hearing right now!"

The Rosh Yeshivah's phrase "*It is still less valuable than this shtickel Torah that I am in the middle of hearing right now*" pierced the young man's heart like an arrow. It was then that he came alive, throwing himself into learning with fervor, realizing the dream for which he had first joined the yeshivah years earlier. 📖



R' Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi



	SHABBOS APRIL 18 א אייר	SUNDAY APRIL 19 ב אייר	MONDAY APRIL 20 ג אייר	TUESDAY APRIL 21 ד אייר	WEDNESDAY APRIL 22 ה אייר	THURSDAY APRIL 23 ו אייר	FRIDAY APRIL 24 ז אייר
BAVLI	Menachos 97	Menachos 98	Menachos 99	Menachos 100	Menachos 101	Menachos 102	Menachos 103
YERUSHALMI	Taanis 11	Taanis 12	Taanis 13	Taanis 14	Taanis 15	Taanis 16	Taanis 17
MISHNAH	Middos 2:2-3	Middos 2:4-5	Middos 2:6-3:1	Middos 3:2-3	Middos 3:4-5	Middos 3:6-7	Middos 3:8-4:1
KITZUR	80:17-26	80:27-35	80:36-45	80:46-60	80:61-67	80:68-76	80:77-86
ORAYSA	Yevamos Chazara 51b-52b	Yevamos 53a Chazara 52b	Yevamos 53b Chazara 53a	Yevamos 54a Chazara 53b	Yevamos 54b Chazara 54a	Yevamos 55a Chazara 54b	Yevamos Chazara 53a-53b

Rabbi Murray Maslaton by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer

Marty was an absolutely brilliant student who was offered a scholarship to one of the top universities in America. But though he attended college, Marty was a religious boy who went to shul on a regular basis and it was there that he crossed paths with Rabbi Murray.

Marty's family, and the community members who knew him, were very proud of their genius. But Rabbi Murray was not impressed.

"I want to tell you a *mashal* about your life," he told Marty.

"Imagine that a king decides to give a magnificent golden spoon as a gift to a friend of his. Now imagine further that the king encounters his friend a few months later and asks him, 'Tell me, are you enjoying the golden spoon?'"

"The friend replies, 'The golden spoon was the perfect gift for me, Your Majesty. Every time the sink in my house is clogged, I use the golden spoon to unclog it. It's an extremely useful tool to have in the house, and I truly appreciate your giving it to me!'"

"Needless to say, the king is furious.

"Hashem gave you a golden head," Rabbi Murray explained to Marty. "But instead of using it to become great in Torah, you're wasting your potential learning something that won't really make a difference in the long run."

"Rabbi," he said, "if you can show me why learning Torah is more important than studying physics, I'll change my life and begin learning Torah."

"Where is your college and how do you get there?" Rabbi Murray asked.

"Manhattan. I take the train."

"Fine, I will join you for the journey every morning, and we'll learn together."

Rabbi Murray began by teaching Marty *Mishnayos Pe'ah*, *Demai*, and *Kilayim* because they are filled with mathematical calculations, which he knew would appeal to Marty's brilliant mind.

R' Mordechai Nahem (formerly Marty) would later say that during their learning session on the train, Rabbi Murray was consistently able to calculate the very complicated equations better than he — though he was the student who'd graduated in the top one percentile in America.

"Okay," Marty said after they'd been learning together for a while. "I think I'm ready to go to yeshiva now."

"Do you mean a yeshiva where you can combine learning with getting a degree?"

"No. I want to go to a yeshiva where the only thing they do is learn."


Hearing this, Rabbi Murray picked up the phone and called R' Mordechai Gifter *zt"l*, the rosh yeshiva of Telz.

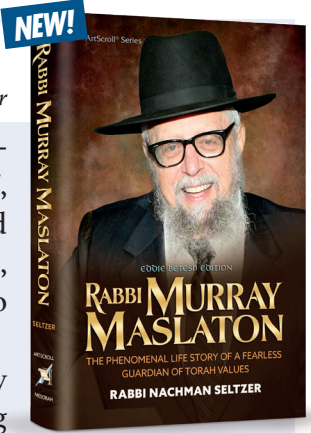
At the time this story took place, Telz was a very hard yeshiva to get into but after some unconventional cajoling, Rabbi Murray got Marty accepted.

Marty went to Telz, and from there to Lakewood, where he became a tremendous *talmid chacham*. After years

of the highest-level learning at BMG, he was asked by R' Shlomo Diamond to join the original group of *yungeleit* who established the *kollel* in Deal, New Jersey.

