

APR 17 2010 3 Iyar 5770 Parshat Tazria-Metzorah

Orthodox Union-West Coast Offices: 9831 W. Pico Blvd., LA CA 90035 [www.ouwestcoast.org](http://www.ouwestcoast.org)

KASHRUTH: 310.229.9000 EXT.1 ■ NCSY: 310.229.9000 EXT.209 ■ OU/SYNAGOGUE SERVICES: 310.229.9000 EXT.200 ■ FAX: 310.229.9011 ■ EMAIL: [westcoast@ou.org](mailto:westcoast@ou.org)

## Sanctifying the Mundane

What is the purification process for a person recovering from *tzara'at*, this mysterious skin disease discussed in our parsha? The Torah (Levit. 14) prescribes taking two birds: One is to be brought as a sacrifice upon the Temple altar, and the other is to be kept alive and sent out to fly on its own "upon the face of the field" (v. 7). What is the meaning of this unique process of purification?

Rashi offers the reason for birds as the means of purification: "Skin lesions befall a person for speaking *lashon hara* (gossip), which is prattling speech. This is why the Torah requires one to use birds for his purification, since birds constantly tweet with their mouths to make noise."

Rashi's connection between tweeting birds and the speaker of *lashon hara* still requires clarification. I can understand slaughtering a bird and offering it upon the altar as a symbolic subjugation of my speech. But then why send a live bird to fly away? Isn't it only going to continue chattering and tweeting throughout the world now that it's "free as a bird"?

Sefer Apiryon (Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried, 1804-1886) explains that one who wishes to do *teshuvah* from speaking *lashon hara* cannot be rehabilitated through restrained speech alone. It isn't enough to just put a piece of duct tape over one's mouth and stop speaking. Rather, one must retrain oneself to speak *lashon hatov*, proper speech, good speech, the speech of Torah and kindness, in order for one to be considered to be fully rehabilitated.

This is why King Solomon said (Ecclesiastes 7:20), "There is no righteous person in the world who can do good and do no wrong." The Alter of Kelm used to remark that it is possible to find someone who can do no wrong; all one has to do is lock oneself in a closet and this guarantees that he or she will do no wrong. What is impossible, however, is for a person to "do good" in the world and to never do wrong in the process.

Our goal is therefore to not only subdue our speech by killing the bird, but to also take a living bird, a bird which represents our future speech, and send it out "upon the field." This field is the one about which Solomon said (Song of Songs 7:12), "Come, my beloved, let's go out to the field." The Talmud (T.B. Eruvin 21b) comments that "going out to the field" refers to the Torah scholars, who forsake the

prosaic activities of the city slickers, the business wheelers and dealers, and instead remove themselves from the daily grind to study Torah.

This is also the reason why, before setting the live bird free, one must dip it in the blood of the slaughtered bird (v. 6). This demonstrates that as one proceeds with one's future speech, one does so with caution, always remembering the errors of one's past, which are represented by the blood of the slaughtered bird.

By connecting the two birds – the live one with the dead one – we are also acknowledging that the mouth is a powerful double-edged sword. Rabbi Shimon b. Yochai once stated (Yerushalmi Berachot 1:2): "Had I been at Mt. Sinai, I would have demanded that G-d make man with two mouths – one for speaking Torah and the other for his prosaic needs." Rabbi Shimon later recanted his words, realizing that it is impossible to bifurcate one's life between the holy and the mundane. One must train oneself to use those very same faculties for both holiness and mundanity, so that even during the most common conversations of one's life, one is reminded of the holiness of every second of life.

May we merit to fill our mundane lives with holiness, and make the holy components of our lives part of our mundane living.

**Rabbi Daniel Korobkin**  
Director,

OU-WC Syn/Community Services

## Olympus Various Varieties of Hard Cheese

Brands: Olympus

Company: Tyras S.A.—GREECE

Issue: This product bears an unauthorized OU symbol. Consumers spotting this product are requested to contact the Orthodox Union at 212.613.8241 or via email at [kshalerts@ou.org](mailto:kshalerts@ou.org).



