

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Shlach 5772

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MEMORIES AND REGRETS :: Rabbi Berel Wein

This month of June commemorates the forty-fifth anniversary of the Six Day War, an event that changed Israeli and Jewish in myriad ways. Those of us who lived through those fateful and fearsome days, we recall the foreboding and mental and emotional depression that gripped the Jewish world for the three weeks leading up to the war itself.

The Arabs proclaimed that they would end the State of Israel and throw its Jews into the Mediterranean Sea. The Soviet Union backed the Arabs with its vicious propaganda machine as did the Leftist fellow travelers the world over, many of them Jewish by birth. Those guys are still around in today's world though their great patron and perfect society, the Soviet Union, is in the ash heap of history.

The Soviet Union armed Egypt and Syria to the teeth and trained their armies while Britain did the same for Jordan. These three Arab countries united their military commands and confidently proclaimed their certain victory before the first shot was even fired. Abba Eban, the then Israeli Foreign Minister, circled the globe's capitols seeking help for his beleaguered country but finding none.

The ineptitude of the United Nations, the cynicism of the American State Department and the hollowness of the promises of the American President, and the anti-Semitism of de Gaulle, all were now blatantly revealed. I was then a rabbi in Miami Beach and I visited a neighboring church near my synagogue to ask the pastor to sign an interfaith letter supporting Israel that was to be published the next day in the local newspaper. I was shocked and saddened by the vehemence in his voice as he refused to do so. I then realized how truly alone the Jewish people were – and continue to be, when push comes to shove

Well, surprisingly Israel won the war in six days, reunited Jerusalem, acquired the Golan Heights and controlled the biblical land of Israel from the Jordan to the sea. The Jewish world was ecstatic, relieved but utterly confused. What was Israel to do with its victory and gains? The Arab world remained intransigently opposed to any type of recognition of or compromise with Israel.

So Israel began a decades long process of negotiating with itself, slowly but surely frittering away any of the benefits that accrued to it during the war and its aftermath. Over the decades Israel gave back the Sinai, the Gaza Strip, much of the West Bank, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, recognized the establishment of a neighboring Palestinian state, fought many wars and endured continuing terrorist attacks, signed a number of meaningless agreements, all in a fruitless attempt to achieve a lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Egyptian and Jordanian peace treaties have never achieved a significant change of the mindset of the population of those countries towards Israel and its right to exist. Those peace treaties by themselves today hang by a thread and certainly cannot be reckoned as being secure and binding by any stretch of imagination.

The Six Day War brought to the Jewish world a sense of unity and solidarity that since then has never been matched. At this point, the stark divisions in the Jewish world have since then been magnified and intensified. The political parties in Israel have splintered and subdivided. The personal animosities and the pursuit of ideology – secular and religious – have overcome the realistic practicalities of life and nationhood. The leaders of Israel have been found wanting – corrupt, politically and morally, in a way that the original founders of the state would find hard to believe. The dream of Greater Israel has been smashed and the reality of lesser Israel offers little comfort and inspiration to many Jews both in Israel and in the Diaspora.

Yet, the Russian exile has returned home and the country is strong and relatively prosperous. I see Israel today as being paradoxically more Jewish, if not even more observant, than it was forty-five years ago. But

the fire of idealism, of a great dream to be fulfilled is no longer present. We are weary of war and conflict and wary of false peace.

We distrust all of our political leaders with equal disdain and doubt their motives and schemes. They betray us on a regular basis – just ask the dispossessed of Gush Katif and now of Beit El. Somehow we never internalized the lessons of the Six Day War, so that the memories of that great moment in our history has turned from nostalgia to regret. History teaches us that when opportunity arises it must be seized. Rarely if ever does it reappear in the same form again.

Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha :: SHLACH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The attitude of Jews towards the Land of Israel has always been a litmus type of test of Jewish commitment and even faith throughout the ages. As we see in this week's parsha, from the beginning of our national existence there have always been Jews – leading Jews, well-intentioned Jews, even outwardly pious Jews – who have preferred living somewhere else in the world to living in the Land of Israel.

Even when Hitler came to power, European Jews in many cases refused to consider the option of immigration to the Land of Israel. It is not my place to judge others for their behavior in a very dreadful time, especially since I am blessed with the perfect hindsight that they tragically lacked, but it is a strange fact that throughout Jewish history the naysayers regarding the Land of Israel in Jewish society have always abounded.

Jews in the generation of Moses claimed their preference for the land of Egypt over the Land of Israel. An entire generation of special and gifted Jews was destroyed in the desert of Sinai because of their unwillingness to consider living in the Land of Israel as a viable option for them and their descendants. The challenge of living in the Land of Israel was apparently too great a problem for them to overcome - physically, psychologically and spiritually.

To me this attitude remains one of the supreme mysteries of all of Jewish history. But mystery or not, it certainly is a fact that has governed Jewish life over the ages.

When Moses' own relative refused the offer to go to the Land of Israel, Rashi explains that the two reasons for his behavior had to do with family and making a living. These are very strong reasons that exist today that prevent many Jews from considering immigrating to the Land of Israel. Again, I neither judge nor begrudge anyone in this or any other life changing matter.

However, I feel that the issue of the Land of Israel, independent of any other causes and motives, strikes at a very deep place within our personal and national soul. The fact that the most ultra-assimilated and the most outwardly ultra-pious within the Jewish people are included in our generation's most vociferous of the anti-Land of Israel groups, shows that the problem is both deep and sensitive.

The extremes in Jewish society cannot deal with the Land of Israel as a reality and earnestly hope that the issue will somehow disappear completely. There are millions of Jews who prefer living in exile to living in the Land of Israel. The Jewish people, as a whole has not absorbed the lessons of the exile, its alienation, assimilation and its ultimate corruption of Torah values.

Today, many Jews who physically live in the Land of Israel still psychologically and spiritually live in the exile, in a fantasy of the long-deadly destroyed shtetel of Eastern Europe. As foretold to us by our prophets, the ultimate fate of the Jewish people will be determined for us by our attitude to the Land of Israel. Living in the Land of Israel or at least visiting it regularly is currently the centerpiece of Jewish life, its faith and its future.

Shabat shalom

Insights

The Disease To Please

"...we were like grasshoppers in their eyes..." (13:33)

Two actors are sitting in a beat-up coffee shop on Sunset Strip. One is telling the other about the jobs he almost got, the jobs his agent messed up on, the jobs he should have got but he was too old, he was too young, too dark, too tall, too short. He carries on like this for about twenty minutes. Then he pauses and says to the other, "Okay, that's enough about me. Now you talk about me for a while."

I remember a school friend who used to spend a good ten minutes on his hair in the mirror trying to achieve a spontaneous effect.

It's not just that narcissism is a very obvious and unattractive aspect of conceit, but it places someone in a world of reaction instead of action.

When we fall prey to the desire for the approbation of others, every decision becomes tainted with the disease to please. Rather than consider what is right, we may be equally or even more concerned about how it will look, how it will read to others.

Our age has even invented a profession for people whose job is to gauge and garner the approval of the masses – the Spin Doctor. Just like a doctor, the Spin Doctor diagnoses and prescribes. He diagnoses how a political decision will be received and he prescribes how to get the masses to swallow the medicine.

The task of the Jewish People is to be the emissaries of G-d in this world.

G-d's imprimatur is pure unvarnished truth.

As the verse states, "G-d is a G-d of Truth." The Hebrew word for "truth" is *emet*. *Emet* consists of the first, the middle, and the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Truth is only true if it is true at the beginning, in the middle and at the end. If you 'spin' it to the side anywhere along the line – it's not what the Torah calls true.

"We were like grasshoppers in their (the giants') eyes..."

The Kotzker Rebbe identifies this line in this week's Torah reading as the root of the spies' sin. Why were the spies thinking about how they looked to the giants?

As the emissaries of the Jewish People – and as Jews themselves – they should have had no interest other than to bring back an accurate report about the Land. Who cares about what other people thought about them?

The mere fact that they viewed themselves from the outside skewed their judgment and led them to create a world of illusion - a self-produced movie - which resulted in the greatest debacle in Jewish history.

All because of a little preening in the mirror.

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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Parshas Shelach

Send forth men, if you please, and let them spy out the Land of Canaan. (13:2)

"Watch where you are going" is a common adage which exhorts us to keep an eye on the road, the street, etc. It may also be used concerning spiritual matters: to "wake up," look around, take heed; these are important lessons to be learned; listen to your Heavenly messages. There are many wake up calls in life which we, regrettably, ignore. Our parsha begins with one such tragic circumstance.

Shelach lecha anashim, "Send for yourself men". Thus begins one of the most tragic errors in our history. Rashi asks, "Why is the parashas ha'meraglim, episode of the spies, juxtaposed upon the incident concerning Miriam HaNeviah who spoke against her brother Moshe Rabbeinu? She was punished for this infraction; yet, these wicked men saw what had occurred as a result of lashon hora, slanderous speech, and took no heed." They ignored the lesson that Miriam's debacle imparted. Rashi's words, *lo lamdu mussar*, "They did not learn a lesson," focus on the root of their sin. We all have tendencies to gravitate to areas and endeavors that, at best, are

inappropriate. For some reason, the indiscretionary nature of the endeavor does not serve as a deterrent from sin. In fact, for some, the thrill of sin is almost encouraging.

