



Dear Friends,

It is day #195 of the war. On Passover, we will reach the 200-day mark. It's impossible to believe that we continue to suffer across the Jewish holiday calendar. This year's Seders will be tempered by the pain of the war and the desire to bring every hostage and soldier home. We've created a special "[Haggadah of Hope](#)" full of ways to incorporate the situation in Israel and Rabbi Sacks' wisdom on hope into all of our Passover tables. Please enjoy a [recording](#) of a Sacks-Herenstein class on the Haggadah that I co-taught with Dr. Shira Weiss this past week.

After Passover, we will be hosting a two-part online series entitled "Negotiating the Impossible: The War and Its Aftermath" with Dr. Tal Becker and David Makovsky. To register, please see flier below.

We are also awed by the miracle of Israel's defense system and the assistance from our global allies. There is much to mourn and still much over which we can say *Dayenu*.

Personally, there is so much I am grateful for at this time of the year, despite the daily anguish. I want to take this occasion to thank our incredible professionals at the Center - Dr. Shira Weiss, Aliza Abrams Konig, Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Schiffman, and Rabbi Ari Rockoff - for all they do every day. *Dayenu*. This Passover, I extend my deepest thanks to Terri and Andrew Herenstein for their affection and ongoing support. *Dayenu*. I feel very blessed to have wonderful colleagues at YU who have become treasured friends. *Dayenu*. And I feel most privileged of all to be part of Yeshiva

University, where I can live fully and authentically as a Jew and a religious Zionist. *Dayenu*.

It's always a wonderful time to count our blessings - and on the darkest days, those blessings shine brighter.

Wishing you a Shabbat Shalom and a joyous Passover.
Bring them all home now!

Erica

Haggadah Highlights



To access the source sheet for the event, [click here](#)

Click [here](#) for a downloadable supplement, the Haggadah of Hope insert, to integrate Israel and the hostage crisis into your Seder.



 Yeshiva University
THE RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS-HERENSTEIN
CENTER FOR VALUES AND LEADERSHIP

Presents a virtual series

Negotiating the Impossible: The War and its Aftermath

Dr. Tal Becker
Former Legal adviser of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Veteran member of Israeli peace negotiation teams, Lead drafter and negotiator of the Abraham Accords, Member of the recent team representing Israel at International Court of Justice.
Wednesday, May 8 • 8:00 p.m. ET

David Makovsky
Ziegler Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute, Director of the Koret Project on Arab-Israel Relations, Adjunct Professor in Middle East studies at Johns Hopkins University, Senior advisor to Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations (2013-14)
Sunday, May 12 • 8:00 p.m. ET

[Click Here to Register](#)



Metzora 5784

Holy Haughtiness

Parshat Metzora continues to detail the intricate laws of the skin, cloth, and house affliction, *tzara'at*. While *tzara'at* is often considered a punishment for evil speech in rabbinic literature, the Talmud relates six other possible causes, one of which is arrogance (*Arakhin* 16a). Psalms connects these two sins in one verse, "He who slanders his friend in secret I will destroy; I cannot endure the haughty and proud man" (Psalms 101:5). There is a conceptual similarity between slander and hubris. Evil speech is often an external manifestation of the internal trait of arrogance. People who are humble and internally self-confident, do not need to talk badly about others to lift their own egos.

The ritual process of purification reflects this moral message. One of the sacrifices offered by the priest on behalf of the *metzora* is an *asham*, a sin offering. Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno explains that this type of offering atones for *me'ila*, a misuse of the sacred domain. Evil speech and haughtiness are both considered a misappropriation of the Holy. Often done in private, those who slander others presume that nobody else will hear or take note. This is a direct insult to God, ignoring Divine omniscience. As the Talmud comments, "Whoever commits a transgression in private, it is as though he pushed away the feet of the Divine Presence" (Hagiga 16a).

Arrogance is also a misappropriation of the Divine. Sforno quotes a stark statement from the Talmud, "Any person who has arrogance within him, the Holy One, Blessed be He, said: He and I cannot dwell together in the world" (Sotah 5a). In his commentary on the Sforno, Rabbi Raphael Pelcovitz explains that someone who is arrogant "misappropriates God's exclusive right to *gei'ut*, majesty, which is related to *ga'ava*, pride. Here again, he intrudes on God's domain." As the verse in Psalms contends, only "God is King, He is clothed in majesty (*gei'ut*)" (Psalms 93:1).

Taking the Sforno's model of *meila* further, the *metzora's* misappropriation of the holy perhaps goes even deeper. Both evil speech and arrogance not only disregard God's presence, but they also diminish the fact that humans are created in God's image. The *metzora* attempts to denigrate, degrade, and depreciate the holiness of his victim through the defamation. Moreover, these sins dismiss the holiness of body and soul endowed by God to the *metzora*. He, like all of us, is tasked to use his power of speech for kind and sacred purposes. He is

encouraged to cultivate his character, skills, and talents for redemptive acts. Misinterpreting these gifts as his own - “My own power and the might of my own hand” (Deut. 8:17) - and distorting them to defame others, is *me’ila*, a misappropriation of Divine blessings.

Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter, in his *Chidushei HaRim*, identifies one more type of misappropriation: misplaced humility. Rashi, quoting a midrash, describes the symbolism of the purification process, which included cedar wood and hyssop. Cedar, the tallest of trees, was included because *tzara’at* was a manifestation of the arrogant personality. Hyssop, a shrub whose leaves are tiny, is used because the *metzora* necessarily lowered himself through the purification process. Rabbi Alter argues that it only makes sense to include symbolic objects in the purification process that reflect the aspirational goals of the *metzora*. Since the cedar represents haughtiness, why would it be singled out and have a place of prominence in the process of purification?

Rabbi Alter suggests that there are times that the cause of our sins is not arrogance but misplaced humility. When there is a need to be morally and spiritually proactive, a false sense of “Who am I?” can lead to misinformed complacency and inaction. The Talmud, after a dozen or so serious denigrations of arrogance, writes in the name of Rav, that a Torah scholar needs to embody at least a small measure of arrogance (*Sotah* 5a). In Hasidic texts, this nuanced notion is referred to as “holy haughtiness.”

How does one find the balance between holy haughtiness and misappropriating the holiness of God, self, and others with arrogance and evil speech? When we focus on ourselves to the exclusion or displacement of God or others, then we are inappropriately arrogant. In contrast, when we recognize and utilize our talents and abilities to look beyond ourselves to serve God and help others, we demonstrate a true appreciation of the value of the holy.

Character Challenge: Reflect on your relationships. How can you use your speech and skills to make space for others and increase holiness in the world?

Quote from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt”l: “Humility means that you are secure enough not to need to be reassured by others. It means that you don’t feel you have to prove yourself by showing that you are cleverer, smarter, more gifted, or successful than others. You are secure because you live in God’s love. He has faith in you even if you do not. You do not need to compare yourself to others. You have your task, they have theirs, and that leads you to co-operate, not compete” (*Studies in Spirituality*, p. 263).

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