

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet YISRO 5770

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RABBIS' BUSINESS :: Rabbi Berel Wein

A recent rabbinic ruling by the Chief Rabbis of Efrat regarding the sale of cigarettes in their community has, as can always be expected, provoked criticism and discussion. Though there may be issues of pro and con regarding this specific issue (though I for one cannot imagine believing that smoking tobacco in the long run can be beneficial to anyone except the tobacco companies) the underlying tone of this discussion is: "Rabbis, mind your own business!"

It is asserted that whether a community allows the sale of tobacco within its environs is none of the business of rabbis. Such specious arguments that they can still be purchased outside of Efrat do not speak to the heart of the matter. The argument is not about tobacco sales, it is about rabbis expressing an opinion on matters of public health and concern – a field that rabbis are not supposed to deal with in any way.

Stick to your books and leave us wise men, politicians, and professors to run everything. Keep your opinions to yourselves and concentrate on the matters given to your authority – kashrut, marriage and divorce and other matters of ritual. But do not have the effrontery to discuss publicly any public or national matters outside of your particular matters of expertise. At least that is the way the situation appears to this old battle-scarred rabbi. Maybe it is only paranoia on my part (Richard Nixon is famously reported to have said: "You would also be paranoid if the whole world was against you!") but rabbis generally are a persecuted species who are responsible for everything but should never attempt to express a public opinion about anything.

The Talmud states that "all matters that pertain to the general welfare of the community are the responsibility of the rabbi." Over the centuries this injunction has been honored more in the breach than in actuality. Nevertheless there can be no dispute that respective and respected rabbis influence the policies of the religious parties that sit in our Knesset. We may not always agree with their opinions and advice but in the religious world one would hope that no one would gainsay their right to express those opinions and advice publicly.

Such figures as Rabbis Ovadyah Yosef, the late Rabbi Eliezer Shach, and the late Lubavitcher Rebbe have had great influence on particular segments of Israeli and Jewish society and on the general Israeli public and world Jewry as well. Yet there is always controversy not only about what they said but over whether they even had a right to say it publicly and forcefully.

When Rav Shach expressed himself regarding a possible settlement with the Palestinians and the dangers of isolation from the non-Jewish world, he was roundly criticized for expressing his views. "Leave our foreign and defense policies up to the experts and don't mix in to what is none of your business" was the general media reaction to his words.

Well, I for one don't see why his opinion is less valuable to our current debate on policy and our future than the opinion of all of the so-called "experts" that are always interviewed by our media and have yet to come up with a successful formula for solving these problems. Rabbis have a legitimate right to express their opinions on matters of public concern.

Rabbis have regularly been accused here in Israel of "incitement" when expressing their opinions on public matters. Left wing professors in Israeli universities who advocate boycotts of Israel are never accused of "incitement." Rather they have the sacred privilege of academic freedom and freedom of speech. Apparently they can say anything they wish without being told to mind their own academic business.

Are the rabbis any less academic and accomplished than the professors? Present company excluded, I think that they are not. I think that it is the fear that people may actually listen to the opinion of the rabbis, opinions

which many times contrast to current political correctness and modern lifestyle that lies at the bottom of this self-righteous censorship attempt.

Why can the rabbis of Efrat not tell their community about the dangers of smoking and attempt to persuade the merchants there to discontinue selling death? Rabbis speak with thousands of years of tradition, Jewish experience and personal practice behind their words. One may have the choice to hearken to their advice or ignore it. But I do not believe that anyone has the right to challenge their right to express their opinions on national, general and communal matters in a public manner.

Shabat shalom

Weekly :: Parsha YITRO :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The basis for all civic morality and personal piety lies in the words of revelation granted to Israel at Mount Sinai and recorded for us in the Torah in this week's parsha. It is difficult to imagine any sort of human progress or civilization absent the Ten Commandments and its value system. Monotheism, respect for parents and authority, protection of person and property, the importance of a day of rest and spiritual serenity, truthfulness and justice, are all the bases of human existence and progress.

We are aware even today, millennia later, that these necessary ideas for human achievement are still not universally accepted. Crime, murder, and immorality of all sorts still rule much of human society. Perhaps that is one understanding of the dire statement of the rabbis in Avot that there is a heavenly voice that emanates daily from Sinai that states: "Woe to My creatures due to their abuse and insult of Torah!"

These basic rules of life that are so clearly and logically self-evident in their wisdom and essence are nevertheless observed more in their breach than in their true observance. One look at any daily newspaper anywhere around the globe will confirm this sad assessment of human affairs in our current world.

We are a long way from assimilating the ideas of Sinai into our lives even after thirty three hundred years of their existence as the basic building blocks of human civilization. Sadly, the evil nature of humans remains somehow paramount in our society.

But the Torah bids us to combat this inherent individual evil nature within us. We have to begin with ourselves. It is related that a great sage once stated in his elderly years: "When I was young I attempted to rectify everything that was wrong in the world. As I grew older I realized that this task was beyond my abilities, so I concentrated on my community. After time I realized that this was also beyond my abilities, so I now concentrated on my family and my descendants. Sadly, I realized that this was also not given to me rectify easily. So now I have decided to concentrate on myself – my own self-discipline and improvement."

The Torah always speaks to us in personal terms, as individuals who are held responsible for our actions and omissions. The Ten Commandments are therefore written to us directly, in second person, and not merely as nice moral generalities. They are commandments and not just advice that can be accepted or rejected.

The Talmud and Halacha have defined for us each of these commandments in a legal and technical manner. Jewish tradition, customs and mores have expanded on these legal details and fleshed out for us a moral code for daily, practical human behavior.

It is only in this broader moral context that we can understand the commandment "not to covet." It may be unenforceable legally in a court of law by itself unless one has actually stolen because of it but the moral implications of the commandment should be clear to all. Fortunate are we to whom such a Torah and moral value system was given.

Shabat shalom

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Yitro
For the week ending 6 February 2010 / 21 Shevat 5770
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Overview

Hearing of the miracles G-d performed for Bnei Yisrael, Moshe's father-in-law Yitro arrives with Moshe's wife and sons, reuniting the family in the wilderness. Yitro is so impressed by Moshe's detailing of the Exodus from Egypt that he converts to Judaism. Seeing that the only judicial authority for the entire Jewish nation is Moshe himself, Yitro suggests that subsidiary judges be appointed to adjudicate smaller matters, leaving Moshe free to attend to larger issues. Moshe accepts his advice. Bnei Yisrael arrive at Mt. Sinai where G-d offers them the Torah. After they accept, G-d charges Moshe to instruct the people not to approach the mountain and to prepare for three days. On the third day, amidst thunder and lightning, G-d's voice emanates from the smoke-enshrouded mountain and He speaks to the Jewish People, giving them the Ten Commandments:

1. Believe in G-d
2. Don't worship other "gods"
3. Don't use G-d's name in vain
4. Observe Shabbat
5. Honor your parents
6. Don't murder
7. Don't commit adultery
8. Don't kidnap
9. Don't testify falsely
10. Don't covet.

After receiving the first two commandments, the Jewish People, overwhelmed by this experience of the Divine, request that Moshe relay G-d's word to them. G-d instructs Moshe to caution the Jewish People regarding their responsibility to be faithful to the One who spoke to them.

Insights

A Kingdom of Priests

"And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests..." (19:6)

A couple of months ago I was on a flight to London. A few seats in front of me a Jew in full Chassidic garb prepared to take his seat. Before this, however, he removed from his bag sections of a brown cardboard with elastic straps attached to them.

At first it crossed my mind that he was going to distract himself from the unblinking salacious eye of the video monitor in front of us by constructing a model train or car. However, I quickly dismissed this idea as I have yet to see a Chassid make a toy model at the age of forty-five.

He started to grapple with one section of cardboard, stretching its elastic over the back rest of the chair in front of him creating a cardboard wall that rose above the seat a good fifteen inches. Then he attached two side panels of equal height to this first piece, completing a booth that gave him total privacy from the undesirable images and sounds that were leaching from the video screens around him, and from the atrociously low standard of decorum of the ladies' attire in the plane.

"Kol HaKavod! (Well done!)" I thought, "I wish I had the guts to do something like that."

"And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests..."

Being a priest means that you have to be prepared to give up on some things.

Being a priest means that sometimes people will think you're 'over the top'. Being a priest means that sometimes you're going to do things that are incredibly uncool — and not care a tinker's cuss about it.

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Moshe related to his father-in-law everything that Hashem had done to Pharaoh and Egypt for Yisrael's sake - all the travail that had befallen them on the way. (18:6)

Yisro had been living in Midyan, away from what was happening to Pharaoh and his people in Egypt. News travels fast, and suddenly Yisro became aware of the emerging Jewish nation: how they were liberated from hundreds of years of bondage; how they survived the travail and how they marched out of the country. He heard how the Red Sea miraculously split for them, granting them salvation and destroying their Egyptian oppressors. Yisro also became aware of the battle with Amalek, in which the Jewish people triumphed over the nation which would become their archenemy. All of this inspired Yisro to leave the comfort of his home and travel out to the wilderness in order to join the nascent Jewish nation. When Moshe Rabbeinu greeted his father-in-law, he immediately began to relate to him all of Klal Yisrael's experiences, the incredible miracles that Hashem had wrought for them, and their salvation which He had catalyzed. We wonder why Moshe found it necessary to reiterate the story. Clearly, Yisro was aware of all that had taken place. That was why he had come in the first place! He came because he heard; he was there, because he was aware. The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh asks this question and explains that Yisro had heard generalities. He now wanted to hear the nuances, every single detail spelled out. He wanted specifics.

Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, cites Targum Yonasan who teaches that the tent where Moshe took Yisro was the bais medrash. Even though Yisro had heard what Hashem had done for the Jewish people, he had heard it all before and formulated it in his mind. The decision to join the Jewish nation was predicated upon Yisro's own logical conclusions. He had not had the benefit of viewing these events through the prism of Torah. Yisro had not yet been availed the Torah perspective on these occurrences. While events which take place before our very eyes may point in one direction, under the lens of the Torah they might represent a completely different perspective. Yisro was missing the Torah's view, so Moshe took him to the bais medrash to teach him the Torah's view on the miracles.

Yisro achieved an elevated spiritual plateau on his own, but-- without a Torah perspective-- he was standing on a precarious perch. Many people get turned on to Judaism through artificial stimulation - a kumsitz, a Shabbaton, an emotional gathering. It does not last unless it is concretized with Torah study. Seeing is believing only if one sees through the correct lens.

There is another dimension to viewing everything through the prism of Torah. Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, says, "The distance between the heart and the mind is greater than the distance of heaven to earth." Every individual is comprised of the heart, which is the seat of emotion, and the brain, which represents one's intellect. In order for the soul to achieve its purpose, the heart and the brain must work in harmony. We need both. Emotions motivate us to observe; passion drives our observance. Without intellect, we often fail to understand the truth about Judaism. We have questions that need answers which emotion cannot provide. Likewise, intellect alone will lay the groundwork for a cold, insipid relationship with Yiddishkeit.

Yisro heard about the miracles. He was on an emotional high. His enthusiasm was piqued, but how long would this stimulation last? At what point would he confront issues that were likely to undermine his positive "feelings"? How much pain could he sustain before the positive feelings would begin to falter? An intellectual understanding of Judaism prepares him for challenges to the heart, as the heart helps him overcome the challenges to his intellectual belief. Moshe told Yisro, "You heard; we saw, but-- without sitting and learning in the bais medrash, without intellectual appreciation of Yiddishkeit-- your stimulation could begin to wane."

Horav Yerachmiel Krohm, Shlita, takes a different, albeit practical, approach. Let us analyze why Yisro felt he had to leave Midyan in order to journey out to the barren wilderness to be with the Jewish nation. Yisro was a truth-seeker. His entire life was comprised of one long search for the truth. He was not the only one to have heard about the wonders and miracles that accompanied the exodus of the Jewish nation from Egypt.

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
Parshas Yisro

Yisro, the minister of Midyan, the father-in-law of Moshe, heard everything that G-d did to Moshe and Yisrael. (18:1)

Many other nations heard, but it left no lasting impression on them. It was like a dream that dissipates once one wakes up. Yisro heard, reflected, and decided to respond to it. He left home and journeyed to the wilderness. He wanted to join this nation.

Moshe Rabbeinu came out to greet his father-in-law - he and the rest of Klal Yisrael. After all, when Moshe went out to greet someone, everybody followed along. What an incredible honor this was for Yisro. Moshe understood the tremendous danger that confronted his father-in-law. Yisro had heard about all of the wonderful things that had occurred, but the Egyptian exodus was not all a positive experience. The Jews had had to overcome much adversity, pain and travail. Confronting their masters at the banks of the Red Sea was a fearful experience. Battling with Amalek was terrorizing.

In other words, most of the miracles were either preceded or accompanied by adversity. The manna descended from Heaven on a daily basis, but this did not mean that the people did not worry every night lest they would not have breakfast waiting by their door the next morning. Judaism is about man's daily struggle with his fears, inclinations, ego and demons. One for whom the Torah is his guide has something to hold on to, to lean on during periods of uncertainty. Olam Haba, the World to Come, is the ultimate reward for a life of virtue, but the pathway to the Eternal World of Truth is through this world.

Moshe was concerned that Yisro might only look at one side of the coin. In order to develop a clear perspective on Judaism, the world has to view the nation through the prism of reality. He, therefore, related the "rest of the story" to Yisro. Yes, we won - but not without a fight. We live above the rules of nature. Our existence is miraculous. We travel through the travail; we survive the vicissitudes. It is all through Hashem's intervention - if we are deserving.

Reality eludes many of us. It is so much easier to live in a dream world in which everything works out, no one becomes ill, children are perfect, money is always available. Regrettably, it does not always work that way, and it is important that we be realistic about this when presenting Jewish life and observance to someone who is newly initiated. Rav Krohm takes us into the field of education, illustrating how too much of the "positive" can defeat our purpose and undermine our goals.

A student presents potential for achievement. The rebbe responds with encouraging comments and excellent grades. He continues to motivate with positive reinforcement, painting an impressive picture of: how far the student can go; all the benefits of being a successful student; how the schools will line up to accept him; and the wonderful opportunities that will avail themselves. The rebbe fails to mention the challenges that appear along the way, hardships he will have to overcome. He convinces the student to continue his education in a specific yeshivah gedolah without mentioning that the student will be one of many such special students in this yeshivah. It will require diligence far beyond what he has demonstrated in the past in order to maintain his present level of achievement. In other words, it is very easy to present a rosy picture, but is it honest? In order to prevent an illness, one often must be inoculated with a strain of that illness, so that he can build up immunity to it. So, too, must we present the entire picture, so that our students will be prepared and immunized.

Moshe related it all to Yisro, because he wanted his father-in-law to make an intelligent decision based upon a clear picture of the reality of Jewish life. When one knows what the future has in store, then the present does not weigh him down. Yes, it will not be easy, but look at the finish line: Olam Haba.

Moshe descended from the mountain to the people. (19:14)

Rashi cites the Mechilta that comments: "Moshe did not concern himself with his personal affairs at all. He immediately went from the mountain to the people." It seems like a great sacrifice, but spiritual leadership demands nothing less than total devotion to the klal, community. When we think about it, what really were the personal affairs of Moshe Rabbeinu? Did he really spend that much time at home? Horav Yosef Sholom Elyashiv, Shlita, tells us that Moshe's "personal affairs" were unlike ours. He cites the Rambam in Hilchos Melachim 12:4, who says: "The great sages and

the prophets did not desire the days of Moshiach because this would allow them to rule over the world...They sought this idyllic period because they would then be free to study Torah and plumb its wisdom...so that they could merit life in the World to Come."

This teaches us, opines Rav Elyashiv, that Moshe's idea of personal affairs was none other than sitting and learning, so that he would merit Olam Haba, the World to Come. His personal life was Torah - and nothing else. Yet, he gave it all up, so that he could be free to address the needs of Klal Yisrael. He sacrificed his own ruchniyus, spirituality, so that Klal Yisrael would grow spiritually. This was his greatest sacrifice.

I remember Horav Baruch Sorotzkin, zl, relating that after his father, Horav Zalman, zl, came to Eretz Yisrael and settled there, his goal was to sit and learn all day and not involve himself in anything else. Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, called upon him to chair the Chinuch Atzmai, Torah Schools for Israel, the nascent educational system that adhered to Torah standards. It was this organization that allowed observant children to receive a Torah education. At first, Rav Zalman demurred claiming that he had no strength; he wanted to devote his time totally to Torah study. Rav Aharon asked him to be moser nefesh b'ruchniyus, literally, sacrifice his own spiritual dimension, so that Jewish children could receive a Torah education. Rav Zalman agreed. He gave up the opportunity for personal spiritual elevation, so that Klal Yisrael would benefit.

The Ponevezer Rav, zl, Horav Yosef Kahaneman, zl, was the architect of Torah in Eretz Yisrael, post World War II. After losing his wife and all but one son in the Holocaust, he managed to escape and emigrate to Eretz Yisrael. He could have felt sorry for himself, but instead he channeled all of his energies into the task of rescuing and comforting his grief-stricken brethren. In what seemed at the time to be a wild dream, he purchased a large parcel of land in the growing town of Bnei Brak, with plans to build a yeshivah. This was the cornerstone, the beginning of the Ponevez Yeshivah and the Torah empire which he established. He lived with the vision of a rebuilt Klal Yisrael. He did not rest, as he globetrotted around the world, raising funds for his manifold projects. He answered the call of the people. He listened with his heart, as he saw the pleas expressed by the tearful eyes of the broken survivors. He sacrificed his ruchniyus, so that others could benefit. He once pointed to the outside facade of the Yeshivah building and remarked, "Each brick is another shverer, difficult, Rambam that I could have explained." He gave up his own learning to allow others to study Rambam. Yes, he limited his own opportunities, but he enabled so much more to be achieved.

Do not covet your fellow's house...not anything that belongs to your fellow. (20:14,15)

If we were to explore which transgression in the Torah encompasses all others, from which prohibition should one distance himself the most, the responses would vary. Some would have an intellectual twist; others would focus on the philosophical; and yet others would address the ethical. We might be able to narrow it down. Chazal teach us that the Aseres Ha'Dibros, Ten Commandments, encompass the entire Torah. They serve as the foundation for the Taryag, 613 mitzvos.

Therefore, all we must do is figure out which of these Ten Commandments carries the greatest weight, which one incorporates all of the others. In his Even Sheleimah, the Gaon, zl, m'Vilna points out that the very last commandment, Lo sachmod, Do not covet, encompasses all the other commandments as well. Horav Chaim Vital, zl, comments that this is why it is the last of the commandments. It encompasses all of the others. One who covets -- who is envious of what others possess, and is driven to have it for his very own - is falling into that abyss which is the root of all evil.

Why is this? Why should one who covets what someone else has be considered the paradigm of evil? If we think about it, it all really does make sense. This person is obviously dissatisfied with what he possesses, constantly envious of his fellow. In Yiddish, he would be referred to as an umtzufridener mentch, unhappy person. Nothing he has is good enough for him. He always wants what the "Joneses" have. Where is the source of this evil root? What drives a person to such discontent?

It comes from a lack of emunah, faith, in the Almighty. He does not trust Hashem, or he subconsciously does not believe that Hashem guides his life

as part of a Master plan, and that what he has - and what he does not have - is for a clear and defined reason.

