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Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Parshat Re'eh 5765

TORAH WEEKLY—Parshat Re'eh
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OVERVIEW

Moshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from Hashem. When the nation enters Eretz Yisrael they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. Hashem will choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there; not to a private altar. Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the Mishkan, but in Eretz Yisrael meat may be shechted anywhere. Moshe lists the categories of food that may only be eaten in Jerusalem. He warns the nation against copying ways of the other nations. Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added or subtracted from it. If a “prophet” tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death. One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to death. A city of idolatry must be razed. It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot. Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk. Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor. Bnei Yisrael are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted—Hashem will bless the person in all ways. A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an awl at the door post and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee year. The Parsha ends with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot.

INSIGHTS

In G-d We Trust

“...You shall open your hand to your brother, to your poor, and to your destitute in your Land.” (15:11)

Sign seen hanging in a store:

“In God we trust, everyone else pays cash.”

A philosopher once asked Rabban Gamliel, “Your Torah commands you over and over again to give charity, and to not be afraid of it affecting your financial security. Isn’t such a fear natural? How can a person give away his money without worrying that perhaps he should have saved it for a “rainy day”?”

Rabban Gamliel asked him, “If someone asked you for a loan, would you agree?”

“Depends on who that someone is,” replied the philosopher. “If it’s someone I didn’t know, then yes, I would be afraid of losing my money.”

“What if he had guarantors?” asked Rabban Gamliel.

“Well, if I knew I could rely on them, I would agree.”

“How about if the guarantor was the President, how would you feel about that?”

“Well, of course, in those circumstances I would have total confidence that I’d get my money back.”

“When someone gives charity” said Rabban Gamliel, “he’s actually extending a loan to the “President” of the Universe. It says in the book of Mishlei (Proverbs) “One who gives graciously to the poor extends, as it were, a loan to G-d, Who will pay back all that is due.”

G-d pays us back in this world by making sure we get back what we ‘loaned’ Him. And, in the next world, we get the full reward for our ‘loan.’

No one is as trustworthy as G-d; if He guarantees to return our money, why should anyone have the slightest hesitation in giving charity?”

Based on the Midrash

“RavFrand” List - Parshas Reeh

A Spoon and a Handle

“For you shall surely open your hand to him.” (Devarim 15:8)

First, the Torah tells us (15:7), “If there be a pauper among you, one of your brethren, in one of your gateways in your land that God your Lord has given you, do not harden your heart nor close your hand tight against your impoverished brother.” This is clearly telling us to give charity to the poor person. Then the Torah continues, “For you shall surely open your hand to him and provide him with the necessities he is missing.” This seems to call for a higher level of charity not covered by the first commandment.

There was once a Jew in Vilna who took a great interest in local history. In the course of his research, he would often go out to the old cemetery and read the inscriptions on the tombstones. He was able to gather a surprising amount of information in this fashion.

One day, he came across two adjacent graves. According to the inscriptions, the two men were brothers, both talmidei chachamim, both extraordinary baalei tzedakah, philanthropists. Strangely, the two tombstones shared an inscription from Eishes Chayil, the last chapter of Mishlei (31:20). The inscription began on one tombstone with “she extended her palm (kappah) to the poor” and was completed on the other with “and she stretched out her hand (yadeha) to the pauper.”

The man was puzzled. First of all, he had never seen an inscription shared by two tombstones. Second, inscriptions from Eishes Chayil were used almost exclusively for women. There was obviously a story behind all this, and by all appearances, an interesting story. The man sought out one of the oldest men in the Vilna community and asked him about the inscription. The old man indeed had a story to tell.

These two brothers were Torah scholars of the highest order, and they were also wealthy and extremely generous in their charities. They were much respected and admired in the community.

Suddenly, their fortunes took a turn for the worse. Some of their businesses failed. Their investments stagnated. People began to wonder and whisper. Why would such a thing happen to such sterling people?

The Rabbinical Court of Vilna also heard the stories and took the matter under advisement. “How can this be,” declared one of the judges, “that two such exemplary talmidei chachamim should be going bankrupt? It is a chillul Hashem! We have to do something about it.”

“But what can we do about it?” asked another judge. “Should we give them a loan?”

“No, of course not,” said the first judge. “We have to get to the bottom of this and correct it.”

“But how?” said the second judge.

“There is a simple way,” offered a third judge. “We have to summon the brothers to court and interrogate them about everything they’ve done for the past few years. I have no doubt they will answer our questions truthfully.”

The Rabbinical Court questioned the brothers for hours and discovered only one instance of wrongdoing. The Halachah demands (Kesubos 50a) that a person should not give away more than a fifth of his wealth to charity, but the brothers often exceeded this limit. Their only crime was that they gave too much charity!

What was to be done about this? The Rabbinical Court decided that the brothers could not be trusted to stay within the prescribed limits. Therefore, they themselves took control of the finances and decreed that anyone approaching the brothers for charitable donations should come to the Rabbinical Court's appointed administrator of the brothers' accounts. The poor appeared on the doorstep of the brothers, and they duly directed them to the court-appointed administrator of their accounts.

"We've been to him already," they protested, "and he is not nearly as generous as you've always been. We'll never feed our children on what the administrator gives us."

The brothers' hearts melted, but what could they do? They didn't have control of their money. So they began to give away the silver in their cabinets to the poor. Eventually, this trove was also depleted, and they were left with one silver spoon between them.

The next day, when a beggar approached each of the brothers, they broke the last spoon in half. One took the spoon part and gave it to a beggar, and the other took the handle and gave it to a beggar.

This wonderful act of charity was memorialized on their tombstones, relying on a wordplay. The beginning of the verse, "She extended her palm (kappah) to the poor" - kappah also meaning "her spoon" - appeared on the first tombstone. The completion of the verse, "And she stretched out her hand (yadeha) to the pauper" - yadeha also meaning "her handle" - appeared on the other.

This is an example of "opening the hand" of the highest order.

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

PARSHAS REEH

See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse. (11:26)

The Torah begins with the word, re'eh, see, written in the singular, and it concludes with the word, lifneichem, before you, written in the plural. Why is this? Horav Chaim, zl, m'Veermiza, brother of the Maharal, derives from here that if one has the opportunity to rebuke a group that will probably not listen to him, he should do so, regardless. This approach acknowledges the unlikely chance that even one person might be inspired, which would validate the effort. Moshe Rabbeinu spoke lifneichem to all of Klal Yisrael, but his words were actually addressed to the re'eh, each individual Jew. Success is measured with each individual. I must add, however, that one's goal should be to reach the masses, but, if he succeeds in reaching only one person, his efforts will have met with success. This reflects the value of each and every Jew.

Rabbi Akiva lost twelve-thousand pairs of students. Twenty-four thousand of the greatest Torah scholars in history were all gone. This would have devastated a lesser individual. Not Rabbi Akiva, the individual who rose from illiteracy to becoming one of the greatest Torah illuminaries that ever lived. He forged on and took five new talmidim, students. Through them, he perpetuated Torah knowledge. He realized the inestimable value of each individual student.

We live in an era in which success is measured by numbers. A successful school is a large school. A good yeshivah is a large yeshivah. This statement cannot be farther from the truth. While numbers might accrue to one's advantage, when he is fund-raising for his institution, his success is measured by each individual that he inspires.

Furthermore, one may not even notice the influence that he has had on the individual for quite some time. If the effect has been rendered, however, it will be recognized. In other words, our function is to do; Hashem will determine the success ratio of our endeavors.

