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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON TAZRIA METZORA - 5775

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Sefira Reminder: **Tonight (Friday night) is the 21st day, which is 3 weeks of the Omer**

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From: TorahWeb <[torahweb@torahweb.org](mailto:torahweb@torahweb.org)> to: [weeklydt@torahweb2.org](mailto:weeklydt@torahweb2.org)  
Date: Thu, Apr 23, 2015 at 8:34 PM subject:

### **Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky - A Message from another World**

The significance of the numbers seven and eight permeates the parshios of Tazria and Metzora. After waiting seven days of impurity following the birth of a boy, on the eighth day the baby receives a bris milah. Seven days is the period to determine the status of the various types of tzora'as. Following a verdict of impurity brought about by tzora'as, a seven day purification period is mandated to be followed by korbanos brought on the eighth day. Parshas Metzora concludes with the halachos that govern different emissions that render an individual impure and, once again, the counting towards purification requires a time period of seven days to pass. Following the seven days, purity reaches a culmination on the eighth day when special korbanos are brought. What is so special about the number eight that it is the day of the bris and the day when purification is complete?

Seven and eight are numbers that appear in our celebration of yomim tovim. The days of sefiras haomer consist of seven counts of seven days each. After seven times seven has been completed, Shavuot is celebrated on the "eighth" day corresponding to the fiftieth day since the beginning of the counting of the Omer. The Ramban suggests that Shavuot is in a certain sense the last day of Pesach. Following the week-long celebration of the actual yom tov, the period of Sefiras Haomer links the "eighth day of Pesach" (i.e. Shavuot) to the previous seven. Similarly, the seven day holiday of Sukkos culminates with the celebration on the eighth day with Shemini Atzeres. What is the nature of this progression from seven to eight?

This procession is meaningful if we first understand the relationship between the numbers six and seven. Six is associated with the physical world. The four directions together with up and down (for a total of six) comprise the physical boundaries that surround us, whereas seven is the

dimension of time. Although seven is no longer physical, it still belongs to this world, as time is only meaningful in our physical world. However, the number eight signifies the next level which emanates from an other-worldly existence. The Torah itself is a part of that other world and therefore we connect to Torah through the vehicle of "eighthly" things. We celebrate periods of sanctified time for seven days on Pesach and Sukkos but we conclude these days with the ultimate celebration of the Torah itself. Z'man Matan Toraseinu can only be on the "eighth" day. Similarly, Shemini Atzeres is the celebration of Torah itself; at that point all the mitzvos of the month of Tishrei have been performed and we may now focus our attention on the celebration of Torah. What later became known as Simchas Torah is the appropriate way to mark the day dedicated to Torah.

The eighth days in this week's parshios are likewise connected to the other-worldly gift of Torah. Bris milah and Torah are bound together as is evident from bircas hamazon in which we thank Hashem simultaneously for "al brischa she'chasamta bivsareinu, v'al torascha she'limaditanu." Both bris milah and talmud Torah are referred to as covenants that the world rests upon. A newborn enters the world of bris milah and Torah on the eighth day. The entry into a world which is beyond the physical one we reside in and even beyond the realm of time can only occur on the eighth day.

Purification goes beyond immersion in the water of the mikvah and the offering of korbanos. The last statement of the Rambam in Sefer Tahara draws our attention to the true nature of purification. Although physical water technically purifies, the real transformation occurs when one immerses himself in the waters of Torah. Just as entering a physical mikvah requires total contact with the water, with no barriers in between, so too the Torah-true path to purification of the soul mandates a total immersion in the living waters of Torah study. The transformation from impure to pure requires entering the realm of the number eight. The process can only be completed when one enters that realm and reconnects to the source of all purity, to the Torah itself.

As we read these parshios we also count the days and weeks towards kabbalas haTorah. Let us immerse and purify ourselves by entering the world of Torah, the special world symbolized by the number eight.

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[http://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/835006/Rabbi\\_Nisson\\_Shulman/Sefirat\\_Haomer\\_in\\_History#](http://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/835006/Rabbi_Nisson_Shulman/Sefirat_Haomer_in_History#)

### **SEFIRAT HAOMER IN HISTORY**

**Rabbi Nisson E. Shulman**

May 1990

We are in the Sefirat Haomer. You all know that on Lag Baomer the period of mourning which began after Pesach eases. And then, according to some customs, begins again. It continues until just before Shavuot, until after Rosh Hodesh Sivan.

The plague that struck Rabbi Akiva's students is the ostensible reason for the mourning. The plague stopped on Lag Baomer. If the plague is to be identified with a period of setback at the hands of the Romans in the Bar Kochba war in which Rabbi Akiva's students took part, then Lag Baomer marked a change for the better in the fortunes of that war.

It is wonderful that we remembered such a loss across the reaches of time. There are many who seek to forget history and remain oblivious to its lessons. This period of mourning is our Jewish way of listening to the call of our Abels, our heroes and martyrs crying out across history and demanding from us great commitments. Such remembering is most appropriate during Sefira, and especially at this time in Jewish history.

So the plague that struck the students of Rabbi Akiva is only the excuse for the custom of this period of mourning. If not that, we would have found another reason for such an expression, so necessary for the soul of man, not only of our Jewish soul, to remember, and to fulfill the Divine command,

ZECHOR YEMOT OLAM, BINU SHENOT DOR VADOR, SHEAL AVICHA VEYAGEDCHA, ZEKENECHA VEYOMRU LACH.

The plague stopped at Lag Baomer. Yet the spirit of Judaism continued to mourn until almost Shavuoth time. Custom has decreed that mourning period. Yet even custom speaks with reason. It behoves us to understand this custom through which we can learn many things about our past, our present, and our future destiny.

Examining Jewish history, we find that almost every major tragedy which struck our people began during this period of time.

During Sefira, in 1096, the Crusades, which left a path of murder and desolation in every Jewish community they crossed, began their massacres in all the great communities of Ashkenazic Jewry, such as Spiers, Worms, and Mayence.

During Sefira, almost 300 years later, in 1348, Jews were accused of causing the Black Plague in Europe by poisoning the wells from which Christians drank. The pogrom which followed totally desolated European Jewry, and destroyed its culture, its books, as well as its people.

Exactly 300 years afterwards, in 1648, during Sefira, the Cossack uprising under Bogdon Chmielnicki began in Poland and raged against the Jews until over a million Jews perished in its fury.

About 300 years later, in 1933, "The Bookburning of Berlin", when 20,000 volumes of sacred books were burnt at Goebles' command, took place in the 5th day of Iyar.

Ten years later, again on the 5th of Iyar, the last vestige of resistance was crushed in the Warsaw Ghetto, and it was totally given over to the flames.

These were the greatest tragedies that struck our people during the history of Ashkenazic Jewry. And all of them began during Sefira.

Lest it be thought that only Ashkenazic Jewry suffered during this period of time, let it be known that the order by Ferdinand and Isabella, finally and irrevocably expelling the Jews from Spain during the Spanish Inquisition, was signed in the 5th of Iyar, 1492.

It seems likely that the Sefardic tragedies took place during the earlier part of Sefira. The author of the Shulhan Aruch, Rabbi Joseph Karo, was a Sefardi. He was therefore content to follow the custom ending the period of sorrow with Lag Baomer.

But the Ashkenazic tragedies, like the Cossack rebellion, the Black Plague pogroms, the Crusades, all began during the later part of Sefira. So Rabbi Moses Isserles, who interprets Jewish law of the Shulhan Aruch for Ashkenazic Jews, favoured maintaining the spirit of sadness as long as possible and not to celebrate in joy again until just before Shavuoth. So Rabbi Moses Isserles, RAMA, accepts the second custom.

But what is most interesting in all of this, is that during this very tragic time, even on the most tragic days of this period of time, has come the modern redemption, have come the anniversaries of Israel's birth and triumph.

The 5th of Iyar, when in 1933 Hitler burned our books and Goebles threatened the mass murders to come, and when in 1492 the order was signed making Spanish Jews homeless wanderers over the face of the earth, has now been changed to the day of Israel's independence, celebrating that very day in 1948 when our State was reborn.

And the 28th of Iyar, during the latter part of Sefira, when in 1096 the Crusaders packed communities of Jews into their synagogues and burned them alive, and when 300 years later Europe's masses did the same during the Black Plague, and when yet again in 1648 the Cossacks under Chmielnicki did the same, that day has changed to the holiday when we celebrate the liberation of Jerusalem from the hands of the enemy.

VEHAFACHTI EVLAM LESASON.

THEIR MOURNING SHALL CHANGE TO JOY.

That is the prophecy we have waited for two thousand years to see begin in fulfilment; and that is what we are seeing today. Let us therefore hope, pray and strive for that day when all our times of sorrow can be changed to great

days of gladness and peace forevermore.