It all boils down to what Horav Moshe Chaim Luzatto, zl, writes in the beginning of his magnum opus, *Mesillas Yesharim*, "A person must clarify and recognize exactly what is his duty in this world." Horav Yerucham Levovitz, zl, questioned this. Certainly, every Jew knows what is demanded of him. Ask any Jewish child in elementary school, and he or she will immediately tell you that we are here to serve Hashem. What chiddush, novel idea, is the *Mesillas Yesharim* presenting to us? Rav Yerucham explains that we must focus on the personal message, *chovaso*, his obligation. Each and every Jew has his own unique tendencies, qualities and potential. He has been endowed by Heaven with a personality and skills that are uniquely his own. Hashem does not demand more from an individual than he is capable of achieving with the Heavenly abilities which he has been granted. Chaim has to become Chaim - not Shmuel!

This is the goal which each one of us is instructed to achieve. Life is meaningful only when one has an ultimate, meaningful goal. Ramchal teaches us that in order for man to begin his personal journey toward spirituality, he must first define and grasp for himself a clear concept of his personal goal, his duty to Hashem. One can have the finest means of transportation, but it is to no avail if he has not yet determined his destination. We all have our personal spiritual destination, our *chovaso b'olamo*, duty in Hashem's world. Until this has been determined, we cannot begin the journey.

Rav Yerucham applies the idea of a personal goal based upon one's individual abilities to explain a statement made by Chazal in *Meseches Niddah 30b*. Chazal teach that, prior to a child's birth, Hashem makes him swear that he will be righteous and not wicked. Maharasha questions the need for what seems to be a superfluous vow, since every Jew was "sworn in" at Har Sinai to accept the Torah and carry out its mitzvos. Why is there a need to swear once again?

The Mashgiach explains that the oath taken at Sinai was a collective one, addressing our general duty as a people to adhere to the Torah and mitzvos. Prior to one's birth, however, the vow becomes personal, individualizing specifically for the person to be born. This vow is tailor-made, commensurate with the abilities of the individual. No two people are given the same duty - because no two people are the same.

In his *Sefer Nitzotzos*, Horav Yitzchak Hershkowitz, Shlita, quotes a practical analogy which illuminates the concept of personal goals in life. A group of people were waiting in the bus station in Tel Aviv. Different buses were pulling out to various destinations in the Holy Land. A young boy stood with his mother in line for the bus that made the short run from Tel Aviv to Yerushalayim. Next to them was another line of people waiting to take the bus from Tel Aviv to Be'er Sheva, situated in the southern tier of Eretz Yisrael. Understandably, this was a much longer trip. As the young boy alighted the bus for Yerushalayim, he questioned his mother concerning the physical condition of their bus in comparison to the bus traveling to Be'er Sheva. His mother explained that since their trip was short, the bus used by the company was an older bus with fewer comforts and modern accouterments. The travelers to Be'er Sheva required a newer bus which provided greater comfort, so that their ride would be more pleasurable.

Life is like that. We are here for a specific purpose: to fulfill our duty to Hashem and earn our way into *Olam Habba*, the World to Come. We are not here to pick the roses and have a great time. Thus, the "bus" we take for our journey through life does not have to be luxurious. Regrettably, there are some individuals who have yet to define their personal goals in life and integrate it into their individual psyches.

This is where the *meraglim* went wrong. Life is a journey with a destination. Every lesson which we learn is important for us, so that we are able to reach our destination and achieve our personal goal. For example, when the *meraglim* learned that a woman who had achieved the spiritual eminence that exemplified Miriam erred by saying just a few words that were not carefully selected, they should have derived a lesson concerning the significance of speech. They should have realized how easy it is to go

wrong, deviate slightly from the correct course and not reach one's destination. They forgot their personal duty in this world and, thus, took the wrong bus!

Send forth men, if you please, and let them spy out the Land of Canaan that I gave to Bnei Yisrael. (13:2)

The debacle with the meraglim, spies, haunts us to this very day. The entire episode is laden with questions. We will focus on a simple question: the redundancy of the word Canaan. Once Hashem said, "To the (land) that I give to Bnei Yisrael," we know that this is the Land of Canaan. There is a premium on every word in the Torah; thus, every word that is repeated is excessive. In his Zera Kodesh, Horav Naphtali, zl, m'Ropshitz suggests a homiletic rendering of the pasuk that sheds much light on the pesukim and offers us a new perspective concerning the incident that brought down an entire nation.

The Rebbe explains that the middah, positive character trait, which transcends all others, is that of anavah, humility, and hachnaah, yielding oneself. An indication of this verity is none other than Moshe Rabbeinu, Klal Yisrael's quintessential leader and teacher, whose greatest appellation is his humility. This is also the most praise-worthy quality of Eretz Yisrael. It is a land which imbues its inhabitants with a sense of selflessness and humility. Thus, it is called the Land of Canaan, a derivative of hachnaah. It describes the land and what it infuses in its citizens.

When Moshe sent forth the meraglim, he intimated to them to take heart and apply their minds, so that they would take notice of this exceptional quality. This is derived from the phrase, U're'issem es ha'aretz mah hu, "And you will see the land what it is." The words, mah hu, is an allusion to humility, as Moshe and Aharon HaKohen commented about themselves v'nachnu mah, "And what are we?" (Shemos 16:7) In addition, Moshe instructed the spies to discern if the nation residing in Canaan is chazak or rafa, strong or weak. This means that although the nation is physically strong, they view themselves as weak. Moshe encouraged the meraglim to develop an appreciation for Eretz Yisrael to take a long, hard look at the country, its inhabitants and their character traits. See how the Holy Land transforms its inhabitants. The strong act like the meek and the mighty attribute their strength to a Higher Power. Ha'm'e'at hu im rav, is their census little or great. Normally, this would refer to the warrior count, so that the Jewish army would be aware of whom they were up against: Ha'yesh bah eitz im ayin, "Is there a tree or not?" Rashi explains that this refers to a righteous man, in whose merit the country could be spared. The Ropshitzer adds, "Is there a holy man who views himself as ayin, nothing?" In short, Moshe inquired as to the humility quotient of the land his army was about to conquer. They were sent to reconnoiter the land - but it was for a positive purpose. Regrettably, their personal insecurities prevailed and clouded their perspective of the truth.

Humility is a quality trait that is not easily acquired. One must work on himself with sincerity to achieve true humility. The Maggid, zl, m'Zlotchav asks: If humility is a defining character trait to the point that it outweighs all mitzvos, why is it not included among the 613 mitzvos? We should have a mitzvah: You shall be humble! He explains that mitzvos must be carried out lishmah, for the purpose of Heaven. Every commandment in the Torah has this purpose. Anavah, humility, is not something one does for a purpose. He either is humble - or he is not. To act humbly for a reason smacks of a lack of sincerity and, thus, is not true humility. Indeed, humility in which one calls attention to his self-effacing character is nothing more than subtle arrogance.

An individual seeking "guidance" in dealing with "arrogance" issues approached Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, and asked him for his sage advice concerning conquering this negative character trait. Rav Sholom told the man, "Go into the shul and stand by the bimah. Presently, I am occupied. I will be there soon, and we will talk."

A few moments went by, and another Jew with a problem encountered Rav Sholom: "The tax collector is breathing down my back, demanding a huge sum of back taxes. What should I do?" Rav Sholom replied, "Go into the shul, and you will meet a man standing by the bimah. Discuss your problem with him."

The man followed Rav Sholom's instructions, only to be rebuffed by the individual with "arrogance issues." Subsequently, they both came out to Rav Sholom and asked what the purpose of his suggestion was. Rav Sholom asked the first man, "You mean you cannot solve his problem? Return to the shul and wait for me at the bimah."

A short while later, a gentleman whose daughter was soon to be married came to Rav Sholom with a tale of woe. He had no way of covering the dowry. It was beyond his financial ability. What should he do? Rav Sholom told him, "Go into the shul, and you will see a man standing at the Bimah. He will help you."

This man approached the first man who seemed to have "moved" into the shul and asked for his help in marrying off his daughter. The first man replied somewhat incredulously, "I have no idea why Rav Sholom sent you here. I have no money. I could never help you." As before, both men went outside to Rav Sholom. The first man asked, "Why did the Rav send this man to me?"

"What? You have no money? I am sorry. Go back into the shul. I will be there soon."

As the first man returned to shul, another Jew asked Rav Sholom a halachic sheilah, question, concerning the kashrus of a lung. Rav Sholom also instructed this third man to go into the shul and ask the sheilah to the man standing by the bimah. Well, he did, and the answer was once again negative. He had no clue concerning the halachic status of the lung. When he returned to Rav Sholom and "wondered" why the Rav sent a sheilah to him, Rav Sholom countered, "You mean you are unable to discern the halachic status of this lung? I am sorry I bothered you. Go back into the shul, and we will soon talk."

The next man to come over to Rav Sholom was a simple laborer whose wagon had fallen into a ditch, and he needed help extracting his horse and wagon from the mud. The reader can probably guess that Rav Sholom also gave this man the address of the "man standing at the bimah."

This was too much. The first man came out and asked Rav Sholom: "What is the Rav doing to me? I am physically weak. How could I help extract the horse and wagon from the ditch?"

At this point, Rav Sholom turned to the man and said, "I do not understand you. You obviously lack the acumen necessary to help the man who had tax problems. You have no money; otherwise, you would have helped the father with his daughter's dowry. A talmid chacham, Torah scholar, you are not, for you could not determine the halachic status of the lung. Apparently, physical strength is also not one of your qualities, since you turned down the wagon driver. Let me see: no acumen; no money; no scholarship; no strength. Yet, you need my advice on how to deal with arrogance issues? Exactly what is it that you have to be arrogant about?"

