

Good Shabbos Everyone. This week's parsha speaks about the process of return of the Metzorah, the person stricken with the spiritually-caused physical ailment of "tzoraas." The Torah details how the stricken person was brought to the Kohen, and how the Kohen purified the person to allow the person to return to the Jewish camp. While the details of that process may not seem relevant to our us today as there is no tzoraas, there is of course a message in this parsha which speaks to the generations. Namely, even if one is outside of the Jewish camp, they can return. In many cases Jews who are "outside the camp" can be motivated to return through the actions of our Torah leaders, who are compared to the Kohen of yesteryear. The following true story illustrates this idea.

The Yom Kippur war (1973) left Israel with thousands of casualties, and one of them was Mr. Sadon. He had been lying for weeks in critical condition in Tzrifim Hospital and the doctors weren't optimistic. But his wife, sitting by his bedside, knew better. Somehow she was sure that against all odds everything would be all right.....she was writing a letter to the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Mr. Sadon had never been an observant Jew, but his wife had grown up "observant" in her very early years. In fact her grandparents had been Chabad Chassidim, but she left it all when she was just a young girl; that's the way things went in Israel unfortunately for many. Nevertheless, she knew of the greatness of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and sought his blessings by writing him a letter. In the bed next to Mr. Sadon lay a Moroccan Jew called Mr. Shapir who also had been severely wounded and had a dim prognosis. When he heard that Mrs. Sadon was writing to the Rebbe his eyes lit up. He motioned her to come close and handed her a small book of Psalms (3 sq. cm.), a family heirloom given to him by his grandfather. He begged her to send it to the Rebbe and request that he sign it with his name and a blessing. And so Mrs. Sadon added the Tehillim to her letter and mailed them off.

Things began to improve for Sadon to the degree that two weeks later the hospital informed him that he was well enough to leave! They needed the bed for more serious cases. After a few months at home they had almost forgotten the entire incident, and things began to return to normal, until one day Mrs. Sadon received a small envelope in the mail from the office of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Inside was Mr. Shapir's tiny book of Psalms inscribed and signed by the Rebbe in extremely small print, and a letter addressed to her. The Rebbe repeated the blessings he wrote in the Tehillim, added a few more, and explained that although it was not his custom to sign holy books he had made an exception, and then signed his name once again. But at the bottom of the letter a footnote caught Mrs. Sadon's eye: "P.S. Apparently you already light Shabbat Candles like every Kosher Jewish woman."

The next morning Mrs. Sadon called the hospital, only to discover that Mr. Shapir had also recovered, and left weeks earlier. She got his number from the phonebook, but there was no answer at his house. So she mailed him a letter telling him about his Tehillim, and waited for a response. Sure enough two weeks later she heard a knock at her door and it was none other than a beaming Mr. Shapir. He had been in a recuperation center for the last few weeks, and as soon as he arrived home and saw her letter he took a taxi to her house. It wasn't long, before he was joyously reporting the stages of his miraculous recovery, and marveling over the Rebbe's inscription in his little book.

But the Rebbe's footnote still burned in her mind. Something inside her kept repeating: "Light candles like every Jewish woman". Little by little she warmed up to the idea. After all, the Rebbe did write it to her, and it was the same Rebbe that just helped her and so many others with his prayers...so it can't be THAT bad.

After a few weeks of this she decided that she would do it! This Friday she would light Shabbos candles!! She even went to the store and bought candles and two small candleholders. But when she arrived home she realized that she didn't know what to do. She didn't know when to light them, or where to put them. She didn't know the blessing, and most embarrassing of all; she didn't even know whom to ask! She stood there confused for several minutes and she felt a tremendous urge to just put it off for another week, when suddenly the phone rang. It was her oldest son calling from the army; his weekend leave had been cancelled, and before he could continue she said, "Oh that's too bad, I was looking forward to seeing you. Tell me son, is the Army Rabbi there? I want to ask him something."

A few minutes later the Rabbi had gladly answered her questions, dictated to her the blessing, and even promised that he would mail her a "Kitzur Shulchan Aruch" (Jewish Law book). Mrs. Sadon hung up the phone and did what he said. She lit the candles, put her hands over her eyes, slowly said the blessing and just stood there. When she uncovered her eyes suddenly everything was different. Suddenly everything was so pure and quiet. She was so happy...She cried. Of course it didn't stop there; little by little the flames began changing their lives. The next Friday, after lighting the candles she felt that some of the pictures and statues in the room sort-of "clashed" with the Shabbos lights. So she moved the offenders to a different room altogether. Then they bought a few Torah books for their bookcase, and the T.V. became silent on Shabbos. Finally she decided to contact the local Chabad House to make her Kitchen Kosher. Then things really began to move. It wasn't long before there were Mezuzas on all the doors. Mr. Sadon bought himself his first pair of Tefillin, and even began attending Torah classes a few times a week. And that was only the beginning. The Lubavitcher Rebbe and the Shabbos candles made the change. Let us look to our Torah leaders for inspiration! **Good Shabbos Everyone.**