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From: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> To ravfrand@torah.org date: Thu, Apr 23, 2015 subject: Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshios Tazria & Metzora Parshios Tazria & Metzora

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape# 897 – Insights Into Sefiras Ha'Omer. Good Shabbos!

Think Big and Play To Win

The proscribed offerings for a woman who gives birth are a sheep within its first year as an olah-offering and a young dove or a turtledove as a sin offering. However, the Torah makes provision for a woman who cannot afford the sheep as her olah-offering and specifies that in that case two young doves or two turtledoves – one as an olah offering and one as a sin offering are acceptable. [Vayikra 12:6-8]

Rashi here comments, based on a Gemara in Zevachim 90a, that the Torah here is actually imprecise. In fact, the Halacha is that anytime a person needs to bring both a sin and an olah offering, the person brings the sin offering first, followed by the olah offering. This is a procedural rule in offering "mixed sacrifices". Rashi explains the reason for the rule in Parshas Vayikra: A sin offering offers atonement for a sin; an olah (meaning to go up) re-establishes one's relationship with the Almighty. Anytime a person has offended someone, protocol is to send in an intermediary first to make an apology, after the apology, it is appropriate to bring in a present to restore the relationship. One starts with the appeasement, not with the present.

If anyone has had the experience of somehow doing something wrong to their wives, such that they owe them an apology, it should be obvious that proper etiquette requires something more than just sending flowers. First a husband must offer his profuse apology, atoning for his past mistake. Only then is it appropriate to give a present. Presents themselves should not be expected to work in lieu of an apology. Therefore, the "Chatas" [sin offering] always precedes the "Olah" [burnt offering].

This idea is really synopsized in Tehillim [Psalms] by the pasuk "Depart from evil and do good" [Tehillim 34:15].

Why then, the Gemara asks, does the Torah here imprecisely specify "and she shall take two turtledoves or two young doves, one for an olah-offering and one for a sin-offering"? The Talmud answers, somewhat mysteriously, "the olah offering precedes the sin-offering only in the Torah reading, not in terms of the sequence in which they are actually offered".

The obvious question is that the Torah is not written to confuse us. If they are to actually be brought in reverse order, why did the Torah write it as "one for an olah and one for a chatas"?

Rav Avrohom Gurvitz offers the following explanation: Of course, the rule of thumb is "Depart from evil and do good". We always first need to stop doing what we are doing wrong and then try to "do good". That is in the actuality of it. However, in theory a person must reach for the stars. A person must have aspirations of greatness. He must want for himself – certainly in spirituality, but even in every endeavor – the top. One who does not shoot for the top will never achieve anything. The Torah says "one for an olah and one for a chatas" because the Torah is informing us that our mindset must be that we want to achieve the greatest closeness to the Ribono shel Olam. Once we have that theory down, in practice, when we do something wrong, it is understood that we need to bring the sin offering first and then the Olah.

Rav Gurvitz supports this thought with an idea he heard from his father. The pasuk states "Moshe and Aharon were among His priests and Shmuel among those who invoke His Name..." [Tehillim 99:6]. The Talmud states that in righteousness, the prophet Samuel was on the same level as Moshe and Aharon. For this reason, the pasuk in Tehillim equates them. The Medrash states that before Shmuel was born, a Heavenly Voice (Bas Kol) proclaimed, "A child is going to be born who will be on the same level as Moshe Rabbeinu and his name is going to be Shmuel." The Medrash says

that all the pregnant women at that time named their sons Shmuel when they gave birth, in the hope that perhaps their son was the baby about whom the Bas Kol spoke.

Rabbi Gurvitz's father commented to his son, "You know how a Shmuel was produced? He was produced because there was an environment in which everyone strived to have such greatness for their son that he should grow up to be like Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon!" If EVERYONE is striving to have a Shmuel haNavi, then in fact ONE Shmuel haNavi can emerge! However, if everyone has pedestrian ambitions for their children then greatness will not emerge from anyone in that generation.

This is the same concept. We need to think big. Whether or not we will eventually achieve such greatness, we must shoot for the stars; aim for the top!

A Jew once came into the Volozhin Yeshiva and brought his young son to the Netziv. He told the great Rosh Yeshiva, "Here is my son, I want him to learn in your Yeshiva and I want you to make him into a Jew with integrity and into a Jew who sets aside fixed times for learning Torah. The Rosh Yeshiva told this Jew, "You know when your father brought you into the Yeshiva, he told me 'I want you to make him into a great man (Adam Gadol) and into one qualified to be a decider of law (Moreh Hora'ah) in Israel.' You became a Jew with integrity and one who sets aside fixed times for learning Torah because your father had aspirations that you become a Moreh Hora'ah b'Yisrael. If your aspirations are to have a son who is 'merely' a nice guy who learns Daf Yomi, you can't even be assured that that will happen."

When one's aspirations are great, he at least has a chance of producing greatness. However, when a person thinks myopically, when one thinks 'low bar,' he will not achieve even minimally.

Rabbi Gurvitz adds a beautiful thought: Why does the Torah offer this concept of "one for an Olah and one for a sin-offering" (which means 'Think Big') by a woman who seeks purification following childbirth? This is not the only place in the Torah where a person brings both a sin offering and an olah. The Torah could have informed us of this same idea in other places as well. Why here?

The answer is that when a woman gives birth, she must believe "I just gave birth to the next Gadol HaDor (great man of the generation)". If a mother thinks like that, she may indeed be able to achieve greatness for her child. If her goal is "okay, he should be a mediocre child," greatness will never come.

Rav Yakov Kamenetsky once commented on the Halacha in Shulchan Aruch that for a Jewish child whose mother is not able to nurse him, the parents should seek a Jewish wet-nurse rather than a non-Jewish wet-nurse because the non-Jewish wet-nurse eats non-kosher food. This Halacha is derived from the Medrash, which states that Moshe refused to nurse from Egyptian women (and consequently Pharaoh's daughter needed to hire his own mother to nurse him). The explanation given for Moshe's refusal to nurse from an Egyptian was "The mouth that is destined to speak with the Divine Presence of G-d should suck something which is a *davar tameah*?"

Rav Yakov notes the generalization made here that every Jewish child should nurse from a Jewish woman if possible, based on the precedent of Moshe Rabbeinu. When, he asks, was the last time we had a Jewish baby that spoke directly with the Divine Presence of G-d? The lesson is that when one has a child, one should at least have the hope and aspiration that this child could be a "mouth that will speak with the Shechinah." Then one can perhaps hope for greatness. With an attitude of "Eh! It's just another kid," one's child will not achieve greatness.

There was once a meeting of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah held in the house of Rav Avrohom Kamenetsky, son of Rav Yakov. All the Gedolim were gathered there. When the meeting was over, there was a question of protocol as to who should leave the room first. Rav Yakov's daughter-in-law, who was in the room, was pregnant at the time. She naturally assumed that the great Rabbis should walk out the door first. Rav Yakov insisted that his pregnant daughter-in-law should walk through the door first. Why? He said, "It is because she is pregnant and maybe she is pregnant with Moshiach!"

It is the same concept. She may have a child who possesses a mouth that will speak with the Shechinah. When a person thinks like that, maybe he can achieve greatness. That is the attitude of "one for the olah-offering and one for the sin-offering." However, if a person lives life merely departing from evil and playing "not to lose" rather than aspiring for greatness, he will not achieve anything. One has to play to win!

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com  
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This write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah CDs on the weekly Torah Portion.

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From: Shabbat Shalom <[shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org](mailto:shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org)> date:Thu, Apr 23, 2015 subject: Remembering Rav Aharon

**Rav Aharon Lichtenstein: A Personal Reminiscence**  
**Rabbi Menachem Genack**

April 23, 2015

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, as I knew him, was not merely a giant of Torah, but also a giant of a man. He was a child prodigy—Rav Hillel Zaks, a grandson of the Chafetz Chaim and friend of Rav Aharon from Yeshivas Chaim Berlin, recounted that Rav Aharon stood uniquely above his peers even as a teenager. (In Yeshivas Chaim Berlin, his status as a child prodigy earned him the nickname “the babe,” a moniker which followed him to Yeshiva University.) Rav Aharon’s encyclopedic knowledge was matched by the incisiveness of his analysis, and he was a leading exponent of the Brisker method.

But aside from his genius, Rav Aharon was a man of great humility, kindness, *yirat shamayim*, and principle. When my father died I was still young, and Rav Aharon offered me great comfort and arranged many of the details of the funeral. He was a man of unsurpassed integrity, both in his intellectual pursuits and in his personal relationships and dealings. I remember in the summer of 1967, Rav Aharon, who was already a Rosh Kollel, playing a game of full-court basketball with other students of the Rav in Onset, Massachusetts. At one point in the game, Rav Aharon turned to me and said, “It is not ethical to play just offense and not defense.” Although his comment was tongue-in-cheek, it reflected his forethought and seriousness with which he undertook his every action.