We now understand why Lo sachmod tells it all, why it is the one transgression that encompasses all of the others. If one does not have faith in Hashem, if he lacks emunah, then the rest of the Torah has no meaning or value. The cornerstone of Jewish observance is belief in Hashem. Without this essential ingredient motivating our observance, it will shortly dissipate. Believing in Hashem goes much further. One must recognize that who he is - the neshamah, soul, which serves as his identifying feature - is determined by Hashem. Likewise, it is Hashem Who determines what life situation is best for nurturing his individual, unique soul. This is defined as a person's destiny. In other words, a believing Jew trusts that whatever happens to him is part of his ultimate destiny, as decided by Hashem. To covet is to deny this reality, thus undermining the entire corpus of Jewish belief.

Hashem wants us to be ourselves - not anyone else. Everything about our lives is part of His plan. Thus, when we are dissatisfied with our lot, we are actually disagreeing with Hashem's decision. Hashem has custom-designed our daily challenges - both spiritual and material/physical - specifically for us. Moreover, He gives us the fortitude to withstand these challenges. To covet means to seek other challenges without the support of Hashem. That is something to consider.

Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, notes that the tenth commandment is one which only a Divine Lawgiver could have legislated. A mortal ruler can enact laws against activities which are physical actions, such as murder and theft. Only G-d can legislate in the area of thought and attitude. Only Hashem can tell us to sanctify our minds. Only He knows whether we have purged ourselves of jealousy. He can tell us not to covet, because He knows if we are listening to His command.

In closing, I would like to explain one aspect of this prohibition which we often tend to ignore - either purposely or inadvertently. I remember writing this in one of the earlier Peninim, but it is certainly worth repeating. After mentioning the various possessions belonging to a fellow Jew which we are not to covet, the Torah concludes with an all-inclusive, v'chol asher l'reiecha, "and all that belongs to your fellow" (ibid. 20:14). If we are forbidden to covet "all that belongs to our fellow," why does the Torah itemize the previous "possessions," such as wife, house, servant, etc.? Ostensibly, they are included in "all that belongs to your fellow." I once heard a very practical explanation for this redundancy. People are envious of their neighbor, friend, etc. The other fellow has something - I also want it. The other fellow has it easy earning a living, marrying off his children - I also want it. The Torah tells him: v'chol asher l'reiecha - take into consideration all that your fellow has to contend with. There are aspects of his life of which you are unaware. There are occurrences down the road of which you and he are unaware. When one covets, he needs to take the entire picture into perspective. Suddenly, one is no longer quick to covet. He can do without the other fellow's living, his car, his wonderful life, because there are aspects of his life that he is not prepared to accept. Many things are included in Hashem's decision to provide an individual with good fortune. It is all part of a large equation. The Torah intimates to us: think twice before you covet, because included in all your good fortune is "all that belongs to your fellow."

The entire people saw the thunder and the flames...the people saw and trembled. (20:15)

The greatest moment in Jewish history, the most seminal Revelation which the Jewish people experienced, was Mattan Torah, the Giving of the Torah, on Har Sinai. What does this mean, and how does it affect us? If a Jew studies Torah, but either has no clue or simply does not believe in its source on Sinai, does it make a difference? It is Torah anyway - or is it not? One who studies Torah, but is not conscious that it is the very same Torah that was given to us by Hashem on Har Sinai, has drained all life from the Torah. Conversely, one who studies Torah, fully aware of its source and recognizing its Divine authorship, merits that the Torah then enters into his entire system, generating life within him. When we connect with Har Sinai, the Torah becomes alive. When Har Sinai is nothing more than an abstract legend or archaic tradition, then we study Bible.

Horav Simcha Wasserman, zl, gives an excellent analogy. When a plant is growing, its roots spread beneath the ground. Through this process, the roots provide sustenance to the plant from the nutrients of the soil. When the plant is growing, it has life. If one were to sever the plant from its source in the ground, the plant would die. It may have value as a piece of wood, but it is no longer alive. It is not a living plant. Likewise, there are those who "protect" the Torah in their libraries and museums. Essentially, for them the Torah is dead. They are storing it in a mausoleum. They have cut themselves off from the living Torah. One is alive as long as the respirator connects him to the oxygen. Har Sinai is our lifeline. To deny its role in the life of a Jew is to commit spiritual suicide, and, if we impose this line of thinking on others, we commit spiritual murder.

The root of all Judaism is Torah from Sinai: The Jewish personality receives its sustenance from this root. When firmly implanted in that root, the Jewish personality flourishes: he is vibrant, ethically correct and serves the Almighty with passion and vigor. In addition, one who studies Torah m'Sinai develops an intellectual maturity unlike that of any other discipline. He questions everything; he analyzes everything. The more one develops a capacity for analytical thinking, the greater his objectivity, allowing him to control his emotions - rather than being controlled by them.

When one delves into the intricacies of Torah, he discovers its eternal nature, thus perceiving its Divine Author. Rav Simchah explains that in order to enable us to understand Torah, which is a creation that is fathomless and endless, Hashem gave us an accompanying gift: automatic adjustment. He compares this to a mother who is nursing her child. A newborn infant lacks the strength or the capacity for as much nourishment as a two-year-old child requires. Does the mother "measure" her child's intake? Hashem created it so that the milk is automatically supplied commensurate with the individual child's capacity to receive. The Chovos HaLevavos views this as one of the wonders of Hashem's Creation.

Torah is very much the same. A rebbe who teaches Torah with a focus on the students developing an understanding of the lesson will be blessed by Hashem, similar to a nursing mother. The rebbe's explanation will adjust "itself" to the student, and the student will grasp it on his own individual level. This is because Torah is the product of Divine authorship and, thus, not given to the usual parameters and limitations inherent to secular scholarship.

I would like to end with what I feel is a captivating story which Horav Noach Weinberg, zl, relates that encapsulates so much about Torah. A young man came to Aish HaTorah as a graduate of Yale University, hailing from a totally secular background, but he ended up spending a year at the yeshiva and returning home a Torah-observant Jew. Rav Weinberg asked him what motivated him to come to the yeshivah in the first place. He explained that he had majored in the Russian language in college. Upon graduating, he decided to test his skills in Russia. While in Moscow, he was told that there was going to be a Jewish celebration in front of the Great Synagogue. That evening, 50,000 Jews gathered in front of the Great Synagogue to dance on Simchas Torah!

This was a most haunting experience. Muskovites are a dour lot. No one dances in the street. Yet, here were thousands of Jews dancing with genuine joy! What happened? To find the answer to this pressing question, he became friendly with a group of refuseniks who were learning and teaching Torah throughout Moscow. He joined their classes. Although far from erudite himself, he noted that one of the teachers knew very little. This, however, did not prevent him from teaching.

He asked the "teacher," "How long have you been learning Torah that you feel proficient to teach it?"

The reply was, "Six months." For six months, he had attended two to three classes a week, and he was now teaching Torah to others.

"How can you know enough to teach?" he asked.

The fellow looked him squarely in the eyes and said, "I risked my life to learn what I know. My teacher risked his life to teach me. How can I not teach it? Whatever I have learned is so precious and represents so much that I am willing to risk my life to pass it on."

It was the power of that message that brought that young man to

Yerushalayim and the beginning of his life of Torah observance.

Shiru l'Hashem shir Chadash

Sing to Hashem a new song.

As David HaMelech approaches the conclusion of Sefer Tehillim he calls for a "new" song. Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, explains that shirah, song, is an awakening of the mind by means of emotions and excitement of the senses and intellect. This is expressed through song. What is a "new" song? Apparently, it must be an additional sensation of Hashem. This can occur in one of two ways: either one recognizes Hashem's power and wisdom in some new phenomenon, previously neglected by us; or by an increasing awareness of some phenomena which we had previously studied. In any event, we derive from here that one should not become complacent in his awareness of Hashem. He constantly bestows kindnesses on us, which obligate us in new songs. The purpose of all life is to praise Hashem. Therefore, one should utilize all the days of his life for this purpose. It is not enough to "have praised." One must continue praising by delving deeper and studying more, so that his awareness of gadlus ha'Borei, the greatness of the Creator, becomes greater and deeper, thereby facilitating recurrent and everlasting esteem and tribute.

In memory of Meir Bedziner R' Meir ben Betzalel HaLevi z"l nifter 24 Shevat 5764 on his yahrzeit.

Reb Meir loved people and was beloved by all. His sterling character and pleasant demeanor were the hallmarks of his personality.

He sought every opportunity to increase the study of Torah and that it be accessible to all.

yehi zichru baruch The Bedziner and Meltzer Families

Parshas Yisro: What's News

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Matzav.com)

Though the marquee event of this week's portion surrounds the epic event of Matan Torah, the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, there are still many lessons to be learned from every pasuk of the parsha, even the seemingly innocuous ones. Rabbi Mordechai Rogov, of blessed memory, points out a fascinating insight from the following verses that discuss the naming of Moshe's children.

"Yisro, the father-in-law of Moses, took Zipporah, the wife of Moses, after she had been sent away, and her two sons - of whom the name of one was Gershom, for he had said, 'I was a sojourner in a strange land.' And the name of the other was Eliezer, for 'the God of my father came to my aid, and He saved me from the sword of Pharaoh.'" (Exodus 18:2-4).

After Moshe killed the Egyptian taskmaster who had hit the Hebrew slave, Pharaoh put a price on Moshe's head. The Medrash tells us that Moshe's head was actually on the chopping block but he was miraculously saved. He immediately fled from Egypt to Midian. In Midian, he met his wife Zipporah and there had two sons.

The question posed is simple and straightforward: Moshe was first saved from Pharaoh and only then did he flee to Midian and become a "sojourner in a strange land." Why did he name his first child after the events in exile his second son in honor of the miraculous salvation from Pharaoh's sword? Rav Rogov points out a certain human nature about how events, even the most notable ones, are viewed and appreciated through the prospect of time.