When the Chafetz Chaim, zl, reached an advanced age, he became sickly and weak, and he hardly ever traveled. Once, Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, zl, the venerable rav of Vilna, asked the Chafetz Chaim to come to Vilna to give words of inspiration to bolster observance of the mitzvah of taharas ha'mishpachah, family purity. The Chafetz Chaim was already past the age of ninety, and his family felt that the trip would be a most difficult one for him to undertake. The Chafetz Chaim's response was unequivocal: "If Rav Chaim Ozer asks, then I must go."

The family did everything possible to prevent the sage from undertaking this major venture, but the Chafetz Chaim was determined and adamant; he was going. A throng of thousands of Jews met the gadol hador when he arrived. Friday night, he spoke to a group of 6,000 women. On Shabbos morning, there were over 6,000 men in the congregation. After the seudah, meal, Shabbos afternoon, many members of the community visited the Chafetz Chaim and asked for his blessings. One elderly Jew approached the Chafetz Chaim, and, after receiving his sage advice, asked for a blessing. The Chafetz Chaim then spent a few moments speaking with the man about emunah, faith, in Hashem. When the man left, the Chafetz Chaim remarked, "I think I reached him." Indeed, when the Chafetz Chaim returned home to Radin, he commented to a member of his family, "The entire trip was worth it, even if the only person that was inspired was the elderly Jew that came to see me in the afternoon." Success is measured with each Jew - one at a time.

You shall not add to it, and you shall not subtract from it. (13:1)

We are admonished neither to add to nor to subtract from the mitzvos that Hashem has given us. It certainly makes sense that subtracting mitzvos is a dangerous practice. In contrast, however, one would think that adding mitzvos is laudatory. Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, cites Horav Yosef Zundel, zl, m'Salant, a disciple of Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl, who related in the name of his rebbe, the Gaon, zl, m'Vilna, that any practice that is initiated "supposedly" for the purpose of increasing Torah observance and ethical/moral living, but does not succeed, is actually counter-productive. This practice, which ultimately usurps Torah authority and denigrates mitzvah observance, is actually coming to us via the guile of the yetzer hora, evil inclination. The yetzer hora makes every attempt to sway us to a life antithetical to Torah dictate, and, at times, even uses a mitzvah as a ploy to induce us to commit an aveirah. It will involve us in all forms of frumkeit, piety/observance, and chesed, acts of loving-kindness - as long as we do not study Torah. We can spend days looking for the perfect Esrog, but what about our seder, study period, for learning?

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai instructed his five greatest students, "Go out and see which is the best derech, approach, to life one should maintain." Why does he say, "Go out" ? Can this discussion not take place "inside" as well? No! Says Rav Chaim Volozhiner. The bais hamedrash is a place for learning - not discussions. When the talmidim, students, find themselves outside the four walls of the bais hamedrash with nothing to do, then, they should initiate this discussion. If it takes place in the hallowed halls of the bais hamedrash, it is the work of the yetzer hora.

In his inimitable manner, the Maggid, zl, m'Dubno uses an analogy to render a rationale for the prohibition against adding mitzvos. There was a man who would often borrow various utensils from his neighbor. One day, he borrowed a pot. The next day he returned two pots to his benefactor, claiming that the original pot, which he had borrowed, conceived and gave birth overnight. This went on for about two weeks. Whenever he borrowed a utensil, he would return two. Apparently, there was a population boom with regard to the man's utensils. We can be certain that the lender was very pleased with this arrangement. One day, the man came over and said, "Tonight, I am having a large dinner party. Regrettably, my house is not very well lit. Can I borrow your large golden candelabra?" "Certainly," the other man replied. "I will be happy to lend you my menorah." The dollar signs were already shining before his eyes as he conjured up images of another golden candelabra.

A few days passed, and the borrower did not return the candelabra. "Something must be wrong," the lender thought to himself. "The borrower has never been late with a payment. It just does not make sense." He decided to go to the lender's home and ask for his candelabra. The door to the home was opened by the borrower, who seemed to avoid his gaze. "Where is my candelabra? It is almost a week since you borrowed it," the lender asked.

"Oh, I am so sorry to inform you that your candelabra became ill and died," the borrower replied. "What? Why are you teasing me? You know that a candelabra does not die," the lender practically screamed back at him.

"You seemed to have no problem believing that inanimate utensils can give birth. Why do you not believe that they can also die?" the borrower smugly countered.

The lesson to be derived is very clear and simple. One who supplements a mitzvah, thinking foolishly that there is nothing wrong with increasing upon a mitzvah, might also one day, when confronted with a difficult mitzvah, decrease his mitzvah performance. After all, if one can add, why can he not similarly subtract?

If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or daughter, or the wife of your bosom, or your friend, who is like your own soul, will entice you secretly, saying, "Let us go and worship the gods of others. (13:7)

Rashi cites the Sifri that interprets the phrase, "your friend, who is like your own soul," as a reference to one's father. The other commentators do not seem to agree with this exposition. We wonder why the Torah would choose such a roundabout way of referring to one's father. Why not simply say - father? Horav Meir Chodosh, zl, explains that a father is not a meisis, seducer. A father is a mechanech, an educator. This father certainly is a terrible educator, but an educator he is. He educates either by example or by instruction. He either guides his son to continued spiritual growth, or he catalyzes his spiritual downfall. It all depends on how he educates him. The father's role in his son's life does not fall under the category of meisis. His function as the child's primary educator places him in a position in which what he does, or does not do, affects the child from an educational perspective.

A father's actions, his various activities, statements, mannerisms, allusions and innuendo, all leave a lasting impression on his child. His responsibility as a role model is awesome. When we look at the flip side, however, the side of positive instruction, care and sensitivity, we see the incredible reward and nachas one can derive.

You are children to Hashem, Your G-d. (14:1)

Our relationship with the Almighty is unique. His love for us is that of a father to his son. In the Talmud Kiddushin 36a, Rabbi Yehudah says that this relationship is based upon how we act. If we act as children towards a father, then Hashem will treat us as such. If we do not, we are not considered sons. Rabbi Meir disagrees, contending that the relationship of banim, sons, to Hashem, holds true regardless of the way we act. The Teshuvos HaRashba says that the halachic position remains with Rabbi Meir.

The Chida, zl, says that according to Rabbi Meir we must view every Jew as having a distinguished status. Regardless of one's background or position, he is Hashem's son, a position that is unparalleled and to be revered. The Arizal writes that in "recent" generations, the power of the sitra achara, "other" forces, the forces of tumah, spiritual contamination, have taken a greater hold on us. Therefore, the little that we do of a positive nature is valued by Hashem and considered on the level parallel of the Tanaim, sages of the Talmudic era. Thus, every Jew should be revered and treated as a king.

The Midrash Tanchuma attributes this distinction to one action on the part of Avraham Avinu. When he saw the Angels in the guise of Arabs coming towards his tent, he ran to them. Afterwards, when he went to prepare the meal for them, the Torah says that he ran to the cattle. In reward for the Patriarch's running, we, his descendants, maintain an eminent status. This is due to one positive action, one display of enthusiasm to perform Hashem's will.

We have no idea of the value of even one mitzvah and the esteem it holds in the eyes of Hashem. The following story gives us a window of insight into the value of a single mitzvah. In a resort hotel in Eretz Yisrael outside Yerushalayim, the mashgiach, Kosher supervisor, would see to it that there was a daily minyan for Minchah. It happened that one day he had a very difficult time completing the minyan. He decided to go outside in search of that elusive tenth man. He soon met a Jew who neither had a clue about what a minyan was nor about what the mashgiach wanted from him. After the mashgiach explained the significance of minyan and the incredible reward in store for those who participate in a minyan, the stranger acquiesced to be number ten.