When I came to know him, Rav Aharon was already the Rosh Kollel of RIETS, but he still attended the Rav’s shiur. His comments during the shiur were always to the point, and the Rav was always very attentive to them. Whenever the Rav was searching for a source, he turned to Rav Aharon, who invariably supplied it. As is well known, Rav Aharon was a proponent of studying literature, because as he once wrote, “the humanities deepen our understanding of man: his nature, functions and duties.” When I was studying *Paradise Lost* in college, Rav Aharon said to me, “I envy you, because you can read Milton now for the first time.” Once, the Rav explained that the Rambam and Rashi disagree about whether Shir Hashirim is a metaphor for the relationship between the individual soul and God, or a metaphor of the relationship between God and the nation of Israel. Rav Aharon interjected that both meanings can be sustained, just as Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* is an allegory with several different layers of meaning. For all his love of poetry, it was the Shir Hashirim within his own soul which animated Rav Aharon’s life, the poetic song within his soul which melded the relationship of both the individual and the Jewish community with God.

A kaleidoscope of images helps capture his unique persona. Rav Aharon retained an eternal youthful quality, which I believe was a product of his unabated sense of discovery and openness to new learning. Upon his Aliyah to Israel, he developed a close relationship with Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, and on the death of Rav Shlomo Zalman, Rav Aharon tore his clothing as a son does for a parent, and as a devoted disciple does for a teacher. In his essay “The Source of Faith is Faith Itself,” we encounter Rav Aharon as one whose faith flowed from the example of his teachers in whom he saw the embodiment of the Jewish tradition—Rav Hutner, the Rav, and Rav Ahron Soloveichik—as well as from the divine encounter that Torah study itself provides. His eloquent words about Rav Ahron Soloveichik apply equally to himself: “I was simply enthralled by what he was—a remarkable fusion of mastery and simplicity, of vigor and humility and, above all, a pillar of radical integrity.” When a new translation of the Rambam’s philosophical magnum opus was published, Rav Aharon approved of the subtle change in title from Guide for the Perplexed to Guide of the Perplexed. The former, he believed, removed the Rambam himself from among the rank of the perplexed, whereas the latter more accurately captures the notion that perplexity is not a contradiction to faith and leadership. This was in keeping with the lesson Rav Aharon learned from his mentors, “that it was not so necessary to have all the answers as to learn to live with the questions.”

I remember that when Rav Aharon left America to join Rav Amital in heading Yeshivat Har Etzion, I did not understand how Rav Aharon was willing to sacrifice his undoubted future prominence as a leader of American Jewry. However, watching from afar, I saw how he and Rav Amital were able to have a significant impact on Israeli society as a whole. In addition to being responsible for introducing the Brisker derech and the thought of the Rav to the yeshivot hesder, Rav Aharon became renowned throughout Israel as a religious leader and thinker of the first rank.

I had the merit to speak to Rav Aharon on the phone one last time just a few weeks ago, as I called to wish him and Dr. Tovah Lichtenstein a Chag Sameach before Pesach and to receive a bracha from him. I will always cherish my memories of him.

The Daf Yomi on the day of Rav Aharon’s passing, Ketubot 77, describes the death of R. Yehoshua ben Levi, the prime student of R. Yehuda Hanasi. Upon his entry into the Garden of Eden, he was heralded by Elijah proclaiming, “Make room for the son of Levi, make room for the son of Levi.” The Talmud explains that R. Yehoshua ben Levi merited his exalted position in the world to come because, in contrast to his peers, he did not disassociate himself from the sufferers of a highly contagious and debilitating disease. Instead, “R. Yehoshua ben Levi attached himself to these sufferers and studied the Torah; for he said, ‘Ayelet ahavim ve-ya’alot chen, a lovely hind and a graceful doe (Mishlei 5:19)—if the Torah bestows grace upon those who study it, would it not also protect them?’” These words of R. Yehoshua ben Levi are a fitting epitaph for Rav Aharon, who was the prime disciple of the R. Yehuda Hanasi of our times, the Rav. Rav Aharon, with his humility, drew close even those that others isolated, those distant from his coterie, and always through the Torah whose grace he radiated. And although this daf marks the end of the chapter Hamadir, the masechta goes on, just as Rav Aharon’s legacy will surely continue through the example of learning, humility and grace he instilled in his extraordinary family and legions of students and admirers.

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion <office@etzion.org.il> to: yhe-sichot@vbm.etzion.org.il date: Wed, Apr 22, 2015 at 8:04 AM subject: [Yhe-sichot] VBM-SICHOT75 - Special Sicha for Yom HaAitzma'ut YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM) STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA SURVIVAL AND FULFILLMENT -- THOUGHTS ON YOM HAATZMA'UT

### **Based on a sicha by Harav Aharon Lichtenstein zt”l**

Adapted by Yair Yaniv Translated by David Strauss  
The Torah describes two journeys of aliya undertaken by Avraham to reach the land of Canaan. On the first journey, described at the end of Parashat Noach, Avraham sets out of his own free will: And they went out with them from Ur-Kasdim, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran, and dwelt there. (Bereishit 11:31)

The second journey, described at the beginning of Parashat Lekh-Lekha, Avraham undertakes at God’s command: Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father’s house, to the land that I will show you. (Bereishit 12:1)

The Ramban at the end of Parashat Noach explains (Bereishit 11:28): His father Terach and Avraham had in mind from the day that he was saved [in Ur-Kasdim] to go to the land of Canaan in order to distance themselves from the land of the Kasdim for fear of the king. For Haran was close to them, and they were all one people and one language, the Aramaic language being spoken in both places, and they wanted to go to a people [in Canaan] who would not understand the language of that king and his people. This is the meaning of: “And they went out with them from Ur-Kasdim, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran” (Bereishit 11:31), where their families and forefathers had always lived, and they dwelt among them, and stayed there for many days. There Avraham was commanded to do what he had intended to do, to go to the land of Canaan. He left his father, who died there in Haran his country, for he went with his wife and with his nephew Lot to the land of Canaan. This is what the verse states: “And I took your father Avraham, from the other side of the river, and led him through the whole land of Canaan” (Yehoshua 24:3). For he was commanded about this on the other side of the river, and it is from there that He took him and led him through the whole land of Canaan.

Avraham’s aliya began in the same way as did Herzl’s Zionist movement. There is persecution because of Jewish identity and because of adherence to God, based on faith and values, and Avraham feels the need to escape. His starting point is not the attraction and the vision of the land of Israel, but rather escape from Ur-Kasdim. Avraham makes aliya from a country of distress, from a vale of tears. But while Avraham is in Haran, he is commanded “to do what he had intended to do, to go to the land of Canaan.” The spirit of God breathes life into his pragmatic plan. Here is the intersection between Avraham’s plan and God’s providential plan to plant him in the land of Israel. Avraham’s starting point is to run away, to survive, to exist, and this plan becomes the foundation for fulfilling the will of God. Avraham’s vision-less plan takes on flesh and bones, and the dimension of actualizing God’s will is added to it, both on the individual and the national levels. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik distinguishes between two covenants that exist between God and the Jewish people – the covenant of fate and the covenant of destiny. Avraham’s initial plan and departure from Ur-Kasdim fall into the framework of the covenant of fate. The command of “Lekh Lekha” turns the framework of fate into a framework of destiny; it turns the place that was meant to serve as a place of refuge into God’s inheritance. We occasionally hear harsh criticism of the State of Israel voiced by some in the religious community. They claim that the state lacks a moral vision, that it is devoid of spirituality and is guided exclusively by a drive for power. A country was established that merely meets the ordinary needs met by all other countries. A state that we would have expected to be a state of vision became a state of refugees, a political asylum. Classical Zionism indeed had the same aspiration as did Avraham when he started out – to escape from Ur-Kasdim, to provide a political refuge for the Jews, to reach a place where it would be possible to exist, to grow stronger, and to fashion ourselves into a nation. It would be absurd to say that this goal is not legitimate. But despite the fact that Zionism’s primary goal was to establish a political refuge for the Jewish people, it should be remembered that the aspiration to achieve this goal specifically in the land of Israel drew on the yearnings of all the generations to return to the Promised Land. The Ramban says in his

commentary to the beginning of Parashat Lekh-Lekha: It is possible to say that Avraham knew from the outset that the land of Canaan is God's inheritance, and there God would give him his portion, and he believed that "to the land that I will show you" was an allusion to the land of Canaan...