Chris Matthews in his classic book *Hardball, An Inside Look at How Politics is Played by one who knows the Game*, tells how Senator Alben W. Barkley of Kentucky, who would later serve as Harry Truman's vice president, related a story that is reflective of human nature and memory. In 1938, Barkley had been challenged for reelection to the Senate by Governor A. B. 'Happy' Chandler, who later made his name as Commissioner of Baseball.

During that campaign, Barkley liked to tell the story of a certain rural constituent on whom he had called in the weeks before the election, only to discover that he was thinking of voting for Governor Chandler. Barkley reminded the man of the many things he had done for him as a prosecuting attorney, as a county judge, and as a congressman and as a senator.

"I recalled how I had helped get an access road built to his farm, how I had visited him in a military hospital in France when he was wounded in World War I, how I had assisted him in securing his veteran's benefits, how I had arranged his loan from the Farm Credit Administration, and how I had got him a disaster loan when the flood destroyed his home."

"How can you think of voting for Happy?" Barkley cried. "Surely you remember all these things I have done for you!"

"Sure," the fellow said, "I remember. But what in the world have you done for me lately?"

Though this story in no way reflects upon the great personage of Moshe, the lessons we can garner from it as well as they apply to all of us.

Rabbi Rogov explains that though the Moshe's fleeing Pharaoh was notably miraculous it was still an event of the past. Now he was in Midian. The pressure of exile from his parents, his immediate family, his brother Ahron and sister Miriam, and his people, was a constant test of faith. Therefore, the name of Moshe's first son commemorated his current crisis as opposed to his prior, albeit more miraculous and traumatic one.

Sometimes appreciating the minor issues of life take precedence over even the most eventful - if that is what is currently sitting on the table.

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The Mitzvah of Kiddush

Rabbi Yonason Sacks

The TorahWeb Foundation

While all rishonim maintain that the mitzvah of Kiddush is derived from the posuk of "Zachor es yom hashabbos l'kadsho - Remember the Shabbos day to sanctify it" (Shemos 20:8), the fundamental nature of this "Zechira" is subject to considerable debate. The Rambam (Hil. Shabbos 29:1) employs this posuk to teach that one must commemorate the Shabbos at both its commencement and at its departure with "zechiras shevach v'kiddush" - words of "praise and sanctification." The Rambam's presentation appears to characterize Kiddush and Havdallah as serving to offset Shabbos from the rest of the week, bookending the Shabbos with expressions of the day's uniqueness (see also Sefer HaMitzvos 155). Based on the Rambam's insistence upon expressions of "praise and sanctification," the Minchas Chinuch (31) infers that actual verbal articulation of Kiddush is necessary for fulfillment of the mitzvah: mere mental contemplation is insufficient (see, however, Pri Megadim E.A. 271:2).

The Ramban (Shemos 20:8), however, characterizes Kiddush in a somewhat different fashion. In describing the mitzvah of Kiddush, the Ramban analogizes the Kiddush of Friday night to the inaugural Kiddush of the Yovel year performed by the Beis Din. Rather than merely demarcating Shabbos from the rest of the week, Kiddush serves to literally consecrate and infuse the day of Shabbos with holiness. Although the kedushas hayom of Shabbos is not actually contingent upon human sanctification - whether a person recites Kiddush or not, Shabbos invariably begins at Sunset on Friday night (see, for example, Beitza 17a) - the Torah nonetheless enjoins us to actively participate in the inauguration of the Shabbos.

The Ramban's understanding of Kiddush finds precedent in other areas of halacha as well. A similar model may be found, for example, in the halachos pertaining to the Kedushas Bechor of an animal (see Nedarim 13a). Although firstborn animals are intrinsically endowed with sanctity from birth, irrespective of whether the owner actually declares the firstborn as "sanctified" or not, the owner of the animal is nonetheless commanded to actively declare the firstborn as sanctified. The Mordechai (Gittin 4:380) expresses a similar concept regarding the mitzvah of shemitas kesafim (relinquishing of loans) of the shemittah year. Despite the fact that the shemittah year will cancel loans regardless of a lender's intent (see, however, Yeraim 278), the Torah commands all lenders to formally declare that they relinquish their loans. The Ramban perceives Kiddush in a similar fashion, as it represents the human involvement in the sanctification of the day at its onset.

The practical difference between the interpretations of the Rambam and the Ramban expresses itself in the mitzvah of Havdallah. Because the Rambam understands “Zachor es yom hashabbos l’kadsho” as an imperative to offset Shabbos from the rest of the week, the Rambam derives both the mitzvah of Kiddush as well as the mitzvah of Havdallah from the same posuk. Both mitzvos serve an identical role, bookending the Shabbos from the remaining days of the week. In the Ramban’s view, however, “Zachor es yom hashabbos l’kadsho” enjoins us to sanctify the Shabbos at its onset in a manner comparable to the sanctification of the Yovel. Hence, the posuk only refers to Kiddush at the inauguration of Shabbos, but not to Havdallah.

The Ramban notes that his understanding of Kiddush as a “Mekadesh” or “sanctifier” of the day accounts nicely for the d’rabanan (Rabbinic) status of the Shabbos morning Kiddush, “Kiddusha Rabba.” Just as the sanctification of the Yovel and of Rosh Chodesh is performed solely at the onset of the event, so too the Kiddush of Shabbos can only be performed (on a Biblical level) at the beginning of Shabbos. Any subsequent “Kiddush” during the course of Shabbos can only exist as a Rabbinic replica.

In addition to the d’oraisa (Biblical) Kiddush recited at the onset of Shabbos, Chazal instituted a secondary Kiddush to be recited on Shabbos morning, known as “Kiddusha Rabba.” The Rambam (Hil. Shabbos 29:10) maintains that, like the d’oraisa Kiddush of Friday night, one may not eat prior to reciting Kiddusha Rabba. The Ra’avad (ibid.) disagrees, arguing that the ‘true’ Kiddush, which entails a prohibition of eating, was recited on Friday night. Kiddusha Rabba of the daytime, however, demands no such stringency. The Maharam Chalava (Pesachim 106a) echoes the Ra’avad’s sentiment, explicitly stating that, despite its name, “Ein zeh Kiddush mammash” - Kiddusha Rabba is “not a ‘literal’ Kiddush.” The Maharam Chalava supports this notion by citing Kiddush HaChodesh of Beis Din: just as Kiddush HaChodesh of Beis Din entails a single act of inauguration at the commencement of the month, so too the Biblical mitzvah of Kiddush on Shabbos requires only a single declaration.

Apparently, the Ra’avad and Maharam Chalava understand the essential nature of Kiddusha Rabba differently than the Rambam. The Rambam appears to view Kiddusha Rabba as a form of “Kiddush” - albeit Rabbinic. In other words, when the Rabbanan instituted Kiddusha Rabba, they modeled it after the Biblical form of Kiddush. Hence, Kiddusha Rabba carries the identical stringencies of Kiddush d’oraisa, including the prohibition of eating and the necessary recital “b’makom seuda.” The Ra’avad and Maharam Chalava, however, assume that Kiddusha Rabba is not included under the rubric of “Kiddush” in any shape or form. Rather, Kiddusha Rabba constitutes an independent Rabbinic mitzvah to enhance the Shabbos day meal with wine, which is not patterned after the d’oraisa mitzvah of “Kiddush.” Hence, Kiddusha Rabba does not assume the same stringencies as the nighttime Kiddush.

This dispute may also express itself in the obligation of women to recite Kiddusha Rabba. According to the Rambam, Kiddusha Rabba is patterned after the Mitvah d’oraisa of Kiddush. Hence, just as women are uniquely obligated in the mitzvah of Kiddush based on a special derivation of the Gemarah (see Berachos 20b), so too women are obligated to perform Kiddusha Rabba, which exists as an extension of Kiddush. According to the Raavad and Maharam Chalava, however, Kiddusha Rabba is not connected to Kiddush, despite its name. Rather, Kiddusha Rabba constitutes a new mitzvah to enhance the Shabbos meal with wine. As such, it constitutes a mitzvas assei shehazaman grama (positive time-bound mitzvah), and women are thus exempt.

Perhaps the Rambam’s understanding of Kiddusha Rabba as a Rabbinic form of Kiddush (as opposed to an independent Rabbinic mitzvah bearing no relationship to Kiddush) may be rooted in his aforementioned general understanding of the nature of Kiddush. Recall that the Maharam Chalava questioned the possibility of reciting Kiddush during the day – even if the Kiddush is only mid’rabanan – based on the fact that Kiddush HaChodesh of Beis Din is performed only at the beginning of the month. The Rambam, however, would reject this analogy, maintaining that Kiddush of Shabbos is incomparable to Kiddush HaChodesh of Beis Din. While Kiddush

HaChodesh of Beis Din marks the consecration of the month, Kiddush on Shabbos functions solely to offset Shabbos from the rest of the week. Hence, although Kiddush of Beis Din may only be performed at the onset of the month, one could envision the possibility of Kiddush (albeit Mid’rabanan) in the middle of Shabbos.

The Gemarah in Masseches Berachos (27b) relates: “misparallel odom shel shabbos b’erev Shabbos v’omer k’dusha al hakos” - one may recite the Shemoneh Esrei of Shabbos and Kiddush on Erev Shabbos. At first glance, the dispensation to recite the Shabbos Kiddush on a weekday appears difficult. Many rishonim explain this ruling through the principle of “tosefes Shabbos” - the ability to actually “begin Shabbos early.” While Kiddush most certainly must be recited on Shabbos itself, when one accepts the sanctity of Shabbos early, one may also recite Kiddush early. Based on this understanding, many authorities (see Or Zarua Hilchos Erev Shabbos 14 and Ra’ah ibid.) rule that the institution of “tosefes Shabbos” must be mid’oraisa: if the ability to accept Shabbos early was merely a rabbinic innovation which was unrecognized on a Biblical level, one could not possibly fulfill one’s Biblical Kiddush obligation during that time (see however, Mordechai (Megillah 2:798)).

