

## Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Shabbos Parshas Shelach 5775

### Weekly Blog :: Rabbi Berel Wein *Fifa And Rabbi Riskin*

There is much irony present in the news of the day and there also are connections between stories about apparently disparate subjects that can be easily overlooked. As unlikely as it seems, I discern a distinct connection between the debacle and justified humbling of FIFA – the self-proclaimed holy guardian of world football/soccer and of international sports generally – and the ill-timed, ill- advised and wrongheaded attempt by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel to attempt not to renew Shlomo Riskin's tenure as Chief Rabbi of Efrat.

The behavior of FIFA in entertaining the shameful attempt by the Palestinian Authority to exclude Israel from this world soccer organization somehow triggered a slew of events, which has discredited FIFA. In effect, it is now almost a disgrace to be a member of that organization. Corrupt to the core, led by a conceited, egotistical executive head and hypocritically portraying itself as being a force for peace, morality and unity, FIFA has been exposed as the imposter that it is.

As a believing Jew, I cannot help but chuckle to myself that FIFA's undoing was somehow connected, time wise, to its willingness to be used as an agent of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish propaganda and boycott. In its sham moral piety and current political correctness, it hastily took up a wrong and absurd cause and established itself as an arbitrator of diplomatic disputes and a decisor regarding matters having nothing to do with soccer and sports. It has shot itself in the foot and been exposed as the criminal organization it is. There are no coincidences in God's world.

Another organization, which is seemingly bent on self-destruction is the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. Also racked by recent scandal and shameful leadership, and having lost most of its credibility and constituency over the past few decades, the Chief Rabbinate is somehow now preoccupied with not renewing the tenure of Rabbi Shlomo Riskin as Chief Rabbi of Efrat.

There are very few rabbis in the world who have done more for the cause of Torah education, synagogue and community service, and building the Land of Israel than Rabbi Riskin. This is not meant as a eulogy, God forbid, and he does not need my approval or approbation. By attacking him however, the Chief Rabbinate is only exposing its own weaknesses, shortcomings and complete misunderstanding of the nature and mood of the people that it is supposed to serve.

The haredi section of Israeli society has long abandoned the rulings and personages of the official Chief Rabbinate of Israel. It has successfully infiltrated that institution, which it regards in contempt and derision, and has gained control-granting itself power, patronage, jobs, money and an entrenched bureaucracy. This is a remarkable achievement since it loudly proclaims that it does not support the institution itself nor even deem it to be legitimate.

Because of the ineffectiveness of the Chief Rabbinate and its disattachment from Israeli society, it also has very little influence or presence in Israeli secular society. Except for official marriage and/or divorce proceedings, the secular Israeli has no connection whatsoever to the institution of the Chief Rabbinate.

The only remaining constituency that at least pays lip service and allegiance to the Chief Rabbinate has been the Religious Zionist section of Israeli society. Singling out Rabbi Riskin for attack and removal will certainly alienate this last constituency. There is no justification for this action against Rabbi Riskin except raw politics and the need for the power to intimidate others.

The Chief Rabbinate should be busy repairing its public image, so tarnished by scandal and bureaucratic inefficiency. A public expulsion of one of the leading rabbinic figures in world Jewry can only further diminish any respect left for the institution of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate.

Like FIFA, the Chief Rabbinate is engaged in a cause that will eventually backfire. That this is not apparent to the Chief Rabbinate itself is testimony enough as to its disconnect from the reality of current day Israeli society and, in fact, from world Jewry at large. A rabbinate that is so disconnected from its society and has forfeited most of its constituency cannot exist and function for very long.

Eventually, this rabbinate will be called into question. The burden of proof in this instance certainly does not lie with Rabbi Riskin. It lies squarely with the Chief Rabbinate itself, which would be wise to stop this exercise of unjust power and begin to truly tend to the flock of Israel, which has been entrusted to it.

Shabbat shalom

---

### Weekly Parsha Blog:: Rabbi Berel *Shlach*

Moshe, at the behest and request of the Jewish people, chooses twelve outstanding leaders and orders them to embark on a mission of spying regarding the Land of Israel and its current Canaanite population. Moshe is confident that this mission will reinforce the enthusiasm and commitment of the Jewish people to settle and build their national homeland, promised to them by God through their ancestors.

God Himself, so to speak, appears to be almost aloof and passive about this spying mission. In the words of Rashi in this week's commentary to the parsha, the Lord leaves the choice of executing such a mission solely in the hands of Moshe. It is his option to proceed with the mission or to declare to the people that God's promises regarding the Holy Land are in themselves sufficient and need no human confirmation or empirical proof.

Moshe, the great leader, prophet and visionary of the Jewish people, is confident that the spies will confirm his positive view of the Land of Israel and thus dispel any remaining hesitation or doubts that the Jewish people may have regarding their old – new homeland. Once the spies returned and issue their glowing report, Moshe is convinced that he will no longer hear the nagging refrain of “let us return to Egypt.”

He is therefore personally crushed by the betrayal of the ten spies, who not only do not issue a positive report but rather proclaim to the people that a Jewish homeland and national entity in the Land of Israel is an impossibility. And in a final statement of heresy, these ten spies state that even God Almighty cannot overcome the difficulties of Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel.

Moshe apparently miscalculated the depth of fear and hesitation that lay within the Jewish people regarding the Land of Israel. This fear and hesitation was evident throughout the narrative of the wanderings of the Jewish people in the desert of Sinai. It resonates throughout the centuries of later Jewish history, even unto our day and in our current situation.

In a strange and almost irrational manner, the Jewish people favored being under foreign rule and its “protection” over true national independence and reliance upon their own abilities and God's protective hand, so to speak. Egypt was no picnic for the Jews, but it allowed them the luxury of not having to make hard choices and not having to become self-reliant.

Even the sojourn in the desert of Sinai appealed to them for they were free from the everyday challenges of toil, tilling the land, building communities and constantly defending themselves from the enemies that would always surround them. To a great extent it was this deep fear of independence and all of the challenges that independence would bring with it that motivated the Jewish people to accept the negative report that the ten spies presented and to long for foreign domination over personal and national independence.

Much of the ambivalence that is present today in the Jewish world regarding the State of Israel stems from this fear of independence and

longing to belong to a foreign nation that will somehow alleviate our problems and make us less special. The millennia of Jewish history reflect this inner psychological struggle, which exists within us. As is often the case in human affairs, it is the minority report of Calev and Yehoshua that proves to be correct and beneficial.  
Shabat shalom

---

**Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Shlach**  
*For the week ending 13 June 2015 / 26 Sivan*  
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - [www.seasonsofthemoon.com](http://www.seasonsofthemoon.com)  
Insights

*The Living Shepherd*

***“But as I live – and the glory of G-d shall fill the whole world...” (14-21)***

Several years ago in London, there was a poetry recital competition.

The final poem to be recited was Psalm 23. A young fellow took center-stage and began, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want... He restores my soul... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." His performance was outstanding and was greeted with thunderous applause. Neither the audience nor the judges had any doubt who was the winner, and the young fellow was called to the stage and received his prize.

After the applause and the cheers had died down, there was an elderly, Eastern European Jew standing in front of the stage and looking up through the footlights. He said, "Would the judges mind if I also said "The Lord is my Shepherd?"

Amused, the judges invited him up to the stage.

Slowly he made his way to the microphone in a spotlight in the middle of the stage. He cleared his throat and with a thick Yiddish accent began to speak.

After a few words, a reverent hush fell over the audience; soon people started to cry.

The old man finished the Psalm. There was complete silence in the auditorium.

After a few moments, the old man turned to the judges, thanked them and the audience for their indulgence and made his way out into the street.

Clutching his prize, the winner followed the old man out into the street.

"Rabbi, I want you to take the prize; you're the one who deserves it, not me."

"Not at all," replied the elderly Jew. "I wasn't competing. You did a fine job and the prize is rightfully yours."

The young man continued, "But rabbi, can you explain to me why it was that when I ended the Psalm the audience cheered, but when you finished they cried?"

The elderly Jew replied, "The difference is that I know the Shepherd."

We can believe that there is a G-d, we can even know that there is a G-d, but we can still live like atheists.

***“But as I live – and the glory of G-d shall fill the whole world...”***

Belief can remain an abstract philosophical concept; we can even keep all the mitzvos, but fail to make G-d "live".

When we say that G-d is a "living G-d", we don't just mean that we believe in His existence, but that He is part of our every waking second; He is our King.

If the Chafetz Chaim walked into the room, everyone would stand in awe of him. The Master of the Universe fills the entire world and certainly the room in which the Chafetz Chaim stood, but the Chafetz Chaim gets a bigger welcome?

Because G-d is "Kadosh Kadosh Kadosh", thrice-removed, His transcendence makes it difficult for us to sense His immanence — that His Glory fills the world.

Our job as Jews is to take the abstract and the transcendent and make G-d into our living Shepherd.

Sources: based on Rabbi Shimshon Pincus and others

© 2015 Ohr Somayach International - all rights reserved

**Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column**  
***Shelach: "Appearances and Reality"***

Even the most casual observer of human behavior knows that people are not always what they seem to be. We all have a public face, or façade, which is often inconsistent with our inner, or "real", selves. In fact, we typically have more than one such façade in our repertoire. Our choice of which facade to use depends upon the social situation in which we find ourselves.

Does this mean that we are all imposters? The Psalmist confesses: "I said in a rash moment that all men are liars (Psalms 116:110)." Was he correct in his assertion? Or was his pessimistic assessment of human nature limited to just one "rash moment"?