He followed the mashgiach into the building and began walking up the stairs to the dining hall, where the minyan took place. Suddenly, the mashgiach was notified that the son of one of the worshippers had arrived, so that they now had a minyan. The mashgiach turned to the Jew who had only walked up the steps, and told him that their minyan problem had already been solved. He thanked him for his good intentions and bid him good day.

Ten years went by. One night? when the mashgiach was sleeping, he had a dream. In the dream, the man whom he had called in to be the tenth man appeared before him. His countenance shined brilliantly. The man related to him that he had passed from his earthly abode during the previous month: "I have come to thank you for attempting to include me in your minyan. You have no idea of the incredible spiritual reward I have received because of the three steps I walked up in order to complete the minyan." He added, "I have one favor to ask of you. I have one son who lives in Yerushalayim. He is non-observant. In fact, he is very estranged from a life of Torah and mitzvos. Please go and ask him to recite Kaddish for me. It will mean so much."

The mashgiach, of course, met with the son of the deceased and was successful in convincing him to say Kaddish for his late father. All of this was the result of three steps. Can we even begin to imagine the reward for complete mitzvah observance?

You shall open up your hand to him... and proved whatever is lacking to him. (15:8)

Avraham Avinu is known as the amud hachessed, pillar of kindness, having set the example and standard for his descendants to emulate. Indeed, more than simply being the model of chesed, he ingrained this character trait in the personality of his descendants. Jews are generous, caring and compassionate. Regardless of their religious affiliation and level of observance, this innate quality defines one's Jewishness and connection to the soul of the Jewish nation. Our people have always sought out opportunities to perform acts of kindness. In his Ahavas Chesed, the Chafetz Chaim emphasizes that it is not sufficient to merely help when one is needed. A Jew must go one step further: he must love chesed. This is an acquired trait that he develops. It is characterized by the individual's motivation to search for chesed opportunities, so that he can express his innate Jewish character. What better example than Avraham, who, after having undergone a painful Bris Milah at an advanced age, insisted on sitting at the door of his tent in the heat of the day, just so that he might be able to serve others?

In his Atarah L'Melech, recently translated by Rabbi Sholom Smith, Horav Avraham Pam, zl, insists that chesed be administered on an individual basis and catered specifically to the particular needs of the recipient. This idea is underscored by the Torah when it says, "You shall open up your hand... and provide whatever is lacking to him." The word "him" is used to highlight the importance of dealing with each person as an individual, not as a number.

Rav Pam expounds on the mitzvah of performing chesed. He explains that those who believe that an act of chesed requires one to expend a great deal of time or spend much money are mistaken. Those who think that performing chesed takes great talent are in error. Frequently, all a person needs in order to perform a service for another person is a good set of ears! Listening to an individual's plight, assuring him that he is not alone, that someone does care, can, at times, be more effective and meaningful than a check.

The pasuk in Mishlei 12:25 says, "When there is worry in a man's heart, he should suppress it." In the Talmud Yoma 75a, Chazal offer two distinct approaches toward addressing the challenges and anxieties that are so intrinsic to life. In some situations, one can overcome anxiety by focusing his mind on another matter. Another way is to share one's worry with a friend or anyone who will listen. When one offers a sympathetic ear, he can often perform a great chesed by alleviating someone's emotional burden. Often, this is the only relief one may experience from certain problems. The issues do not go away. The problems remain, but the person feels better just by having talked about it. The seemingly insignificant

gesture of simply listening, of being there for someone in need, helps to alleviate the awesome weight that he carries.

We live in times of advanced technology. Phones, cell-phones, electronic mail - everyone is seconds away. Yet, we fail to make that call which can mean so much to someone who is isolated. Lending a sympathetic ear is a great form of chesed. I may add that how we make the call carries great weight. When we call someone and are perceived as impatient, intimating that we have better things to do than to sit on the phone, it probably would have been better had we not called altogether. The way we have acted only adds to the hurt. This idea likewise applies to children that call their parents and are bored with the topics or interests that their parents have chosen to discuss. They quickly have forgotten when just a few years earlier, what was important to them had very little meaning for their parents. Yet, they listened. As we prepare ourselves for the Yemei HaDin, Days of Judgment, it would serve us well to spend a little of our "precious" time listening to others.

Va'ani Tefillah

Korbanos: Sacrifices

The Korbanos are divided into two categories: The highest level of sacrifice is Kodoshei Kodoshim. These Korbanos represent the loftiest level of kedushah, coinciding with the highest level of duty and commitment. Symbolically, they remind us that if one wants to draw near to Hashem, he must conjure up all physical aspects of his personality and dedicate his service to Hashem. It is for this reason that the Shechitah, slaughtering, and Kabbalah, acceptance of the blood, occurs on the tzafon, northern, side of the Mizbayach, the side where the Shulchan, Table, is situated. As mentioned before, this side represents the material and physical aspects of life. Included in the category of Kodoshei Kodoshim are: the Chataos, Sin-offerings, for sins of transgression; Olos, Burnt/Elevation offerings, brought for sins of omission; and Ashamos, Guilt-offerings, brought for wrongdoing. Two of the communal Korban Shelamim, Peace-offerings, the two sheep of Shavuos, are the only ones included in the Kodoshei Kodoshim. Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, explains that these two Korbanos are unique in their responsibility to remind Klal Yisrael of the blissful contentment one may achieve if he lives in accordance with the law of the Torah. Since these korbanos represent a goal not yet attained, they are included among the Kodoshei Kodoshim. The Shalmei Yachid, individual/private Peace-offerings, however, are Kodoshim Kalim, lesser level of kedushah, since they reflect the emotions of joy already attained.

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Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky - The Ultimate Joy

The mitzvah of simcha appears in parshas Re'eh in many different contexts.

The parsha begins with bringing korbanos to Yerushalayim and rejoicing by partaking of them with our families. Later in the parsha we are commanded to bring ma'aser sheini to Yerushalayim and to eat it b'simcha. Parshas Re'eh concludes with rejoicing on the shalosh regalim. As simcha is so integral to these various mitzvos, we must understand what the nature of simcha is.

The Torah constantly mentions simcha in the context of being lifnei Hashem - in the presence of Hashem (Devarim 12:7, 12:12, 15:26, 16:11). Rav Soloveitchik explains that there is an intrinsic connection between simcha and being in the presence of Hashem. It is being in the presence of Hashem that obligates us to rejoice. The visits to Yerushalayim for the shalosh regalim, eating korbanos, and ma'aser sheini are times when we are physically in the presence of Hashem. There are other times where we stand spiritually before Hashem and we are also required to be in a state of simcha. According to many opinions there is a mitzvah of simcha on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. It is for this reason that many of the laws of mourning are suspended during these days as they are during the shalosh regalim. Even though there is no requirement to visit the beis hamikdash or to eat korbanos on these days, the teshuva that we perform on Rosh

Hashaha and Yom Kippur places us spiritually lifnei Hashem and as such requires us to be in a state of joy.

The Rambam (Hil. Megillah 2:17) describes at length the highest level of simcha one can attain. On Purim we are required to fulfill three mitzvos to enhance the simcha of the day. We eat a festive meal, we send mishloach mannos and we give mattanos l'evyonim. Although each of these obligations is a part of the simcha of Purim, one should concentrate his time and resources primarily on mattanos l'evyonim. The Rambam explains that by doing so one follows in the ways of Hashem Who brings joy to those who are downtrodden. The ultimate expression of being in the presence of Hashem is to imitate Him. By assisting the poor we are not only enabling them to rejoice but we are enhancing our own simcha. By following the example of Hashem, we add another dimension to being lifnei Hashem.