Are there trees in it - or not? You shall strengthen yourselves and take from the fruit of the land. (13:20)

Rashi explains that the instructions of Moshe Rabbeinu to the meraglim, spies, to check out whether there were trees was not agricultural in nature. Man is likened to a tree; thus, Moshe was intimating that they determine if there was a righteous person living in the city whose merit could conceivably intercede on behalf of the citizenry. Rashi's statement is famous in its own right. I recently saw a homiletic rendering of this exegesis which has great practical application in contemplating Jewish life. The Belzer Rebbe, Horav Aharon, zl, was often likened to a Heavenly angel. His virtue and piety coupled with his asceticism elevated him to a realm rarely reached by a human being. When the Rebbe was niftar, passed on, his chassidim were left bereft of their mentor and address for every entreaty. He was the embodiment of tzidkus, righteousness, in this world. They could not imagine life without his guidance, so intense was their grief. Broken-hearted and sullen, they decided to solicit the sage advice of the Pressburger Rav, Horav Akiva Sofer, zl. Perhaps he could offer them solace and hearten them.

The Rav listened to them, and, being that it was the week of Parashas Shelach, he quoted the pasuk, Ha'yesh bah eitz im ayin, "Are there trees in it - or not?" Rashi teaches that the phrase, ha'yesh ba eitz, is a reference to an adam kasher, sincerely righteous man, who will be maigin, protect, the generation. "How does one discern if the individual is righteous?" the Rav

asked. "Im ayin - when he is no longer with us. No one lives forever. When the tzaddik passes from his earthly abode - then we view the attitude of his talmidim. If they are v'hischazaktem, strengthen one another, remain close and act with unity and harmony, this is a clear sign that their mentor was a true tzaddik."

Therefore, how are we to reconcile ourselves with some of the petty and not so petty discordant relationships that occur after a great mentor takes leave of the world? The fire of machlokes, dispute and controversy, is not prejudicial. It affects all segments of Jewish life, regardless if one is chassidic, litvish, yeshivish - or none of the above. Does this, chas v'shalom, reflect negatively on the personage of the mentor? Certainly not! The Belzer Rebbe's chassidim were so distraught concerning the loss of their holy Rebbe that they sought guidance whom to follow. Who could replace their esteemed leader? When the students, and even sons, lock their horns in dispute concerning who is to lead, who is to get the title, who receives greater eminence, the controversy is of a different nature. Those who are timid enough to follow are more concerned with the political situation than with grieving over their Rebbe who has just passed on. When a great leader dies who did not designate a successor for reasons unknown, a vacuum is created, a void which is ripe for the Satan to involve himself. It is called a machlokes l'shem Shomayim, controversy for the sake of Heaven. That is the name given to it by the Satan. In truth, it is nothing more than simple machlokes.

And how is the land - is it fertile or is it lean? Are there trees in it or not? You shall strengthen yourselves and take from the fruit of the land. (13:20)

Rashi comments that Moshe Rabbeinu's reference to a tree is actually an allusion to a tzaddik, righteous person. Moshe wanted to determine if the land possessed a righteous individual in whose merit the inhabitants would be spared. Two questions immediately present themselves: First, how were the spies to ascertain the true righteous nature of a person? Piety and virtue are not necessarily attributes that manifest themselves publicly. How often have we met individuals who overtly present themselves as virtuous and righteous, only to discover later that it was all a show, a sham cover-up of an individual whose insidious nature is cloaked in a raiment of piety? Second, what was the purpose of retrieving fruit from the land? If the "tree" is primarily a metaphor and allusion for a person, how will the fruits make a difference?

The Satmar Rebbe, zl, explains that the "fruits" determined the integrity of the adam kasher, righteous man, and his ability to protect the land's inhabitants. How does one determine the spiritual veracity of a tzaddik? Individuals portray themselves as righteous, virtuous, the epitome of piety. Yet, at times, we discover that it was all a ruse. They are actually quite distant from the image they present. Moshe taught the meraglim how to distinguish the real tzaddik from the chameleon: look at his "fruits," his sons and students. If those who follow in his footsteps are truly righteous, sincere in their piety and paragons of moral rectitude, then apparently the apple has not fallen far from the proverbial tree; the Rebbe is a tzaddik.

And My servant Kalev, because he possessed a different spirit, and followed Me fully. (14:24)

Hashem said that Kalev would be rewarded. What about Yehoshua? He was the other spy that stood in opposition to the slanderous reports against the Land. Furthermore, what is the meaning of Kalev's different spirit? How was he different from Yehoshua in this manner? K'motzei Shalal Rav quotes Horav Yehudah Kahana, zl, brother of the Ketzos HaChoshen who suggests an entirely new perspective on this pasuk. He cites the statement made by Chazal in the Talmud Berachos 34b, B'Makom she'baalei teshuvah omdim, ein tzaddik gamur yachol laamod. This essentially means that the baal teshuvah, penitent, ascends to a spiritual perch which eludes even the righteous person. In other words, one who has triumphed over the evil within him has achieved more and will be elevated beyond the status of he who has always been righteous.

Moshe Rabbeinu was Yehoshua's rebbe. He prayed for him, entreating Hashem not to allow Yehoshua to falter and fall in with the meraglim. Thus, from the outset, Yehoshua had it made. He was a tzaddik. His revered rebbe saw to his spiritual ascendancy. Kalev, however, was not as

fortunate. He felt pangs from within encouraging him to gravitate to the rest of the group, become part of the assembly. He overcame these feelings, breaking away from the majority of the group until, with a broken heart, he shed tears at the gravesite of the Patriarchs. He entreated the Patriarchs to intercede on his behalf, so that he not succumb to his yetzer hora, evil inclination. He emerged triumphant; he was a true baal teshuvah. Kalev achieved a spiritual status that even Yehoshua could not reach. Yehoshua was a tzaddik. Kalev was a baal teshuvah. This is the meaning of Kalev's ruach acheres, different spirit. The negativity that was coercing him to leave Moshe and join the other spies, to turn his back on all that was right and true, was the ruach acheres. As Hashem attests, however, va'yimale acharai, he followed Me fully. Kalev's penitential return earned him special reward.

I have always been bothered by this interpretation. Why would someone of Kalev's spiritual caliber gravitate to a group of insecure malcontents who went on to slander Eretz Yisrael, thereby creating a mutinous situation within the ranks of Klal Yisrael? While it is true that Yehoshua was Moshe's talmid muvhak, primary student, Kalev was an individual of exalted spiritual status. He was a tzaddik who was selected by Moshe to be part of this elite group. The others soured. He "gravitated" towards them. Why?

Perhaps the answer lies in his family pathology. Kalev ben Yefuneh was married to Moshe's older sister, Miriam HaNeviah. They had a son who became a Navi. His name was Chur. During the Golden Calf rebellion, Chur stood up to the mutineers and was killed for his act of courage! I wonder if this entire scenario did not play out in Kalev's mind. Maybe there was another way. Perhaps it was safer not to stand up to the wicked. Clearly, there was precedent not to. After all, look at what happened to "my son"! This is how the yetzer hora manipulates a person. I doubt if any of this occurred, but it does give us something to think about, concerning why someone of Kalev's spiritual caliber would have hesitated - if but for a moment.

It shall constitute Tzitzis for you, that you may see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem and perform them. (25:39)

Tzitzis are a vehicle for remembering the precepts of the holy Torah. Tzitzis b'gimatria, in its numerical equivalent, totals 600; the eight strings and five knots add up to 613, which is the number of mitzvos of the Torah. Yet, we do not see many people applying themselves to this number. One can wear Tzitzis - even wearing the fringes outside for all to see- yet still act in blatant disregard of the mitzvos. How are we to understand this anomaly?

The Maggid, zl, m'Dubno offers a parable which elucidates this matter. A poor man was once invited for dinner to the home of a wealthy man. Aside from the luxurious furnishings, the poor man was blown away by his host's chair. It was hand-carved mahogany with imported leather upholstery. What impressed him the most were the bells attached to the chair. Whenever the host needed something, he jingled a different bell and immediately a servant appeared to fulfill his master's wish. The poor man left the table that night satiated, but obsessed with a desire to one day also have such a marvelous chair.

The poor man scrounged, saved every penny that he could, until one day, he finally had the necessary money. He went to a carpenter and commissioned a chair replete with bells, exactly like the one owned by the wealthy man. Finally, the chair was ready for pick up. The poor man went to the carpentry shop and picked up the chair. He invited his circle of friends to watch the miraculous chair. His family sat around their simple table, eyes glued to the chair. His friends came and were eagerly awaiting to see this chair's wonderful properties.

The show was about to begin. The poor man was ready for the entr'e. He took the entr'e bell and jingled. Lo and behold, nothing happened. The poor man figured that it was a new bell that required "breaking in." Nonetheless, nothing happened. No servants, no food, just bizyanos, humiliation. The next day, the poor man returned the chair to the carpenter with his list of complaints. How dare he take his hard-earned money and cheat him!

The carpenter looked at the poor man incredulously, "Fool that you are. Do you think that it is the bells that produce the servants, the food and everything else? The bell is there only as a vehicle for summoning the correct person or to inform the kitchen that the master is ready for the next course."

A similar idea applies to Tzitzis. Yes, gazing on the Tzitzis is a *segulah*, special remedy, for remembering mitzvos. This *segulah*, however, functions only when the person studies Torah and is knowledgeable of the mitzvos. If a person knows nothing, because he learns nothing, he will have nothing to remember. It is like the poor man with the bells. He can summon all he wants. If there is no one on the other end listening for the summons, it is of no value.

Va'ani Tefillah

Ha'mechadesh b'tuvo b'chol yom tamid maasei Bereishis.

In His goodness He renews daily, perpetually, the work of Creation.

Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl, explains the concept of *maasei Bereishis*, the work of Creation, as referring to the creation of *hester*, concealment, with the ability to repair the circumstance by revealing the light from within the darkness. At the point of Creation, the world as we know it was one large, dark void, *tohu va'vohu*, "emptiness and nothingness." From this void, Hashem created *yeish mei'ain*, something from nothing. It was dark nothingness, and it suddenly became a universe, a vibrant, living, breathing world. Every day -- in fact, every moment-- there is created the opportunity for each and every one of us to reveal that hidden light and illuminate the world. This is the meaning of *chidush*, renewing, *maasei Bereishis*, representing an awesome kindness which Hashem grants us. Every single day, we wake up with renewed powers and special *siyata diShmaya*, Divine assistance, to transform these latent powers into creative ability. We require one thing: desire, willingness, motivation. We have the ability; we are granted the opportunity. For what are we waiting?

Sponsored by The Klahr Family (New York) In loving memory of our grandparents Phillip and Lillian Finger who were long-time friends and family of the Hebrew Academy. la'h R' Zalman Fishel ben Chanina Halevi a"h Maras Ettl Leah bas R' Yeshaya Halevi a"h t.n.t.v.h.

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Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column, Parshat Shelach

Sponsored in memory of Nathan and Louise Schwartz a"h

Caleb at the Crossroads

Imagine standing at a crossroads. We have all been there. We have all experienced moments in our life's journey when we had to make a crucial choice and decide whether to proceed along one road or along another. (Except for Yogi Berra, of course, who famously said, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it.")

We have all also experienced moments much further along in our journey, often many years later, when we reflected back upon our decision and wondered what would have been if we had pursued the alternative road.

Now imagine standing at a crossroads together with a close friend. Both of you face an identical choice, either this road or that. One of you chooses one road, and the other decides differently and selects the other road.

Each would have an intriguing tale to tell if, after many years, they had to meet and have the opportunity to compare the results of their different decisions.

Throughout my adult life, I have been fascinated by the experiences of survivors of the Holocaust. Whenever I have been fortunate enough to have the time to engage in conversation with one of them, I listened eagerly to their stories. When they permit, and they do not always, I ask them questions not just about their experiences, but about their choices and decisions.

I especially remember the discussions I had with one of them, let us call him Mr. Silver. He often would tell me about the hellish years he spent fleeing and fighting the Nazis in the forests of Poland. He had a companion then, let us call him Simon. Mr. Silver and Simon were boyhood friends

who together witnessed the murder of their parents, and who together managed to escape and join the partisans. Eventually, they were both caught and incarcerated in prisons and concentration camps.

In his story, Mr. Silver compared his attitude throughout those horrific times with the attitude of his friend Simon. "You know me," he would say, "and you know how I've always seen the bright side of things, the hopefulness of every situation, however dire." Indeed, I assured him that I could vouch for his consistent optimism.

"As much as I was an idealist," he would continue, "so was Simon a hard-core realist. He saw things as they were and dealt with them accordingly. He had no illusions whatsoever of hope."

Many years after my conversation with Mr. Silver, I finally met Simon and, together with him, was able to compare the life he led subsequent to the Holocaust, and subsequent to his crossroad decisions, with the life of Mr. Silver. Simon, after the war, chose not to marry and chose to live in a rather remote American community with little contact with other Jews. Mr. Silver married, raised a large family with numerous grandchildren, and was very much involved with Jewish causes, and eventually chose to live out his final years in the state of Israel.

Two individuals at the same crossroads, making different decisions, with starkly different life outcomes.

This week's Torah portion, *Shelach*, gives us the opportunity to witness individuals at the crossroads. Individuals who make radically different decisions and whose lives thereby played out very differently.

Let us focus, for example, on the personalities of Nachbi ben Vofsi, prince of the tribe of Naphtali, and of Caleb ben Yefuneh, prince of the tribe of Judah. Up until the dramatic moment described in this week's Parsha they led almost identical lives. They both experienced the Exodus from Egypt, the miraculous splitting of the Red Sea, the revelation at Mount Sinai, and opportunities for leadership of their respective tribes.

They were both assigned to spy out the land of Canaan, and they both crisscrossed the Promised Land and returned to give their reports. But then we read (Numbers 13:30-31), "Caleb... said, 'Let us by all means go up, as we shall gain possession of the land, and we shall surely overcome.' But the men who had gone up with him (one of whom was Nachbi) said, 'We cannot attack that people, for they are stronger than we.'"

Two individuals, at this very same crossroads in their lives; one full of hope and trust and confidence, and the other frightened, albeit very realistic.

How differently their lives played out from this point forward. Nachbi perished in ignominy in the desert while Caleb remained a prince, enhanced his reputation, and was granted his reward, the city of Hebron.

We all face crossroads in our lives; some of great significance, and some seemingly trivial. Our choices can be Nachbi-like – practical and safe, but ultimately cowardly. Or they can be informed by hope, trust, and confidence, and ultimately be brave and heroic.

The choice is ours, and so are the consequences for the rest of our lives.

Orthodox Union / www.ou.org

Britain's Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

The Fear of Freedom

The episode of the spies has rightly puzzled commentators throughout the centuries. How could they have got it so wrong? The land, they said, was as Moses had promised. It was indeed "flowing with milk and honey." But conquering it was impossible. "The people who live there are powerful, and the cities fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of the giant there ... We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are ... All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the titans there ... We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and so we seemed in theirs" (Num. 13: 28-33).

They were terrified of the inhabitants of the land, and entirely failed to realise that the inhabitants were terrified of them. Rahab, the prostitute in

Jericho, tells the spies sent by Joshua a generation later: "I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you ... our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below" (Joshua 2: 10-11).

The truth was the exact opposite of the spies' report. The inhabitants feared the Israelites more than the Israelites feared the inhabitants. We hear this at the start of the story of Bilaam: "Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, and Moab was terrified because there were so many people. Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites." Earlier the Israelites themselves had sung at the Red Sea: "The people of Canaan will melt away; terror and dread will fall on them" (Ex. 15: 15-16).

How then did the spies err so egregiously? Did they misinterpret what they saw? Did they lack faith in God? Did they – more likely – lack faith in themselves? Or was it simply, as Maimonides argues in *The Guide for the Perplexed*, that their fear was inevitable given their past history? They had spent most of their lives as slaves. Only recently had they acquired their freedom. They were not yet ready to fight a prolonged series of battles and establish themselves as a free people in their own land. That would take a new generation, born in freedom. Humans change, but not that quickly (*Guide III*, 32).

Most of the commentators assume that the spies were guilty of a failure of nerve, or faith, or both. It is hard to read the text otherwise. However, in the Hassidic literature – from the Baal Shem Tov to R. Yehudah Leib Alter of Ger (Sefat Emet) to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson – an entirely different line of interpretation emerged, reading the text against the grain to dramatic effect so that it remains relevant and powerful today. According to their interpretation, the spies were well-intentioned. They were, after all, "princes, chieftains, leaders" (Num. 13: 2-3). They did not doubt that Israel could win its battles with the inhabitants of the land. They did not fear failure; they feared success. Their concern was not physical but spiritual. They did not want to leave the wilderness. They did not want to become just another nation among the nations of the earth. They did not want to lose their unique relationship with God in the reverberating silence of the desert, far removed from civilization and its discontents.

Here they were close to God, closer than any generation before or since. He was a palpable presence in the Sanctuary in their midst, and in the clouds of glory that surrounded them. Here His people ate manna from heaven and water from the rock and experienced miracles daily. So long as they stayed in the desert under God's sheltering canopy, they did not need to plough the earth, plant seeds, gather harvests, defend a country, run an economy, maintain a welfare system, or shoulder any of the other earthly burdens and distractions that take peoples' minds away from the Divine.

Here, in no-man's-land, in liminal space, suspended between past and future, they were able to live with a simplicity and directness of encounter they could not hope to find once they had re-entered the gravitational pull of everyday life in the material world. Paradoxically, since a desert is normally the exact opposite of a garden, the wilderness was the Israelites' Eden. Here they were as close to God as were the first humans before their loss of innocence.

If that comparison is too discordant, recall that Hosea and Jeremiah both compared the wilderness to a honeymoon. Hosea said in the name of God: "I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her" (Hos. 2: 16), implying that in the future God would take the people back there to celebrate a second honeymoon. Jeremiah said in God's name, "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the wilderness, through a land not sown" (Jer. 2: 2). For both prophets, the wilderness years were the time of the first love between God and the Israelites. That is what the spies did not want to leave.

Clearly this interpretation is not the plain sense of the narrative, but we should not dismiss it on that account. It is, as it were, a psychoanalytical reading, an account of the unconscious mindset of the spies. They did not

want to let go of the intimacy and innocence of childhood and enter the adult world. Sometimes it is hard for parents to let go of their children; at others it is the other way round. But there must be a measure of separation if children are to become responsible adults. Ultimately the spies feared freedom and its responsibilities.

But that is what Torah is about. Judaism is not a religion of monastic retreat from the world. It is supremely a religion of engagement with the world. The Torah is a template for the construction of a society with all its gritty details: laws of warfare and welfare, harvests and livestock, loans and employer-employee relationships, the code of a nation in its land, part of the real world of politics and economics, yet somehow pointing to a better world where justice and compassion, love of the neighbour and stranger, are not remote ideals but part of the texture of everyday life. God chose Israel to make His presence visible in the world, and that means that Israel must live in the world.