Avraham intuitively felt that the land of Canaan is God's inheritance, and therefore he preferred it to all other places and set his eyes toward it when he ran away from Ur-Kasdim. While there is no comparison between the faith of Avraham and the faith (or lack of faith) of the early Zionist ideologues and dreamers, no Jew, after the command of Lekh Lekha, could think about the land of Israel as anything but a special country, the land of God's inheritance. This feeling penetrates deeply even within secular Zionism. We, believers who are descendants of believers, must understand that while it is possible that Herzl and those who followed in his footsteps viewed the land of Israel in the same way that Avraham did at the outset, there is still no doubt that their hearts throbbed with a certain sense of fulfillment of a prophetic vision, of being connected to the land of Israel as God's inheritance. But even one who is not prepared to accept this must understand that, at the very least, even if the builders of Israel viewed the land exclusively in the framework of the covenant of fate, God adds to this framework the covenant of destiny. We stand in constant tension between these two factors, between the consciousness that we are in need of a refuge and an assurance of our existence, and the full adherence to the vision to which God dedicated the command: "Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you." We must maintain our presence in the Holy Land based on the consciousness that it is God's inheritance, and based on a sense of mission. But at the same time, we must not ignore the other dimension – the need for a land of refuge and survival. It is clear that after the command, after the land is already "the land that I will show you," we are incapable of viewing it in a completely secular fashion that distinguishes between religion and destiny. From time to time we need to be reminded that we must not veer from the boundaries of this dialectic, neither toward excessive use of force, nor to excessive spirituality. We need a reminder that will restore for us the proper proportions and perspective. Yom HaAtzma'ut restores for us with full force and depth the consciousness that here, in God's inheritance, we can fulfill visions, but also exist; we can realize dreams but also live. (This sicha was delivered on Yom HaAtzmaut 5748 [1988].) For more sichot by Harav Lichtenstein zt"l on Yom HaAtzma'ut, see here: <http://etzion.org.il/en/topics/yom-haatzmaut?combine=aharon+lichtenstein> Yhe-sichot mailing list [Yhe-sichot@vbm.etzion.org.il](mailto:Yhe-sichot@vbm.etzion.org.il) <http://vbm.etzion.org.il/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/yhe-sichot>

From: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> reply-to: shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org date: Thu, Apr 23, 2015 at 7:58 PM

The Circumcision of Desire

### Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

It is hard to trace with any precision the moment when a new idea makes its first appearance on the human scene, especially one as amorphous as that of love. But love has a history. [1] There is the contrast we find in Greek, and then Christian thought between eros and agape: sexual desire and a highly abstract love for humanity in general.

There is the concept of chivalry that makes its appearance in the age of the Crusades, the code of conduct that prized gallantry and feats of bravery to "win the heart of a lady." There is the romantic love that makes its appearance in the novels of Jane Austen, hedged with the proviso that the young or not-so-young man destined for the heroine must have the right income and country estate, so as to exemplify the "truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." [2] And there is the moment in Fiddler on the Roof where, exposed by their children to the new ideas in pre-revolutionary Russia, Tevye turns to his wife Golde, and the following conversation ensues:

Tevye: Do you love me? Golde: I'm your wife! Tevye: I know! But do you love me? Golde: Do I love him? For twenty-five years I've lived with him, fought with him, starved with him. Twenty-five years, my bed is his... Tevye: Shh! Golde: If that's not love, what is? Tevye: Then you love me! Golde: I suppose I do! The inner history of humanity is in part the history of the idea of love. And at some stage a new idea makes its appearance in biblical Israel. We can trace it best in a highly suggestive passage in the book of one of the great prophets of the Bible, Hosea.

Hosea lived in the eighth century BCE. The kingdom had been divided since the death of Solomon. The northern kingdom in particular, where Hosea lived, had lapsed after a period of peace and prosperity into lawlessness, idolatry and chaos. Between 747 and 732 BCE there were no less than five kings, the result of a series of intrigues and bloody struggles for power. The people, too, had become lax: "There is no faithfulness or kindness, and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing and committing adultery; they break all bounds and murder follows murder" (Hos. 4: 1-2).

Like other prophets, Hosea knew that Israel's destiny depended on its sense of mission. Faithful to God, it was able to do extraordinary things: survive in the face of empires, and generate a society unique in the ancient world, of the equal dignity of all as fellow citizens under the sovereignty of the Creator of heaven and earth. Faithless, however, it was just one more minor power in the ancient Near East, whose chances of survival against larger political predators were minimal.

What makes the book of Hosea remarkable is the episode with which it begins. God tells the prophet to marry a prostitute, and see what it feels like to have a love betrayed. Only then will Hosea have a glimpse into God's sense of betrayal by the people of Israel. Having liberated them from slavery and brought them into their land, God saw them forget the past, forsake the covenant, and worship strange gods. Yet He cannot abandon them despite the fact that they have abandoned Him. It is a powerful passage, conveying the astonishing assertion that more than the Jewish people love God, God loves the Jewish people. The history of Israel is a love story between the faithful God and his often faithless people. Though God is sometimes angry, He cannot but forgive. He will take them on a kind of second honeymoon, and they will renew their marriage vows:

"Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her... I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will know the Lord." (Hosea 2: 16-22) It is this last sentence – with its explicit comparison between the covenant and a marriage – that Jewish men say when they put on the hand-tefillin, winding its strap around the finger like a wedding-ring.

One verse in the midst of this prophecy deserves the closest scrutiny. It contains two complex metaphors that must be unraveled strand by strand: "In that day," declares the Lord, "you will call Me 'my husband' [ish]; you will no longer call Me 'my master' [baali]. (Hosea 2: 18) This is a double pun. Baal, in biblical Hebrew, meant 'a husband', but in a highly specific sense – namely, 'master, owner, possessor, controller.' It signalled physical, legal and economic dominance. It was also the name of the Canaanite god – whose prophets Elijah challenged in the famous confrontation at Mount Carmel. Baal (often portrayed as a bull) was the god of the storm, who defeated Mot, the god of sterility and death. Baal was the rain that impregnated the earth and made it fertile. The religion of Baal is the worship of god-as-power.

Hosea contrasts this kind of relationship with the other Hebrew word for husband, ish. Here he is recalling the words of the first man to the first woman:

"This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman [ishah], Because she was taken from Man [ish]." (Gen. 2: 23) Here the male-female relationship is predicated on something quite other than power and dominance, ownership and control. Man and woman confront one

another in sameness and difference. Each is an image of the other, yet each is separate and distinct. The only relationship able to bind them together without the use of force is marriage-as-covenant – a bond of mutual loyalty and love in which each makes a pledge to the other to serve one another.

Not only is this a radical way of reconceptualizing the relationship between man and woman. It is also, implies Hosea, the way we should think of the relationship between human beings and God. God reaches out to humanity not as power – the storm, the thunder, the rain – but as love, and not an abstract, philosophical love but a deep and abiding passion that survives all the disappointments and betrayals. Israel may not always behave lovingly toward God, says Hosea, but God loves Israel and will never cease to do so.

How we relate to God affects how we relate to other people. That is Hosea's message – and vice versa: how we relate to other people affects the way we think of God. Israel's political chaos in the eighth century BCE was intimately connected to its religious waywardness. A society built on corruption and exploitation is one where might prevails over right. That is not Judaism but idolatry, Baal-worship.

Now we understand why the sign of the covenant is circumcision, the commandment given in the first of this week's parshiot, Tazria. For faith to be more than the worship of power, it must affect the most intimate relationship between men and women. In a society founded on covenant, male-female relationships are built on something other and gentler than male dominance, masculine power, sexual desire and the drive to own, control and possess. Baal must become ish. The alpha male must become the caring husband. Sex must be sanctified and tempered by mutual respect. The sexual drive must be circumcised and circumscribed so that it no longer seeks to possess and is instead content to love.

There is thus more than an accidental connection between monotheism and monogamy. Although biblical law does not command monogamy, it nonetheless depicts it as the normative state from the start of the human story: Adam and Eve, one man, one woman. Whenever in Genesis a patriarch marries more than one woman there is tension and anguish. The commitment to one God is mirrored in the commitment to one person.

The Hebrew word *emunah*, often translated as "faith," in fact means faithfulness, fidelity, precisely the commitment one undertakes in making a marriage. Conversely, for the prophets there is a connection between idolatry and adultery. That is how God describes Israel to Hosea. God married the Israelites but they, in serving idols, acted the part of a promiscuous woman (Hos. 1-2).

The love of husband and wife – a love at once personal and moral, passionate and responsible – is as close as we come to understanding God's love for us and our ideal love for Him. When Hosea says, "You will know the Lord," he does not mean knowledge in an abstract sense. He means the knowledge of intimacy and relationship, the touch of two selves across the metaphysical abyss that separates one consciousness from another. That is the theme of The Song of Songs, that deeply human yet deeply mystical expression of eros, the love between humanity and God. It is also the meaning of one of the definitive sentences in Judaism: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:5).

Judaism from the beginning made a connection between sexuality and violence on the one hand, marital faithfulness and social order on the other. Not by chance is marriage called *kiddushin*, "sanctification." Like covenant itself, marriage is a pledge of loyalty between two parties, each recognizing the other's integrity, honouring their differences even as they come together to bring new life into being. Marriage is to society what covenant is to religious faith: a decision to make love – not power, wealth or force majeure – the generative principle of life.