One Talmudic Sage, Rabban Gamaliel, was so convinced that people are not what they seem to be that he based the admissions policy of his academy upon this belief. He declared that no one could enter his study hall unless "his inside was like his outside". Before one could enter this academy he had to somehow prove that he was in fact as pious and as learned as he appeared to be. If Rabban Gamaliel, or whoever served as his admissions officer, detected a discrepancy between the would-be student's exterior appearance and his "real" interior qualifications, he would be denied entrance into the study hall.

Luckily for those students whose "insides" did not match their "outsides", and luckily for the future of Torah study, Rabban Gamaliel's colleagues disputed his policy and eventually overturned it.

Nevertheless, Rabban Gamaliel's wariness regarding surface appearances remained sound advice in the opinion of at least one later sage, Rabbi Meir. He offers us this counsel: "Do not look at the container but at what it contains, for a new flask may contain old wine, and an old flask may not contain anything, even new wine (Pirkei Avot 4:27)."

Moreover, whereas Rabban Gamaliel was suspicious of pious exteriors which might belie impious interiors, Rabbi Meir went even further with his advice, recognizing that the reverse might also obtain. Negative appearances might conceal quite positive characteristics buried beneath the surface.

Commentators remind us that Rabbi Meir continued to learn Torah from his previous master, Elisha Ben Avuya, even after the latter rejected his own past and behaved in a most sacrilegious manner. Rabbi Meir "cast away the rind, and ate the fruit". Rabbi Meir looked beyond the container, the impious exterior of Elisha ben Avuya, and discerned the legitimate teachings which were contained within.

In this week's Torah portion, Shelach (Numbers 13:1-15:41), we encounter two startling examples of the discrepancy between external appearances and internal realities. The first example is found in the person of Caleb. You will remember that 10 of the 12 spies returned from their mission with a discouraging report, denigrating the Promised Land. Caleb and Joshua were the only two who demurred and insisted that "the land that we traversed and scouted is an exceedingly good land... A land that flows with milk and honey... (Numbers 14:7-8)." The people gullibly swallowed the spies' report, and ignored the minority opinion of Caleb and Joshua.

The Almighty responded: "... None of the men who have seen My Presence and the signs that I have performed in Egypt... Shall see the land that I promised on oath to their fathers..." The faithful Caleb, however, was excluded from that response: "But My servant Caleb, because he was imbued with a different spirit... him will I bring into the land..."

What precisely is the meaning of "he was imbued with a different spirit"? Rashi explains: "He had two 'spirits', one in his mouth and one in his heart. To the spies he said, 'I am with you in your scheme.' But in his heart he intended to speak the truth. He was thus able to silence them; because they were convinced he was on their side."

Caleb had an exterior façade and an interior reality. On the exterior, he allied himself with the spies, but in his interior, in his heart, he contained the truth.

Caleb then is not only an example of the universal discrepancy between "inner" and "outer" that characterizes all humans. He illustrates that

sometimes it is desirable and meritorious to feign a surface appearance, even if it totally contradicts one's internal convictions.

I am an avid reader of first-person reports of prisoners of war and of how they managed to survive years of isolation and torture. I specifically recall the account of one of those imprisoned in North Vietnam in what came to be called the Hanoi Hilton. He attributed his survival, and the survival of many of his co-prisoners, to the ability to act in a compliant, even subservient, manner toward their guards and interrogators while retaining an inner courage and steadfastness. Sometimes, a façade is vital to survival.

I remember reading the memoirs of Rabbi Chaim Zeitchik, of blessed memory. He was a dedicated yeshiva teacher who found himself in the depths of Siberia during the Second World War. He was subjected to unspeakable physical conditions and to the sadistic cruelty of those who used him for forced labor. He was able to emerge from those years of horror by maintaining an outer appearance of obedience and cooperation, which masked his inner commitment to spirituality and faith. "To them, I was 'one of the boys'... an excellent and dedicated laborer... But they were unaware of my secret inner self, which even enabled me to remain a clandestine yeshiva bachur."

There is another example in this week's Torah portion of this existential split between outer appearances and inner realities. This example teaches us an even deeper lesson. Our outer appearances are not merely artificial pretenses. Quite the contrary, our outer behavior can have a beneficial impact upon our very souls. For this I refer you to a fascinating practical suggestion in the commentary of Ibn Ezra on the passage which concludes this week's parsha.

In this passage we are commanded to attach tzitzit, or ritual fringes, to our four cornered garments. This is, of course, the basis for the universal Jewish custom of wearing a tallit, or prayer shawl, during prayer services. The biblical verses make no reference to a connection between the tallit and prayer.

Ibn Ezra explains that wearing the tallit during prayer makes one more fully aware of the spiritual lessons of the prayers. He continues: "In my opinion it would be preferable to wear the tallit at other times of day, and not only during prayer. For it is precisely at those ordinary times, much more so than during prayer, that one is likely to sin."

In our survey of the Torah portion this week we described the ubiquitous conflict between appearance and reality. Often this duality results in duplicity, so that others must guard against being taken in by artificial façades.

But sometimes, as in the case of Caleb, the façade is a necessary pragmatic strategy, praiseworthy if one is principled enough to preserve his authentic inner self.

Ibn Ezra takes us even further. He teaches us that the façade can sometimes change our inner attitudes in a most beneficial manner, channeling them towards spirituality and holiness.

---

**Orthodox Union / [www.ou.org](http://www.ou.org)  
Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks  
*Assembling Reminders***

You are driving ever so slightly above the speed limit. You see a police car in your rear view mirror. You slow down. You know perfectly well that it is wrong to exceed the speed limit whether anyone is watching or not, but being human, the likelihood of being found out and penalized makes a difference.

Recently a series of experiments has been conducted by psychologists to test the impact of the sense of being observed on pro-social behaviour. Chenbo Zhong, Vanessa Bohns and Francesca Gino constructed a test to see whether a feeling of anonymity made a difference. They randomly assigned to a group of students either sunglasses or clear eyeglasses, telling them that they were testing reactions to a new product line. They were also, in an apparently unrelated task, given six dollars and chance of sharing any of it with a stranger. Those wearing clear glasses gave on

average \$2.71 while those wearing dark sunglasses gave an average of \$1.81. The mere fact of wearing sunglasses, and thus feeling unrecognised and unrecognisable, reduced generosity. In another experiment, they found that students given the opportunity to cheat in a test were more likely to do so in a dimly lit room than in a brightly lit one. The more we think we may be observed, the more generous and moral we become.

Kevin Haley and Dan Fessler tested students on the so-called Dictator Game, in which you are given, say, ten dollars, together with the opportunity of sharing any or none of it with an anonymous stranger. Beforehand, and without realising it was part of the experiment, some of the students were briefly shown a pair of eyes as a computer screen saver, while others saw a different image. Those exposed to the eyes gave 55 per cent more to the stranger than the others. In another study researchers placed a coffee maker in a university hallway. Passers-by could take coffee and leave money in the box. On some weeks a poster with watchful eyes was hanging on the wall nearby, on others a picture of flowers. On the weeks where the eyes were showing, people left on average 2.76 times as much money as at other times.[1]

Ara Norenzayan, author of the book *Big Gods* from which these studies are taken, concludes that "Watched people are nice people." That is part of what makes religion a force for honest and altruistic behaviour: the belief that God sees what we do. It is no coincidence that, as belief in a personal God has waned in the West, surveillance by CCTV and other means has had to be increased. Voltaire once said that whatever his personal views on the matter he wanted his butler and other servants to believe in God because then he would be cheated less.

Less obvious is the experimental finding that what makes the difference to the way we behave is not simply what we believe, but rather the fact of being reminded of it. In one test, conducted by Brandon Randolph-Seng and Michael Nielsen, participants were exposed to words flashed for less than 100 milliseconds, that is, long enough to be detected by the brain but not long enough for conscious awareness. They were then given a test in which they had the opportunity to cheat. Those who had been shown words relating to God were significantly less likely to do so than people who had been shown neutral words. The same result was yielded by another test in which, beforehand, some of the participants were asked to recall the Ten Commandments while others were asked to remember the last ten books they had read. Merely being reminded of the Ten Commandments reduced the tendency to cheat.

Another researcher, Deepak Malhotra, surveyed the willingness of Christians to give to online charitable appeals. The response was 300 per cent greater if the appeal was made on a Sunday than on any other day of the week. Clearly the participants did not change their minds about religious belief or the importance of charitable giving between weekdays and Sundays. It was simply that on Sundays they were more likely to have thought about God on that day. A similar test was carried out among Muslims in Morocco, where it was found that people were more likely to give generously to charity if they lived in a place where they could hear the call to prayer from a local minaret.

Nazorayan's conclusion is that 'Religion is more in the situation than in the person,'[2] or to put it another way, what makes the difference to our behaviour is less what we believe than the phenomenon of being reminded, even subconsciously, of what we believe.

That is precisely the psychology behind the mitzvah of tsitsit in this week's parsha:

This shall be your tsitsit and you shall see it and remember all the Lord's commandments and keep them, not straying after your heart and after your eyes, following your own sinful desires. Thus you will be reminded to keep all My commandments, and be holy to your God. (Num. 15: 39)

The Talmud[3] tells the story of a man who, in a moment of moral weakness, decided to pay a visit to a certain courtesan. He was in the course of removing his clothes when he saw the tsitsit and immediately froze. The courtesan asked him what was the matter, and he told her about the tsitsit, saying that the four fringes had become accusing witnesses against him for the sin he was about to commit. The woman was so

impressed by the power of this simple command that she converted to Judaism.

We sometimes fail to understand the connection between religion and morality. Dostoevsky is said to have said that if God did not exist all would be permitted.[4] This is not the mainstream Jewish view. According to Rav Nissim Gaon, the moral imperatives accessible to reason have been binding since the dawn of humanity.[5] We have a moral sense. We know that certain things are wrong. But we also have conflicting desires. We are drawn to do what we know we should not do, and often we yield to temptation. Anyone who has ever tried to lose weight knows exactly what that means. In the moral domain, it is what the Torah means when it speaks of “straying after your heart and after your eyes, following your own sinful desires.”