Interestingly, however, the Rambam makes no mention of tosefes Shabbos anywhere in his Mishneh Torah. The Maggid Mishneh (Hil. Shevisas Esor 1:6), as explained by the Beir Halacha (261 s.v. “Yeish Omrim”), explains that the Rambam considers tosefes Shabbos to be a purely Rabbinic institution. The Kesef Mishneh (Hil. Shabbos 4:3) goes further, arguing that the Rambam rejects the notion of tosefes Shabbos entirely – even mid’rabanan. Either way, if the Rambam does not recognize the possibility for biblically accepting Shabbos early on Friday afternoon, he faces an obvious difficulty: how can the Gemarah sanction reciting Kiddush on Friday afternoon?

The Rambam addresses this issue himself. In quoting the aforementioned Gemarah, the Rambam writes (Hil. Shabbos 29:11): one may recite Kiddush on Friday afternoon, even though the Shabbos has not yet begun...because the mitzvah of ‘Zechira’ obliges one to recite Kiddush and Havdallah at the commencement and departure of Shabbos, or slightly beforehand or afterwards” (Hil. Shabbos 29:11). The Rambam explicitly acknowledges that Kiddush need not be recited on Shabbos itself. If one recited Kiddush on Friday afternoon before the actual onset of Shabbos, one nonetheless fulfills the d’oraisa Kiddush obligation. The Rambam’s license to recite Kiddush before the actual commencement of Shabbos fits consistently with the Rambam’s general understanding of the nature of Kiddush. Because Kiddush serves to mark off Shabbos from the rest of the week, it must be recited sometime around the transitional point from Friday to Shabbos, but not necessarily on Shabbos itself. If, however, one assumes like the Ramban, that Kiddush of Shabbos is analogous to Kiddush of Yovel and Rosh Chodesh, one must certainly wait until Shabbos itself to sanctify the Shabbos, as is the case with Yovel and Rosh Chodesh, one must certainly wait until Shabbos itself to sanctify the Shabbos, as is the case with Yovel and Rosh Chodesh.

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The Power of Belief
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Rather recently, books have appeared advocating “positive imagery,” suggesting that if you imagine the scene that you wish to occur, this will make it happen. The first tendency is to dismiss this almost derisively. “I was laid off eight months ago. I have repeatedly imagined myself happily employed at a new job, but I am still unemployed.” It is quite difficult to counter such observations. Magical thinking is juvenile, one says, and wishing it will happen does not bring it about.

Logically, I would go along with this observation. However, I came across an essay in the sefer Ohev Israel, by the Chassidic master, Rebbe Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Apt. He cites Rashi’s statement (Genesis 7:7) that Noah vacillated in his belief that there would indeed be a flood, and did not

enter the ark until the rising waters forced him to. The Rebbe of Apt asks, "How can one say that Noah, whom the Torah describes as a perfect tzaddik, was lax in his belief in Hashem's words?"

The Rebbe explains that the word emunah, faith, is related to the word omein, which means "to raise up," as in the Book of Esther, which uses the word omein in the sentence that Mordecai reared Esther. This connotation, the Rebbe says, means that emunah can "raise" things, i.e., bring them about. Therefore, Noah did not allow himself to have a strong belief that the flood would occur, because he feared that this might actually cause the flood to materialize. Noah still held out hope that the people might do teshuvah that might avert the flood, and his intense emunah might hasten it. Thus, Rashi's comment is not an aspersion on Noah.

We have the principle that a positive middah is more powerful than a negative middah. If, as the Rebbe says, a strong belief (emunah) may result in a negative result, then certainly, a strong positive belief may bring about a desired result.

However, the belief must be genuine and complete, which may be difficult to achieve.

Rebbe Yitzhak Meir of Gur cited the Midrash, that before offering the Torah to the Jews, Hashem offered it to other peoples. The Moabites asked, "What does the Torah say?" and Hashem said, "You shall not commit adultery." The Moabites rejected the Torah because, "We are a lustful people. We cannot accept that restriction."

Hashem then offered it to the Edomites, who asked, "What does the Torah say?" and Hashem said, "You shall not commit murder." The Edomites rejected the Torah because, "Our father, Esau, was blessed 'to live by the sword.'

Why did Hashem offer the Torah to other nations? So that they should not say, "You favored the Jews. If you had given us the Torah, we would have been the chosen people." Now Hashem can say, "I offered it to you, but you rejected it."

"But," Rebbe Yitzhak Meir asked, "how does that address the charges of the Moabites and the Edomites. They will still say, 'You quoted us "You shall not commit adultery." and "You shall not commit murder," but to the Jews You said, "I am the Lord your G-d." Had you told us that, we would have accepted the Torah.'

Rebbe Yitzhak Meir explained, "The Torah is intended to help a person overcome his physical drives. The primary physical drive of the Moabites was lust, and that of the Edomites, bloodshed. These are not the primary drives of the Jews. The Jews' primary drive is skepticism. Other nations could believe that idols, rivers and mountains were gods. Jews, on the other hand, witnessed many supernatural miracles, yet as the Torah relates and our history confirms, continued to doubt Hashem. Therefore, Hashem approached each nation with what would be the greatest challenge for them. For the Moabites it was restraint of lust, for the Edomites it was restraint of killing, and for the Israelites, it was to believe in Hashem.

Emunah is indeed a powerful force and may make things happen. However, sincere and complete emunah is difficult to achieve.

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Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Sabbath Peace, Inside and Out

Check out the Pockets

Sometimes it is the seemingly insignificant details that enable us to see the big picture.

"Hanania taught: One should examine one's garments on Sabbath eve before nightfall. Rav Yosef observed: This is a great law for the Sabbath." [Shabbat 12a]

The Sages sought to prevent one from unknowingly carrying objects in the public domain on Shabbat. This is perhaps a useful suggestion, but what makes it such an important principle - "a great law for the Sabbath"? After all, even if one were to accidentally carry an object forgotten in one's pocket, this would fall under the Halachic category of mitaseik - an unintentional

act for which one is not at all culpable. Why did Rav Yosef so highly praise Hanania's advice? Is checking one's pockets really so central to Sabbath observance?

Sabbath Harmony

We live out our lives in two realms. There is our inner world - our ideals and moral principles, our aspirations and spiritual goals. And there is our outer world - our actions in the 'real' world, our struggles to eke out a living and tend to our physical needs in a challenging and competitive world. The greater the dissonance between our inner and outer lives, between our elevated ideals and our day-to-day actions, the further we have will strayed from our Divine image and true inner self.

Shabbat, however, provides an opportunity to attain a degree of harmony between our inner and outer lives.

The holiness and tranquility of Shabbat help enrich our inner lives. Shabbat is a state that is very different from our workday lives, which have been complicated and even compromised by life's myriad calculations and moral struggles. "God made man straight - but they sought many intrigues" [Ecc. 7:29].

The Sabbath, with its elevated holiness, comes to restore the purity of inner life that was suppressed and eroded by the corrupting influences of day-to-day life, influences that often contradict our true values and goals. But the power of Sabbath peace is even greater. Not only does Shabbat restore our inner world, but it reaches out to our outer world. The spiritual rest of Shabbat enables our outer life to be in harmony with our inner life, bestowing it a spirit of peace and holiness, joy and grace.

Great Principle of Shabbat

Now we may begin to understand the importance that the Sages placed on observing the Sabbath, even in life's external aspects. The Hebrew word for clothing, beged, comes from the root bagad, meaning 'to betray'; for clothes can hide and betray the true inner self. One Shabbat, however, even the most superficial facets of our lives, our clothes and pockets, should reflect the sanctity of the Sabbath day.

The Sages prohibited certain activities because of marit ayin, an action's superficial appearance as inappropriate for Shabbat. And we are commanded to wear special clothing in honor of the Sabbath [Shabbat 113a]. These external displays of Sabbath holiness are meant to ensure that its spirit of peace and harmony will permeate and refine our outer lives.

For this reason we should be careful even in situations that do not truly desecrate the Sabbath. Since they can occur frequently, they have the potential to dilute its sanctity. Forgetting an object in one's pocket does not truly entail Sabbath desecration; it is not even considered a shogeig (unintentional) act [Tosafot on Shabbat 12b]. But the realm of external actions does not make these fine distinctions between degrees of intention. On the superficial, physical plane, some measure of desecration of Sabbath peace has taken place.

Rav Yosef praised this advice to check one's pockets before Shabbat as "a great law for the Sabbath." He recognized that this halachah fulfills the ideal of Shabbat as a force of holiness binding together the spiritual heights of our inner self together with the most superficial aspects of our physical existence. This is truly a great principle, refining the sanctity of the Sabbath and guarding its character, as it seeks to balance our inner and outer worlds, our highest aspirations with our day-to-day actions and external aspects of life.

[Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. II p. 28; Ein Eyah Shabbat ch. I sec 42]

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Haftorah - Parshas Yisro Yeshaya 6:1 by Rabbi Dovid Siegel

This week's haftorah reveals to us the unlimited potential of the Jewish soul. The prophet Yeshaya shares with us his astounding vision of Hashem's throne of glory. He says, "Fiery angels stand before Hashem in service ... They call to one another and say in unison, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is

Hashem the master of the legions whose glory fills the entire world" (6:2,3) Yeshaya saw one of the loftiest visions ever to be seen by man and responded in the following manner, "Woe to me for I remained silent because I am a man of impure lips...and my eyes beheld the Divine Presence itself." (6:5) This verse displays Yeshaya's humble response to his awesome experience feeling unworthy of catching the faintest glimpse of Hashem's magnificent glory. Yet, Yeshaya was troubled by his personal silence during those lofty moments unable to participate in the angels' glorious praise. (see Radak ad loc) He attributed this to his personal imperfection and inadequacy. Apparently, his speech was impure and sinful and rendered him unworthy of uttering a sound in Hashem's holy presence.