Just as spirituality is the most intimate relationship between us and God, so sex is the most intimate relationship between us and another person. Circumcision is the eternal sign of Jewish faith because it unites the life of

the soul with the passions of the body, reminding us that both must be governed by humility, self-restraint and love.

Brit milah helps transform the male from Baal to Ish, from dominant partner to loving husband, just as God tells Hosea that this is what He seeks in His relationship with the people of the covenant. Circumcision turns biology into spirituality. The instinctive male urge to reproduce becomes instead a covenantal act of partnership and mutual affirmation. It was thus a decisive turn in human civilisation as Abrahamic monotheism itself. Both are about abandoning power as the basis of relationship, and instead aligning ourselves with what Dante called "the love that moves the sun and other stars." [3] Circumcision is the physical expression of the faith that lives in love.

[1] See, e.g., C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960. Simon May, *Love: A History*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2011.

[2] The famous first line of *Pride and Prejudice*.

[3] *The Divine Comedy*, 33: 143-45.

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<http://5tjt.com/>

## **The KosherSwitch**

Halachic Musings

**By Rabbi Yair Hoffman**

When there is an issue that affects all of Klal Yisrael, it must be handled delicately and by the leading Torah scholars. This can be illustrated by a story that has not yet been widely told.

Many years ago, a woman who was severely handicapped approached Rav Yechiel Michel Stern, shlita, one of the leading poskim and rabbanim in Yerushalayim, with a very delicate question. Rav Stern realized that it was necessary to build a mikveh that contained a hydraulic lift—the first of its kind. Immediately he went to work on a halachically acceptable design. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Elyashiv, and Rav Vosner, zt'l, convened to discuss the very serious halachic obstacles to the initial design. At the meeting, these three giants of p'sak called Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt'l, in the United States for his insight as well. The obstacle was the requirement of "hevyasam al yedei taharah," discussed in a Rosh in Hilchos Mikvaos (siman 12) based on a Gemara in Zevachim (25b).

Three of the poskim were willing to accept a somewhat tenuous leniency in regard to the matter, by virtue of the great need at stake. One of the poskim, however, had reservations. The other three poskim agreed that the matter was so serious that unless they had unanimous agreement they could not proceed further.

The project was derailed for a short time, until a new design was created that was able to circumvent the issue. When the second design was presented, all four poskim accepted the matter readily. This is the history behind the hydraulic mikva'os that are now available across the world.

### **The KosherSwitch**

The idea that halachic matters of widespread importance must be handled by the leading Torah scholars is particularly relevant regarding the innovation called KosherSwitch, a technological device that has been advertised as a gadget that will enhance the Shabbos of the public. The problem is that leading poskim have taken the exact opposite position—its use is at best restricted to a hospital or nursing-home setting. It should never be used in a home setting by individuals who are not suffering from serious illness. Indeed, many of the leading rabbis who were touted as advocates of the technology have released statements that their advocacy of the item was limited to certain situations and that their views have been misrepresented.

The YouTube video promoting the device has a section in it that this author finds distasteful in the extreme. An ostensibly religious man, searching for a Shabbos goy (a woman in this case), inadvertently crosses a moral line. There is no question that the rabbis who appear in the promotional video would never have agreed to appear in it if they knew that there was innuendo of such a nature in the promotional material. The rabbis were clearly misled.

The question is, were these rabbis also misquoted? Before we go there, let's clarify some basic halachic terms and concepts.

#### Three Terms

I would like to introduce three terms to the discussion.

- Direct action: generally a Biblical prohibition

Gramma: generally a rabbinic violation • Semi-gramma: also known as not considered a gramma and thus fully permitted.

Gramma means a "causation force" rather than a "direct force." The laws of gramma on Shabbos are derived from the Talmudic passages of gramma in damages and in murder. "Causation force" is not necessarily permitted; at times it is forbidden by rabbinic decree. The Shulchan Aruch and Rema (O.C. 334:22) rule that a gramma is forbidden on Shabbos except in cases of loss or great need.

The trick, then, is to create a switch that would halachically not even be considered a gramma, a causation force, but rather a semi-gramma. The makers of the KosherSwitch claim that they have accomplished this—the manufacture of a switch that does not even constitute a gramma. But have they?

#### How It Works

The KosherSwitch is activated by moving a plastic piece, unattached to anything electrical, that prevents an internally emitted light pulse from hitting the other side. When the light pulse hits the other side, the switch turns the light on. The emission of the pulse and the reception of the pulse are allegedly subject to random degrees of uncertainty.

For comparison, we must first understand the halachic status of an ordinary electric switch. Our system of alternating current (AC) is like a river of flowing electrons moving back and forth as they pass around an electric circuit. If the circuit is interrupted, the electrons stop flowing. When the gap in the circuit is bridged, the electrons continue flowing and eventually turn on the electric light. Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, zt'l, believed that the electric light switch was, in fact, a direct force.

But according to our explanation, a regular electric switch should be considered a gramma—a causation force and not a direct force. Why? Because the switch is only bridging the gap in the flow of electrons. It is not generating the electricity; it is merely completing the path along which the electrons would flow. That should be a gramma, not a direct force.

Halachah, however, views this either as direct force or as a forbidden type of gramma. The reasons are subject to some debate. Primarily, the immediacy of the causation force makes it as if it is direct.

#### Gramma Versus Semi-Gramma

What are the halachic factors that would make something that is causative a semi-gramma rather than a gramma?

There are three main approaches in the poskim.

1. Some poskim hold that if there is a delay in time between the person's action and the result, then it would be considered a semi-gramma.
2. Other poskim hold that if the secondary action will not perform occur, then the causative action is not even considered a gramma. In other words, if it is not definite that the secondary result will happen, it would be considered a semi-gramma, not a gramma.
3. Yet other poskim hold that if it is not the normal way in which this causative action is performed, then it is considered a semi-gramma.

#### Addressing The Approaches

The inventor of the KosherSwitch attempts to address all of the various approaches, but the question is, are these really adequately addressed?

The inventor believes that the switch between the two different modes is sufficient to address whether it is "the normal way of doing it." This is questionable, however. How so? With the KosherSwitch, you still move a switch up and down just as you do during the week. Is flipping a vertical switch on a Friday truly sufficient to make this an abnormal way? True there is also a green light, but who says that this is sufficient to make it not a normal way of doing it?

Another question: While it is true that the LED or its receiver might not work the first time, but after a series of signals, it is a mathematical certainty that the secondary action will happen. Who says that the criterion of whether it will definitely happen is determined by one cycle and not the aggregate total? While it is true that previous versions of a gramma-switch allowed for this leniency, it is my understanding that many poskim disagreed with it.

#### Education In Mitzvos

Yet another issue about this switch is whether it will train children to turn lights on and off on Shabbos in places that do not have the KosherSwitch. There is a product called "NearBeer" that does not contain significant traces of alcohol. Is it a good idea to give our pre-teens and teens "NearBeer" simply because it contains no alcohol? The results might be devastating. To make the KosherSwitch available to all would undermine Shabbos observance and proper chinuch.

#### What Do The Rabbanim Say?

Finally, there are a number of rabbis who have been quoted to the effect that they permit it entirely, when in fact they only issued their permissive ruling with certain caveats. For example, this author saw a letter from Rav Harpenes that states that he only permitted it for hospitals or for nursing homes. Other rabbis stated that they had just issued a berachah for general success—but they did not advocate its use outside a hospital or nursing-home venue. There are other rabbis who have said that there is an issue of zilusa d'Shabbsa, denigrating the Shabbos, and that each person must ask his own rav or posek.

As discussed above, a technological development with such far-reaching repercussions should be presented to the outstanding gedolim of the generation before it is presented to the public. If this switch had first been developed in 2014 or 2015, we could understand why it does not carry the endorsement of Rav Elyashiv, zt'l. Yet the KosherSwitch has been around since before 2011—plenty of time to have been presented to Rav Elyashiv—and yet he did not endorse this device.

#### Conclusion

It is this author's view that the switch does not meet the criteria of semi-gramma according to the majority view of poskim. There are also serious dangers involved in chinuch and the promotion of this technology. It can precipitate a new slippery slope where the very concept of Shabbos can be undermined, chas v'chalilah.

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From: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to: Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date: Thu, Apr 23, 2015 at 4:44  
**Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum** - Parshas Tazria-Metzora

#### PARASHAS TAZRIA

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If a person will have on the skin of his flesh a s'eis or a sapachas, or a baheres, and it will become a tzaraas affliction on the skin of his flesh. (13:2)

Lashon hora, slanderous speech, which is the cause of tzaraas, is most often the result of envy and controversy in their various states. In the scheme of things, for every dispute among people, every point of contention which catalyzes animus towards one another and the resulting inevitable lashon hora, there is one simple point, one solitary position, that would make the controversy dissolve, if the individual would opt for it. If so, the envy dissipates and harmony continues to reign. What has the power to mitigate dispute, to put an end to contention between people? Vitur, acquiescence, submissiveness. One who has an accommodating nature, who is compliant and tolerant, will inevitably never be involved in a machlokes, controversy. He does not look to promote himself; he is willing to bend, to submit to the will of others. It takes two people to start and maintain a dispute. When one is mevater, compliant, he has no one with whom to contend.

Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl, once remarked concerning a dispute that raged between two distinguished people, Es iz a shad as zei beida vaisin nisht der ziskeit fun zein a mevater, "It is a shame that neither one knows the sweetness of vitur, acquiescence." Furthermore, he was wont to say, "Throughout my life, I have always been mevater - and you should know that I never lost out" (due to my submission).

A number of years ago, an episode occurred that received some attention and was recorded by a number of periodicals - Peninim included. I take the liberty of repeating it because of its capacity to inspire. Rav Eliyahu Mann, who serves as a close student and aide to Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, was asked by a man to set up a special appointment with Rav Kanievsky. Apparently, his daughter was engaged to a fine ben Torah, with the wedding date set for three weeks from then. That day, they had been informed by the chosson's parents that their son was ill with the dread disease and would require treatments for some time. They asked the Gerrer Rebbe to advise them with regard to the wedding plans. The Rebbe replied that this was a difficult question. The only person who could render a halachic response consistent with Torah dictate is Rav Chaim Kanievsky. The meeting was arranged.

The next morning, the chosson and his parents, together with the kallah and her parents, met with Rav Chaim, who listened to the two sides. The chosson claimed that, since he would have to undergo painful and, at times, debilitating treatments, it was not fair that the kallah should have to be subjected to such a relationship during the first year of their marriage. The kallah, however, claimed that it was not proper that such a distinguished ben Torah as her chosson should be compelled to suffer alone through such an ordeal.

When Rav Chaim heard the two sides of the "dispute," he immediately rendered his decision: they should get married on the designated date, and they should be blessed to build a bayis ne'eman, a true Jewish home, committed to the Torah and a glory to Hashem. As soon as the Rav rendered his decision, all the parties present broke into tears of joy, knowing that the wedding would go on as planned.

On the day of the wedding, Rav Eliyahu suggested to Rav Chaim that perhaps they should attend the wedding. After all, the Rav had played a critical role in preserving the shidduch, match. Rav Chaim agreed. The arrival of Rav Chaim at the wedding created quite a stir, since it was highly unusual for him to attend any affairs. He sat with the chosson for a few minutes, then rose and danced with him. Following the dance, Rav Chaim bid the chosson and kallah mazel tov and wished them well. As Rav Chaim walked from the hall to the waiting car, he was accompanied by the chosson and kallah and all of the guests.

When they returned home, Rav Eliyahu asked Rav Chaim the reason for his decision that the young couple not delay their wedding. Rav Chaim replied, "It is an explicit Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 33:1). In its commentary to the pasuk (Bereishis 7:11), the Midrash addresses the concept of the judgment that is rendered by Hashem. A story is quoted in which Alexander of Macedonia visited a far-away country for the purpose of studying their judicial system. A case presented itself in which two litigants came before the ruler (who was also the judge) with the following dispute: One person sold a ruin, in which the buyer later discovered a hidden treasure. The buyer claimed that he had purchased a ruin - not a treasure. The seller claimed that he had sold the churbah, ruin, with whatever may be in it. The ruler rendered the following decision. He asked one of them, "Do you have a son?" He replied in the affirmative. After confirming that the other litigant had a daughter, he suggested that the two children marry one another and share in the treasure.

Alexander, of course, took issue with this judgment, saying that he would have had both litigants killed and the treasure reverted to the king. The ruler of the country countered that, if it rains in Alexander's kingdom, it is only in the merit of the animals. The human beings are not worthy of blessing - if this is how judgment is rendered in his country.

Rav Chaim commented that we derive from this Midrash that, when two people are each out to be mevater, to acquiesce to one another, the only way to "solve" their "dispute" is through a matrimonial match in which they will now share together as one. "Therefore," concluded Rav Chaim, "I advised the young couple to marry - in compliance with the sage advice of Chazal."

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Sponsored in loving memory of Beate Frank a"h Baila bas Eliezer a"h By her husband, Walter Frank, and her children and grandchildren, Birdie and Lenny Frank and Family Peninim mailing list Peninim@shemayisrael.com [http://shemayisrael.com/mailman/listinfo/peninim\\_shemayisrael.com](http://shemayisrael.com/mailman/listinfo/peninim_shemayisrael.com)

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from: Rabbi Kaganoff <[ymkaganoff@gmail.com](mailto:ymkaganoff@gmail.com)> reply-to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Sun, Apr 19, 2015 at 11:15 AM subject: early shabbos article attached

### **Starting Shabbos Early**

#### **By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

Question #1: Asking for help "If I accepted Shabbos early, may I ask my neighbor, who is beginning Shabbos at the regular time, to turn on a light?"

Question #2: Very early Shabbos "How early can I begin Shabbos?"

Question #3: 18 versus 20 "Some communities schedule candle lighting 18 minutes before sunset on Friday, whereas others schedule it 20 minutes before sunset. Is there a halachic reason for the difference?"

Question #4: Some like it late "If all the shullen in my neighborhood make Shabbos early, am I obligated to do so?"

Answer: All the questions above involve a mitzvah called tosefes Shabbos, the halachic requirement to begin observing Shabbos before the day has yet arrived and, also, to continue observing Shabbos for some time after the day is over on Saturday night. The early authorities discuss whether tosefes Shabbos requires one to begin Shabbos a specific amount before the set hour, or whether it is left to the individual's discretion to decide how much extra time one treats as Shabbos (Tosafos, Beitzah 30a s.v. Deha; cf. Toras Ha'adam page 252).

Why eighteen minutes? There are different customs regulating how many minutes before sunset one should kindle the Shabbos lights. Most places today establish the official time as at least eighteen minutes before sunset. The reason for this is because there are opinions that Shabbos begins between 13½ and 18 minutes before sunset (Sefer Yere'im; see Mishnah Berurah 261:23 and Shaar Hatziyun ad locum). This approach is based on a method of understanding the Talmudic passages regarding the scientific phenomena that define the end of the day. Kindling Shabbos lights at least eighteen minutes before sunset accomplishes three things.

1. It prevents one from doing melachah, even according to the opinion of the Sefer Yere'im.

2. It guarantees that one fulfills the mitzvah of tosefes Shabbos.

3. It provides time to prepare for the arrival of the sanctity of Shabbos.

18 versus 20 At this point, we can already address one of our opening questions: "Some communities schedule candle lighting 18 minutes before sunset on Friday, whereas others schedule it 20 minutes before sunset. Is there a halachic reason for the difference?"

In order to fully accommodate the Yere'im's opinion, some authorities contend that one should kindle the Shabbos lights before eighteen minutes prior to sunset, so that there is tosefes Shabbos, even according to those who understand that he held that Shabbos enters eighteen minutes before sunset (Mishnah Berurah 261:23 and Shaar Hatziyun). This is why many communities schedule candle lighting twenty minutes before sunset -- the extra two minutes fulfill the mitzvah of tosefes Shabbos, even according to the most stringent position. Those who schedule candle-lighting for exactly eighteen minutes accept that this fulfills the vast majority of halachic opinions and all the major accepted approaches.

How does someone accept Shabbos? Women usually accept Shabbos when they kindle the Shabbos candles. There is a difference between Ashkenazic

and Sefardic practice as to how this is done. Ashkenazim assume that a woman accepts Shabbos when she recites the blessing on the kindling. Therefore, an Ashkenazic woman kindles her Shabbos lights before she recites the blessing, since, once she recites the blessings, she has accepted Shabbos and cannot light the candles or lamps. To accomplish having the brocha recited before the mitzvah, the Rema (Orach Chayim 263:5) advises that she block the light from herself with her hand. The common practice is that she covers her eyes with her hands while reciting the brocha and upon completing the brocha removes her hands, so that she can see and benefit from the kindled Shabbos lights.

Sefardic women recite the brocha of lehadlik neir shel Shabbos and then kindle the lights. They assume that she accepts Shabbos when she completes kindling the lights. Therefore, many have the practice that she does not extinguish the match with which she kindles the Shabbos lights, but instead places the match down so that it goes out by itself (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 263:10).

Both Sefardic and Ashkenazic women should recite the minchah prayers before lighting the candles, since once one has accepted Shabbos, one can no longer daven the weekday Friday minchah. However, if the day is drawing to a close and the candles still stand unkindled, one should kindle the Shabbos lights, even though, as a result, one will be unable to daven minchah (Mishnah Berurah 263:43). If this happens, a woman should daven maariv that night, and, immediately upon backing up the steps to complete “shemoneh esrei,” she should wait a few seconds, and then step forward to recite the same shemoneh esrei a second time (ibid.). This second prayer is a tefilas tashlumim, a make-up prayer, to replace the minchah that was missed (Brachos 26a). Reciting the Shabbos maariv amidah prayer a second time qualifies as restitution for the missing tefillah, notwithstanding that it is very different from the unrecited weekday minchah.