The moral sense, wrote James Q. Wilson, “is not a strong beacon light radiating outward to illuminate in sharp outline all that it touches.” It is, rather, “a small candle flame, casting vague and multiple shadows, flickering and sputtering in the strong winds of power and passion, greed and ideology.” He adds: “But brought close to the heart” it “dispels the darkness and warms the soul.”[6]

Wittgenstein once said that “the work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders.”[7] In the case of Judaism the purpose of the outward signs – tsitsit, mezuzah and tefillin – is precisely that: to assemble reminders, on our clothes, our homes, our arms and head, that certain things are wrong, and that even if no other human being sees us, God sees us and will call us to account. We now have the empirical evidence that reminders make a significant difference to the way we act.

“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who shall know it?” said Jeremiah (Jer. 17: 9). One of the blessings and curses of human nature is that we use our power of reason not always and only to act rationally, but also to rationalize and make excuses for the things we do, even when we know we should not have done them. That, perhaps is one of the lessons the Torah wishes us to draw from the story of the spies. Had they recalled what God had done to Egypt, the mightiest empire of the ancient world, they would not have said, “We cannot attack those people; they are stronger than we are” (Num. 13: 31). But they were in the grip of fear. Strong emotion, fear especially, distorts our perception. It activates the amygdala, the source of our most primal reactions, causing it to override the prefrontal cortex that allows us to think rationally about the consequences of our decisions.

Tsitsit with their thread of blue remind us of heaven, and that is what we most need if we are consistently to act in accordance with the better angels of our nature.

[1] This and the following paragraphs are based on Ara Norenzayan, *Big Gods: How religion transformed cooperation and conflict*, Princeton University Press, 2013, 13-54.

[2] *Ibid.*, 39.

[3] *Menachot* 44a.

[4] He did not say these precise words, but said something similar in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880).

[5] Commentary to *Berakhot*, introduction.

[6] James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense*, Free Press, 1993, 251.

[7] *Philosophical Investigations*, §127.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks or to subscribe to his mailing list, please visit [www.rabbisacks.org](http://www.rabbisacks.org).

---

**Orthodox Union / [www.ou.org](http://www.ou.org)**

***Rabbi Ari Kahn on Parsha***

***A Divine Rendezvous***

Group dynamics are interesting and complex. Individuals who come from different places, geographically or emotionally, see the same situation in different ways. In the episode of the so-called spies, this phenomenon repeats itself over and over.

The first instance may be seen in the divergent reports delivered by the twelve emissaries who are sent to scout the Land of Israel. Ten of the scouts speak of the Land's beauty and bounty, but stress that conquest is not a viable option. The eleventh man, Calev (Caleb), insists that the land is conquerable, while the twelfth scout, Yehoshua (Joshua), remains silent. Remarkably, God is not a factor in the discussion: Divine intervention and the supernatural protection they continue to enjoy are not taken into consideration by any of the opposing sides in the debate.

Calev is adamant, and refuses to fall in line with the majority, which leads the ten dissidents to change tactics: making a subtle shift, they malign the Land itself and cast its desirability into question. Fear leads to mass hysteria; panic sets in. Suddenly, life and death as slaves seem preferable to the uncertain future that awaits them in the Promised Land (14:2), and the masses begin to plot overthrowing their leaders and returning to Egypt (14:4). It is likely that this consequence, the rebellion against Moshe and Aharon, was neither intended nor anticipated by the spies: They themselves were tribal leaders, and would likely have been cast aside in the same putsch.

Calev and Yehoshua protest: If God wills it, the conquest will happen. The Land, they insist – is exceedingly good. Here, then, are two different perspectives on the same set of observations: Is the Land conquerable? Is it desirable? What should the next stage of their collective history look like? One opinion is to forge ahead and begin the conquest; others prefer to abort the entire project and return to Egypt. A third group emerges: the very same people who started the debate, the ten spies who opined that going forward was not an option yet did not articulate an alternative plan of action, stand bewildered, even dumbfounded.

At this point, God intervenes. He threatens to eradicate the entire people and build a new nation from Moshe's descendants, but Moshe intercedes, pleading and praying, until a drastically reduced sentence is handed down: The malicious spies perish in a plague, and the masses who preferred Egypt or even death in the wilderness are banned from entering the Land they had rejected. In an ironic twist of poetic justice, they are doomed to die in the desert; only their children will merit entrance to the Land. Of the entire generation that left Egypt, Yehoshua and Calev would be the sole survivors.

In the aftermath of this tragic series of events, something strange happens. Another group forms, a group whose identity or size are not revealed. They reject the punishment, the death sentence that hangs over them, and decide that the time is ripe to conquer the Land of Israel. Tragically, they are massacred in battle.

Who were the members of this ill-advised group of would-be warriors? The Torah provides no details; all that is left to us is conjecture. While we might be tempted to say that the ten rogue spies repented and sought to correct the damage they had done, this is not an option: The text clearly states that they were already dead. One other certainty is that neither Calev nor Yehoshua were party to this effort; they both lived to fight another day. While the possibilities seem endless, we can nonetheless narrow down the field of candidates. It seems unlikely that those who were so terrified of war that they preferred slavery and certain death, were suddenly emboldened. Only two reasonable candidates remain: the tribes of Calev and Yehoshua, the two dissenting scouts: Yehuda and Efraim.

While both are excellent candidates, one tribe in particular has fidelity to the Land of Israel indelibly imprinted in its spiritual DNA. While Calev's enthusiastic “Yes we can” (13:30) response to the spies' disheartening assessment is certainly impressive, it seems far more likely that descendants of Yosef would take up the cause of Eretz Yisrael: Yehoshua was a descendant of Efraim, the son of Yosef – the same Yosef who mourned his personal exile, and whose dying wish was that he be carried out of Egypt and buried in Israel. Generations later, the daughter's of Zlaffhad from the tribe of Menashe, Yosef's elder son, were unwilling to forfeit their inheritance in the Land of Israel. Time and again, the children of Yosef express a greater yearning for the Land of Israel. Yehoshua's own tribe seems likely to have spearheaded the push to conquer the Land; just as the head of the tribe, Yehoshua, would one day lead the battle, they decide to step forward.

Unfortunately, they seem to have failed to internalize the thrust of Yehoshua's message: The conquest will take place when God wills it, and only when He is in their midst. They had taken the wrong message from the sin of the spies, concluding that the time had come, and that they could correct the error of those who had eschewed the land by actively taking their future into their own hands. A comparison of census data before and after this episode reveals that the tribe of Ephraim suffered a sudden, drastic drop in population. Apparently, in a tragic mix of bravery, self-confidence and misguided idealism, this band of Ephraimites, known as the Ma'apilim, thought they could force God's hand, as it were. Perhaps they hoped to "catch up" with their destiny, which they saw slipping away. They must have hoped to reconcile with God in the Land of Israel, but they did not think they needed His help to get there.

Once again, we are struck by the difference in perspective: Ten spies considered God uninvolved, and did not figure Him into the equation at all. The masses thought that God hated them (Dvarim 1:27) and fully expected to be eradicated. The Ma'apilim looked forward to meeting God at the end of the battle, in an intimate rendezvous in The Land of Israel. Only Yehoshua and Calev fully understood that the only way to enter the Land is with God.

The message should not be lost on us: Although the events of modern history may also be interpreted from many different perspectives, there is, in fact, one interpretation that is more correct, more relevant, than the others: The miraculous ingathering of the exiles we are witnessing in the modern era is nothing short of the hand of God bringing His People back home for that great, long-awaited rendezvous.

For a more in-depth analysis see: <http://arikahn.blogspot.co.il/2014/06/audio-and-essays-parashat-shelach.html>

---

**Drasha Parshas Shlach**  
**by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**  
*Piece of Cake*

It was not a good scenario. The twelve spies returned from their forty-day sojourn to the Land of Canaan and ten of them were not happy campers.

They left as an enthusiastic and united crew, selected by Moshe for what should have been an easy mission of assurance -- confirming what they were already told by their forebears, as well as the Almighty -- Eretz Yisrael is a beautiful land that flows with milk and honey. Instead, the only two who had anything positive to say about the land of Israel, were Calev and Yehoshua. The rest of the spies claimed that the land was not good and that there were dangerous giants living there who would crush them. And now, in the face of the derogatory, inflammatory and frightening remarks that disparaged the Promised Land, Calev and Yehoshua were left to defend it.

It was too late. The ten evil spies had stirred up the negative passions of a disheartened nation. The people wanted to return to Egypt. But the two righteous men, Yehoshua and Calev, tried to persuade them otherwise.

The first and most difficult task facing them was to get the Children of Israel to listen to them. The Torah tells us: "They spoke to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel, saying, "The Land that we passed through, to spy it out -- the Land is very, very good.

If Hashem desires us, He will bring us to this Land and give it to us, a Land that flows with milk and honey. But do not rebel against Hashem! You should not fear the people of the Land, for they are our bread. Their protection has departed from them; Hashem is with us. Do not fear them!" (Numbers 14:7-9).

What did they mean by saying that the giants were "our bread"? Did they mean that the children of Israel will eat them like bread? Why bread of all things?

A story that circulated during the 1930s told of Yankel, a Jewish immigrant from the Ukraine who made his livelihood selling rolls on a corner in lower Manhattan. He was not an educated man. With poor eyesight and a hearing problem, he never read a newspaper or listened to the radio. He would daven, say Tehillim, learn a bit of Chumash, and bake

his rolls. Then he would stand on the side of the road and sell his fresh-baked delicious smelling rolls.