To be sure, the Jewish people were not without their desert-dwellers and ascetics. The Qumran sect known to us from the Dead Sea Scrolls was such a group. The Talmud speaks of R. Shimon bar Yochai in similar terms. Having lived for thirteen years in a cave, he could not bear to see people engaged in such earthly pursuits as ploughing a field. Maimonides speaks of people who live as hermits in the desert to escape the corruptions of society (*Laws of ethical character*, 6: 1; *Eight Chapters*, ch. 4). But these were the exceptions, not the rule. This is not the destiny of Israel, to live outside time and space in ashrams or monasteries as the world's recluses. Far from being the supreme height of faith, such a fear of freedom and its responsibilities is – according to both the Gerer and Lubavitcher Rebbe – the sin of the spies.

There is a voice within the tradition, most famously identified with R. Shimon bar Yochai, that regards engagement with the world as fundamentally incompatible with the heights of spirituality. But the mainstream held otherwise. "Torah study without an occupation will in the end fail and lead to sin" (*Avot* 2: 2). "One who makes his mind up to study Torah and not to work but to live on charity, profanes the name of God, brings the Torah into contempt, extinguishes the light of religion, brings evil upon himself, and deprives himself of life hereafter" (Maimonides, *Laws of Torah Study* 3:10).

The spies did not want to contaminate Judaism by bringing it into contact with the real world. They sought the eternal childhood of God's protection and the endless honeymoon of His all-embracing love. There is something noble about this desire, but also something profoundly irresponsible that demoralised the people and provoked God's anger. For the Jewish project – the Torah as the constitution of the Jewish nation under the sovereignty of God – is about building a society in the land of Israel that so honours human dignity and freedom that it will one day lead the world to say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (*Deut.* 4: 6).

The Jewish task is not to fear the real world but to enter and transform it. That is what the spies did not understand. Do we – Jews of faith – understand it even now?

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Sh'lach

One Can Recognize His Own Greatness Without Being Arrogant

The final statement the Meraglim [Spies] made concerning their report regarding what they saw in the Land of Israel was: "There we saw the Nephillim, the sons of a giant from among the Nephillim; we in our eyes like grasshoppers; and so too were we in their eyes." [*Bamidbar* 13:33] We have commented in past years – how did the spies know how they looked to the Canaanites? They were, after all, not mind readers. The answer we have given is that if one perceives himself as a grasshopper then that will be how others perceive him as well! To put it colloquially, "if you think you are a shmoteh [rag], then that is how others will look at you as well."

This is an important lesson in life. We must have a certain level of confidence in who we are. No one should make the mistake to think (as some people do) that if I think I am not a grasshopper then I am being haughty. This is not a matter of arrogance. The definition of modesty is not

to go around saying "I am nothing. I know nothing. I am a zero." The definition of appropriate modesty is to recognize who I am and what talents I have, but not to be proud about it because I realize that it is all a gift from the Master of the World.

If a person has a beautiful voice and they ask him to daven as the Shlich Tzibur, he should not say "I cannot carry a tune." That would be patently untrue. But when he gets up to daven he should not think that he is deserving of great honor because he can sing so beautifully. The ability to sing is a gift from G-d and that is true of all the human abilities that a person may possess. We are charged to use the gifts G-d gives us appropriately in His service.

Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, was the picture of humility. He was an extremely humble person. I am told that he was once getting into a car on the Lower East Side and someone on the street called out in a loud voice "Moshe!" (to someone else entirely), but the Gadol Hador assumed it was he who was being addressed and calmly asked "What can I do for you?" And yet the same Rav Moshe Feinstein was once at a wedding and a young man approached him and asked him a question to which Rav Moshe gave him an answer. The young man raised his voice and asked a question on the answer Rav Moshe gave him and again received another answer from Rav Moshe. This continued several more rounds with the young man raising his voice higher and higher with each successive exchange. Until, finally Rav Moshe Feinstein took him by the arm, led him aside and said to him, "Young man, I don't believe you understand who you are talking to!" Meaning, I am Rav Moshe Feinstein and you don't talk to me like that.

What about the humble Rav Moshe Feinstein on the Lower East Side who responded to someone who yelled out "Moshe"? This is not a contradiction. Rav Moshe Feinstein knew who he was.

I recently heard another story where a young man asked Rav Moshe a question at a wedding and Rav Moshe gave him an answer. The young man asked, "Does the Rosh Yeshiva know that the Pri Megadim rules just the opposite?" To which Rav Moshe answered, "Yes. I have learned that Pri Megadim 296 times." How could he talk like that if he was so modest? The same answer: He knew who he was.

I heard a story many years ago regarding the Chasam Sofer. I have never verified it. There was a certain question regarding an Agunah [woman whose husband's death was doubtful] that became a cause célèbre and involved great Rabbinic opinions on both sides of the issue. The matter came to the Chasam Sofer. He thought about it, took out his pen and in a half hour wrote a responsa to permit the woman to remarry. They asked him, how he could be so bold and confident when it was such a controversial matter. He answered "I have the pen of authority in these matters in this generation." In other words, he could say about himself that he was the final word, and what he said about the matter was the definitive psak halacha. Finished.

These people were tremendously humble people but they knew who they were and they knew what the psak was and they were not afraid to exercise their authority. This is not haughtiness.

The Custom of Praising A Choson At A Sheva Brochos

I saw a Sefer by a Rav Eliyahu Mann who records vignettes from the life of Rav Chaim Kanievsky. He writes that the widespread custom is that at a Sheva Brochos celebrating a couple's recent marriage, one who is asked to give a Dvar Torah speaks about the praises of the Choson. Sometimes the speaker goes a bit overboard and makes the groom sound like the next Chasam Sofer, which in most cases he is not. Our Sages say that a Choson is comparable to a King. Just as it is customary to say praises about a King, so too it is customary to say praises about a Choson. The purpose of this is that a Choson is now starting his married life. It is important for him to realize who he is and what potential he has so that he recognizes who he can become. For this reason, it is appropriate to tell the Choson "You are gifted with many talents. It is your obligation to use them."

The story of Rabbi Akiva is well known: When he returned home with his 24,000 students after having been separated from his wife Rachel for 24 years, his wife tried to approach him through the crowd and the students – not knowing who she was -- tried to shoo her away. He told them "Leave

her, for what's mine and what's yours belongs to her." The simple interpretation of this Gemara is that what Rabbi Akiva was saying was that what he accomplished and what his students accomplished belongs to his wife is because she let him learn undisturbed for 24 years.

However, Rav Mann quotes a novel interpretation: Rachel, the daughter of Kalba Savua – the wealthiest man in town – could have married anyone she wanted. She could have had the "best guy in any Yeshiva". She took Akiva ben Yosef the shepherd, who at that stage in his life was an ignoramus. She believed in him and that gave him the confidence to become the great Rabbi Akiva. It is for that reason that he credited her for all that he had accomplished and all his students had accomplished. It is important to know that someone believes in you and thinks highly of you as a source of motivation to encourage oneself to live up to those expectations. This is the source of the custom of praising a Choson at the Sheva Brochos.

The Wood Chopper's Motivation Was Good, But...

At the end of the Parsha, the Torah tells us the incident of the "mekoshesh eitzim" [the cutter/collector of wood on Shabbos]. There is a Talmudic dispute exactly what forbidden labor was involved, but the bottom line is that this individual desecrated the Shabbos. Moshe Rabbeinu did not know yet what the proper punishment was for Shabbos desecration. He inquired of the Almighty and was told the punishment was stoning and this punishment was carried out.

It is the opinion of Rabbi Akiva [Shabbos 96b] that this "wood cutter" was none other than Tzelafchad, whose 5 daughters later inquired of Moshe Rabbeinu concerning their rights to their father's inheritance.

The Medrash states that the mekoshesh eitzim carried out his act "for the sake of Heaven". He desecrated the Shabbos "for the best of reasons". His purpose, according to the Medrash, was to demonstrate the severity of Shabbos desecration. He felt he needed to dramatically demonstrate to the nation that laboring on Shabbos was a capital offense. This same idea is brought in the Targum of Yonasan ben Uziel.

Assuming the interpretation of Rabbi Akiva and the Targum Yonasan ben Uziel – we may ask: was Tzelafchad righteous or wicked? There are several proofs that may be brought that Tzelafchad was indeed a tzaddik [righteous]. [Shabbos 96b; Bava Basra 118b]

Although the Talmud does call Tzelafchad righteous for what he did, Tosfos writes in Shabbos that had the Jews kept that second Shabbos (which was violated by the wood chopper), no nation would have ever been able to rule over them. Klal Yisrael would have been unconquerable. There would not have been a "Churbun Bayis Rishon" [Destruction of the first Bais HaMikdash], a "Churbun Bayis Shayni" [Destruction of the Second Bays HaMikdash], a Babylonia exile, a Roman exile, an Inquisition, a Tach v'Tat, or a Holocaust. But because of this action our future was infinitely worse.

What is the lesson? Here is a person who intended to act for the sake of Heaven. In fact, he was a righteous person. But look what he caused! He caused all the destruction we have known as the Jewish people. Rav Simcha Zissel Brodie says the lesson is that one is never allowed to take the law into one's own hands. One should follow the Shulchan Aruch and not say that there is a greater good or a higher purpose or that the "ends justify the means". This is exactly what the woodchopper did. He claimed that the ends – to get the message of the severity of Chilul Shabbos across – justified the means of Chilul Shabbos. But this is not the way Judaism works! One is not allowed to play fast and loose with the law, even for the best of reasons.

The Gemara [Shabbos 150b] speaks of a certain pious person who noticed a breach in his fence on Shabbos. When he saw what happened, he made plans to fix it immediately because of the great financial loss the breach would cause him. A few moments later, he remembered that it was Shabbos and decided to leave the breach open. The Talmud relates that a miracle occurred and a fast growing bush (Tzelaf tree) appeared in the breach and restored the protection of his property so that he suffered no loss.