The concluding pesukim of parshas Re'eh discuss simcha on the shalosh regalim. In terms of halachic practice, the obligation of simcha is equal on all of the regalim. Nevertheless, from the pesukim themselves it would appear that the Torah is differentiating between the regalim. On Pesach the mitzvah of simcha is not mentioned explicitly. Chazal derive its existence from the comparison of Pesach to the other regalim. Although simcha is mentioned on Shavuos, it only appears one time in the pesukim. On Succos we are commanded to rejoice and this mitzvah is repeated with the phrase "v'hoyisa ach someach". In Vayikra (23:40) we are commanded again to rejoice on Succos for seven days. It is this emphasis on simcha on Succos that led Chazal to define the essence of Succos as being zman simchaseinu. What is the significance of Succos being the highest expression of simcha?

Chazal compare our relationship with Hashem to a marriage. The shalosh regalim correspond to the three stages of celebration that accompany a wedding. The kiddushin is celebrated on Pesach as Hashem chose us to be His nation at this time. The nissuin took place on Shavuos, as Chazal compare ma'amad Har Sinai to a chuppah. Succos corresponds to the week of sheva berachos celebration. The simcha between a chassan and kallah barely begins at kiddushin, since the couple does not yet know each other as husband and wife. The simcha progresses slightly at the chuppah, but the true simcha only exists later as they become closer to one another. So too is our relationship with Hashem. On Pesach we have just met Hashem and our joy at being in His presence is limited. On Shavuos as we become closer our joy grows. Only once we are already in His presence, like a married husband and wife, is our joy complete. Only on Succos can the Torah emphasize simcha to such an extent that it defines the essence of the day.

Perhaps there is an additional dimension of Succos that brings an overflow of joy. Not only is Succos the culmination of the shalosh regalim, it is also the conclusion of the Yomim Noraim season. On Succos we celebrate the accomplishments of the Yomi Noraim. The most critical aspect of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is the renewal of our relationship with Hashem. The Rambam (Hil. Teshuva 7:7) describes the greatness of teshuva. Prior to teshuva a person is distant from Hashem. Teshuva brings him into the presence of Hashem. It is this realization that brings about the immense joy of Succos. Since simcha and lifnei Hashem go together, the closer we are to Hashem the more intense our simcha becomes. As we stand before Rosh Chodesh Elul looking forward to and preparing for the glorious days of chodesh Tishrei, let us set our goal to be coming closer to Hashem. Let us focus on spiritually being in His presence, following in His ways of bringing joy to others, and thereby merit to be lifnei Hashem in the physical sense as well, rejoicing in the beis hamikdash, b'meheira b'yamienu.

The Website of the Chief Rabbi

Sir Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

COVENANT AND CONVERSATION

3rd September 2005, 29th Av 5765

Re'eh

Charity as Justice

If you seek to understand Judaism's social vision, look at its anti-poverty legislation.

If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your G-d is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tight-fisted toward your poor brother. Rather be open-handed and freely lend him sufficient for his needs in that which he lacks. Be careful not to harbour this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for cancelling debts, is near," so that you do not show ill will toward your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your G-d will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open-handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land. (Deut 15: 7-11)

Ostensibly the passage is about the cancellation of debts in the seventh year (shemittah, the year of "release"). The oral tradition, however, extended it to the laws of tzedakah – the word usually translated as "charity" but which also means "distributive justice, equity". The rabbis interpreted the phrase "sufficient for his needs" to mean the basic requirements of existence: food, clothing, shelter and so on. "That which he lacks" was understood as referring to a person who was previously wealthy but has now become impoverished. He too must be helped to recover his dignity:

It is related about Hillel the Elder that, for a certain poor man who was of good family, he bought a horse to ride on and a slave to run before him. When on one occasion he could not find a slave to run before the man, he himself ran before him. (Ketubot 67b)

The force of this passage lies in the fact that Hillel himself was notoriously poor, yet he gave of his money and time to help a rich man who had lost his money regain his self-respect.

This double aspect is evident throughout the laws of tzedakah. On the one hand, they are directed to the brute fact of poverty. No one must be deprived of basic physical necessities. On the other, they address with astonishing sensitivity the psychology of poverty. It demeans, embarrasses, humiliates, shames. Tzedakah, ruled the rabbis, must be given in such a way as to minimize these feelings:

When Rabbi Yannai saw a certain man giving a coin to a poor person in front of everyone, he said: It would have been better not to have given it to him than to have given it and put him to shame. (Hagigah 5b)

In a famous passage, Maimonides describes the eight levels of charity:

There are eight degrees of charity, one higher than the other.

The highest degree, exceeded by none, is that of one who assists a poor person by providing him with a gift or a loan or by accepting him into a business partnership or by helping him find employment – in a word by putting him in a situation where he can dispense with other people's aid. With reference to such aid it is said, 'You shall strengthen him, be he a stranger or a settler, he shall live with you' (Lev. 25: 35), which means: strengthen him in such a manner that his falling into want is prevented.

A step below this is the one who gives alms to the needy in such a way that the giver does not know to whom he gives and the recipient does not know from whom he takes. This exemplifies doing a good deed for its own sake. One example was the Hall of Secrecy in the Temple, where the righteous would place their gift clandestinely and where poor people from noble families could come and secretly help themselves to aid. Close to this is dropping money in a charity box . . .

One step lower is where the giver knows to whom he gives, but the poor person does not know from whom he receives. Thus the great sages would go and secretly put money into poor people's doorways . . .

A step lower is the case where the poor person knows from whom he is taking, but the giver does not know to whom he is giving. Thus the great sages would tie coins in their scarves, which they would fling over their shoulders, so that the poor could help themselves without suffering shame.

Lower than this, is where someone gives the poor person a gift before he asks.

Lower still is one who gives only after the poor person asks.

Lower than this is one who gives less than is fitting, but does so with a friendly countenance.

The lowest level is one who gives ungraciously. (Mattenot Ani'im 10: 7-14)

This exquisitely calibrated ethic is shot through with psychological insight. What matters is not only how much you give, but also how you do so. Anonymity in the giving of aid is essential to dignity. The poor must not be embarrassed. The rich must not be allowed to feel superior. We give, not to take pride in our generosity, still less to emphasise the dependency of others, but because we belong to a covenant of human solidarity, and because that is what G-d wants us to do, honouring the trust through which he has temporarily lent us wealth in the first place.

Especially noteworthy is Maimonides' insistence that giving somebody a job, or the means to start a business, is the highest charity of all. What is humiliating about poverty is dependence itself: the feeling of being beholden to others. One of the sharpest expressions of this is to be found in the Grace after Meals, when we say, "We beseech You, G-d our Lord, let us not be in need of the gifts of men or of their loans, but only of Your helping hand . . . so that we may not be put to shame nor humiliated for ever and ever." The greatest act of tzedakah is one that allows the individual to become self-sufficient. The highest form of charity is one that enables the individual to dispense with charity. From the point of view of the giver, this is one of the least financially demanding forms of giving. It may not cost him anything at all. But from the point of view of the recipient, it is the most dignifying, because it removes the shame of receiving. Humanitarian relief is essential in the short-term, but in the long-run, job creation and economic policies that promote full employment are more important.