The Orthodox Union **only** accepts responsibility for the kosher status of those advertisers under OU certification (310) 229-9000 ext.200  
[westcoast@ou.org](http://westcoast@ou.org)

*Design & Layout by Susie*



## Yom Haatzmaut Sameach!

### UPCOMING EVENTS @ OU WEST COAST

> The Annual Manny Stern, z"l,  
Synagogue Leadership Seminar

▶ **THIS Sunday,**

**April 18, 5pm**

**Rabbi Shlomo Einhorn**

"On Fire:

*Sparking Immediate Shul Growth"*

&

"Storm-winds:

*Program Ideas That Will Blow Your Mind"*

for OU Shul Rabbis/Presidents/Board Members/Exec & Youth Directors & Yeshivot Personnel, too.

Location: OU Headquarters  
Includes dinner RSVP

> OU Trustee's Event  
Wednesday, April 21

Hold-the-Date

Tuesday, May 4, 2010

Tefilla Enrichment Initiative

A one-evening seminar featuring speakers who will inspire and encourage us to achieve meaningful tefila experiences.

This program will take place at B'nai David-Judea.

Watch for more details.

> OU Annual Awards Banquet  
Tuesday, June 22

Honoring

David & Debbie Schultz  
Seth & Ruth Berkowitz  
Dr. Steve & Linda Tabak

## OU SYNAGOGUES AROUND THE REGION

### Beverly Hills: Cong. Beth Jacob (310) 278-1911

- **SUNs APR 18-JUN 20, 10am-12pm:** MaTan's Mother-Daughter Bat Mitzvah program with Rebbetzin Jordana Topp. Call to register.
- **MON APR 19, 6pm:** Bnei Akiva Annual Community-wide Yom HaZikaron/Yom Haatzmaut Ceremonies.
- **Women's Spring Seudah Shlisheit Series with the Rebbetzins:**  
APR 24, 5:30pm, Reb. Jordana Topp @9533 Sawyer; MAY 15, 5:45pm Reb. Yael Weil @9634 Cresta; JULY 10, 6pm, Reb/Dr. Hindy Posy @1531 Glenville

### Beverly Hills: Young Israel of North B.H.: (310) 276-7650

- **Shabbat APR 17:** AIPAC w/ LA Director Catherine Schneider
- **Shabbat APR 24:** Guest, Hon. Israel Con Gen'l Yakov Dayan
- **Shabbat MAY 1:** Guest, Rabbi Daniel Korobkin
- **Shabbat Yom Yerushalayim MAY 7-8:** Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Cantor Avi Erblich, Miriam Adani (Kever Rachel), Judy Klitsner (Pardes)

Calabasas Shul: (818) 591-7485

### Canada-Calgary: House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel (403) 259-3230

- **WEDS JUNE 2:** Annual Dinner & Installation of Rabbi Yisroel Miller

### Canada-Edmonton: Beth Israel (780) 488-2840

- **FRI MAY 7, 5:30pm:** Lag B'Omer in the Park, BBQ, RSVP
- **TUES MAY 18:** Shavuot Pizza/Pasta Dinner & All night learning

### Canada-Vancouver: Schara Tzedek (604) 736-7607

- **TUES APR 20, 5:30pm:** Yom Ha'atzmaut Celebration @ the Rabbi & Rebbetzin's
- **Shabbat MAY 1:** Luncheon w/guest speaker Dr. Deena Zimmerman. RSVP

Denver, CO : BMH-BJ Cong (303) 388-4203

Denver, CO: EDOS (303) 322-7943

Irvine, CA: Beth Jacob (949) 786-5230

LA: Adas Torah (310) 203-9659 [www.adastorah.com](http://www.adastorah.com)

LA: Aish Hatorah (310) 278-8672 x 305 or [tsullivan@aishla.com](mailto:tsullivan@aishla.com)

- **TUES MAY 11, 5:30pm:** Gala BQ "Sunrise at the Kotel"-Beverly Hilton

LA: B'nai David-Judea (310)-276-9269 or [amram@bnaidavid.com](mailto:amram@bnaidavid.com)