The Ben Yehoyada writes in the name of the Ari z"l that this "certain pious individual" was a Gilgul of Tzelafchad. The soul of Tzelafchad, who made an error in desecrating the Shabbas with the incident of the wood chopping, was given the opportunity to come back to earth in another body and correct the mistake he had once made. When he corrected the error by abstaining from repairing the fence, it was most appropriate that the vegetation which (miraculously) grew there was named Tzef-chad (one Tzelaf tree).

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Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky
The TorahWeb Foundation
The Lesson of the Unique Fruit

Immediately following the events of the cheit hameraglim, the Jewish people are given the halachos that govern the offering of the menachos and nesachim (flour and wine offerings that accompany various korbanos). At first glance, the connection between these aspects of korbanos and the previous tragic story of the meraglim seems very difficult to identify. The connection can be found, however, in a seemingly trivial detail in the report of the meraglim which is fundamental to understanding their failure. The fruit of Eretz Yisroel is greatly emphasized throughout the meraglim story. Moshe Rabbeinu specifically instructs the meraglim to return with fruit. The Torah even relates that their trip coincided with the grape harvest. Which fruit the meraglim harvest and how they bring it back to be displayed is described in great detail. While Moshe Rabbeinu's instructions to ascertain the strength of the inhabitants of the land and the types of cities they live in are obvious concerns for an invading army, why the interest in the fruit of the land? Will the presence or absence of any fruit alter the plan to enter and conquer the land?!

Chazal (Berachos 41b) remarkably comment that each of the shiv'as haminim that Eretz Yisroel is blessed with corresponds to a specific halachic measurement (the olive, for example, provides the halachic measurement that governs eating, i.e. the kezayis.) What is the meaning of Chazal's statement? When the Torah describes the blessings of the produce of Eretz Yisroel, isn't it obviously referring to physical benefits of the fruit?

The Rambam in Hilchos Teshuva questions how to understand the meaning of the various physical blessings the Torah promises us for observing the mitzvos. Chazal state "Sechar mitzvah b'hai alma leika - reward for mitzvos is not granted in this world." If so, why does the Torah speak about rain and successful crops resulting from mitzvah observance? The Rambam explains that these blessings are not rewards for mitzvah observance but rather provided as means without which we could not continue our observance. The purpose of the blessings is not to enable us to enjoy a delicacy but to provide us with our physical needs and thereby free us to pursue spiritual goals. The produce of Eretz Yisroel should inspire us to reach greater heights in avodas Hashem- even the size of the fruit teaches us halachic lessons!

Moshe Rabbeinu instructs the meraglim to not merely look at the fruit of the land to ascertain its physical qualities but to contemplate its message. If Hashem blessed the land with extraordinarily large fruit there is nothing to fear. On the contrary - this unique harvest that awaits the Jewish people will help them attain their goals of avodas Hashem in Eretz Yisroel without being overly distracted by mundane pursuits.

Tragically, the meraglim saw in the bounty of Eretz Yisroel the opposite message. They saw it as a curse of Hashem representing the impossible task that presented itself. The enormous size of the grapes reinforced their fear of the giants who dwelled in the land. The meraglim, and the entire Jewish people, entirely missed the secret of the fruit, and saw it only as another indication of the physical threat that loomed in front of them.

Following the tragic outcome of the meraglim episode, the very first mitzvah recorded in the Torah addresses the produce of Eretz Yisroel. Bnai Yisroel will enter Eretz Yisroel and offer korbanos which will be

accompanied by each of the three types of produce with which Hashem blesses the land. "Vehaya im tishme'uh ... v'asafta deganecha v'tirosh'cha v'yitzharecha - upon listening to my mitzvos you will gather your grain, wine, and olive oil." Flour mixed with oil, together with wine poured on the mizbeach, symbolizes the use of these three gifts of the land for avodas Hashem, thus reaffirming our understanding of their role as means to facilitate that avodah. May we merit to once again offer the korbanos as well as the physical and spiritual gifts of Eretz Yisroel.

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Rav Kook List
Rav Kook on the Torah Portion
Shelach: The Lesson of Shiloh

A scholar, recently arrived from America, was deeply disturbed. He went to visit Rav Kook, unburdening his severe disappointment about the state of religious observance in Eretz Yisrael. He was shocked by the sight of irreligious Jews desecrating the Sabbath, eating forbidden foods, and rebelling against Jewish traditions in the Holy Land. How could he raise his children in such an environment? He was so upset, that he contemplated returning to America.

Ascending to Shiloh

Rav Kook replied to him:

Surely you remember the story from the beginning of the book of Samuel, a story which you studied as a child. The book relates how Elkanah, the father of the prophet Samuel,

"would ascend each year from his town, to prostrate himself and bring offerings to God at Shiloh. And there, Eli's two sons Hophni and Phinhas, served as kohanim to God" (I Sam. 1:3).

It is curious that the verse mentions the High Priest's sons, Hophni and Phinhas. What is their connection to Elkanah's yearly pilgrimage to Shiloh?

The Midrash teaches that Elkanah didn't just travel to Shiloh. Elkanah wanted to encourage others to fulfill the mitzvah of aliyah la-regel, of visiting the central sanctuary on the holidays. In order to publicize the mitzvah and convince others to join him, each year Elkanah would take to a different route to Shiloh.

One might ask: What happened that the mitzvah of aliyah la-regel - a mitzvah mentioned several times in the Torah - became so lax in his generation, so that Elkanah felt it was necessary to bolster its observance?

The second question answers the first question. Hophni and Phinhas are described as corrupt individuals who were punished severely for their actions in the Shiloh sanctuary. The fact that they served as kohanim was the reason that many chose not to visit Shiloh. If kohanim like Hophni and Phinhas serve in the Tabernacle, people reasoned, it is preferable not to travel there and be exposed such scandalous behavior.

Elkanah, however, saw the matter differently. He told the people that, despite the corruption and improper behavior, we should not sever our connection to this holy place. We may not abandon God's mitzvah. Rather, it is our duty to ascend to Shiloh and strengthen the holiness of the place.

It was due to his noble efforts that Elkanah was rewarded with a son who was a great prophet and leader.

Strengthening Holiness in the Land

At this point Rav Kook turned to his guest:

We learn from here an important lesson regarding Eretz Yisrael. The fact that there are irreligious Jews living here should not be a reason for us to abandon the mitzvah of dwelling in the Land of Israel. And certainly one should not consider leaving the country. Every individual who lives in Eretz Yisrael and observes Torah and mitzvot adds greater holiness to the Land.

Those who dwell in Eretz Yisrael in holiness, Rav Kook assured the scholar, will merit children about whom they will be able to say with pride

- like Hannah, Samuel's mother - "It was for this child that I prayed" (Sam. 1:27).
(Adapted from Chayei HaRe'iyah by Rabbi Moshe Zvi Neriah, pp. 211-212)
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Weekly Halacha by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Trees, Plants and Flowers on Shabbos

Question: What are the Shabbos restrictions in regard to trees?

Discussion: It is Biblically prohibited to tear a branch or a leaf from a tree on Shabbos—Reaping. To protect us from inadvertently doing so, the Rabbis erected numerous “fences,” precautionary measures, which restrict our access to trees. It is, therefore, rabbinically forbidden on Shabbos and Yom Tov to:

- * Shake a tree. One may touch a tree if it will not shake.¹
- * Climb, sit, or lean heavily [e.g., to tie one's shoes] on a tree.² Sitting on a dead tree stump is permitted by some poskim³ and prohibited by others.⁴
- * Swing from a branch or from an object directly connected to a tree. Thus a swing or a hammock which is connected to a tree may not be used on Shabbos.⁵ Even a swing which is connected to a chain and the chain, in turn, is connected to a ring which is attached to the tree is still forbidden to be used.⁶ If, however, poles are connected to two trees and a swing or hammock is attached to the poles, they may be used, provided that the trees are sturdy and will not move or bend.
- * To place or hang an object [e.g., a jacket, a sefer] on a tree.
- * To remove an object from a tree. Even before Shabbos, it is prohibited to place [or leave] items on a tree that are usually used on Shabbos, since one could easily forget and remove them from the tree on Shabbos.⁷
- * To smell a growing, edible fruit while it is attached to a tree.⁸ It is even forbidden to eat—on Shabbos—a fruit that has fallen off the tree on Shabbos. It is permitted, however, to eat it immediately after Shabbos.⁹
- * Ride an animal on Shabbos. This is forbidden since it is easy for a rider to forget and pull a branch off a tree while riding.¹⁰ As an extension of this edict, the Rabbis declared all animals to be muktzeh.¹¹

All trees—whether fruit bearing or barren, live or dead—are included in these rabbinical decrees.¹² But the restrictions apply only to the part of the tree which is higher than ten inches from the ground.¹³ Trees and bushes which do not grow to a height of ten inches are not restricted in any way.¹⁴

Question: What are the Shabbos restrictions in regard to plants and flowerpots?