One detail of Jewish law is particularly noteworthy: even a person dependent on tzedakah must himself or herself give tzedakah. On the face of it, the rule is absurd. Why give X enough money so that he can give to Y? Giving to Y directly is more logical and efficient. What the rabbis understood, however, is that giving is an essential part of human dignity. The rabbinic insistence that the community provide the poor with enough money so that they themselves can give is a profound insight into the human condition.

Jewry has had many distinguished economists, from David Ricardo (whom Keynes called the greatest mind that ever addressed itself to economics), to John von Neumann (a physicist who, in his spare time, invented Game Theory), to Paul Samuelson, Milton Friedman and Alan Greenspan. They have won an astonishing 38% of Nobel prizes in the field. Why should this have been so? Perhaps because Jews have long known that economics is one of the fundamental determinants of a society; that economic systems are not written into the structure of the universe, but are constructed by human beings and can be changed by human beings; and thus that poverty is not a fact of nature but can be alleviated, minimized, reduced. Economics is not a religious discipline. It is a secular art and science. Yet, deeply underlying the Jewish passion for economics is a religious imperative: "There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open-handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land."

Halacha Talk

by Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

The Importance of Eating

The Halachos of Ikar and Tafeil

Question #1: You made a bracha on a cup of tea and sipped it, and then decided it needed more sugar. Do you need to make a bracha on the extra sugar?

Question #2: You cooked a delicious vegetable-barley soup. What bracha do you recite before eating it? Does it make any difference whether you want to eat the barley?

Question #3: I eat my potato latkes with apple sauce. How many brachos and which ones do I recite before eating them? Does it make a difference if I finish the latkes but am still eating the apple sauce?

We apply the rules governing *ikar* and *tafeil*, literally the “primary” item and the “secondary” one, numerous times throughout the day. Whether we are eating cereal with fruit and milk for breakfast, macaroni and cheese for lunch, chicken with rice for supper, or ice cream in a cone for a snack, these halachos apply. It definitely behooves us to be sure we are applying the halachos correctly.

First an introduction:

The Mishnah (Berachos 44a) which discuss brachos recited before eating states, “This is the rule: Whatever is primary and is accompanied by something secondary, one recites the bracha on the primary and absolves the secondary item.” Thus, the secondary item does not receive its own bracha, but is included in the bracha of the primary item.

WHAT CONSTITUTES AN IKAR-TAFEIL SITUATION?

There are two general categories of situations included in the halachos of *ikar* and *tafeil*: (1) enhancers and (2) mixtures.

(1) Enhancers: This category includes food items where the *tafeil* food is being eaten to make the *ikar* food taste better. Some common examples include: Cereal with fruit and milk, where the fruit and milk enhance the taste of the cereal; eating latkes with apple sauce; stirring your herbal tea with a cinnamon stick; breading fish or meat (*schnitzel*). In all of these cases, the bracha is recited over the *ikar*, that is, the cereal, latkes, tea, or meat, and the *tafeil* is included with this bracha.

The category of enhancers also includes cases where the *ikar* is too spicy or sharp to eat by itself. Thus, eating a cracker or piece of bread with a very sharp food to make it edible is a case of *ikar* and *tafeil* and one recites the bracha only on the sharp food (Mishnah Berachos 44a).

We should note, however, that the *tafeil* item loses its bracha only when one eats it together with the *ikar* or afterwards. But if one eats the *tafeil* before one eats the *ikar*, one does recite a bracha on the *tafeil*. Thus, if someone eats a food before drinking a schnapps to soften its “bite,” he recites a bracha on the food since he is eating it before imbibing the schnapps. When this situation occurs, the poskim debate what bracha one recites on the *tafeil*. We will discuss this case shortly.

(2) Mixtures: This category includes cases where one item of food is not enhancing the other item, but rather, both items are important. For example, someone eating macaroni and cheese, blintzes (they always contain a filling), cholent, kugel, or stew is interested in eating all the different foods that comprise the dish. The same halacha applies when eating soups, which typically contain vegetables, meat or chicken, noodles, barley, or flour. In these cases, all the food items eaten are important and no ingredient is a seasoning or enhancement for the other food. However, since these mixtures have the status of one complete food item, they should have only one bracha. Thus, the concept of *ikar* and *tafeil* is very different here - it is the rule used to determine which bracha we recite on the entire food. In this case, the bracha of the *ikar*, which is usually the majority item, is the bracha on the entire item.

WHAT DETERMINES THE BRACHA ON A MIXTURE?

There are three rules that determine which bracha to recite on a mixture.

1. If one of the items in the mixture is clearly the most important, then that item determines the bracha (*Pri Megadim*, *Pesicha Koleles*, *Hilchos Brachos s.v. HaTenai*; *Mishnah Berurah* 212:1). For example, the bracha on a chicken soup that includes vegetables is *shehakol* since the chicken is the most important flavor component in the soup. However, if it is a vegetable soup with some meat added for flavor, the bracha would be *ha’adamah* (*Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 205:2 and commentaries).

2. When none of the components are clearly the most important, the bracha is usually determined by the majority item in the product. Thus, the bracha on a peanut bar that contains peanuts, honey, and sugar is *ha’adamah* since peanuts are the major ingredient, and the bracha on a *tzimmes* consisting of prunes and sweet potatoes depends on which item is the major ingredient.

3. However, when the mixture contains one of the five grains (wheat, barley, spelt, oats, and rye) then the bracha is usually *mezonos*, unless the flour or grain product is included only to hold the food together (*Shulchan Aruch* 204:12; 208:2,3). Because these grains are important, they are the *ikar* of the mixture even if they are a minority ingredient. However, when the flour’s purpose is only to hold the item together or to provide texture, then it is not the *ikar* of the food.

Therefore, the bracha on vegetable-barley soup is *mezonos* and similarly, the bracha on a trifle containing cakes and ice cream is *mezonos* even if there is more ice cream than cake, since the cake is a grain product.

However, the bracha on potato kugel that contains flour, bread crumbs, and/or matzoh meal to provide texture is *ha’adamah*. Since the grain product here functions only to hold the kugel together, it is *tafeil* and does not affect the bracha. Similarly, flour added to thicken soup is *tafeil* (*Mishnah Berurah* 212:1). When the flour provides taste or makes the product satisfying, then the flour is the *ikar* and the bracha is *mezonos* (*Shulchan Aruch* 204:12; 208:3). Thus, the bracha on vegetable-barley soup is *mezonos*. However, if the barley is completely dissolved,

the bracha on the soup is usually *ha’adamah*. Similarly, if you do not want to eat the barley but a few pieces ended up in your portion anyway, the bracha is *ha’adamah*. The same rules apply in the case of licorice candy whose bracha is *shehakol* even though it contains a significant amount of flour, since the flour is there only to give it a stiff texture. On the other hand, the bracha on *kishka* is *mezonos*, since the main ingredient is the flour.

Many breakfast cereals are made from a corn flour that has oat flour added. Before reciting a bracha on these cereals, one must try to determine whether the oat flour is included to add taste or substance, in which case the bracha is *mezonos*; or if it is included simply to keep the pieces of cereal from falling apart, in which case the bracha is *shehakol*. If one cannot determine why the oat flour is added, one should recite *shehakol*.

WHAT IS A MIXTURE?

When dealing with the correct bracha on a food mixture, one of the key questions one must ask is whether the food is indeed a mixture that requires one bracha or if its considered two (or more) separate foods that each require a separate bracha. Here are several examples that will clearly demonstrate the question involved:

Does a “meat and potatoes” roast require one bracha on both ingredients, or is it two items that require separate brachos?