- **TUES APR 27, 7pm:** "Lonely Man of Faith" screening w/producer Ethan Isenberg. \$10 p/p. RSVP to shul.
- **SUN JUNE 6:** Annual Tribute Dinner

LA: Etz Jacob (323) 938-2619

LA: Mogen David Cong. (310) 556-5609

LA: Young Israel of Century City: (310) 273-6954

- **Shabbat APR 17:** S-I-R Gil Hoffman, JPost
- **Shavuot MAY 18-20:** S-I-R Rav Hershel Schachter

LA: Young Israel of Hancock Park: (323) 931-4030

LA: Yeshiva of LA (YOLA) 310-203-3197 [yeshivarabbi@juno.com](mailto:yeshivarabbi@juno.com)

- **MINCHAMAARIV: SUN-THURS, 15 minutes before Shkiah;**  
**LATE MAARIV: SUN-THUR 10pm. M-TH am/pm: adults/students chavrusas**

Laguna Woods, CA: Beth Torah (949) 587-1967 (a retirement community)

La Jolla: Adat Yeshurun (858) 535-1196

- **SUN JUNE 6:** Shul Banquet Gala

Las Vegas, NV: Shaarei Tefila (702) 384-3565 (Mikva 384-3317)

Oakland, CA: Beth Jacob (510) 482-1147

Palm Springs, CA: The Desert Synagogue (760) 327-4848

Palo Alto, CA: Emek Beracha (650) 857-1800 (Mikva 493-5555)

- **MAY 9: Annual Dinner.** Guest speaker Hadassah Lieberman

Phoenix, AZ: Beth Joseph (602) 277-8858

Portland, OR: Kesser Israel (503) 222-1239

- **TUES APR 20, 8pm: Yom Haatzmaut** Presentation produced by Rabbi Berel Wein on the formation of the state of Israel. The presentation: "Fate & Faith, Episode 7: A New Beginning: 1948-1957."

Sacramento, CA: Keneset Israel Torah Center (916) 481-1159

- **SUN MAY 23:** "An Evening in Eden"-Farm Fresh Food Gala & Silent Auction

San Diego, CA: Cong. Beth Jacob (619) 287-9890

San Diego, CA: Kehillat Ahavat Yisrael-KAY (858) 633-0181

San Francisco, CA: Adath Israel (415) 564-5665

Seattle: Bikur Cholim Machzikay Hadath (206) 721-0970

- **Condolences** to Rebbetzin Rivy Poupkov Kletenik

Seattle: Ezra Bessaroth (206) 722-5500

Seattle: Sephardic Bikur Holim (206) 723-3028

- **SUN MAY 2, 4pm:** Lag La'Omer BBQ & Raffle. RSVP

Valley Village, CA: Shaarey Zedek Cong. (818) 763-0560

- **SUN APR 25, 10am-5pm:** Israel & Jewish Culture Day Fair

Venice, Pacific Jewish Center-The Shul on the Beach:(310)392-8749

Washington-Mercer Island: Shevet Achim (206) 275-1539

Woodland Hills: Beit HaMidrash (818) 999-2059 (5850 Fallbrook Ave.)

- **SUNs @ 8:30am:** following 8am minyan-Shiur-Baba Kama w/Rabbi Yaakov Rechinitz

West LA: Westwood Kehilla (310) 441-5288x30 [director@kehilla.org](mailto:director@kehilla.org)

- **Shabbat APR 23-24:** S-I-R Dr. David Lieberman, Author/ Psychologist

## NCSY-JSU-YACHAD ANNOUNCEMENTS/EVENTS



**Office contact:** 310-229-9000 x 209 [www.westcoastncsy.com](http://www.westcoastncsy.com)

Start planning your summer, check out our amazing summer programs @ A

Want to help run a chesed project? call Solly at 310-557-6582

**MAY 29-31:** Spring Regional

**CITY NCSY:** Call Solly @ 310-557-6582 or [Shess@westcoastncsy.com](mailto:Shess@westcoastncsy.com)

**DNL--MONs 7-8pm:** @ Pizza World 365 S. Fairfax Ave.

**Latte&Learning-TUES 7:30pm:**@CB&T-233 S. Beverly Dr. w/R'Josh Horwitz

**JR. NCSY:** (6-8 grade) Call Josh 310-694-2976 or [ncsyjosh@gmail.com](mailto:ncsyjosh@gmail.com)

... **NCSY Bar/Bat Mitzvah** tutoring available. *Talmud Torah* classes.