The vision continued and Hashem commanded one of His fiery angels to deliver Yeshaya a burning coal. Yeshaya said, "And with tongs the angel removed the coal from the altar, touched my mouth and said...Your sin is removed and your error forgiven." (6:6,7) Immediately following this, Hashem asked, "Whom shall I send?" and Yeshaya responded and said, "Here I am; send me." (6:8) Yeshaya's awesome vision together with his humble response initiated him into prophecy. After this initial cleansing, he became worthy of transmitting Hashem's penetrating message to His people. In addition, Yeshaya's cleansing process allowed him to join the ranks of the angels and converse with Hashem in His actual presence. (Radak ad loc)

This intriguing incident suggests the unthinkable, that man can rise to the lofty status of Heavenly beings. Although Yeshaya was privy to the inner most levels of spirituality he sensed his mortality and felt unworthy of associating with such elevated levels of holiness. Alas, he was a human being and not a spiritual entity. He identified with impurity and sin and didn't deserve to see such revelations or sing Heavenly praises. Hashem revealed Yeshaya that he had the potential and after minor refinement he would personally attain those lofty levels. Interestingly, when we reflect upon this incident we tend to side with Yeshaya. We also wonder, "What position does an impure mortal occupy amongst Heavenly angels?" How could man even consider participating in Heavenly praise? Although angels reflect Hashem's glory what can be said about man?!

The answer to these is found in the essential discussion of mortality between Hashem and the angels. The Sages relate that the angels complained to Hashem when He chose to share His precious Torah with His people. They argued, "Your glory (Your Torah) should remain among the Heavenly beings. They are holy and Your Torah is holy, they are pure and Your Torah is pure and they are everlasting and Your Torah is also." Hashem responded that the Torah could not remain amongst them because they are perfect spiritual beings with no mortality, impurity or illness. Hashem's true glory would ultimately come from man plagued by impurity and mortality. (Midrash Shochar Tov 8) This response also troubles us because, in truth, we side with the angels. Isn't perfect fulfillment of Hashem's will the greatest tribute to His honor? What could be more glorious than the angels' purest praises? How could mortality and impurity serve as positive factors in Hashem's ultimate glory?

The Sages' words in this week's haftarah provide deep insight into this. Rashi reflects upon the burning coal and notes that the fiery angel held it with tongs. This suggests that the coal's heat was too intense for an angel to hold. Surprisingly however, Yeshaya's lip endured direct contact with the coal without being harmed. Rashi quotes the Sages who explain a human being's potential truly surpasses the status of an angel. They support this with a verse in Yoel that says, "For His camp is massive but mightier are those who do His word." (Yoel 2:11) Chazal interpret Hashem's massive camp to refer to His angels and those who fulfill His word to refer to His prophets. This teaches us that, in truth, a devout prophet is greater than an angel. (Rashi 6:7 from Midrash Tanchuma)

The upshot of this is based on man's equal ability to obey or disobey Hashem. An angel's clear perception of Hashem basically leaves no room for anything but perfect behavior. Man, on the other hand, is plagued by impurity, weakness and temptation. His perfect adherence to Hashem's will is undoubtedly true testimony to Hashem's greatness. Man's absolute negation for Hashem's sake displays the true power of His word. The

spiritual ascent of a prophet proves that free thinking man can be so subservient to his master that he transcends all physical barriers. Maimonides explains that the basic qualifications of any prophet demand full control over all passions and emotions never succumbing to any physical desire. After achieving this he continues to detach himself from worldly matters totally focusing his mind on spirituality while training it never to stray into frivolity or vanity. He continues developing until his mind becomes transfixed on Hashem's innermost secrets thus deeming one worthy of Hashem's contact. During prophecy one realizes that he transcended all human barriers and joined the ranks of the angels. (see Rambam Yesodei HaTorah 7:1) This incredible accomplishment by man supersedes indeed the Heavenly angels even during their loftiest praises to Hashem. Man, unlike angel, begins far from perfect but can actually refine himself and attain the spirituality of the Heavenly hosts themselves.

We now understand that the human being sings the "praise of all praises" through his enormous efforts overcoming his human imperfections. Yeshaya originally felt unworthy of participating in the Heavenly display of Hashem's glory due to his human limitations and imperfections. Hashem responded that his conscious decision to totally subject himself to Hashem's will surpassed the Heavenly praise. Once Yeshaya's personal speech was totally cleansed he was worthy of participating in the loftiest of all praises. He could now speak in Hashem's presence and even rise above the angels and display, through his total subservience, Hashem's greatest honor.

This lesson has great bearing on our times. Chafetz Chaim raises the classic concern how the latest generations consider meriting the advent of Mashiach? If previous generations who were undoubtedly more pious than ours did not merit Mashiach how could our shameful generation merit him? Chafetz Chaim answers that, on the contrary, no generation ever qualified for Mashiach as much as ours. He explains that in previous times Mitzva observance was, basically, a foregone conclusion. It did not require endless self sacrifice and had therefore had relatively limited value. In our days, however, foreign influences are so rampant that even basic Mitzva observance requires tremendous devotion and sacrifice. In present times, we may add, morality has fallen so low that attaining any level of purity and self negation is a tremendous accomplishment. In this light every mitzva has such great value that we, above all, display Hashem's greatest glory. Hashem undoubtedly tells His angels, "Look at My people who manage to remain moral and pure even in their corrupt and free thinking environment." "Can anyone bring Me greater glory than them?!"

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Weekly Halachah - Parshat Yitro 5750

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Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

Chasan and Kallah: The Seven Festive Days

For seven days after their wedding, the chasan and kallah continue to joyously celebrate their marriage. Indeed, the seven days following a wedding are considered like a "private Yom Tov" for the chasan and kallah.1 It is important that the young couple, along with their families, study the following laws and customs before the wedding so that they start off their married life in accordance with the halachah.

The obligation of simchah

* The chasan is obligated to spend time with his bride and make her happy for the entire seven festive days. [Even if the chasan or the kallah was previously married, the couple is still obligated to perform the mitzvah of simchah for seven days. If, however, both the chasan and kallah were previously married, then they are obligated to engage in the mitzvah of simchah for only three days.]2]

* The chasan and kallah must eat their meals together.3

* The chasan should limit his Torah study during this time, i.e., he should not immerse himself in intricate texts but rather engage in less demanding

areas of study.⁴ If the kallah does not mind, however, he may study whatever he chooses.⁵

* The chasan and kallah dress in their better clothing (bigdei kavod).⁶

* It is a mitzvah for others to make the chasan and kallah happy and to praise them throughout the entire seven festive days.⁷

* It is permitted for a chasan and kallah to visit the sick and to comfort mourners during this time.⁸

Walking alone

A chasan may not walk unaccompanied outside [in the street or in the marketplace] during the seven festive days, and neither may a kallah.⁹ Two reasons for this prohibition are given: 1) A chasan and kallah must be carefully watched so that mazikim do not attack them¹⁰; 2) It is not befitting the honor of a chasan and kallah to walk out alone during their first week of marriage. The following rules apply:

* The prohibition applies even during the day¹¹ and even if there are many people in the street.¹²

* They are not to go out even to shul¹³ or for the performance of any other mitzvah, unless that mitzvah must be fulfilled and no one else is available and they cannot go together.¹⁴

* The chasan and kallah may go outside together even if they are not accompanied by others.¹⁵

* According to one opinion, the chasan or kallah should not even be alone inside the house during these seven festive days; they must be accompanied by at least one person at all times.¹⁶

Work

The chasan and kallah¹⁷ are prohibited from doing any work or engaging in any business for the entire seven days. This prohibition stands even if the kallah allows the chasan to work.

There are different opinions in the poskim regarding the type of "work" that is prohibited. Some maintain that only work that entails tirschah (toil) or is very time-consuming (such as most labors which are prohibited on Chol ha-Moed) is prohibited.¹⁸ Others, however, hold that even light housework, except for work entailed in food preparation, is prohibited.¹⁹

It is permitted, however, for the chasan and kallah to do any work or engage in any business if otherwise they would incur a loss (melechtes davar ha-aveid) and no one else can take care of it for them.²⁰

A chasan and kallah may deposit their monetary gifts in the bank and may go shopping for household appliances and furniture.²¹

According to most poskim, a chasan and kallah are allowed to take a haircut during this time.²²

Sheva Berachos

Nowadays, it has become commonplace for a newlywed couple to be regaled at least one festive meal a day by their relatives and friends during the first week of marriage. At such a festive meal, seven additional blessings (Sheva Berachos) are recited after Birkas ha-Mazon is completed, provided that several conditions, which will be enumerated in the next chapter, are met.

It must be stressed, however, that while the basic concept of Sheva Berachos is recorded in the Talmud²³ and codified in the Shulchan Aruch, there is no obligation for a chasan and kallah to partake in this type of meal. Indeed, in earlier times many communities did not celebrate Sheva Berachos at all,²⁴ and some communities never even heard of it.²⁵ Some poskim even question whether this type of meal is considered a seudas mitzvah.²⁶ Accordingly, while it is recommended by some poskim²⁷ for the chasan and kallah to partake in Sheva Berachos²⁸ at least once a day,²⁹ and this has become the common practice,³⁰ it is by no means an obligation.³¹ If they so desire, they may eat by themselves or with their immediate family and no Sheva Berachos will be recited. When Sheva Berachos meals become a source of stress, strain or strife for the couple or their families, they should be advised that such meals are absolutely not required. Many people are not aware of this.

The seven festive days begin immediately after the chupah. There are three possible timetables:

* If the chupah takes place at night, that night and the day after are considered day one, followed by another six nights and days.