Is the bracha on a mix of raisins and peanuts *ha’aitz* or *ha’adamah*?

Is a fruit salad containing melon or pineapple in addition to pears, apples, and peaches a mixture that requires one bracha or separate brachos?

Let me clarify. Suppose you dine on a chicken dinner with side dishes of noodle kugel and string beans. Although you are eating them all at the same time, these foods are not a mixture. Therefore, each item requires its own bracha.

FRUIT SALAD

Do the ingredients of a fruit salad that contains both *ha’aitz* and *ha’adamah* items require two separate brachos or is the salad a mixture requiring one bracha? Whereas in a soup, peanut bar, or *tzimmes*, the foods were cooked or blended together and are difficult to isolate from one another, in most fruit salads the different fruits can be clearly distinguished from one another and separated. On the other hand, because the pieces are small, one usually eats the different varieties together.

The poskim dispute whether fruit salad warrants one bracha or two. According to most poskim, one should recite only one bracha over a mixture of this type. Following their opinion, one would recite a bracha on the majority item in a fruit salad. However, the *Chayai Odom* contends that when the items can be clearly distinguished from one another they are not to be considered a mixture and one should recite separate brachos on the components of the dish. Thus in his opinion, one should recite a *ha’aitz* on the tree fruits and then *ha’adamah* on the melon in the fruit salad.

(As we noted in a previous article, if the only *ha’adamah* items in the fruit salad are bananas, pineapples and other perennials, one should recite the *ha’adamah* first even though one would normally recite *ha’aitz* first. This is because of the opinion that the correct bracha on any perennial is *ha’aitz*. According to this opinion, if one recited a *ha’aitz* on the tree fruits, reciting a different bracha afterwards on the banana and pineapple is a bracha *li’vatalah*, a bracha in vain. Although we do not rule like this opinion, we should also not ignore it.)

The same dispute exists regarding a mix of raisins and peanuts; most poskim contend that one should recite the bracha of the majority item and the *Chayai Odom* rules that they require two separate brachos.

The *Mishnah Berurah* (212:1) concludes that *safek brachos lihakeil*, when in doubt we do not recite a bracha and therefore one should recite one bracha on both items. The bracha should follow whatever bracha one would recite on the majority of the mixture even if it is made up of different fruits (*M’kor HaBeracha* pg. 182). If one cannot determine whether the majority is *borei pri he’aitz* or *borei pri ha’adamah*, then one should recite *borei pri ha’adamah* since when one recites *pri ha’adamah* on an item that is *pri ha’aitz* one fulfills the requirement, but not vice versa.

Following the majority opinion that one recites one bracha on the mixed fruit salad or the peanuts and raisins, we still need to clarify a very important issue. At what point do we consider the two items to be different foods requiring separate brachos? In the case mentioned above of a chicken dinner with side dishes of noodle kugel and string beans, it is obvious that they are different items. But is a roast of meat and potatoes or a shepherd’s pie (consisting of layers of ground meat and potatoes) considered one item or does it require two separate brachos?

The poskim say that the rule is as follows: When the two items are eaten together in one spoonful then one recites one bracha, even if there is an occasional spoonful where one is eating only one of them (*Aruch HaShulchan* 212:2). However, if each spoonful usually contains one item exclusively, then they should have separate brachos (*Aruch HaShulchan* 212:2). Thus, meat and potatoes cooked together would have two separate brachos since the meat and potatoes are usually not eaten together in the same forkful. However, shepherd’s pie or soup would require only one bracha since each forkful or spoonful will probably contain parts of at least two

different foods. In this case, one recites one bracha even if an occasional forkful/spoonful has only one of the ingredients (Aruch HaShulchan 212:2).

WHAT ABOUT CHOLENT?

A cholent consisting of barley, kishka, meat, potatoes and beans, contains some items whose bracha is mezonos (the barley and kishka), and others whose bracha is shehakol (the meat), or ha'adamah (potatoes and beans). Is cholent a mixture like a soup and requires only one bracha, or is it like eating a meat and potatoes roast where several brachos are recited on the components? Truthfully, it depends on the consistency of the cholent. If the cholent is made in such a way that each forkful contains a mix of the various ingredients, than its bracha is mezonos if it includes barley or kishka. However if the potatoes or meat are large discernable items, then they will require their own brachos (Pri Megadim, Pesicha Kolleles, Hilchos Brachos s.v. klal amru; VeZos HaBeracha pg. 110).

AFTER BRACHA

The rules of ikar and tafeil also apply to the bracha acharonah (Shulchan Aruch 212:1). Thus, if one eats cereal with milk and fruit, and the cereal's bracha acharonah is al hamichyah, one does not recite a borei nefashos on the milk or the fruit.

Rav Moshe Feinstein discusses the following interesting case: Someone ate a small amount of food that was the ikar of his meal, but he did not eat enough to recite a bracha acharonah. However, he ate a sufficient amount of the tafeil to require a bracha acharonah. What bracha acharonah does he recite? Rav Moshe rules that he recites borei nefashos even if the tafeil item would ordinarily require a different bracha acharonah (Shu"t Igros Moshe 4:42).

Let us explain his ruling with an example. Someone made hamotzi on bread before eating a meal at which he ate several olives, but then ate less than a kizayis of bread, too little to require bentsching. Later, he was planning to eat some pastry that included raisins, and he ended up eating less than a kizayis of pastry but more than a kizayis of raisins. He does not recite bentsching or al hamichyah because he did not eat enough of the ikar item. Therefore he must recite a bracha acharonah on the tafeil. However according to Rav Moshe, he should recite borei nefashos even though he is reciting a bracha acharonah on olives and raisins, items which usually require the longer bracha acharonah of al ha'eitz ve'al pri ha'eitz! What happened to the long bracha acharonah?

The answer is that a tafeil is considered unimportant and therefore does not warrant a bracha any more. However, because one cannot benefit from this world without making a bracha before and after eating food, only the minimum bracha, borei nefashos, is required.

Rav Moshe proves this approach in the following way. The halacha is that after eating enough bread to be completely full, the requirement to bentsch is min haTorah, whereas the requirement to recite brachos after eating in general is only midirabbanan. Rav Moshe points out the following. What would happen if someone ate a very spicy pepper, and in order to be able to eat it he must consume a huge amount of bread- but he is eating the bread only because of the spicy food. What bracha acharonah would he recite afterwards? Since the bread in this case is tafeil to the pepper, one would recite only a borei nefashos after eating the bread and pepper (over the pepper). Rav Moshe points out that although the bread satisfied him completely, the full bentsching, which is usually required min haTorah, is completely suspended. This proves that by becoming a tafeil the bread loses all significance; it is no longer bentsching material. Thus, we see that a tafeil loses all importance and the only reason we recite a bracha is that we are prohibited from benefiting from this world without a bracha.

BEFORE AND AFTER

Until now we have been discussing situations when you are eating the ikar and tafeil together. What do you do if you are eating the tafeil item either before or after you eat the ikar?

A TAFEIL EATEN BEFORE

A tafeil loses a bracha only when it is eaten together with the ikar or afterwards, but not when it is eaten before. Again, the reason for this becomes fairly clear once we think about it. A tafeil's bracha is subsumed by the bracha on the ikar. This helps us as long as one has already recited the bracha on the ikar. However, if one has not yet recited the bracha on the ikar, how can one eat the tafeil without reciting any bracha at all since we are forbidden to benefit from the world without first reciting a bracha? Thus, it must be that we recite a bracha on the tafeil when eating it before the ikar.