**YACHAD:** Call Perri @323-228-4191. **Ongoing activities.**

## B'NEI AKIVA OF LA ANNOUNCEMENTS

→ **Office:** 310-248-2450 [bneiakivaLA@gmail.com](mailto:bneiakivaLA@gmail.com)

→ **Shabbat - April 17, 2010—Snifim:**

**LAVI** @ the Dagan's, 5140 Avenida, Hacienda(Tarzana)

6:00 PM Walking Group @ Miranda Street (off Burbank and Lindey)

6:30 PM Mincha & Snif

**SHLUCHOT** (Pico/Robertson, Beverly Hills, Beverlywood)

5:25 PM Walking group

6:00 PM Snif begins at Hillel Hebrew Academy

→ **MON Evening APRIL 19: Annual Community**

**Yom HaZikaron & Yom Haatzmaut Ceremony**

**BJ-YH:** Mincha: 6pm—Program: 6:20pm--Culminates in Jacob's

Garden with music, food, dancing.

**Upcoming Events: Chevyra Bet (9-12 grade)**

May 20-23, 2010 - NY Shabbaton @IO-Moshava

May 23, 2010 - Israeli Day Parade - New York



## OU COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

▶ **ONGOING: OU'S WOMEN'S TORAH NETWORK (WTN)**

Classes with Geri Wiener – *Spring Sessions*

→ **MONs-Valley (private home):** → **WEDs-City (OU Hdqtrs):**

▶ **THIS SUN APR 18<sup>th</sup> @ UCLA: NCSY's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Basketball Tournament\***

Sign your team up today by calling 310 229-9000 ext. 226

\*Sponsorship opportunities available.

▶ **Yom Haatzmaut-MONDAY EVENING-APR 19, BNEI AKIVA@BJ**

▶ **Yom Haatzmaut-APR 19, 7pm, presented by Consulate General of Israel & Saban Theater**

## ISRAEL'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD

**Ear infection? Don't be a drip – use the foam**

A promising Israeli startup has whizzed through its paces with a foam-delivery system for eardrops that may revolutionize treatment of a condition that plagues millions.

**Collecting for an online era**

Whether it's stamps, coins or phone cards, collecting just got easier with a new award-winning Israeli website that enables collectors to post their catalogs on line.

**A streaming music platform for cell phones**

Israel's McCanto pioneers a technology that lets you stream your entire music collection via your mobile device, while protecting music rights and promoting sales.

**In Israel, water is the new oil**

For more than 50 years, Israel has been trying to solve the country's water shortage problem and has resorted to technological ingenuity to make it happen. As a result, Israel has emerged as a leader in developing water purification, irrigation and desalination technologies.

**Solar energy from the pea on your plate**

Solar energy is often inefficient and difficult to utilize in cloudier climates. Now a Tel Aviv University (TAU) scientist is suggesting that the solution to these difficulties may lie on your dinner plate.

A nano-machine found in the common pea plant might be harnessed to change light into an energy source to provide electric power, according to research by Prof. Nathan Nelson of TAU's Department of Biochemistry.

**Carnivorous plants may save people**

New research from Israel suggests that carnivorous plants like the Venus Fly Trap may provide a breakthrough in anti-fungal drugs for use in humans.