"Buy a roll, mister?" he would ask passersby, the majority of them would gladly oblige with a generous purchase. Despite his simple approach, Yankel did well. He ordered a larger oven and increased his flour and yeast orders. He brought his son home from college to help him out. Then something happened. His son asked him, "Pa, haven't you heard about the situation with the world markets? There are going to be great problems soon. We are in the midst of a depression!" The father figured that his son's economic forecast was surely right. After all, his son went to college whereas he himself did not even read the papers. He canceled the order for the new oven and held s for more flour, took down his signs and waited. Sure enough with no advertisement and no inventory, his sales fell overnight. And soon enough Yankel said to his son. "You are right. We are in the middle of a great depression."

Bread is the staple of life, but it also is the parable of faith. Our attitude toward our bread represent our attitude toward every challenge of faith. If one lives life with emunah p'shutah, simple faith, then his bread will be sufficient to sustain him. The customers will come and he will enjoy success. It is when we aggrandize the bleakness of the situation through the eyes of the economic forecasters, the political pundits, or the nay sayers who believe in the power of their predictions and give up hope based on their mortal weaknesses, then one might as well close shop.

Yehosua and Calev told the people that these giants are no more of a challenge than the demands of our daily fare. They are our bread. And as with our daily fare, our situation is dependent totally on our faith.

If we listen to the predictions of the forecasters and spies, we lose faith in the Almighty and place our faith in the powerless. However, by realizing that the seemingly greatest challenges are the same challenges of our daily fare — our bread — the defeat of even the largest giants will be a piece of cake.

Good Shabbos

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Toras Chaim at South Shore and the author of the Parsha Parables series.

Questions or comments? Email [feedback@torah.org](mailto:feedback@torah.org). Project Genesis, Inc.

---

**Youthful Hearts and Eyes**  
**Rabbi Mordechai Willig**  
**The TorahWeb Foundation**

*"Do not explore after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray' (Bamidbar 15:39) - after your heart refers to heresy, and after your eyes refers to sexual immorality" (Berachos 12b).*

In order to avoid believing ideas that are antithetical to that which the Torah obligates us to believe, we must limit our thought and place a boundary for it to stop (Rambam, Sefer Hamitzvos Negative Mitzva 47). We may not even contemplate a thought which can cause a person to uproot one of the fundamentals of Torah. If a person thinks about these ideas critically, his limited mind may conclude that heresies are true; he may doubt the existence of Hashem, the truth of prophecy and the Divine source of the Torah (Rambam, Hilchos Avoda Zara 2:3). Such contemplation is prohibited even if no heretical conclusions are reached.

Unfortunately, the prescience of the Rambam has been borne out dramatically in our time. The zeitgeist of post-modernism and non-judgmentalism has corroded the allegiance to basic Jewish beliefs even within the Orthodox Jewish community to the point that nothing is considered sacred and nothing is considered certain. Our youth are particularly vulnerable, more so than in medieval times when the Rashba (1:415) prohibited studying philosophy before the age of twenty five. Too often the beliefs of high school students are weakened by those who subject fundamental beliefs to secular critical thinking. On secular college campuses many graduates of these high schools, including those who learned in Israel, doubt or even deny the fundamentals of faith, exactly as the Rambam warned.

The Rambam (Sefer Hamitzvos ibid) continues: We may not be drawn after pleasures and physical lusts by our thoughts focusing on them constantly. Straying after one's eyes can lead to prohibited sexual activity. Here, too, the thought itself is prohibited, even if no physical violations result. Unfortunately, today's unprecedented availability of sexually arousing material makes this mitzva harder to fulfill. Moreover, the permissive culture we live in dramatically increases the chances that sins of thought, vision and speech will lead to sins of the flesh (Rashi 15:39). Too often, high school students do not observe the laws prohibiting physical contact between boys and girls (See Shulchan Aruch, Even HoEzer siman 21. Also see Igras Moshe Even HoEzer vol. 4 siman 60). In secular college campuses many ostensibly Orthodox Jews succumb to the permissive, and even promiscuous, culture.

The percentage of graduates of Orthodox high schools who attended secular colleges that abandon the basic Torah practices of Shabbos and kashrus is alarmingly high. "Orthodox Assimilation on College Campuses" (a recent work by Drs. Perl and Weinstein) shines light on this terrible and increasing reality. The Rambam's proof text refers to a Jewish man marrying a non-Jewish woman, and intermarriages, sometimes with an insincere and likely invalid conversion, are on the rise in this population.

The Sefer Hachinuch (mitzvah 387) notes that one of the reasons the Torah does not prescribe lashes for one who transgresses the prohibition of "Do not explore.." is that it is impossible for one's sights and thoughts to never go beyond that which is acceptable and therefore there is no clearly defined and detectable boundary which we could use to measure this transgression [See Freedom of Inquiry in Torah Umada Journal Vol. 1,2,3]. Nonetheless, placing a youngster in a spiritually dangerous situation is religiously reckless ("What should that son do and not sin?" Berachos 32a.)

Am Yisrael knew that avoda zara was meaningless and they did it only to allow themselves prohibited sexual relationships publicly (Sanhedrin 63b). Their sexual desires overcame them and they said, let us remove the entire burden of Torah from ourselves, then no one will rebuke us about sexual matters (Rashi). Today as well, heresy, the modern-day version of idolatry, and even the abandonment of all Torah commandments, may be linked to sexual desires prohibited by halacha but permitted and even encouraged by today's decadent society's credo of "do whatever feels good."

Now, more than ever, we must guard our eyes and hearts with the necessary boundaries to distance ourselves from such behavior. Parents must model proper thought and conduct and do their utmost to protect their children as well. The Torah's prohibition and warning of, "Do not explore..", recited twice daily in Shema and reinforced constantly by the mitzva of tzitzis, must govern our decisions for ourselves and our children, "so that you may remember and perform all My commandments and be holy to your G-d" (15:40).

Copyright © 2015 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

---

**Parshat Shlach – Who Is Privileged To See Promises Fulfilled?  
Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz  
June 11, 2015 Thursday 24 Sivan 5775**

In this week's Torah portion, we read about a difficult turn of events. Until now, things were more or less going smoothly. Am Yisrael left Egypt, walked across the Red Sea, received the Torah at Ma'amad Har Sinai, and built the Mishkan (Tabernacle).

But this week, we read about a near retreat from the general plan.

As we recall, the plan was to liberate the nation from Egypt and lead it to the Promised Land – Eretz Yisrael, where it would establish an independent state that would gloriously run on the foundations of Torah values. Now, the nation gets close to the border where it stops and... changes its mind.

This sad story begins with the nation's legitimate desire to send spies to check out the land, examine its inhabitants and geography, and come back with valuable information that would help when entering the land and conquering it. To accomplish this, they sent 12 spies, respected men, to

carry out the mission over the border. But instead of fulfilling their mission, guiding the nation and its leaders on how best to enter the land, they announced in front of one and all that it would be impossible to do this: "... the people who inhabit the land are mighty, and the cities are extremely huge and fortified, and there we saw even the offspring of the giant... The land we passed through to explore is a land that consumes its inhabitants, and all the people we saw in it are men of stature." (Numbers 13:28-32) In short, no way.

The truth is, not all 12 of the spies shared this pessimistic outlook. Two of them, Joshua ben Nun, and Calev ben Yefuneh, maintained the faith that the Lord Who liberated them from Egypt and split the sea for them would continue to accompany the nation and help it also when it came to conquering the land. As opposed to their friends, they declared: "We can surely go up and take possession of it, for we can indeed overcome it." (Numbers 13:30) Despite this, the nation lamented the pessimistic description and, as described in the Torah, had a very strong reaction: "The entire community raised their voices and shouted, and the people wept on that night. All the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the entire congregation said, 'If only we had died in the land of Egypt... Why does the Lord bring us to this land to fall by the sword... Is it not better for us to return to Egypt?' They said to each other, 'Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt!'" (Numbers 14:1-4) The nation lost its faith, which led it into a horrible tragedy.

G-d's reaction suited the nation's emotional state exactly: You do not believe that it is possible to enter the land? So, you won't. You will stay in the desert for 40 years, and only the next generation will be privileged to enter the land.

Upon examination, this is not a light punishment.

Actually, the nation that was enslaved in Egypt was liberated with hope in its heart that it would finally merit an independent state in the land promised it from the days of its forefathers.

The nation did not merit seeing the fulfillment of this promise.

The entire nation was punished, with the exception of two people, Joshua ben Nun and Calev ben Yefuneh, the two spies who stood firm in their beliefs while the rest of the nation heeded their pessimistic friends creating despair and the desire to go back to Egypt. These two special people were the only ones who visualized the fulfillment of the promise, the great purpose awaiting the nation when it gets to the Promised Land.

requently, we find ourselves dealing with a society that does not believe in our values, that does not see the purpose we visualize, that loses faith in change. This is what we must keep in mind – whoever keeps his faith and does not despair is the one who will merit seeing the fulfillment of the purpose he believed in and yearned for.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

All rights reserved © 1995 - 2012 The Jerusalem Post.

---

**The Blogs :: Ben-Tzion Spitz  
Shlach: The Power Of The Few  
June 10, 2015**

*Friends, I agree with you in Providence; but I believe in the Providence of the most men, the largest purse, and the longest cannon. – Abraham Lincoln*

Our individualistic society likes to give importance to the difference one person can make. We have innumerable accounts of how one person, standing up to many, overcomes public opinion, resistance, and ridicule and with faith and perseverance, triumphs against the odds of the many.

However, there is one area of human activity where most are of the opinion that numbers have a direct impact on results: War. Napoleon consistently overruns professional soldiers with masses of conscripted Frenchmen who marched over their well-ordered but fewer enemies. Though the Spartans held the Persians at the legendary Battle of Thermopylae for seven days, eventually superior Persian numbers won the day.