However, this does not tell us whether the bracha on the tafeil is the same bracha one would usually recite on it, or whether it is automatically reduced to a shehakol. Let us say that someone is going to drink a powerful beverage or a very spicy pepper, and in order to tolerate it, he is first going to eat some bread or crackers. What bracha does he recite on the bread or cracker?

The Rama (212:1) rules that one recites a shehakol on the bread or cracker!

WHY DOES THE CRACKER LOSE ITS BRACHA?

The Rama's ruling is based on an earlier psak of the Terumas HaDeshen, who discusses a case of someone who wants to drink wine, but can not drink the wine on an empty stomach. Therefore he eats some seeds whose bracha is usually ha'eitz before imbibing the wine. The Terumas HaDeshen rules that he recites a shehakol on the seeds since he is not getting his primary benefit from the fruit (Darchei Moshe 212:2). However, the Beis Yosef disagrees and rules that he should make ha'eitz on the seeds.

What is this dispute dependent on? One could explain that this dispute reflects two different ways of explaining why one does not recite a bracha on a tafeil. The Terumas HaDeshen contends that a tafeil is unimportant and therefore does not warrant a bracha, however, one cannot benefit from this world without a bracha — therefore one recites shehakol. On the other hand, the Beis Yosef holds that the bracha on the ikar counts as the bracha on the tafeil and therefore one does not need to make a bracha on it- but if the tafeil were to require a bracha, it does not lose its status or its bracha.

EATING A TAFEIL AFTER THE IKAR

What do you do if you finished eating the ikar, but you have not yet completed the tafeil. Do you recite a bracha on the tafeil since you are no longer eating the ikar, or do we say that the bracha on the ikar still suffices? For example, you finished your cereal, but there is still some milk left, or you finished the barley of the soup, but there is still more soup to eat. Do you recite a new bracha on the rest of the soup? The halacha is that if you finished the ikar first, and a small amount of tafeil remains, one does not recite a bracha on the remaining tafeil. However, if a large amount remains, one does recite a bracha (Mishnah Berurah 168:46).

At the beginning of the article I asked the following shaylah, "You made a bracha on a cup of tea and sipped it and then decided it needed more sugar. Do you need to make a bracha on the extra sugar?"

The question here is that the sugar is tafeil to the tea, but can it be a tafeil when it was not in front of you when you made the bracha?

The halacha is that if you begin eating something and afterwards decide to eat a tafeil food alongside, the tafeil requires a bracha- but only shehakol (Mishnah Berurah 212:4). This is true only if the tafeil is an enhancer (see our category above). However, if it is a tafeil because it is a mixture, it receives its regular bracha. Thus, if after making a bracha on cereal, someone decided to add milk and fruit, he recites ha'eitz on the fruit and shehakol on the milk. On the other hand, if he knew he would add fruit and milk when he recited the bracha on the cereal, then they are tafeil to the cereal and he does not recite a bracha on them even though they were not present when he recited the bracha.

What should you do if someone brought you a cup of tea and you then decided to add sugar? Do you need to recite a bracha on the sugar?

If you usually add sugar to your tea, you do not need to recite a new bracha. However, if you do not, then you will need to recite a bracha on the sugar.

Not everything we do in life qualifies as our ikar purpose in life- often we must do things that are tafeil to the more important things in life. However, paying attention to the halachos of ikar and tafeil should encourage us to focus on our priorities in life- and not allow the tafeil things we must do become more important than they are.

Halacha Discussion

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

She'ailos U'teshuvos

Question: Is it permitted to move plants or flowerpots on Shabbos?

Discussion: In halachic terms, all potted plants are considered to be "nourished from the ground" and consequently "connected" to the ground and forbidden to be moved or lifted on Shabbos. Regardless of whether the pot has a hole in its base, is indoors² or outdoors - it is classified as severe muktzeh and may not be moved for any purpose on Shabbos³. It is permissible, however, to smell, touch and even bend the stem or the leaves, provided that they are soft and flexible and would not break upon contact⁴.

It is strictly forbidden to move a plant or a flowerpot from a shady area to a sunny area so that exposure to the sun's rays will aid its growth. It is also prohibited to open a window or to pull up a shade with the specific intention of allowing the sun or air to aid a plant's growth. Conversely, if sunlight or fresh air is detrimental to a plant, it would be prohibited to shut them out, since shutting them out promotes the plant's growth⁵.

Question: What about flowers - may they be moved, smelled or touched on Shabbos?

Discussion: Flowers, while still connected to the ground, may be smelled and touched, provided that their stems are soft and do not normally become brittle⁶.

Flowers in a vase may be moved on Shabbos⁷. They may not, however, be moved from a shady area to a sunny area to promote blossoming. If the buds have not fully

bloomed, the vase may be moved but just slightly, since the movement of the water hastens the opening of the buds⁸ .

One may remove flowers from a vase full of water, as long as they have not sprouted roots in the water⁹ . Once removed, they may not be put back in the water if that will cause further blossoming.

Water may not be added to a flower vase on Shabbos¹⁰ . On Yom Tov, however, water may be added but not changed¹¹ .

Flowers should be placed in water before Shabbos. In case they were not, they may not be placed in water on Shabbos if the buds have not blossomed fully. If the buds are completely opened, however, some poskim permit placing them in water on Shabbos¹² .

One may not gather flowers or create an arrangement and place it in a vase on Shabbos, even if the vase contains no water¹³ .

Question: Are there any Shabbos restrictions concerning grass?

Discussion: Touching, moving, walking, running, or lying on grass is permissible¹⁴ . Some poskim¹⁵ prohibit running in high grass if it would definitely result in some grass being uprooted, while other poskim are not concerned with this possibility¹⁶ .

Grass which was uprooted on Shabbos and gets stuck on one's shoes is considered muktzeh, since it was attached to the earth when Shabbos began. One may remove it only in an indirect manner¹⁷ .

Question: Must Birchos ha-Shachar be recited before davening or may they be temporarily skipped?

Discussion: The Shulchan Aruch¹⁸ states that one who arrives late for Shacharis may skip parts of Pesukei d'Zimrah if otherwise he would not be able to daven Shemoneh Esrei with the tzibur. There is no clear discussion, however, concerning the Birchos ha-Shachar: May they be temporarily skipped or must they be recited before davening?

The answer depends on which of the Birchos ha-Shachar we are discussing:

The blessing of Al netilas yadayim must be said before davening. If one forgot to say it before davening he cannot say it after davening¹⁹ . Asher yatzar should also be said before davening, since it should be said immediately after one has relieved himself²⁰ .

Elokai neshamah should be said before davening, since some poskim maintain that after one has recited Shemoneh Esrei, he may no longer recite this blessing²¹ . If one forgot to say Elokai neshamah and remembered during Pesukei d'Zimrah, he should recite it right then and there²² . If he remembered before saying the blessing of Mechayeh ha-meisim, he should have specific intention that he does not want the blessing of Mechayeh ha-meisim to substitute for Elokai neshamah [since their content is similar]²³ .

Birchos ha-Torah should be said before davening, since according to many poskim, the verses which are said in Pesukei d'Zimrah should be preceded by Birchos ha-Torah²⁴ . If one forgot to recite Birchos ha-Torah before davening, he may say them [and the accompanying pesukim] during Pesukei d'Zimrah²⁵ . If one did not remember that he forgot Birchos ha-Torah until he is in the middle of Birchos Kerias Shema, then he should have in mind, while saying the blessing of Ahavah rabbah, to fulfill the obligation of Birchos ha-Torah²⁶ . He must learn something after Shemoneh Esrei.