[www.Israel21c.org](http://www.Israel21c.org)



April 08, 2010

## **Go West. Young Couple** By Rabbi Aryeh and Sharona Kaplan

*In recognition that the overwhelming majority of Modern Orthodox college students are being educated at secular universities, the Orthodox Union, in partnership with Hillel, administers the Heshe and Harriet Seif Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus (JLIC), a program that helps Orthodox students navigate the college environment and balance their Jewish commitments with their desire to engage the secular world. Through the work of a young rabbi and his wife – known as Torah Educators -- JLIC provides avenues for spiritual development and exploration to Jewish students from varied backgrounds and presents a positive, sophisticated and welcoming face of Orthodox Judaism on campus.*

*JLIC, now in its tenth year, is found on 15 major campuses, of which one is located west of the Mississippi. That campus is UCLA. Since September 2004, the Torah Educators have been **Rabbi Aryeh and Sharona Kaplan**, natives of Teaneck, N.J.*

*This is what their lives have been like since they arrived in Los Angeles*

It is amazing to consider how many of the milestones in our personal life are intimately intertwined with equally notable milestones of the Orthodox community at UCLA.

We arrived in Los Angeles from New York in 2004, happily settling into a spacious two-bedroom apartment in Westwood near campus, luxuriating in our SUV with an empty back seat and cavernous trunk, while marveling at the personal journey that lay ahead. We quickly made the Hillel at UCLA our home away from home, for JLIC is located there.

We hunkered down in the Beit Medrash, the Jewish library, studying the sheet of names that was the complete list of men and women participants in the JLIC community at UCLA that we inherited from Rabbi Uri and Julie Goldstein, who built the program there in its first three years and left us much to work with.

Now, almost six years later, we have moved ourselves, and our three Angelino children (ages, 5, 3 and 1), out of our very full apartment, are anticipating the arrival of our new eight-seater SUV which is scheduled to arrive only weeks before our fourth child, and look back astounded on all that has transpired. The Beit Medrash is alive with a steady buzz of learning and daily minyanim-- prayer services; the new

bookcases that were installed to accommodate the additional Jewish texts are full beyond capacity; and our Excel spreadsheet cataloging the members of the JLIC community boasts over 450 names.

JLIC programming is the pulse of an Orthodox student's life on campus. With a wide range of study opportunities, including ones specifically tailored to law school students, Iranian students, men's and women's learning groups, advanced learning opportunities and classes for those just beginning – not to mention over 40 one-on-one study sessions each week – the calendar of learning is diverse and exciting. With personal classes for brides and grooms; support for newly married couples; classes for young professional alumni delivered at their workplaces and ongoing mentorship; counseling and shared celebrations, the relationships formed through JLIC are often deep and long lasting.

Operating out of the Hillel at UCLA creates a seamless portal for the full range of Jewish students – not only the Orthodox -- to become absorbed into the JLIC community. With the ongoing support of the staff, the beautiful state of the art building, a Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf in the lobby and a kosher meat lunch program on the second floor, it is no wonder that many Orthodox students consider JLIC at UCLA their home away from home.

### **Destination UCLA:**

The presence of JLIC at UCLA has made the campus the destination for Orthodox college students on the West Coast. Students from many area colleges affiliate with the program, some even choosing to live in Westwood (and commute to their own campuses!) to be situated within the strong Orthodox community at UCLA. Students who live at home, with their families, will often opt to spend Shabbat with a friend on campus, while holiday celebrations and social events draw students not only from UCLA but from Santa Monica College, California State University, Northridge and an array of other area institutions along with students from Yeshiva University and Stern College who are in Los Angeles for vacation.

Reflecting upon JLIC, David Bardo UCLA '08, commented, "I don't know how I would fit into life at UCLA without it," as he appreciates that "My closest friends are students I have met through JLIC programs." Ariel Huntley, a sophomore, echoes

his sentiment, declaring, "Without JLIC, I would be unwilling to attend ULCA."

The positive peer pressure, strong social network, regular religious opportunities and the abundance of supplemental study opportunities have created a unique energy that permeates our halls, transforms secular academic experiences and propels students through college in a meaningful, focused and inspired way.

Daniel Nomanim, UCLA '09, testifies that "JLIC was the highlight of my UCLA experience. I found friends, intelligent conversation and a new outlook on religion and life that I will carry with me wherever I go."