Conditional lighting. Should a woman not want to accept Shabbos upon kindling her lights, many authorities permit her to postpone accepting Shabbos until later (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 263:10). This stipulation should be performed only under extenuating circumstances (Magen Avraham 263:20). After making this condition, she may kindle her lights and, sometime before sunset, she must stop doing melachah and accept Shabbos.

Several authorities rule that, should someone decide not to accept Shabbos when kindling early, someone else in the household must accept Shabbos at that time. According to one opinion, if no one accepts Shabbos when she kindles, then the brocha recited upon kindling the lights is recited in vain, a brocha levatalah (Graz 263:11; however, see Mishnah Berurah 263:20 and Rema 263:10). However, if she herself will be accepting Shabbos within eight to ten minutes of her kindling, it is not necessary for someone else to accept Shabbos immediately after she kindles the lights (Shu”t Tzitz Eliezer 11:21).

Example: For example, a family will be eating the Friday night meal at someone else’s house, and it is difficult for the lady of the house to walk both ways. She may decide that she is not accepting Shabbos when she kindles the lights and then travel by automobile (obviously before Shabbos) to the home where they are eating the seudah.

How do men accept Shabbos? Even when men kindle Shabbos lights, they usually do not accept Shabbos at that time, but during the davening. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 261:4) rules that reciting Borchu or Mizmor shir leyom haShabbos qualifies as accepting Shabbos. The Magen Avraham (ad locum) disagrees with the latter ruling, contending that people routinely do melachah after reciting Mizmor shir leyom haShabbos. This means that people do not consider reciting it to be a declaration that one is accepting Shabbos. The later authorities explain that, in the time of the Magen Avraham, people made an implied condition not to accept Shabbos when they said Mizmor shir leyom haShabbos, and that was why they continued to do melachah after reciting it. However, in the time of the later acharonim, such as the Pri Megadim, people accepted Shabbos upon reciting Mizmor

shir and refrained from doing melachah from that point. Other authorities ruled that completing the song of Lecha Dodi, which closes with a welcoming of the Shabbos Queen, constitutes accepting Shabbos, and that, therefore, one is prohibited from doing melachah from then (Mishnah Berurah 261:31 quoting Derech Chachmah).

The early bird catches. How early may someone accept Shabbos and kindle lights? This question is already mentioned by the Gemara (Shabbos 23b) in the following passage:

Rav Yosef’s wife would delay lighting Shabbos lights until it was almost Shabbos. Rav Yosef admonished her, pointing out that in the Desert, the pillar of light that came at night arrived before the day ended. Thus, it is appropriate that the light for night should be kindled while it is still daytime.

Taking the admonition seriously, in a later week Rav Yosef’s rebbitzen decided to kindle the lights very early. An old man, possibly an incarnate of Eliyahu Hanavi (see Tosafos, Chullin 6a s.v. Ashkechei), told her that kindling too early is also not halachically correct (Shabbos 23b).

The Ran notes that the Gemara’s anecdote requires explanation. How close to Shabbos could Rebbitzen Yosef have been lighting that her husband felt it appropriate to correct her? She certainly did not kindle the lights at a time when it was questionably Shabbos, and, certainly, she also observed tosefes Shabbos correctly. If so, she was kindling at the correct time, so why was Rav Yosef admonishing her?

The Ran explains that Rebbitzen Yosef opined that kindling the lights is meant to serve Shabbos and, as such, should be conducted as close to Shabbos as possible. In other words, although one should not perform any melachah during tosefes Shabbos, she mistakenly thought that kindling the Shabbos lights is an exception that could and should be done immediately before Shabbos. Rav Yosef corrected her, pointing out that tosefes Shabbos applies also to kindling the Shabbos lights.

Having accepted Rav Yosef’s admonition, she now felt that she should make sure to kindle her Shabbos lights before she finished her other last minute Shabbos preparations. This was also not correct – the kindling should be the last melachah activity performed before one accepts Shabbos.

How early is too early? Some of the rishonim rule that one can kindle as early as plag haminchah, provided that, when doing so, one accepts upon himself the sanctity of Shabbos (Tur, Orach Chayim 267; Rabbeinu Yerucham, Tolados Adam Vechavah 12:2). Accepting Shabbos after kindling early is necessary in order to demonstrate that the kindling is for Shabbos. This is the ruling accepted by the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 263:4) and later authorities.

When is plag haminchah? Plag haminchah is the earliest time of day that one may daven maariv. It is definitely before sunset -- the Gemara explains that plag haminchah is 43/48 of the day. This means that if one divides the daylight part of the day into 48 quarter-hours, counting back 5 of these quarter-hours from the end of the day is plag haminchah.

When does the day begin and end? There is a major dispute among authorities whether these hours are calculated from alos hashachar, halachic dawn, which is halachically the beginning of the day, to tzeis hakochavim, when the stars appear, or whether they are calculated from sunrise to sunset. Accepted contemporary practice follows the opinion that plag haminchah is measured from sunrise to sunset, which makes plag haminchah in the summer about 1½ hours before sunset (Levush, Orach Chayim 267; Gra, to Orach Chayim 459:2; Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chayim 261:10).

Why no kindling earlier? Why is it prohibited to kindle the Shabbos lights before plag?

Rashi (Shabbos 23b) explains that if one kindles the lights too early, it is not noticeable that one is kindling the lights for Shabbos. This implies that the reason one cannot light Shabbos lights this early has nothing to do with accepting Shabbos early – one can accept Shabbos as early as one wants. The problem is that one who kindles Shabbos lights this early does not properly fulfill his mitzvah of kindling lights in honor of Shabbos. Thus, the Aruch Hashulchan (263:19) assumes that although one may not kindle

Shabbos lights earlier than plag haminchah, someone who accepted Shabbos earlier is required to begin observing Shabbos.

However, other early authorities (Tur, Orach Chayim 267) imply that it is impossible to accept tosefes Shabbos earlier than plag haminchah, and this is the approach accepted by the Magen Avraham (261:10) and the Mishnah Berurah (261:25). In their opinion, if someone accepted Shabbos upon himself before plag haminchah, it has no effect.

An earlier authority seems to agree fully with the position of the Aruch Hashulchan. The Terumas Hadeshen, who lived in 14th century Austria, records the following question: “In most communities, they daven maariv in the long summer days three or four hours before the stars appear. Is there any halachic basis for this practice, particularly since many talmidei chachamim follow it?”

The Terumas Hadeshen responds that he does not know of any basis to permit davening maariv earlier than plag haminchah, which he holds is an hour and a quarter before tzeis hakochovim. (Please note that the Terumas Hadeshen is calculating plag haminchah according to the other approach that I mentioned earlier, and not from sunset, as we are accustomed. Our calculation of plag haminchah makes it more than an hour earlier than it is according to the Terumas Hadeshen.) The Terumas Hadeshen notes that, even on a day that is eighteen hours long from alos hashachar until tzeis, plag is still only an hour and 47½ minutes before tzeis. He does not tell us how he was calculating when tzeis is, but if we assume that he used 40 or 50 minutes after sunset, his plag will be about an hour before sunset. He notes that, according to this calculation, there is no justification for davening maariv three or four hours before the stars appear.

The Terumas Hadeshen then endeavors to explain why communities davened maariv this early, suggesting that people could not wait until it got dark to eat the Shabbos meals. One way to avoid this would be to eat a meal before minchah, but this practice was not followed out of concern that people would make this into their Shabbos meal and not attend shul later. The Terumas Hadeshen notes that, precisely for this reason, many halachic authorities prohibit eating even a small meal before one has davened minchah, even if one eats the meal very early in the afternoon (after minchah gedolah). Because people found it difficult to eat so late on Friday evening, the custom developed of davening the Friday night Shabbos prayers very early. He then quotes a few authorities who held that this may not be done, but they did not stop the practice. He then recounts a story of a city, whose rav was one of the gedolei Yisrael, where they davened so early that, after davening and the seudah, there was ample time for the entire community to go for a walk on the bank of the local river, the Danube, by daylight and return home before dark! Although he does not provide a halachic basis to permit davening this early, nevertheless, he concludes that a talmid chacham may join the tzibur and daven with them, if he is unable to influence them to daven later.

There are some other curious questions about this practice of davening very early that the Terumas Hadeshen does not address:

How could they accept Shabbos before plag haminchah?

How could they kindle Shabbos lights before plag?

It seems that the Terumas Hadeshen held that, since they were accepting Shabbos immediately after kindling the lights, there is no problem with kindling the Shabbos lights early, or with accepting Shabbos this early.