There are obvious exceptions. The battles of modern-day Israel have consistently pitted larger forces against smaller ones, with results that surprised the world. If we go back further in Jewish history we recall the victory of the humble Maccabees against the mighty Syrio-Greco Empire in memory for which we still celebrate Chanukah more than two millennia later.

There is an unusual account in the Torah of a particularly unsuccessful Israelite battle. It occurs immediately after the Sin of the Spies, when the representatives of the Twelve Tribes returned from spying the land, gave a frightening report as to the strength of the Canaanite enemies and in turn caused panic and hysteria amongst the people of Israel. God punishes that generation of men to die in the desert and the entire Israelite nation to wander in the wilderness outside of Canaan for forty years.

However, after the punishment is decreed, men repent and issue a war cry, stating that they are not afraid and will proceed with the invasion of Canaan, as planned previously. But it is too late. Moses warns them that God is no longer with them and that they will fail. They ignore Moses' warning. They attack and are soundly defeated by the Canaanites.

The Baal Haturim on Numbers 14:40 states that we are talking about an Israelite army of 600,000 that was not able to defeat a much smaller enemy. However, he goes on to recall how biblical Jonathan (son of King Saul) with just the assistance of one lad was able to rout an entire Midianite army. God has no qualm to save with many or with few.

Shabbat Shalom

Dedication - To the upcoming wedding of Andrea Klotnicki and Bruno Zalcborg. May they always triumph against all odds.

Ben-Tzion Spitz is the Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of two books of Biblical Fiction and over 400 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes

The Blogs | The Times of Israel

Follow us: @timesofisrael on Twitter | timesofisrael on Facebook

---

**The Blogs :: Nathan Lopes Cardozo**

***Take the bike or tram, get a free coffee, and observe Shabbat!***

The religious and traditional Israeli Jewish population is on the rise in Israel, while the secular population is shrinking. Over the last few years, studies have shown that the number of Israelis who do not observe religious traditions has decreased, comprising only one-fifth of the total Israeli population. This is in contrast to earlier days when 41 percent of Israelis declared themselves secular (1974). Approximately one-third of the general Israeli population considers itself fully observant and the number of traditional Israelis has risen from 38 percent to about 50 percent.

This should make us think. While it is true that the increased observance among Israelis is not always for genuine and healthy reasons, and often goes hand in hand with extreme political views, it cannot be denied that within the next 50 years Israel will probably see an enormous growth in Jewish pride and religious commitment.

As a matter of fact, it is well known that a greater number of secular Israelis would like to become more observant. However, for various practical reasons, or due to social pressures, they are unable to make this switch.

One of the great challenges, if not the greatest, is Shabbat, the only official day of rest in Israeli society, when people enjoy visiting their parents and friends who live far away or who may be in the hospital.

Many would love to go to a restaurant and enjoy an afternoon ride through neighborhoods in Yerushalayim or other cities. But none of this is possible without the use of cars or taxis and with no open restaurants.

Here are some suggestions to overcome these obstacles:

According to one of the greatest halachic Sephardic authorities, the righteous Rabbi Yosef Chayim of Baghdad (circa 1832-1909), also known as the Ben Ish Chai, there is no prohibition against riding a bicycle on Shabbat; that is, when carrying is halachically permitted, through the use of an eruv (a symbolic wall around a city or part of a city), which is found

in almost every city in Israel. In his opinion, all objections to riding a bicycle on Shabbat are highly questionable.

The three most quoted reasons mentioned are:

1) shema yetaken mana – if the bicycle breaks down, there is concern that the rider may repair it. 2) it is considered one of *uvdin de-chol* – weekday activities, which are not in the spirit of Shabbat; and 3) *mar'it ayin* – an act that is permitted but might be confused with something else that is definitely forbidden.

According to the Ben Ish Chai (Responsa Rav Pe'alim (1901) 1; 25), these objections have no halachic foundation. Firstly, he says, "There are numerous items vulnerable to breakage that we would have to prohibit" and "we should not issue new decrees that weren't made by the Rabbis of the Talmud". Secondly, riding a bicycle is not considered a weekday activity. And thirdly, the *mar'it ayin* argument does not apply, since no one can confuse riding a bike with riding other vehicles such as cars or even horses and wagons, which are inherently different.\*

This is why members of the Syrian Orthodox Community in Brooklyn ride bicycles on Shabbat to the synagogue, to visit their parents, or just to get around the neighborhood.

In Israel, permitting the use of bicycles on Shabbat would greatly increase Shabbat observance among those who now drive cars to visit their parents and friends. Once they know that they could take the bike, many would be delighted to become *shomrei Shabbat*. Perhaps specific paths for bike riders could be designated for Shabbat so as to prevent accidents. Special Shabbat bikes should be available, which can't go more quickly than a certain speed, are decorated with beautiful colors, and have a halachically permitted Shabbat light to indicate that this is not an ordinary bike. Religious neighborhoods could decide not to permit this in their own localities.

There is little doubt that this would result in fewer cars on the road and a wonderful atmosphere of nation-wide tranquility, which Israelis encounter on Yom Kippur. It would also allow people to walk in the middle of the road on Shabbat, which would become a national joy. Our psychologists, environmentalists and physicians will surely encourage such a novelty, even though they may lose some business!

Now that Yerushalayim has introduced the light rail, and many other cities may follow suit, it might be a good idea to consider a "Shabbat tram," which would have a special service to the various hospitals. This will no doubt require considerable technical, innovative and halachic thinking to ensure that Shabbat is not violated, but in an age of unprecedented major scientific breakthroughs, it should not be so difficult to overcome all obstacles. We can leave it to the great inventors at the Zomet Institute in Alon Shvut, Gush Etzion.

Obviously, these trams should run infrequently in order not to spoil the Shabbat atmosphere in the streets. They should be colorfully decorated with flowers and Shabbat themes, have comfortable seats, and drinks available. They should travel more slowly than on weekdays and be free of charge. We should not ask non-Jews to operate these trams – it is time to stop the "Shabbos goy" phenomenon in modern Israel! We must make sure that we can run it ourselves, making use of several halachic leniencies and innovations.

Finally, I wonder whether it would be possible to open some restaurants on Shabbat, especially in the less religious neighborhoods. Such restaurants would be fully Shabbat observant, where people could get a drink and a piece of cake free of charge and have the opportunity to meet their friends. Bnei Akiva and other youth organizations should take an active role in running such cafés. They could become a place for communal singing, lectures, debates and other religious-cultural activities on Shabbat. Perhaps setting an MP3 player on a Shabbat clock could provide nice and relaxing Jewish music in the background.

Large American and Israeli companies should finance such initiatives, and people could pop in during the week to donate some money to the restaurant they visited, or they could pay in advance if they so desired.

It is, however, especially important that we do not lose sight of the spiritual aspect of Shabbat, which is a day that protests against the bustling

commerce and the profanity of our lives. It must save us from the agitation and passion of acquisitiveness and the betrayal of our spiritual needs.

Israel greatly needs traditional Shabbat observance before it falls victim even more to the idolization of ourselves and our physical needs. We must therefore make sure that all the above suggestions go hand in hand with a call for more spirituality and authentic religiosity. These suggestions should not be seen as an attempt to seek leniencies for the sake of leniencies. The goal must be more genuine Shabbat observance and immense joy of the day.

It was the great Jewish American psychologist Erich Fromm who wrote: "One might ask if it is not time to re-establish the [traditional] Shabbat as a universal day of harmony and peace, as the human day that anticipates the human future."

We should therefore look for ways by which the less observant can have a greater taste of this breathtaking day, and offer them this opportunity by making it easier for them to participate in its holiness .

*After I wrote my essay Judaism: Thinking Big (TTP 374), which was published in newspapers and journals that were looking for "bold ideas" within Judaism, I was asked to give some practical examples. This is the first essay to do so. Whenever time permits in the coming year, I will try to provide more examples.*

*\* With many thanks to my dear friend and great halachic authority, Rabbi Moshe Shamah, rabbi of the Sephardic Institute in the Syrian Community of Brooklyn, who brought these sources to my attention. Not all authorities agree with the Ben Ish Chai. For an excellent overview of all opinions, see the Or Hadarom Journal, Volume 6, Summer 5749/1989. Chacham Ovadia Yosef z"l seems to agree with the opinion of the Ben Ish Chai, but out of deference to those rabbis who were not comfortable with this ruling, he suggested that one should refrain from riding a bike. See his Leviyat Chen, 107. See also Kaf HaChayim, Orach Chayim, 404:8. There is much halachic literature on this topic. For more information write to: nlc@internet.zahav.net .*

Rabbi Dr. Nathan Lopes Cardozo, Founder and Dean of the David Cardozo Think Tank, is a prominent lecturer and author of many books and essays on Jewish Philosophy and Halachic renewal. He is world-renowned for his unique insights into Judaism. A native of the Spanish-Portuguese Jewish community of Holland who holds a Doctorate in Philosophy, Rabbi Lopes Cardozo received rabbinic ordination from Gateshead Talmudic College, England, and studied in Israel at several leading rabbinical institutions. His weekly Thoughts to Ponder can be obtained via [www.cardozoacademy.org/](http://www.cardozoacademy.org/)

---

## Rav Kook List

### Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

#### *Shlach: Rejecting the Land of Israel*

"And [the spies] began to speak badly about the land that they had explored." (Num. 13:32)

A dispirited discussion took place at Beit HaRav, Rav Kook's house in Jerusalem, not long after the end of World War II. The Chief Rabbi had passed away ten years earlier; now it was his son, Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook, who sat at the head of the table.