* If the chupah takes place by day (any time before sunset), then that day is considered day one, and that night plus the next day is considered day two. This is so even if the yichud and the actual meal took place entirely at night.³²

* If the chupah took place after sunset but was completely over before the stars came out (during bein ha-shemashos) some poskim consider that day as day one³³ while others hold that the first day begins only that night.³⁴

On the seventh day of the seven festive days, Sheva Berachos should be recited before sunset.³⁵ If that cannot be arranged, some poskim allow reciting Sheva Berachos up to forty minutes past sunset [in the United States],³⁶ while many other poskim are stringent and do not allow reciting any one of the blessings even one minute after sunset.³⁷

1 While shivas yemei ha-mishte is a Rabbinic obligation (Rambam, Hilchos Ishus 10:12), see Rambam, Hilchos Aveil 5:1 that it was originally enacted by Moshe Rabbeinu. See also Rashi and Ramban, Bereishis 29:27.

2 Chelkas Mechokek 64:4.

3 While it is permitted for the kallah to be mochel and allow the chasan to spend time or eat by himself during the seven festive days (Rama E.H. 64:2), it is not recommended and it is not customary that she do so (Chupas Chasanim 14:2).

4 Chida in Shiyurei Berachah E.H. 64.

5 Tzitz Eliezer 12:73.

6 Pirkei d'Rav Eliezer 16, quoted by Aruch ha-Shulchan E.H. 64:3.

7 Pirkei d'Rav Eliezer 16; Yalkut Shimoni, Shoftim 70.

8 B'tzeil ha-Chochmah 2:44.

9 While Shulchan Aruch mentions this prohibition only for the chasan, Aruch ha-Shulchan, based on the Talmud, includes the kallah as well.

10 Berachos 54b. Mazikim are supernatural forces which are controlled by the Satan.

11 Radal on Pirkei d'Rav Eliezer 16.

12 Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Beis Chasanim 17). The Sephardim, however, permit going out during the day when there are people on the street.

13 Beis Shemuel E.H. 64:2, quoting the Perishah.

14 Rav Yaakov Emdin (Migdal Oz, pg. 11).

15 Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Beis Chasanim 17).

16 Aruch ha-Shulchan E.H. 64:3.

17 Shulchan Aruch mentions this prohibition only for the chasan, and some poskim maintain that position (see Kisei Eliyahu 64:1; Maharsham 3:206). Other poskim hold that the kallah is included in this prohibition as well (Minchas Pitim 62).

18 She'elas Ya'avatz, vol. 2, 185.

19 Chida in Shiyurei Berachah E.H. 64 and Chayim Sha'al 2:38-60. Tzitz Eliezer 11:85 and 12:73 quotes this view and prohibits even writing, unless he is writing Torah thoughts. Rav Y. Kamenetsky is quoted as orally instructing a chasan not to carry a heavy suitcase up the stairs (Emes l'Yaakov E.H. 64:1).

20 Chazon Ish E.H. 64:7; Yabia Omer 4:8. Other poskim are more stringent.

21 Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Beis Chasanim 14:12).

22 Yabia Omer 4:8 and 5:38.

23 Kesubos 7b, based on pesukim in Megillas Ruth.

24 Maharil (Hilchos Nisstin) quoted in Sova Semachos, pg. 12. See also Aruch ha-Shulchan O.C. 640:14, who writes that in his community no special meals took place during shivas yemei ha-mishte.

25 Teshuvos Chasam Sofer E.H. 122, regarding the community of Frankfurt. In later times, however, the custom changed even in Frankfurt (Rav Y. Martzbach, quoted in Sova Semachos, ibid.). See also Beiur ha-Gra E.H. 55:11 and Pischei Teshuvah C.M. 7:13, quoting the Tumim.

26 Pri Megadim O.C. 444:9. See, however, Mishnah Berurah 640:34, who clearly considers this type of meal as a seudas mitzvah.

27 See Rav Pealim E.H. 4:6 and Yabia Omer 3:11.

28 Especially on Shabbos; Rav Yehudah ben Yakar (Perush ha-Berachos, Sheva Berachos).

29 According to some early authorities, it was customary to do so twice a day (Maseches Sofrim 11:11). The ninety-eight blessings gained according to this custom have the power to "sweeten" the ninety-eight curses recorded in the Tochachah in Parashas Ki Savo (Chidushei ha-

- Rim).
- 30 Among the Ashkenazim. Sephardim, however, generally celebrate a Sheva Berachos only if the meal takes place at the home of the chasan and kallah or their parents.
- 31 This custom does not have the binding power of a minhag which must be upheld, since it is relatively new and is not based on any binding source.
- 32 This is the consensus of most poskim. Moreover, as long as the chupah began before sunset, even if the blessings themselves were recited after sunset, the day that the chupah began is considered day one.
- 33 Sova Semachos, pg. 13 quoting several poskim.
- 34 Pischei Teshuvah E.H. 64:12; Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in Oholei Yeshurun, pg. 25).
- 35 Sha'arei Teshuvah O.C. 188:7; Pischei Teshuvah E.H. 64:12 and many other poskim.
- 36 Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in Oholei Yeshurun, pg. 25). See Sefer Bein ha-Shemashos 10:11 who allows b'diavad reciting the blessings up to 17 minutes after sunset [in Eretz Yisrael].
- 37 Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 59:18); Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Beis Chasanim 7:13); Yabia Omer 5:7; Sova Semachos 1:3. [If the chupah took place during bein ha-shemashos, a rav should be consulted.]

Bedeveled by Stirring Events – or Some Insights on the Melacha of Losh By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

I was recently asked the following question:

“My daughter came home from school telling us that she was taught that we cannot make deviled eggs on Shabbos because adding mustard and shaping them is considered ‘kneading’ the yolks. But I remember my mother always mixed hard boiled eggs with minced onion and oil on Shabbos morning shortly before the meal. Could my mother have been wrong?”

As our readership is aware, the Torah prohibits melachos on Shabbos not because they are taxing, but because these activities are significant and important (Gemara Bava Kamma 2a). As the Yerushalmi relates, after toiling for three and a half years to understand all the prohibited activities of Shabbos, Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakish concluded that each of the 39 major melachos (avos) has at least 39 sub-categories, called tolados, which are also prohibited min haTorah (Yerushalmi, Shabbos, beginning of 7:2). As is clear from the passage, these eminent scholars realized that the Torah prohibited these types of significant activity. As Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch notes, the Torah does not prohibit avodah, which connotes hard work, but melacha, which implies purpose and accomplishment (Commentary to Shemos 20:10).

One of the melacha activities prohibited on Shabbos is losh, kneading (Mishnah Shabbos 73a). Although building the Mishkan did not involve kneading dough, dyeing the cloth used in its construction required kneading a thick paste (see Rashi, Shabbos 73a and Gemara Shabbos 156a). (Some Rishonim contend that we derive forbidden melachos also from activities performed for the service of the Mishkan and the Beis HaMikdash, and not only from the Mishkan’s construction. According to these opinions, the melacha of kneading could be derived from the meal offerings of the Mishkan that involved the kneading of dough [Rav Hai Gaon, quoted in introduction to Maasei Rokei’ach].)

WHAT IS LOSH?

The concept of losh is to combine fine powders or similar small items into a unit by adding liquid (Shevisas HaShabas). Thus, mixing clay for pottery, or cement and sand into concrete, violate the Torah prohibition of losh (see Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 8:16; Rashi, Shabbos 74b). Similarly, mixing oatmeal or reconstituting instant mashed potatoes violates the Torah prohibition of losh (in addition to whatever prohibitions of cooking may be involved).

Similarly, preparing certain food items on Shabbos might fall under the rubric of losh. For example, the Gemara discusses how one may mix bran with water to feed one’s animals. Although bran and water do not form

dough, this is nevertheless prohibited since the bran sticks together (Shabbos 155b).

The Tannaim dispute whether one may add water to bran on Shabbos to feed one’s animals, Rebbe prohibiting because he feels that this constitutes a Torah violation of losh, whereas Rabbi Yosi ben Rabbi Yehudah maintains that adding water to bran involves only a rabbinic prohibition and is permitted in order to feed one’s animals if performed in an indirect way. This introduces a new concept in the laws of losh – that one may perform a rabbinically prohibited activity in an indirect way in order to prepare food or feed on Shabbos (Shabbos 155b- 156a). Performing a prohibited activity in an indirect way is called a shinui or kil’achar yad (literally, using the back of one’s hand), and is usually prohibited miderabbanan. However, under extenuating circumstances, Chazal relaxed the prohibition.

Losh applies only when mixing fine items that stick together to form a unit. It does not apply when adding liquid to large items even if they stick together, since they do not combine into one item (Taz, Orach Chayim 321:12). Therefore, one may use oil or mayonnaise to make a potato salad or tuna salad on Shabbos if the pieces of potato or tuna are large enough to prevent the salad appearing like a single mass.

BATTER VERSUS DOUGH

The Gemara implies that there is a halachic difference between a belilah rakkah, the consistency of batter, and belilah avah, the consistency of dough. By batter we mean a mix that does hold together, so it is not a liquid, yet is fluid enough that one can pour it from one bowl to another (Chazon Ish, Orach Chayim 58:9). Creating a batter involves only a rabbinic violation, whereas mixing a consistency like dough, which is thick enough that one cannot pour it, has stricter rules, often involving a Torah violation.

If the mix does not hold together at all, then one may mix it without any concerns because it is considered a liquid (Chazon Ish, Orach Chayim 58:9).

DEVILING THE EGGS

Based on the above discussion, it would appear that one may not mix egg salad or deviled eggs on Shabbos without a shinui, and possibly not even with a shinui. The mix created when making these foods cannot be poured, and therefore does not qualify as a “batter” but as “dough,” which may entail a Torah prohibition of mixing on Shabbos. We may usually not perform Torah prohibitions with a shinui on Shabbos to prepare food.