It's not just students who are singing the praises of JLIC! We, the Torah Educators, feel the same way. JLIC offers the best possible professional combination for a rabbi. Participating in life cycle events, fielding constant questions about Jewish law and its applications, providing mentorship and celebrating Shabbat and holidays together, which are filled with opportunities to inspire on a communal level, are exciting parts of the pulpit rabbinate that are very present in the life of a JLIC Educator. Yet, the text-based learning, ongoing skill development, individual attention and curriculum building – all with an interested, intelligent and self-motivated audience – capi-

talize on the personal rebbe/talmid (teacher/student) relationship that is nurtured within JLIC.

The rabbi's wife is never an appendage, but is an integral part of the program, equal to her husband, functioning as a role model for the young women who look to her for advice on everything from dating to establishing a kosher kitchen, to the laws of family purity, not to mention textual learning.

With our family now boasting a 2:1 ratio of those born at UCLA over those originating on the East Coast, we now consider ourselves to be firmly situated in Los Angeles. Annual trips to back to New Jersey each summer, where our children attend camp, provide quality time with our extended families and opportunities to reconnect with friends and mentors on the East Coast. While we once lived in walking distance to Yankee Stadium, we have gladly replaced that distinction with a weekly walk to shul past the famous Pauley Pavilion, with outings to Dodger Stadium.

The fire escapes outside our window are no longer, but there are roofless outdoor atriums instead. Snow is a novelty for our kids whenever they visit their grandparents. As for us? We look forward to being an avocado-eating, Dodger-supporting, beach-going Los Angeles family for many years to come!



April 12, 2010

### Gatorade New OU Certification Seeks to take Advantage of Lifestyle Changes in Kosher Market

New York...The decision by [Gatorade](#) to secure the kosher certification of the [Orthodox Union \(OU\)](#) was due to the brand's recognition of new opportunities with younger kosher consumers. Nearly six months after *KosherToday* (October 13, 2009) broke the story that both Gatorade and Tootsie Roll would soon add kosher certification, Gatorade itself broke the news in full page ads and press releases in Jewish publications. In fact, in its ad, Gatorade addresses the emergence of a younger more health conscious kosher consumer. Gatorade noted that its new OU symbol on the label "means the athletes in your family can now have the same advantage the pros have had since 1965." Gatorade's kosher certification also puts its parent company [PepsiCo](#) on a more level playing field with [Coca Cola](#) whose [PowerAde](#) brand has had OU certification for years. Gatorade has for years dominated the energy beverage category which it hopes to retain with its new kosher certification. Carbonated soft drinks have in recent years lost ground to the energy drinks. The retail dollar value of U.S. carbonated soft drink sales was up about 2.7 percent to \$72 billion due to the popularity of higher-priced energy drinks and price increases of traditional soft drinks. The kosher beverage market is estimated at \$1.5 billion, about 10% of the overall kosher market.

### ***If You are Waiting for Jobs to Rain In, You May be in for a Long Wait!***

Why not do the second best thing? Go the [www.oujobs.org](http://www.oujobs.org) and view the thousands of ready to be filled jobs now posted on the Job Board?

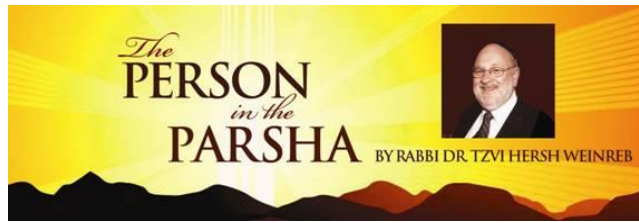
The OU Job Board is proud to offer higher paying no nonsense jobs for your consideration; a fact that has not been lost on Fortune 500 companies, who look to us for results. In terms jobs both full time and part time OU Job Board lists jobs that are ready to be filled NOW.

The OU Job Board is a public service website and Job/Resume Board that publishes open positions from thousands of distinguished corporations throughout the USA, Canada, Israel and now England, completely free of charge, in addition to hosting a wide range of employment-related seminars, resume workshops, job fairs, computer training courses, practical economic advice and much more.