One participant at the Sabbath table had brought up a disturbing topic: the phenomenon of visitors touring Eretz Yisrael and then criticizing the country after returning to their homes. These visitors complain about everything: the heat, the poverty, the backwardness, the political situation - and discourage other Jews from moving here, he lamented.

Rav Tzvi Yehudah responded by telling over the following parable, one he had heard in the name of Rabbi Samuel Mohilever, the rabbi of Bialystok.

#### The Failed Match

There was once a wealthy man who sought the hand of a certain young lady. She was the most beautiful girl in town, and was blessed with many talents and a truly refined character. Her family was not well-off, so they were eager about a possible match with the prosperous fellow.

The young woman, however, was not interested in the match. Rich or not, the prospective suitor was known to be coarse and ill-mannered. She refused to meet with him.

The father asked her to at least meet with the young man in their home, so as not to embarrass him. After all, one meeting doesn't obligate you to marry him! To please her father, the young woman agreed.

The following Sabbath afternoon, the fellow arrived at the house as arranged, and was warmly received by the father. Shortly afterwards, his daughter made her entrance. But her hair was uncombed, and she wore a faded, crumpled dress and shabby house slippers. Appalled at her disheveled appearance, it did not take long before the young man excused himself and made a hurried exit.

What everyone says about this girl - it's not true, exclaimed the astonished young man to his friends. She's hideous!

Rav Tzvi Yehudah stopped briefly, surveying the guests seated around the table. Superficially, it would appear that the brash young fellow had rejected the young woman. But in fact, it was she who had rejected him.

The same is true regarding the Land of Israel, the rabbi explained. Eretz Yisrael is a special land, only ready to accept those who are receptive to its unique spiritual qualities. The Land does not reveal its inner beauty to all who visit. Not everyone is worthy to perceive its special holiness.

It may appear as if the dissatisfied visitors are the ones who reject the Land of Israel, he concluded. But in fact, it is the Land that rejects them!

A thoughtful silence pervaded the room. Those present were stunned by the parable and the rabbi's impassioned delivery. Then one of the guests observed, Reb Tzvi Yehudah, your words are suitable for a son of your eminent father, may his memory be a blessing!

#### Seeing the Goodness of Jerusalem

Rav Tzvi Yehudah's response was indeed appropriate for Rav Kook's son. When visitors from outside the country would approach the Chief Rabbi for a blessing, Rav Kook would quote from the Book of Psalms, "May God bless you from Zion" (128:5).

Then he would ask: What exactly is this blessing from Zion? In fact, the content of the blessing is described in the continuation of the verse: "May you see the goodness of Jerusalem."

The rabbi would explain: The verse does not say that one should merit seeing Jerusalem; but that one should merit seeing 'the goodness of Jerusalem.' Many people visit Jerusalem. But how many of them merit seeing the inner goodness hidden in the holy city?

And that, he concluded, is God's special blessing from Zion.

(Stories from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Malachim Kivnei Adam, pp. 227-278, 230)

Comments and inquiries may be sent to: [mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com](mailto:mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com)

---

## This is the Way We Bake Our Bread! – Some Practical Questions about Hilchos Challah

### By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

*Shaylah #1:* Mrs. Ginsburg calls me with the following question:

"I like to separate *challah* with a *bracha*, but I do not have a bowl big enough to hold the minimum amount of dough necessary. Instead, I have been mixing the dough in two bowls, and draping a cloth over them. Someone told me that this is not a satisfactory method of combining the doughs and that I have been reciting invalid *brachos* as a result. What is the correct way to separate *challah*?"

*Shaylah #2:* Mrs. Bracha, Mrs. Ginsburg's friend, was curious why Mrs. Ginsburg was trying to combine her two doughs. "After all, let her just 'take *challah*' on each bowl separately. Why all this hassle?" Which of the two good ladies is correct?

*Shaylah #3:* In preparation for *Shalach Manos*, Mrs. Lowenstein bakes her *challahs* in small batches and placing them in the freezer. Should she separate *challah* from them?

#### AM I BAKING CHALLAH OR "TAKING" CHALLAH?

In the last question, I used the word *challah* to mean two completely different things – our special Shabbos bread, and the consecrated portion

that we separate from dough. Indeed, a very strange misnomer has occurred in both Yiddish and English that often creates confusion. Whenever someone mixes a large dough or batter intending to bake it, he or she is required to separate a special portion called *challah*. In the time of the *Beis Hamikdash*, a generous portion was separated from each dough and given to a *kohen*.

Since the *challah* had special sanctity, only a *kohen* or his family could eat it and only when they were *tahor*. Today, since we are all *tamei* and cannot rid ourselves of this *tumah*, no one may eat the *challah*; therefore, we separate a small piece, which we burn or dispose of respectfully.

On the other hand, the word *challah* also came to refer to our special Shabbos bread. To avoid confusion, I will refer to the special Shabbos bread as “bread,” rather than *challah*, and the word “*challah*” will refer to the consecrated portion separated from dough or bread to fulfill the mitzvah.

Indeed, it is a very important mitzvah for a woman to bake bread for Shabbos, rather than purchase it from a bakery (*Bi'ur Halacha, Orach Chayim* 242 s.v. *vehu*), and it is an even bigger mitzvah to bake enough to separate *challah* with a *bracha* (*Rama, Orach Chayim* 242). However, as we will see in discussing the questions mentioned above, observing these mitzvos correctly can sometimes become complicated.

The Torah teaches us the mitzvah of *challah* in *Parshas Shlach* (*Bamidbar* 15:18-21). I quote some of the *pesukim*:

(18) *Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, upon your entry to the land that I am bringing you there.*

(19) *And it will be when you eat from the bread of the land, that you should consecrate a special portion for Hashem's sake.*

(20) *The first of your kneading bowls is challah; you should consecrate it, just as you consecrate part of your grain.*

Note that *Pasuk* 19 refers to separating *challah* when you eat **bread**, whereas *Pasuk* 20 mentions taking *challah* from your **kneading bowls**. This leads us to a question: Why does the Torah tell us to separate *challah* from bread if we already separated *challah* when we were kneading it? The two references imply that sometimes we must separate *challah* when kneading dough, whereas at other times we are not obligated to do so until it is already bread. Stay tuned to find out how this applies.

## HOW TO SEPARATE

Before answering Mrs. Ginsburg's question, we need to explain the basic method of *challah* taking.

The simplest method of separating *challah* is as follows:

1. Separate a piece of the dough that will become the *challah* portion, but do not intend that it become *challah*, yet. The custom is that the piece should be at least as large as a small olive (*Rama, Yoreh Deah* 322:5).

2. Touch the piece to the rest of the dough.

3. Recite the *bracha* *Asher kideshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu lihafrish challah*. Many people have the custom of adding the words *min ha'isah* to the end of the *bracha*. (Others end the *bracha* with the words *lehafrish terumah, lehafrish terumah challah, or lehafrish terumas challah* instead of *lehafrish challah*.)

4. Declare that the piece is *challah*. If saying this part in Hebrew, simply say “*Harei zu challah*.” One can just as easily say in English: “This is *challah*.” Technically, one does not need to declare the portion *challah* verbally; it is sufficient to simply decide which piece becomes *challah*. (This last case is useful when someone serves you bread or cake and you are uncertain whether *challah* was separated. Simply have in mind now to designate part of the bread as *challah* and leave that part uneaten.)

5. One should treat the separated portion, which is now *challah*, as non-kosher and destroy it. One may wrap it up carefully in two layers of aluminum foil and burn it in one's oven or on top of the stove. In our ovens, one may burn the *challah* while using the oven for cooking or baking, so long as one is careful that it does not unwrap. Even if it does unwrap, it will not prohibit anything baked in the oven at the same time; however, if it touches the oven itself, that part of the oven will require kashering. Because of the latter concern, some people prefer to wrap the

*challah* carefully and respectfully place it in the garbage rather than burn it.

## MINIMUM AMOUNTS

To answer Mrs. Ginsburg's question how she should separate *challah*, we must first appreciate that there is no mitzvah to take *challah* if one is baking only a small amount of dough. Referring back to our *pasuk*, we will see why this is true.

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) tells us that each individual gathered one *omer* of *man* each day in the Desert. Since the “bowl” used by the Jews in the Desert contained one *omer*, we know that this is the size bowl that the Torah is describing.

How big is an *omer*? The Torah (*Shemos* 16:36) teaches that this was one-tenth the size of an *efah*, but that does not help us if we do not know the size of an *efah*. The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Deah* 324:1) rules that an *omer* contains 43.2 eggs. By the way, the *gematria* of the word *challah* is 43, and the last letter of *challah* is a *hei*, whose *gematria* is five. This is a good way to remember that the minimum size of separating *challah* is a dough made from flour whose volume is 43 and 1/5 eggs (*Shach, Yoreh Deah* 324:2).

However, today we are uncertain how much dough this means, since eggs vary tremendously in size. For our purposes, I am suggesting an estimate. We will assume that less than eight cups of flour does not require separating *challah*, and that one should not recite a *bracha* before separating *challah* unless one uses at least five pounds of flour. Any amount in between requires separating *challah*, but without reciting a *bracha*. These figures are estimates and your *rav* may give you different amounts.

If you ask me why I gave the first measurement in cups and the second in pounds, the answer is very simple. Cups are a less accurate measure than pounds, but more commonly used. If a woman knows that every time she uses eight cups of flour she should take *challah* without a *bracha*, she is unlikely to miss taking *challah* when necessary. On the other hand, a *bracha* requires a more accurate measure, and most *poskim* rule that a *bracha* is recited only over a dough made from five pounds or more of flour (although many *poskim* one should recite a *bracha* even if using less).