So it was that the boy with the golden brain didn't go to work for NASA — but ended up using his brain for the glory of Hashem instead.

Years later, in a beautiful turn of events, Rabbi Murray's son married R' Mordechai Nahem's daughter. 



R' Murray Maslaton with R' Mordechai ("Marty") Nahem

THE WEEKLY QUESTION

What are the three cases in which a person is not only permitted to shave his face with a razor, but is obligated to do so?

Kids, please ask your parents to email the answer to shabbosquestion@artscroll.com by this Wednesday to be entered into a weekly raffle to win a \$36 ARTSCROLL GIFT CARD! Be sure to include your full name, city, and contact info. Names of winners will appear in a future edition. HINT: The answer can be found in *The Jaffa Family Edition Weekly Parashah*.

The winner of the question for Ki Sisa is: NOSSON TZVI DAVID, Passaic, NJ

Question for Ki Sisa was: Which two letters of the Luchos miraculously hung in the air?
Ki Sisa Answer: The middle of the letters *samach* (ס) and the final *mem* (מ).



PART 6: RAV MORDECHAI GIFTER – AN ENDORSEMENT AND AN OFFER

It was early 1977 and the “ArtScroll Series” was taking shape. Rabbi Zlotowitz z”l was writing the Five Megillos. Rabbi Brander was shaping the manuscripts graphically. Rabbi Scherman was a full-time member of the team. By future standards it was still a small operation, but it was humming along – and then a gratifying surprise came in the mail.

It was a hand-written letter from Rav Mordechai Gifter zt”l, the Rosh Yeshivah of Telshe. None of us had learned in Telshe. To us, Rav Gifter was a living legend whom we had never met, yet he took the time and trouble to write, expressing his gratitude and appreciation for our fledgling work. Rav Gifter was an American-born *gadol*, hailing from Portsmouth, Virginia, whose English was impeccable, whose eloquence was electrifying, and whose treasured time was measured in minutes, not days or hours. That a man of his stature had interrupted his learning and teaching to praise our work was precious beyond words.

R’ Meir called him to express our thanks and ask if we could visit him. He invited us to lunch and the next day R’ Meir and R’ Nosson flew to Cleveland for an unforgettable interlude with greatness. The lunch was simple, the hospitality was superb. We were joined by the Rebbetzin and the Rosh Yeshivah’s son-in-law, Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer, who was soon to become a popular ArtScroll author. Rav Gifter emphasized the importance of such work in English and foresaw the effect it would have on huge numbers of English-speaking Jews.

And then he made an important and unexpected offer. He was ready to review and comment on the galleys of the writing, as it proceeded. Needless to say, we thanked him profusely and accepted his

generous offer without hesitation. This arrangement continued for several years, until his heavy responsibilities prevented him from continuing. He even wrote a beautiful Hebrew introduction to the ArtScroll Shir Hashirim.

The Rosh Yeshivah’s readiness to review work in progress had an important side effect. Some time after that pivotal lunch in Telshe, Rav Gifter called R’ Meir. The next day, a few senior roshei yeshivah would be having a private, unpublicized meeting at the Ocean Breeze Hotel in the Seagate section of Brooklyn. Could R’ Meir bring the latest batch of galleys to Seagate? Of course! The next evening R’ Meir arrive at the Ocean Breeze, to be greeted by Rav Gifter. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt”l and Rav Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman zt”l were surprised to see the uninvited young man come to a private meeting. This gave Rav Gifter the opportunity to tell the Yiddish-speaking roshei yeshivah how impressed he was with our work and how great its potential was. Needless to say, the endorsement of Rav Gifter had a powerful impact on his fellow *gedolim*.

We had the pleasure and privilege of visiting him many times, in Cleveland and in Telshe-Stone in Israel, where he founded a yeshivah and led it for several years. On one of those visits, he insisted on personally making tea for us. He said that it was his “Southern hospitality,” a reference to his origin in Virginia. He once told us that he used to feel that he could never deserve Heavenly reward for his learning because he enjoyed it so much. Then he saw in the introduction to *Iglei Tal* that part of the mitzvah to study Torah is to enjoy it. And he gave us his blessing that our work should enable our Jewish brethren not only to understand Torah, but to enjoy its study. Baruch Hashem his *berachah* is being fulfilled.

UP NEXT: The Story Behind Sefer Yonah



R’ Gifter visiting ArtScroll’s Brooklyn headquarters