Discussion: In practical halachic terms all potted plants—both perforated or not,¹⁵ both indoors and outdoors¹⁶—are considered to be “nourished” from the ground and “connected” to it.¹⁷ Consequently, “uprooting” and moving any potted plant from one “connected” place to another, e.g., from the floor to the table, from the table to the porch, or from one side of the yard to another, may be a possible violation of the Labors of Reaping and/or Sowing and should be entirely avoided. Moving a potted plant within the same “connection” location without “uprooting” it, e.g., dragging a plant from one part of the table to another or from one part of the yard to another, is permitted by some poskim but questioned by others,¹⁸ and it is appropriate to be stringent in this matter, whenever possible.¹⁹ It is permissible, however, to smell, touch and even bend the stem or the leaves, provided that they are soft and flexible and would not break upon contact.²⁰

It is strictly forbidden to move a plant or a flowerpot from a shady area to a sunny area so that exposure to the sun's rays will aid its growth. It is also prohibited to open a window or to pull up a shade with the specific intention of allowing the sun or air to aid a plant's growth. Conversely, if sunlight or fresh air is detrimental to a plant, it would be prohibited to shut them out, since shutting them out promotes the plant's growth.²¹

Question: What are the Shabbos restrictions in regard to flowers?

Discussion: Flowers, while still connected to the ground, may be smelled and touched, provided that their stems are soft and do not normally become brittle.²²

Flowers in a vase may be moved on Shabbos.²³ They may not, however, be moved from a shady area to a sunny area to promote blossoming. If the buds have not fully bloomed, the vase may be moved but just slightly, since the movement of the water hastens the opening of the buds.²⁴

One may remove flowers from a vase full of water, as long as they have not sprouted roots in the water.²⁵ Once removed, they may not be put back in the water if that will cause further blossoming.

Water may not be added to a flower vase on Shabbos.²⁶ On Yom Tov, however, a small amount of water may be added but not changed.²⁷

Flowers should be placed in water before Shabbos. In case they were not, they may not be placed in water on Shabbos if the buds have not blossomed fully. If the buds are completely opened, however, some poskim permit placing them in water on Shabbos while others do not.²⁸

One may not gather flowers or create an arrangement and place it in a vase on Shabbos, even if the vase contains no water.²⁹

Question: What are the Shabbos restrictions in regard to grass?

Discussion: Touching, moving, walking, running, or lying on grass is permissible.³⁰ Some poskim prohibit running in high grass if it would definitely result in some grass being uprooted,³¹ while other poskim are not concerned about this issue.³²

Grass which was uprooted on Shabbos and gets stuck on one's shoes is considered muktzeh, since it was attached to the earth when Shabbos began. One may remove it only in an indirect manner.³³

- 1 Rama, O.C. 336:13.
- 2 O.C. 336:1; 336:13 and Beir Halachah, s.v. u'mutar.
- 3 Aruch ha-Shulchan 336:18.
- 4 Ohr l'Tziyon 2:47-29. Mishnah Berurah's position on this matter is not clear.
- 5 O.C. 336:13.
- 6 Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, vol. 1, pg. 62).
- 7 Mishnah Berurah 336:12 based on O.C. 277:4 and 514:6. [See explanation by Rav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 26, note 55. See also a more lenient opinion in Tehilah l'David 277:7.]
- 8 O.C. 336:10.
- 9 O.C. 322:3.
- 10 O.C. 305:18.
- 11 O.C. 308:39. See The Daily Halachah Discussion, pg. 115, for more information on this issue.
- 12 Mishnah Berurah 336:1. There are some poskim who are lenient in the case of a tree which has completely dried out; see Mishnah Berurah and Aruch ha-Shulchan 336:13.
- 13 Mishnah Berurah 336:21.
- 14 O.C. 336:2. However, if the trees or bushes which are less than ten inches high are fruit-bearing, some poskim prohibit those as well; Mishnah Berurah 336:19.
- 15 O.C. 336:8. Even a non-perforated pot is nourished “a bit” from the ground; Mishnah Berurah 336:43. [Possibly, this is only so with wood or ceramic pots; metal or glass non-perforated pots do not allow for nourishment from the ground; Chazon Ish, Orlah 32; Bris Olam, pg. 31. Contemporary poskim disagree whether plastic is like wood or like glass; Orchos Shabbos 18:19.]
- 16 See Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73 and Shevet ha-Levi 6:167; 7:184-1. Some poskim hold that this does not apply to a home's upper floors; see Shulchan Shelomo 336:8 and Bris Olam, pg. 31.
- 17 An additional concern, which applies even to non-perforated pots, are the leaves which protrude over the side of the pot; see Chayei Adam 12:2.
- 18 See the various views in Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 336:38, Minchas Shabbos 80:194, Tehilah l'David 336:6, Bris Olam, pg. 32, Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 26, note 6 and Orchos Shabbos 19:141.
- 19 Rav M. Feinstein (quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, pg. 64); Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73).
- 20 Mishnah Berurah 336:48.
- 21 Entire paragraph is based on the rulings of the Chazon Ish, Shevi's 22:1; Shv'as ha-Shabbos, Zore'a 10; Har Tzvi, O.C. 211; Minchas Shelomo 1:10-8; 2:26-1; Shevet ha-Levi 4:36.

- 22 Mishnah Berurah 336:48.
 23 Rav M. Feinstein, quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, pg. 64.
 24 Rav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73; Bris Olam, pg. 32.
 25 Rav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 26:26.
 26 Mishnah Berurah 336:54.
 27 O.C. 654:1 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 654:2; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 26:26.
 28 See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 336:48; Shulchan Shelomo 336:12; Yechaveh Da'as 2:53; Chut Shani, Shabbos, vol. 1, 10-3.
 29 Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:73.
 30 O.C. 336:3; 312:6.
 31 Mishnah Berurah 336:25 and Beur Halachah, s.v. mutar.
 32 Aruch ha-Shulchan 336:21. See Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 26, note 69.
 33 Mishnah Berurah 336:24.

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Making a Beracha before Separating Challah By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

This week's parsha includes the mitzvah of taking challah—and I therefore bring you:

Question #1: Separate but Equal

Mrs. Planahead* calls with the following question:

"If I knead a large batch of dough and then freeze some of it for future weeks, do I recite a beracha when I separate the challah portion?"

Question #2: Challah or Cokosh?

Rebbitzen Shoko* asks:

"I use about 12-15 cups of flour for my weekly challo. If I make a bigger dough, intending to use the extra to make cokosh, do I now recite a beracha upon separating the challah?"

Question #3: Some Good Guests

Tovah Orachas* calls with the following shaylah:

"We are a group of girls who each has been invited to a different household for Shabbos. We are baking challah together, each intending to bring some to our respective hosts. Do we recite a beracha when we separate challah?"

Introduction:

Before we begin, it is important to note that the word challah was used above to mean two completely different things – the bread we serve on Shabbos and Yom Tov, and the consecrated portion that we separate from dough. To avoid confusion, whenever I use the term "challah" for the rest of the article, I will use it only to mean the consecrated portion.

Dividing the Dough

The three questions I quoted above all involve the following issue: One is required to separate challah only when one makes dough from a certain minimum quantity of flour. Even when one mixes this amount of flour, one may not be required to separate challah because of a halachic concept called daato lechalka, literally, his intent is to divide the dough. Exactly what this concept means is somewhat uncertain. In order to answer the questions that were asked above, we will need to understand and define the concept of daato lechalka. But first, let us review the basics.

Separating challah fulfills a mitzvah, and we recite a beracha prior to separating challah just as we do before performing most mitzvos (see Pesachim 7b). However, we only recite a beracha when it is certain that we are required to fulfill a mitzvah. When it is uncertain that we are fulfilling a mitzvah, we carry out the mitzvah without reciting a beracha. Therefore, it becomes important to know whether one is definitely required to perform a mitzvah, in which case we recite a beracha, or whether we perform the

mitzvah because it is uncertain (safek) whether it is required, in which case we refrain from reciting a beracha.

The Mitzvah

This week's reading, Parshas Shlach, teaches the mitzvah of separating challah.

The first of your kneading bowls is challah; you should make it holy just as you consecrate part of your grain (Bamidbar 15:20).

Small Dough

The halacha is derived from this verse that there is no mitzvah to separate challah if one is kneading only a small amount of dough. This is based on the following: When the Torah required separating challah from "your kneading bowls," to whom was the Torah speaking? Obviously, the generation living in the Desert, who were eating man. The Torah (Shemos 16:32) teaches that each individual gathered one omer of man every day. Since the kneading bowl used by the Jews in the Desert contained one omer, we know that this is the quantity of dough that the Torah is describing. This amount is called the shiur challah, literally, the smallest quantity of dough from which one is obligated to separate challah.

How much "Dough" do you Bring Home?

The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 324:1) rules that an omer contains the volume of 43.2 eggs. However, today we are uncertain how much dough this means since eggs vary tremendously in size. For our purposes, I am suggesting a ballpark figure. We will assume that less than eight cups of flour does not require separating challah, because the batch is too small to fulfill the mitzvah. On the other hand, one recites the beracha only when one is certain that the dough is large enough to fulfill the mitzvah. Therefore, one should not recite a beracha unless one uses at least five pounds of flour. Concerning an amount in between eight cups and five pounds, it is uncertain whether one is required to separate challah or not, and, therefore, we separate challah because it might be required, but without a beracha, because if it is not required, the beracha would be levatalah, in vain.

Cups or Pounds?

Of course, anyone with a scientific background will immediately note that I made a serious error! I gave the first measurement in cups, which is a measure of volume, and the second measurement in pounds, which is a measure of weight! Surely, Kaganoff knows that comparing measures of volume to those of weight is worse than comparing apples to oranges!

The answer is very simple. In factories and bakeries, where accuracy is very important, ingredients are usually weighed. Although cups are a less accurate measure than pounds, they are more commonly used in a household setting. There is a much better chance that a woman who is told to separate challah when she uses eight cups of flour will remember what to do. On the other hand, a beracha requires a more accurate measure, and most poskim require a beracha over dough made from five pounds of flour, although many poskim rule that one should recite a beracha even if using less. Therefore, each individual should ask his or her posek the exact amount for both of these laws, that is, for what minimum amount of dough should one separate challah, and for what minimum amount of dough should one recite a beracha on the separating of the challah.