## WHY SEPARATE CHALLAH WITHOUT A BRACHA?

One recites the *bracha* only when certain that the dough is large enough to fulfill the mitzvah. If the batch is too small to fulfill the mitzvah, then a *bracha* would be *levatalah*, in vain. On the other hand, if one is required to separate *challah*, then one may not eat the bread without separating *challah*. Since it is uncertain exactly how much flour requires *challah*, we separate *challah* without a *bracha* on any dough that is questionable whether it is large enough to require *challah*.

Preferably, one should recite a *bracha* before performing a mitzvah. Therefore, it is preferred to make a batch large enough to separate *challah* with a *bracha*. However, if one does not need such a large amount and it will go to waste, one should make a smaller dough and separate *challah* without a *bracha* (assuming that the batch contains at least eight cups of flour). It is preferable to bake fresh bread for every Shabbos rather than bake a double-batch one week and freeze half for the next week, unless the frozen bread tastes as good as the fresh variety.

We have now answered *Shaylah* #2, the dispute between Mrs. Bracha and Mrs. Ginsburg whether one should try to combine doughs to recite a *bracha* on the mitzvah. Indeed, one should.

Furthermore, one may not deliberately make small doughs in order to avoid taking *challah* (*Pesachim* 48b; *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah* 324:14). Therefore, someone making small batches should combine them into one larger batch in order to fulfill the mitzvah.

## BATCHING TOGETHER

How does one combine different batches of dough or bread?

There are two general ways to combine different doughs into one “batch” in order to perform the mitzvah of separating *challah*. The first is by actually combining two doughs together; the second is by using a vessel to combine doughs or breads into what is now considered to be one batch.

#### HOW DO WE COMBINE DOUGHS?

One can combine two doughs by touching them together sufficiently that parts of one dough will join the other dough when separating them (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 325:1 and Taz*). This sticking together is enough to make the different batches considered as one.

Thus, Mrs. Ginsburg could combine her two doughs by placing the doughs together until they actually stick together. Although this is often a simple way to combine two doughs, Mrs. Ginsburg pointed out that this approach is impractical when her doughs are mixed in two separate bowls. However, a simple solution is to wait until after the doughs rise and then to place them both on the board or tray for braiding. At this point, she should touch the doughs together until they stick to one another and become considered one dough.

“Does this mean that I can never take *challah* until my dough is removed from the bowls?” asked Mrs. Ginsburg. “I would prefer to separate *challah* while the dough is still in the bowl.”

Indeed, there are two possible ways she could take *challah* from the dough while it is still in the bowl, although each approach has its potential drawbacks.

A. If the dough rises in the bowls until it is high enough that one can touch the two doughs together, one may separate *challah* from one dough for both of them after sticking the two together. Of course, this is only possible if both doughs rise until they are higher than the top of the bowl.

B. A second approach involves placing the two bowls in a sheet or tablecloth in a way that the two bowls are touching while inside the sheet or cloth (*Mishnah Berurah 457:7*). Then fold the sheet or cloth over the bowls until it covers the doughs, even partially. I will explain shortly why this combines the doughs together. For reasons beyond the scope of this article, I prefer method “A” to method “B.”

#### HOW DO WE BATCH BREADS?

Another method of combining either dough or bread from small batches into one large batch in order to fulfill the mitzvah of *challah* is to place them together in a basket or other vessel (*Mishnah Challah 2:4; Pesachim 48b*).

Why does a basket make two or more different batches into one batch? Refer back to the *pesukim* that I quoted earlier:

*Pasuk 19: And it will be when you eat from the bread of the land, that you should consecrate a special portion for Hashem’s sake.*

*Pasuk 20: The first of your kneading bowls is challah; you should consecrate it just as you consecrate part of your grain.*

I noted above that *Pasuk 19* refers to separating *challah* when you eat bread, whereas *Pasuk 20* mentions taking *challah* from your kneading bowls, which implies that we already separated *challah* when it was dough. Why does the Torah teach us to separate *challah* from bread, when we already separated *challah* when it was being kneaded? The answer is that sometimes a dough is too small to require separating *challah*, but placing the baked bread (from two or more such doughs) in a basket will create a batch large enough to perform the mitzvah!

#### AN EXCEPTION -- A MIX THAT DOES NOT WORK

If one does not want to combine two doughs, for example, if one dough is whole wheat flour and the other is white, or one is bread dough and the other pastry, then putting them together by touching or placing the two batches in one bowl does not accomplish making them into one batch for *challah* purposes (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 326:1*). These batches remain separate, unless one actually mixes the two doughs together. Thus, even if one touched together *hamantashen* dough with bread dough and the two, together, have the requisite amount to separate *challah*, they are not considered one dough for *challah* purposes.

At this point, we can answer Mrs. Ginsburg’s *shaylah*, about combining two batches of dough mixed in separate bowls. I have suggested two methods whereby one can combine the two batches into a five-pound batch and recite a *bracha* before the separating:

1. Take the different doughs and touch them together until the edges stick to one another. Do this either while the dough is in bowls or any time afterwards, before the bread is baked.

2. Place the doughs or breads together inside one basket, cloth, or vessel. Since they are all inside one container, this combines them into one batch. Preferably, the dough or breads should all touch one another (*Mishnah Berurah 457:7*).

We can now analyze Mrs. Lowenstein’s question whether her freezer combines the breads into one batch that requires her to separate *challah*.

#### DOES ANY VESSEL COMBINE BREAD INTO ONE BATCH?

Previously, we discussed how one can combine two batches together for mitzvas *challah* by placing them into one basket. Does putting breads or *hamantashen* from many small batches into the freezer together create a mitzvah of separating *challah*?

The *Gemara (Pesachim 48b)* teaches that a table with a rim around it combines small batches of bread together to create a mitzvah of *challah*. Thus, it seems that a basket is simply an example. However, many *rishonim* imply that the mitzvah of *challah* is created by a vessel only while in the process of baking bread, but not afterwards (*Rashi, Pesachim 48b; She’iltos #73; see Eimek Shei’lah* who explains these opinions meticulously). However, the *Rosh (Beitzah 1:13)* implies that if a large quantity of already baked bread is mistakenly placed into one vessel, it will become obligated in *challah* at this point; therefore, he recommends combining all the doughs together earlier and separating *challah*. *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 457:1)* implies that he rules like the first opinion, unlike the *Rosh*.

Although some *poskim* suggest that a freezer will combine just as a basket combines, most contemporary *poskim* rule that this is not a concern, for a variety of reasons. These reasons include:

- 1) This takes place long after you finished making the bread.
- 2) You have no intent to combine the doughs together.
- 3) A freezer may not be considered a vessel at all, because of its size and weight.
- 4) The doughs are all bagged before they are placed inside the freezer (see *Machazeh Eliyahu #111; Shu’t Nimla Tal*).

We can now answer questions 1 and 3 that we posed at the beginning.

1) One should indeed try to combine different batches of dough or bread in order to separate *challah* from them, and in order to be able to recite the *bracha*.

3) Although a vessel or tablecloth will combine different doughs into *challah*, a freezer does not create a concern that requires separating *challah*, nor does it combine batches for *challah* taking.

Having discussed the *halachic* details of this mitzvah, it is worthwhile taking 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.

---

#### **Ask The Rabbi: Can The Chief Rabbinate Force Rabbi Riskin To Retire?**

**By Rabbi Shlomo Brody**  
**June 11, 2015 Thursday 24 Sivan 577**  
**The Jerusalem Post - Israel News**

The ongoing disgraceful attempt by figures within the Chief Rabbinate to remove Rabbi Shlomo Riskin as Efrat’s chief rabbi has triggered justified condemnation from many quarters.

Frustrated by Riskin’s challenges to its rulings regarding conversion and other matters, the council announced it will review whether he can

continue to serve in his post past the age of 75. Legally, city rabbis elected after the year 2007 may continuously serve until age 70 and have their tenure extended to 75, while rabbis appointed before that year (including Riskin) may serve until 75 with an optional extension to age 80.

In practice, municipal rabbis have received automatic extensions – as in the case of Tel Aviv Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau (who is 78), father of current Chief Rabbi David Lau.

The attempt to capriciously deploy this law, for ideological reasons, against Rabbi Riskin is an outrage – especially given his continued robustness in faithfully serving his community.

Nonetheless, the affair does raise the opportunity to review halachic stances regarding mandatory retirement ages.

This is a particularly important question in our era of increased longevity, which can facilitate the continued service of elderly figures who might display great vitality (think Shimon Peres) or suffer from failing health (as Pope Benedict XVI recognized about himself).

In a particularly poignant Talmudic passage, the Sages passionately debated the potential impact of aging on scholars. In the Bible, Barzilai the Gileadite refused King David's offer to move to Jerusalem as a privileged pensioner, citing his old age. "I am 80 years old today. Can I distinguish between good and bad?" The Sages creatively interpreted Barzilai's lament as referring to his rational faculty, which could no longer properly distinguish between the sensible and foolish.

This sentiment drew a sharp response from other sages, who accused Barzilai of distorting the situation while averring that his own physical weakness stemmed from a life steeped in fornication. The Talmud further asserted, "The older Torah scholars become, the greater wisdom increases within them." Yet the same passage also cites numerous examples of the physical and emotional toll which old age can take on elderly scholars.

Fears of the waning strength of spiritual leaders might have prompted the Torah's mandate that Levites serving in the Temple must retire at the age of 50. Yet the Sages limited this rule to the era of the desert wanderings, in which the Levites required strength to transport the Tabernacle. Once the Temple found a permanent home, a Levite could remain in service until his vocal cords could no longer harmoniously sing; even then, he could continue to serve on guard duty or in advisory roles. Kohanim, by contrast, were not given age limits, but according to the Sages, were required to step down once they had physically aged, as signified by a tremble or an inability to stand on one leg while tying their shoes.