All other Birchos ha-Shachar may be said after davening. Consequently, if saying them first would cause one to miss tefillah b'tzibur, he should wait till after davening to recite them - provided that he is sure that he will not forget to say them after davening.

Sometimes, though, one is faced with a choice. Since, as we just explained, most of the Birchos ha-Shachar may be recited after davening, the question arises as to what is the better choice when coming late for davening: Is it better to skip parts of Pesukei d'Zimrah or is it better to skip the Birchos ha-Shachar [those that may be said after davening]?

Several poskim²⁷ rule that saying Birchos ha-Shachar before davening is preferable to saying the entire Pesukei d'Zimrah. This ruling is based on the fact that the Birchos ha-Shachar are mentioned in the Talmud²⁸ , while the parts of Pesukei d'Zimrah that one is allowed to omit if necessary, are not. In addition, Birchos ha-Shachar were originally supposed to be said immediately upon arising and getting dressed²⁹ . Nowadays, we say them in shul, but we should not further delay them. Other poskim³⁰ maintain that Pesukei d'Zimrah take precedence over Birchos ha-Shachar since - as we learned - Birchos ha-Shachar can be made up after davening, while the skipped parts of Pesukei d'Zimrah cannot be made up according to the view of some poskim³¹ .

FOOTNOTES

1 O.C. 336:8. Even a non-perforated pot is nourished a "bit" from the ground; Mishnah Berurah 336:43. Possibly, this is only so with wood or ceramic pots; metal or glass non-perforated pots do not allow for nourishment from the ground (Bris Olam, pg. 31). It remains questionable if plastic is like wood or like glass (see Piskei Teshuvo, pg. 223).

2 View of Chazon Ish, Harav S.Y. Elyashiv, and Harav S. Vosner (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73). There is a minority opinion that non-perforated pots are not "nourished" through solid (wooden or ceramic) floors (Bris Olam, pg. 31).

3 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 336:38 quotes the Pri Megadim as questioning whether a plant can be moved [when no question of reaping is involved]. While some poskim (Tehilah l'David 336:6; Bris Olam, pg. 32) are lenient and allow moving a flowerpot when there is no question of reaping, many other poskim (Kalkes Shabbos, Zore'a; Minchas Shabbos 80:194) are stringent. It is proper to be stringent on this issue (Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73) and Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, pg. 64).

4 Mishnah Berurah 336:48.

5 Entire paragraph is based on the rulings of the Chazon Ish, Shevi'is 22:1; Shvisas ha-Shabbos, Zore'a 10; Har Tzvi O.C. 211; Yesodei Yeshurun, pg. 25; Shevet ha-Levi 4:36.

6 Mishnah Berurah 336:48.

7 Harav M. Feinstein (quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, pg. 64).

8 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73); Bris Olam, pg. 32.

9 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 333).

10 Mishnah Berurah 336:54.

11 O.C. 654:1; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 333.

12 See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 336:48; Yechaveh Da'as 2:53. Harav S.Z. Auerbach is quoted (Nishmas Avraham O.C. 336) as being stringent on this.

13 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:73.

14 O.C. 336:3; 312:6.

15 Mishnah Berurah 336:25 and Beur Halachah.

16 Aruch ha-Shulchan 336:21. See also Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah, pg. 331.

17 Mishnah Berurah 336:24.

18 O.C. 52.

19 Mishnah Berurah 4:1. See Igros Moshe O.C. 3:4 who holds that it is considered tefillah b'tzibur as long as part of the Shemoneh Esrei is said together, even though one did not begin Shemoneh Esrei at the same time as the tzibur. Nevertheless, it is permitted to skip Pesukei d'Zimrah in order to begin Shemoneh Esrei together with the tzibur (oral ruling by Harav M. Feinstein, quoted in Orach Yisrael pg. 543).

20 Mishnah Berurah 7:5; 165:2.

21 Mishnah Berurah 52:9.

22 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Tefillah K'hilchasah pg. 167).

23 Mishnah Berurah 52:9. See there and Beur Halachah for what to do if he remembered only after Shemoneh Esrei.

24 Rama O.C. 46:9 and Mishnah Berurah 27-28.

25 Mishnah Berurah 51:10.

26 Beur Halachah 52:1.

27 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (written responsum published in Siach Halachah pg. 10); Harav Y. Kamenetsky and Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (oral ruling quoted in Tefillah K'hilchasah pg. 192).

28 Berachos 60b.

29 O.C. 46:1-2.

30 Harav C. P. Scheinberg (oral ruling quoted in Tefillah K'hilchasah pg. 192). This seems to be the ruling of Chayei Adam 19:4. See also Avnei Yashfei on Tefillah, 2nd edition, pg. 121.

31 This is the ruling of the Aruch ha-Shulchan 52:5. Not all poskim are in agreement.

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SHABBOS PARSHAS R'EI

EREV ROSH CHODESH

Sept. 3, 29 AV

The Haftarah is Aniah Soarah (Isaiah 54:11-55:5) (and not Mocher Hachodosh). We bless the month of Elul. We do not say Av Harachamim or Kel Malei; at Mincha we do not say Tzidkascha Tzedek. Chapter 5 of Pirkei Avos.

FIRST DAY ROSH CHODESH

SATURDAY NIGHT, Sept 3, 30 AV

DEPARTURE OF SHABBOS

Weekday Maariv; Atah Chonantanu; Yaaleh Veyavo, in Shemoneh Esrei; Half-Kaddish; Vihi Noam; Ata Kodesh; Kaddish Tiskabel; Vayiten Lecha; Havdalah; Aleinu; Mourner's Kaddish.

SUNDAY MORNING, Sept. 4

SHACHRIS

The usual service for Rosh Chodesh: Yaaleh Veyavo in Shemoneh Esrei; Half-Hallel; Kaddish Tiskabel; Torah Reading; Mussaf for Rosh Chodesh, etc.

SECOND DAY ROSH CHODESH

SUNDAY NIGHT, Sept. 4, 1 ELUL

MAARIV

We begin to recite Ledovid Ori after Maariv (Nusach Sefard: after Mincha) and Shachris through Shemini Atzeres.

MONDAY MORNING, Sept. 5

SHACHRIS

We observe the same procedure as for the First Day of Rosh Chodesh. *We begin to blow Tashrat every day at the conclusion of the morning service through the day before Erev Rosh HaShanah.*

(The essential purpose of Shofar Blowing is to arouse and even startle people into a heightened awareness of the need to repent. It is the nature of a horn's blast to produce a level of concern, as the Prophet Amos stated (Amos 3:6): "Shall a

Shofar be blown in a city and the people not tremble?" Therefore, it is imperative that a person begin to prepare himself with genuine repentance, prayer, and Tzedakah at least thirty days before the Day of Judgement, Rosh HaShanah. "And our Sages, of blessed memory, provide us with the following insight: The first letters of each of the following words –Anu ledodi v'dodi li – I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine (Song of Songs: 6:3), spell out the word Elul. Therefore, in the month of Elul one must intensify ones efforts at repentance, prayer, and charitable acts. Our Sages, of blessed memory, provided us with an additional insight: The first letters of each word of the phrase Ish Lerayayhu Umatanos

LaEvyonim...each man to his friend (shall send portions) as well as gifts to the needy (Esther: 9:22)," again spell out Elul. This serves as an allusion to the fact that in the month of Elul we must increase our gifts to the poor [Chayei Adam, Siman 138]."

**Please address all comments and requests to
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