However, a standard appetizer in many parts of Europe for the Shabbos day meal was to stir together hard-boiled eggs, minced onion and schmaltz, a dish called “eggs and onions” that required preparation immediately before serving. Was it permitted to mix “eggs and onions” on Shabbos or did it violate the prohibition against kneading on Shabbos since the finished product was mashed egg and onion held together with fat? Although it would seem to be prohibited to prepare this food on Shabbos, this food was commonly prepared every Shabbos morning prior to serving. Does this mean that all these observant Jews were violating the Torah’s command? When we consider that this was the standard appetizer eaten by thousands of Jewish households every Shabbos for hundreds of years, it is difficult to imagine that millions of eggs and onions were prepared in violation of the laws of Shabbos!

Several halachic authorities raise this question, providing a variety of approaches to explain why one may blend eggs and onions on Shabbos. Could the reason to allow this apply to contemporary deviled eggs or egg salad?

Some contend that this mixing was permitted only when the pieces of egg and onion were both large enough to prevent the mix from having a dough-like consistency, but rather looked more like large pieces stuck together. However, the prevalent approach was to chop the eggs and onions into a very fine consistency, in which case the above-mentioned leniency was not applicable.

Other authorities permitted mixing and stirring them together only with a shinui, although apparently the prevalent custom was to mix it without any

shinui at all.

RAV SHELOMOH KLUGER'S APPROACH

Rav Shelomoh Kluger, a great luminary of Nineteenth Century Poland, proposed a highly original reasoning to legitimize the preparing of the eggs and onions on Shabbos. Regarding various halachos of the Torah, predominantly the laws of tumah and taharah, only seven substances are considered liquids -- wine, blood, olive oil, milk, dew, honey and water. Rav Kluger contended that the halachos of losh are also dependent on the use of one of these seven liquids to create the "dough" (Shu"t HaElef Lecha Shelomoh, Orach Chayim #139). According to this novel approach, no losh prohibition is involved if one uses mayonnaise or any oil other than olive oil, nor if one makes dough on Shabbos using only juice other than grape juice.

We should note that following this line of reasoning, not only may one prepare the famous eggs and onions mixture, but one could also prepare deviled eggs or egg salad on Shabbos provided one does not use olive oil as the liquid. Although some may prefer use of olive oil for its cholesterol and other medical benefits, this would not justify violating the laws of Shabbos.

However, Rav Kluger's approach is not without its detractors. For one thing, as he himself points out, his approach disputes the statement of a highly-respected earlier authority, the Pri Megadim (Mishbetzos Zahav 321:12), who contends that losh is violated when one mixes foods together with goose schmaltz (a common ingredient in European homes in his era). This demonstrates clearly that any substance that causes items to stick together violates losh, at least according to some widely-accepted opinions. For the most part, later authorities have not accepted Rav Kluger's contention limiting losh to the "seven liquids."

Rav Shelomoh Kluger applied a second reason to permit the preparation of eggs and onions on Shabbos. He theorized that losh only applies to the earth itself or to items that grow from the ground -- thus precluding eggs from the prohibition of losh. Although this approach only resolves the losh consideration germane to the eggs in the mixture but not to the onions, Rav Kluger further contended that the onions are also exempt from losh since the eggs are the main ingredient. He maintained that when mixing several items, of which losh applies only to some, halacha considers only the major ingredient and ignores the rest (Shu"t HaElef Lecha Shelomoh, Orach Chayim #139).

This second approach of Rav Shelomoh Kluger is also not without its detractors. Both the contention that losh applies only to items that grow from the ground, and the further supposition that one ignores the lesser item are challenged by later authorities (see Tzitz Eliezer 11:36:3, quoting Yad Yosef).

OTHER APPROACHES

Other reasons are quoted to permit making "eggs and onions" on Shabbos, including a suggestion that there is no losh prohibition to stir in an ingredient added for taste even if it indeed causes the food to hold together. (This position is quoted by the Tzitz Eliezer 11:36 in the name of a great scholar; however, the Tzitz Eliezer rejects the argument.) According to this approach, one might argue that one may make deviled eggs on Shabbos since the mustard is primarily added for flavor, although one could argue alternatively that one's intent is to create a consistent filling, which is losh. Others permit the mixing of eggs and onions because they do not form into a gush, that is, a single unit (Shu"t Be'er Moshe 6:44). According to this reasoning, deviling eggs is forbidden since one is indeed forming units of seasoned mashed egg yolk.

RAV SHELOMOH ZALMAN AUERBACH'S APPROACH

Rav Shelomoh Zalman Auerbach presented a different reason to permit mixing "eggs and onions" on Shabbos, which requires a small introduction. At the time of the Gemara, neither Post nor General Mills had yet cornered the market on breakfast cereal, and people were forced to prepare their own breakfast. The Cheerios of the day involved mixing a specialty flour called kali, made from toasted kernels, with oil, water and

salt. The Gemara quotes an opinion that permits mixing kali on Shabbos provided one uses a minor shinui while doing so (Shabbos 155b). Several authorities question why the Gemara is so lenient in this instance (Nishmas Odom; Biyur Halacha). Allow me to explain the basis of their concern: Usually, a shinui may be used on Shabbos in only one of two circumstances:

1. To prepare food that without the shinui involves only a rabbinic prohibition.

2. To prepare the food in a radically different way than it is usually prepared. An example of the latter method is that although one may not chop items fine on Shabbos, one may crush them with the handle of a knife. Since this is a radical departure from the usual method of mashing items with mortar and pestle or other grinding implements, Chazal permitted crushing food this way (Shibolei HaLeket #92, based on Gemara Shabbos 141a).

Thus we are faced with the following anomaly: The Gemara permits mixing kali on Shabbos, seemingly permitting a Torah prohibition of losh by means of a minor deviation from the normal method of preparing this food. This should not be permitted on Shabbos.

The Biyur Halacha responds to this question with two different novel approaches to explain why this is permitted:

1. Mixing a food that is already cooked or toasted and ready to eat does not violate the prohibition of losh. Since these kernels are not used for bread, but are ready to eat after mixing them, this mixing is not considered the prohibited melacha of losh, but is to be treated no different min haTorah from any other preparing of food. Although Chazal prohibited this preparation because it looks like kneading, it is permitted with a shinui as are many other food preparations.

2. The Biyur Halacha suggests an alternative approach: there is no violation of losh while one is eating. This is similar to a concept found by other melachos, notably selecting and grinding, that permits performing these activities immediately before consuming them.

This approach has its detractors, since no early authorities note that this lenience applies to losh, and logically there is a big distinction between selecting and grinding, which are processes that are absolutely essential to normal eating, and kneading, which is not essential (see Magen Avraham 321:24).

RETURNING TO EGGS AND ONIONS

Based on both approaches of the Biyur Halacha, Rav Shelomoh Zalman Auerbach notes that preparing eggs and onions should be permitted because this food cannot be prepared before Shabbos and will become ruined if not prepared shortly before eating. (A similar approach to explain the custom of mixing eggs and onions is presented by an earlier authority, the Tehillah LeDavid 321:25).

In addition, Rav Shelomoh Zalman Auerbach reasons that losh is a process that one does while eating since one mixes food together in one's mouth (Shulchan Shelomoh 321:16). This author does not understand the last statement of Rav Shelomoh Zalman Auerbach, since the processing of food that takes place in one's mouth, chewing, reduces food to small particles and does not combine small particles into larger ones, which is the essence of losh.

According to Rav Shelomoh Zalman Auerbach's approach, preparing "eggs and onions" requires a shinui, meaning that one should add the ingredients to the bowl in an inverted order than one usually does, and should also preferably stir the mix in an unusual fashion, such as not in normal circular strokes but with alternative crisscross motions instead.

However, the approaches mentioned earlier permit mixing eggs and onions without any shinui at all. When reading later halachic works, one finds many poskim who feel that one should avoid preparing eggs and onions on Shabbos, and at a minimum certainly not without a shinui, whereas others are suspicious of those who question such a time-hallowed practice (Be'er Moshe; Tzitz Eliezer).

It is also noteworthy that the first approach presented by the Biyur Halacha should permit not only the famous "eggs and onions" that were an essential

part of Jewish cuisine for hundreds of years, but also preparing either egg salad or deviled eggs on Shabbos. Furthermore, according to the second approach one would be permitted to prepare them immediately before the meal just as one may select immediately before the meal. In both instances, one would need to use a shinui of mixing the ingredients in a different order and not stirring with the usual circular motions.

Where does that leave our deviled eggs or egg salad on Shabbos? As in all areas of halacha, one should consult with one's posek how to prepare these items on Shabbos. The goal of this discussion is to present the background of the halachic issues that form the basis for the varying piskei halacha on this issue.

The Torah commanded us concerning the halachos of Shabbos by giving us the basic categories that are prohibited. Shabbos is a day that we refrain from altering the world for our own purposes but instead allow Hashem's rule to be the focus of creation by refraining from our own creative acts (Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch's Commentary to Shemos 20:10). By demonstrating Hashem's rule even over non-exertive activities such as kneading, we demonstrate and acknowledge the true Creator of the world and all it contains.

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For the week ending 6 February 2010 / 21 Shevat 5770

by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

The Advice of the Wisest •Bava Batra 173b

In his search for a Biblical source for the responsibility of a guarantor, Rabbi Yitzchak cites some passages in Mishlei (6:1-3), which guide us in two areas of interpersonal relationships.

"My son," cautions King Solomon, "if you have served as a guarantor for a friend and have given your hand to a stranger, or if you have been ensnared through the words of your mouth, then do this, my son, and rescue yourself."

The wisest of men then goes on to advise the steps to be taken in dealing with the obligation assumed as a guarantor and making peace with someone who has been hurt with words. Rabbi Yitzchak's interpretation of this advice is that in the case of guaranteeing a loan there is no alternative to paying money to the lender. In regard to hurting another through what you said, his advice is to beg forgiveness even if it means getting friends to help you renew the relationship.

What the Sages Say

"One who wishes to gain wisdom should devote himself to studying the laws of financial matters for they are like an ever-flowing spring."

•Rabbi Yishmael - Bava Batra 175b

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