Accordingly, one basic requirement for elderly spiritual leaders is that they maintain the physical strength to perform their fundamental roles; otherwise, they must accept more limited responsibilities. But it remains difficult to quantify the appropriate physical criterion, especially regarding spiritual figures whose primary roles might include informal teaching and moral guidance.

A second text addresses whether old age impairs the judgment of senior jurists.

The Sages ruled that ideally, one should not become a judge until they have sufficiently aged. Yet they also declared that one who has become "very elderly" may no longer hear cases regarding capital crimes. Following a general trend to prevent the overuse of the death penalty, the Sages required that a judge possess the sensitivity to view the defendant mercifully. They feared that an elderly judge might have lost his merciful "fatherly" touch because he had forgotten the difficulty of raising children, or that alternatively, his old age may make him impatient and mean-spirited.

Citing this passage, former chief rabbi Yitzhak Nissim (d. 1981) suggested that the rabbinate could embrace the mandatory retirement age for Israel's civil servants on the condition that both state and society would provide them with proper pensions and honorary roles. Others scoffed at the suggestion, contending this passage was legally irrelevant because it only applied to courts adjudicating on capital matters and that Jews had historically allowed their spiritual leaders to serve until they saw fit. They cited a halachic principle which asserts that absent sinful behavior, one may only promote – but never demote – a spiritual figure (ma'alim

bakodesh ve'ein moridin). This principle was intended to protect the dignity of a dedicated leader who may suffer from grave social disgrace.

Some decisors, however, have responded that this concern is irrelevant when the initial appointment was made under defined employment conditions, and especially when everyone understands that officials must retire at some age. Nissim, moreover, contended that this principle would certainly not be a factor when the leader's physical conditions did not allow him to fully fulfill his work responsibilities.

These Talmudic passages highlight the dilemma facing our society, which is blessed with many aging leaders. We want them to serve in health and vigor, but also to find alternative contributing roles when their energy wanes and the times arises for them to pass on the torch in a manner that dignifies them, their successors and the community.

Israeli society must think carefully about this dilemma – but only in an objective, even-handed manner, and not as a guise toward removing a beloved and vigorous spiritual leader. ■ The writer directs the Tikvah Overseas Seminars for yeshiva and midrasha students, and is a junior research fellow at the Israeli Democracy Institute. His first collection of these columns, *A Guide to the Complex (Maggid)*, won a 2014 National Jewish Book Award.

*Facebook.com/RabbiShlomoBrody*

Copyright © 2014 Jpost Inc.

---

## **Halacha Hotline of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway**

### ***Enhance Your Shabbos Table with the Halacha Hotline: Parshas Shelach***

#### ***When Drinking Water Requires No B'rachah***

Chazal[1] instituted reciting b'rachos on food and beverages for all situations in which one derives pleasure from ingestion of such items. Indeed, one is forbidden to derive pleasure from this world (by ingesting food or beverages, or smelling aromatic substances) without first reciting a b'rachah rishonah[2] (see Berachos 35a). Water is a unique beverage in that it has almost no taste, yet it quenches thirst like no other drink. The Mishnah (Berachos 44a) rules that one who drinks water because one is thirsty recites the b'rachah rishonah of shehakol nih'yeh bidvaro. The Gemara (ibid. 44b-45a) explains that the ruling of the Mishnah excludes a case in which one drinks the water because one is choking on a piece of meat. In such a case, since one drinks the water for a purpose other than because one is thirsty, one does not recite a b'rachah rishonah before drinking.

Tosafos (ad loc. s.v. D'chanaktei) write that this distinction between drinking to alleviate thirst and drinking for some other purpose applies only with regard to water, for one is considered to have derived pleasure when drinking water only when one drinks it to alleviate one's thirst, [since it is essentially tasteless].[3] When one ingests other types of beverages, however, one's body [4]derives pleasure irrespective of one's intent in drinking [due to their enjoyable taste]. Accordingly, one must recite a b'rachah rishonah before partaking of other types of beverages irrespective of one's reason for drinking them.[5] This distinction is recorded in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 204:7-8 and Mishnah Berurah 204:42-43.

The Mishnah Berurah (204:40, with Sha'ar Hatziyun #34) asserts that even if one does not think one is thirsty, if one derives pleasure from the water on one's palate when one drinks it, one is presumed to be thirsty, and thus recites a b'rachah. Thus, if one thought one was not thirsty and began to drink without reciting a b'rachah and then discovered that one's palate derived pleasure from the drinking, one must recite a b'rachah before drinking more of the water.

The halacha that one who drinks water for purposes other than to alleviate one's thirst is not limited to the case stated in the Gemara- in which one wishes to drink because one is choking. Rather, it applies whenever one drinks water for some purpose other than to alleviate one's thirst.[6] It is important to note, however, that if one is even slightly thirsty - such that one actually derives pleasure from the drinking, one must recite a b'rachah

rishonah before drinking the water, even if the primary reason for drinking is for some purpose other than to alleviate one's thirst (M.B. 204:40,42).[7]

The following is a sampling of cases in which one need not recite a b'rachah rishonah before drinking water:

Drinking water to help one swallow a pill.

Drinking water to help one alleviate a coughing fit.

Drinking water to help stuck food make its way down one's esophagus.[8]

Drinking water to alleviate a burning sensation in one's mouth after eating very spicy food.

Drinking water to help satisfy the requirements of a nutrition plan - if one is not thirsty.

Drinking extra water (when no longer thirsty) before the onset of a fast day to hydrate oneself before the fast (Da'as Torah O.C. 204:7).

Drinking water due to halachic considerations - if one is not thirsty (see note).[9]

The following additional points should be noted:

1) In any case in which one is not required to recite a b'rachah for drinking water, one may not recite the b'rachah (i.e., reciting the b'rachah is not optional).

2) When halacha states that no b'rachah rishonah is recited, neither is the b'rachah acharonah (after-blessing) of borei nefashos recited after drinking (S"A O.C. 204:7).

[1] Our Sages, may their memories be blessed.

[2] Blessing before eating or drinking.

[3] Tosafos elaborate: Although the person surely benefits from the drinking of the water by virtue of his ceasing to choke, that is not a type of benefit that necessitates reciting a b'rachah rishonah on water.

[4] I.e., one's palate (see M.B. 204:40).

[5] Thus, one who drinks apple juice (for example) to help swallow a pill must first recite a b'rachah rishonah (and a b'rachah acharonah afterwards- if one drank the required amount; see note 7). The same ruling applies for any beverage that has a neutral taste. If, however, a beverage has an offensive taste and one drinks it (for example) for medicinal reasons, one does not recite a b'rachah rishonah or a b'rachah acharonah (M.B. 204:43, with Sha'ar Hatziyun #37).

[6] There is a dispute among the Poskim (halachic authorities) whether one should recite a b'rachah if one is not thirsty but drinks cold water on a hot day merely to cool oneself; see Dirshu Mishnah Berurah n.e. 204:7 note 26. There is a dispute also whether one should recite a b'rachah if one is not thirsty but drinks unflavored

seltzer and enjoys the sensation of the bubbles in one's mouth; see Dirshu Mishnah Berurah n.e. 204:7 note 27.

[7] And if one drinks a sufficient amount of water in the correct time-frame, one must recite also a b'rachah acharonah (after-blessing). See S"A 612:10 with M.B. 612:31; see also M.B. end of 271:68 with Sha'ar Hatziyun #69.

[8] Bi'ur Halacha ad loc. s.v. chanaktei umtzah.

[9] One example: If one ate a small amount of food but is not sure if one ate a k'zayis (olive size) - the amount required to recite a b'rachah acharonah, the halacha is that one does not recite the b'rachah acharonah, due to the principle of safeik b'rachos l'hakeil (we refrain from reciting b'rachos in cases of doubt). If one has no more of the original food to eat to satisfy the shi'ur (proper amount), it is a meritorious practice to eat a sufficient amount of a different food that has the same b'rachah acharonah, and recite the b'rachah acharonah on the second food and have in mind the first food as well. Thus, if one ate a small amount of apple and is not sure if it was a k'zayis, one should (for example) drink a revi'is of a beverage, and make the b'rachah acharonah of borei nefashos on the beverage, having in mind the apple as well. However, one who wishes to employ this strategy by drinking water would be able to do so only if one is thirsty. One who is not thirsty may not drink the water for the purpose of employing this strategy, since one may not make a b'rachah rishonah or b'rachah acharonah on water if one is not thirsty (Bi'ur Halacha 204:7 s.v. hashoseh mayim litzma'o).

A second, interesting example: A sotah (faithless wife) who drinks the mayim ham'or'im (cursed waters); see Bamidbar 5:22. These waters are referred to also as "mei hamarim" (the bitter waters); see ibid. verse 18. According to some commentators, the waters actually tasted bitter. Accordingly, she would certainly not recite a b'rachah rishonah before drinking them, since the taste is offensive (see note 5). Even according to the Ramban (ad loc.), who explains that the water is not actually bitter when it enters her body, she would still not recite a b'rachah, since she is drinking the water because of a Torah mandate, not because she is thirsty. [It would seem that if she were actually thirsty, according to the Ramban she should recite a b'rachah since the waters are not bitter, whereas according to the other commentators she should not recite a b'rachah.] (See also Rema O.C. 204:8; cf. M.B. 204:45.)

See also Bi'ur Halacha ibid. for yet another example.

**DISCLAIMER:** Not all details and aspects of the question and answer can be fully expressed in this limited format. Accordingly, one should not rely on the information herein for their specific case as a small change in the circumstances can change the halachic outcome.

---

Please address all comments and requests to [Hamelaket@Gmail.com](mailto:Hamelaket@Gmail.com)