Kneading for Shabbos

The mitzvah of kavod Shabbos includes kneading and baking bread especially for Shabbos. In addition, there is a venerable minhag to knead enough to fulfill the mitzvah of separating challah (Rama, Orach Chayim 242 and Biur Halacha ad loc.). The amount of bread required for a beracha is usually more than the amount of bread baked in the average contemporary household for Shabbos. Therefore, the question is raised: Is it better to bake a large amount one week and freeze half the loaves for the next week, or to bake smaller amounts each week, and not recite a beracha?

The contemporary poskim with whom I have discussed this question all ruled that it is preferable to bake fresh every week for Shabbos rather than baking a double-batch one week and freezing half for the next week.

A Third Approach

In order to have your bread and make a beracha on it, some women decide to do the following: They knead and roll out a large batch of dough, taking challah with a beracha, and then freeze some of the unbaked loaves and bake them the following week. Since the bread tastes freshly baked, this fulfills the mitzvah of kavod Shabbos.

However, this method presents a different question: Does a woman who uses five pounds of flour which she will not bake at one time recite a beracha prior to separating the challah portion? This may have been Mrs. Planahead's question: "If I knead a large batch of dough and then freeze some of it for future weeks, do I recite a beracha when I separate the challah portion?"

Divide and Exempt

I mentioned above the halachic principle called *daato lechalka*, the intention of the person mixing the dough is to divide it, which exempts the dough from the requirement to separate challah. The source of this principle is a *Beraisa* (a teaching dating from the era of the Mishnah), quoted by the Talmud Yerushalmi (Challah 1:5). The actual words of the *Beraisa* are somewhat ambiguous:

One who makes his dough intending to divide it is absolved from the requirement of separating challah.

A simple reading of this passage implies that dividing dough into small parts exempts it from the mitzvah of challah. This interpretation would lead to the following conclusion: The only time one is required to consecrate a challah portion is when preparing a large batch of dough to bake into one huge loaf of bread, such as when one bakes a *bris* challah. Separating challah when one intends to form a large dough into small loaves is not required, and reciting a beracha prior to doing so is a beracha *levatalah*.

This interpretation runs contrary to common practice. For centuries, people have made large batches of dough, separated challah with a beracha, and then divided the large batch into appropriately-sized loaves. Are these thousands of Jews in error, and were reciting berachos in vain? (Shenos Eliyahu, Challah 1:7)

There is other proof that this approach cannot be the correct interpretation of the *Beraisa*. The Mishnah (Challah 1:7) states that a professional baker who kneaded a large dough intending to sell it in small quantities as sourdough is obligated to separate challah. Thus, we see that intending to divide the dough does not absolve the responsibility of separating challah. So what then does the *Beraisa* mean?

The Yerushalmi itself answers that, although the baker intends to divide the dough, he is dependent on the arrival of customers. How we explain this enigmatic answer is the crux of a dispute among the various halachic opinions. I will provide four approaches to answer this question, and then explain the halachic differences that thereby result.

(1) Does he Plan to Bake it at one Time?

One approach contends that the only time one must separate challah is when one mixes a big batch of dough intending to bake it himself at one time. However, one who plans to divide a large quantity of dough into batches, each smaller than the *shiur* challah, and distribute the batches to different people to bake separately, has no requirement to separate challah. Similarly, one who bakes all the dough himself but not all at the same time is absolved from separating challah (*Divrei Chamudos*, *Hilchos Challah* #20). The baker that the Mishnah requires to separate challah must do so because if no customers show up, he will bake it himself in one batch. Thus, although the baker intends to divide the dough and sell it as small batches, the awareness that he may bake the entire dough at one time obligates him in challah. Since his plan to divide and sell the dough is dependent on factors beyond his control, he is still required to separate challah. This approach accepts that dividing dough into small loaves to

bake at one time does not absolve the requirement to separate challah. (Baking one batch after another is still considered "at one time" and would require separating challah.)

Although this approach is a minority opinion, some later authorities rule that one should not recite a beracha when separating challah in this situation. These later authorities conclude that someone kneading a large dough, intending not to bake it at one time, does not recite a beracha upon separating challah. This means that someone who freezes dough for later baking should not recite a beracha upon separating challah unless she expects to bake a five-pound batch at one time.

(2) Who Owns the Dough?

A second approach explains that *daato lechalka* means that one intends to divide the dough among different owners (*Gr'a*, *Yoreh Deah* 326:7; *Shenos Eliyahu*, *Challah* 1:7). If several people mix a dough that they then intend to split up, there is no obligation to separate challah, unless one of the individuals keeps enough to be obligated in challah. Following this approach, *Tovah Orachas* and her friends, who afterwards will divide up the challah among themselves, would not be required to separate challah, since the dough is not owned in common. However, Mrs. Planahead and *Rebbitzin Shoko* are both obligated in challah, and according to this approach they should recite a beracha before separating it.

Nevertheless, this approach should cause us to raise the following question: If *daato lechalka* means that one intends to divide the dough among different owners, why is a Jewish-owned bakery ever responsible to separate challah? After all, all the bread is baked to be sold to its customers?

The answer is that although the owner intends to sell all the bread, since the possibility exists that no customers will show, the bakery could end up keeping all the bread itself, and this potential requires it to separate challah. According to this approach, this is exactly what the Yerushalmi means.

(3) Will I be Unable Later to Combine the Different Doughs?

A third approach, that of the *Chazon Ish*, understands that *daato lechalka* means that one intends to add ingredients to the different parts of the dough or somehow prepare them for different purposes in a way that one will afterwards not want to combine them (*Chazon Ish*, *Likutim* at end of *Zeraim*, 2:3). For example, one intends to add a spice to one batch and not to another, and one would be careful afterwards to keep the two types of bread separate. In these cases, even though the dough started as one batch, the intention to divide it for different uses that one would subsequently be careful not to combine makes the dough into separate batches that are each small enough to be exempt from challah.

Rebbitzin Shoko's case above is a classic example. She is making a big batch of dough, intending to use some of it for bread and part of it for *cokosh*. Once the chocolate is added to the *cokosh* dough, one will be careful to keep the two types of dough separate. Therefore, these doughs do not combine to create a requirement to separate challah.

However, according to this opinion, dividing a dough to bake at different times does not remove the obligation to separate challah.

How do we paskin?

Do we follow this last opinion? Many late authorities conclude that in this circumstance one should separate challah without reciting a beracha.

(4) Pasta and Partners

A fourth approach to explaining the above-quoted *Beraisa* requires some introduction. An early halachic source, *Tosafos* (*Berachos* 37b s.v. *lechem*), reports the following:

"*Rabbeinu Yechiel* was uncertain whether one is required to separate challah from noodles. This is because one who makes dough intending to divide it (*daato lechalka*) is *patur* from challah since it does not have the *shiur*. Here, also, after shaping the dough into noodles one divides the batch into pots, and each pot does not hold enough to be obligated in

challah. Therefore, he (Rabbeinu Yechiel) required separating challah without a beracha because of this uncertainty.”

Pasta is made by making dough of flour and water and, if desired, some additional ingredients, slicing the dough to the desired size and shape, and then cooking it. Whether or not one must separate challah from a pasta dough which will not be baked is a topic for a different article, but it is obvious that Rabbeinu Yechiel held that cooking dough does not exempt it from challah. He exempts pasta from challah not because the dough will be cooked, but because each pot is not large enough to require the separating of challah. According to Rabbeinu Yechiel, large quantities of pasta cooked in industrial-sized pots would require separating challah.

Later authorities find difficulty with Rabbeinu Yechiel's position, contending that someone kneading a large dough intending to bake it as small loaves or rolls should certainly be required to separate challah. Why then is pasta dough exempt from challah only because one intends to cook it in small pots?

The Beis Efrayim explains that the reason is because one will be unable to combine the dough afterwards into large units (Shu't Beis Efrayim, Yoreh Deah #69). Since household pots are not large enough to prepare the full shiur of challah at one time, mixing a large dough for pasta usually means that I will be dividing the dough into small quantities when I cook it, and the doughs will not be combined again after they are cooked. Similarly, when several people pool their flour together to make one batch of dough, we know that they are going to separate the dough and each take his/her part with them. Therefore, this latter situation is exempt from separating

challah according to this opinion, as it is according to some, if not all, of the previously mentioned approaches.

However, when kneading bread dough owned by one person, dividing it into small batches does not exempt them from challah, since the owner could decide later to combine the dough into one large batch or to place all the baked breads into one basket or other vessel, which combines them together to create a shiur challah. The Beis Efrayim would rule that one is required to separate challah (with a beracha) if one mixes a large batch of dough intending to freeze some of it for future use, since one could easily decide to prepare it all at one time.

In Conclusion

We now know that when mixing a large batch of dough that one intends to divide, one may end up separating challah without reciting a beracha. However, when someone owns the entire dough and is dividing the dough into small loaves that one intends to bake at one time, according to all opinions one may recite a beracha prior to separating challah.

The Merit of Challah

Having discussed the halachic details of this mitzvah, it is worthwhile to take a glimpse at the following Medrash that underscores its vast spiritual significance: “In the merit of the following three mitzvos the world was created – in the merit of challah, in the merit of maasros, and in the merit of bikkurim” (Bereishis Rabbah 1:4). Thus, besides gaining us eternal reward, this easily kept mitzvah helps keep our planet turning.

*All these questions are actual shaylos I have been asked. The names have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.

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