Know of anyone who has jobs to offer. Please ask them to send their jobs to: [jobs@ou.org](mailto:jobs@ou.org) and let's help those who need these jobs most-YOU or your community.

Michael Rosner, National Director-OU Job Board - [jobs@ou.org](mailto:jobs@ou.org)

.....more....



## Parshat Tazria-Metzorah

April 17, 2010 – 3 Iyar 5770

To read more articles and essays by Rabbi Weinreb, visit his blog at [www.ou.org/rabbi\\_weinreb](http://www.ou.org/rabbi_weinreb)

### " Going At It Alone"

"No man is an island." "It takes a village."

These are just some of the clichés that are used to convey the importance of social groups, of the realization that people cannot "go at it alone".

But just as it is vital that each of us learns that we are ultimately limited in what we can accomplish by ourselves, it is equally vital that we learn of the benefits of occasional solitude and of the need to sometimes just be alone.

In this week's double Torah portion, Tazria-Metzora, we read at length and in great detail about an individual who is afflicted by a condition known as tzora'at, often translated as leprosy. It is a condition which is characterized by specific discolorations of the skin and which is understood by our sages to be the consequence of immoral behavior, particularly malicious gossip.

The Torah prescribes that such an individual rend his clothes and let his hair grow. He is considered ritually unclean, and "... he shall dwell apart; his dwelling shall be outside that camp." (Leviticus 13:46)

Opinions vary as to why he must be removed from society. Some say simply that he is quarantined because his condition is contagious. Others insist that since his misdeeds caused harm to others, he must be punished by living apart from others.

I prefer, however, the view that believes that a period of solitude is imposed upon this individual to afford him an opportunity to think, to reconsider his actions, and to resolve to live a new moral life style. He is afforded the social isolation necessary for thoroughgoing introspection, a chance to think for himself.

There is a lesson here about the benefits of solitude that is of renewed relevance in our day and age.

The most recent edition of *The American Scholar* (Spring 2010) carries an essay by William Deresiewicz which he delivered to the plebe class at the United States Military Academy at West Point in October of last year. The essay is entitled "Solitude and Leadership."

Mr. Deresiewicz eloquently conveys the message to these future military leaders that leadership demands a mindset which can only come about with frequent and sustained periods of solitude.

He emphasizes the importance of thinking and writes, "Thinking means concentrating on one thing long enough to develop an idea about it."

He further emphasizes the importance of concentrating, and writes that it means "gathering yourself together into a single point rather than letting yourself be dispersed everywhere into a cloud of electronic and social input."

Ralph Waldo Emerson made Mr. Deresiewicz's point long ago when he said, "He who should inspire and lead his race must be defended from traveling with the souls of other men, from living, breathing, reading, and writing in the daily, time-worn yoke of their opinions."

These opinions of a famous 19th century essayist and one of his contemporary counterparts stress and amplify a message implicit in this week's Torah portion. The message is that time by oneself, reflecting and engaging in serious introspection, is an essential component of self improvement and a prerequisite not only for membership in society, but for leadership of society.

Jewish sources go much further than Emerson and Deresiewicz. The latter restrict their insightful comments to the importance of solitude in everyday, mundane affairs. Our tradition goes beyond that and teaches that solitude is necessary for spiritual growth and for religious leadership.

The sages of the Talmud insist upon the necessity of cheshbon hanefesh self-reckoning. The Jewish ethical treatises of medieval times recommend that one regularly withdraw from society to engage in such self reckoning. Chassidim, and most particularly the followers of Rabbi Nachman of Breslav, daily engage in periods of hitbodedut, solitary contemplation.

The secular writers quoted above are helpful in that they make it clear that solitude need not entail mystical practices or spiritual techniques. Rather, solitude provides an opportunity for thinking on one's own and for concentrating deeply without the undue influences of one's social surround.

I personally am convinced that occasional solitude would be a healthy antidote to the blind conformity which is imposed upon all of us by our contemporary world.

Once again, the Torah, in the midst of a passage which seems most out of tune with modernity, gives us a lesson essential for coping with modernity.