Asking for help At this point, we can address another of our opening questions: “If I accepted Shabbos early, may I ask my neighbor, who is beginning Shabbos at the regular time, to turn on a light?”

The Rashba (Shabbos 151a) rules that someone who already accepted Shabbos may ask someone who did not yet accept Shabbos to do melachah. Accepting Shabbos early does not forbid me from asking someone else to do work (Magen Avraham 263:30). The Magen Avraham (261:7) rules that if the entire community accepted Shabbos, one may no longer ask another Jew to do work for him, but he may ask a gentile to do work (see also Rema, Orach Chayim 261:1).

Some like it late We are now ready to discuss the next question: “If all the shullen in my neighborhood make Shabbos early, am I obligated to do so?”

Some rishonim rule that once a community began davening maariv Friday night, all individuals in that community are obligated to observe Shabbos (Mordechai, Shabbos #298, quoting Rivam). This approach is followed by the Shulchan Aruch as normative halachah (Orach Chayim 263:12); however, the ruling is true only if every shul in the community has already accepted Shabbos, or if every shul that this person usually attends has already accepted Shabbos (Shu’t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 3:38). Some authorities suggest that if everyone is accepting Shabbos early only because it is convenient, but not because they want to be more machmir, an individual may not be bound to accept Shabbos when they do (Shu’t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 3:38).

Early hubby If a husband davens at an early minyan, must his wife begin observing Shabbos as soon as he does, or can she wait until he returns home from shul?

Rav Moshe Feinstein rules that the fact that a husband was mekabeil Shabbos does not require his wife to do so, just as his making a personal vow or oath is not binding on her (Shu’t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 3:38; cf. Shu’t Shevet Halevi 7:35, who disagrees). He discusses, at length, whether it is permitted for her to do melachah activities for her husband after he was mekabeil Shabbos, and concludes that it is proper that she does not.

Conclusion Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (Shemos 20:10) notes that people mistakenly think that work is prohibited on Shabbos in order to provide a day of rest. This is incorrect, he points out, because the Torah does not prohibit doing avodah, which connotes hard work, but melachah, which implies work with purpose and accomplishment. On Shabbos, we refrain from altering the world with our own creative acts and, instead, emphasize Hashem’s role (Shemos 20:11). We thereby acknowledge the true Builder and Creator of the world and all that it contains.

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**Speak No Evil: Cholent, The Sassoon Tragedy, and the Arrogance of Evil -- Rabbi Eliyahu Safran**

If you don’t have something nice to say...

How often our silence resonates more profoundly than our words! In music, it is the balance of notes and rests which create the beauty of the melody. If a song is composed of nothing but unrelenting notes it is little more than noise. So too, a man of only words and not silences expresses, at best, noise and, at worst, damaging evil.

Speech and silence. A meaningful life demands both. Without silence, we are noise. Yet, without speech, without language, only our most basic needs can be communicated. With speech, we can create and glory in art, in poetry, in worship and prayer. Speech is that which epitomizes the Divine gift inherent in each of us.

“... And He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life...”

The Targum translates, l’ruach memamela, “to a communicative, speaking being.” That is, our ability to communicate through speech best characterizes the living soul within us. Speech is power. And with power comes danger. It should come as no surprise then that of all possible human transgressions; the one punishable with tz’aras is the sin of lashon ha’rah – evil speech.

Resh Lakish does not mince words. Referring to the law of metzora he says, “This shall be the law of he who spreads evil talk” (motzi shem ra). One who is guilty of lashon ha’ra forfeits the mantle of spirituality from his being. What is he left with? Just his afflicted and “diseased” physical existence.

Abraham Lincoln sought to find the appropriate balance between our speaking self and our silent self when he said, “Better to remain silent and be thought of a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt.”

Foolishness is flaw enough. It is evil that the speaking self too often reveals! This has always been true but the seeming demand that we speak seems to define our cultural moment. We live at a time when it seems

everyone is enamored by the sound of his own voice; as if the world would be somehow bereft without each one adding his “two cents.”

The Internet, with its illusion of anonymity (for who is truly anonymous before God?), seems to invite the cruelest of this empty and vicious “talk”. Follow any “thread” in a comment section and you will find that reasoned discourse is an early victim to ugly, personal attacks.

To use speech for good is a great blessing. Our noblest expression of spirituality is found in our daily need to pray. To pray wholly is to transcend the physical self; to climb above the work of our hands and to surpass the product of our minds. Prayer is “an act of self-purification, quarantine for the soul. It gives us the opportunity to be honest, to say what we believe, and to stand for what we say.”

“The acceptance of the spirit is prayer.”

Our prayer is made possible by our ability to speak. Yet, even in prayer, the blessing and danger of speech is evident. As we enter into prayer, we cry to G-d, “O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Your praise.”

We are raised by our prayer. Made more whole. And yet, even after we have uttered our prayer we must guard against the possibility that our words were false, self-serving, and insincere. And so we conclude every prayer with a simple request, “Guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking guile.”

Would that those words were forever in our hearts and at our lips!

Sadly, they are not. Not only do we speak evil, but it is as if we seek out opportunities to speak ill, to bring the sin of lashon hara down upon ourselves! Few moments make this so blisteringly obvious as how too, too many people reacted to the recent Sassoon tragedy, a tragedy that weighs so heavily on every decent person among us.

How could it not?

A family lost, the result of a fire that began with a faulty electrical connection. A horrible, horrible thing. Seven children lost! And a father, away at a Shabbaton, devastated to learn of his grievous loss when Shabbat went out, only his wife and an older daughter surviving but in critical condition.

Could anyone with even a modicum of human decency not feel for this man and his family?

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In the beginning of Metzora, we learn that the only way to achieve atonement for sin is by purging oneself of the moral flaw that brought about one’s misdeeds and errors. Our Sages made clear that they held haughtiness and arrogance as the root causes of slander and gossip, the very sins that are punished by tzaraas. It is one thing to be haughty or arrogant in speaking about any aspect of another’s life but to show that same arrogance in the face of genuine human tragedy?

Yet that is exactly how many reacted to the horrific Sassoon tragedy! Not to reach out with genuine thoughtfulness or sympathy, but with judgment and condemnation and even, dare I suggest it, a wicked sense of glee, of justification that an observant family would suffer such a horror as a result of observing the Sabbath!

Because it was the hot plate that ignited the spark, there were those who took the opportunity to openly criticize Orthodox observance for its modern adherence to “archaic law and customs”, placing the blame for the fire on this “ancient tradition of Sabbath observance”, and even going so far as to claim that “the fire may not have started if they had not observed the Sabbath!”

Even that was not arrogant enough for “Jonathan T” who felt it appropriate to use the tragedy to condemn Orthodox practices in general! From his judgment seat, he weighed in on “the curious practices used to circumvent the limitations by the Ultra-Orthodox, including elevators that require all riders to avoid the need to push a button. Other practices are more serious including dangerous practices associated with circumcision ...”

Such venomous lashon hara was being uttered even as Gavriel Sassoon sat Shiva for his sheva irreplaceable losses.

Even some rabbis could not help but weigh in. One misguided attempt was an article purporting to address why God permitted these children to die in this manner – as if the author could know all of God’s ways, which Moses only yearned to know! This rabbi apparently did not take note of Gavriel Sassoon’s own words, “In the end it is for their benefit and for our benefit, but we cannot understand the master plan.”

That this man, this father, in the face of his loss could utter these words at that darkest moment, means that he is no less a person than Aharon HaKohen, whose silence – Vayidom Aharon – is at the core of all our laws of mourning.

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And then there were the multitudes, the countless thousands who expressed the goodness of their hearts, who mourned with Reb Gavriel in New York and Jerusalem. They did not come to lecture about smoke detectors, or UL approved hot plates; they did not come to criticize a father for being away on Shabbat to engage in Torah study or to denigrate the constant process of engaging the Eternal truths of our faith in the context of our times, or to mock the tragedy of pure hearts and souls; they came to offer genuine condolence.

So many did so much. But is there more that we can do? Of course there is. We must all focus more on loving our fellow Jews, even (perhaps, especially!) those who are not just like us; don’t dress like us, don’t speak like us, don’t share the same rabbis and rebbes, don’t look like us, don’t wear the same kippah or hat; we must engage the fullness of our Jewish community at all times, not just when tragedies occur.

We are to mourn with those who mourn, yes, but also celebrate with the bride and groom. We must share together in the highs and lows in our Jewish community. The test of a genuine Jewish life is not whether we can respond to another’s crushing pain but whether we can engage with them when life is “just” an everyday affair.

We have mourned with Gavriel Sassoon during his time of mourning but what about before this tragedy? Were we interested in or aware of his Syrian Jewish community’s rich history, heritage, customs, and nusach and extra ordinary levels of Tzedakah? Or were we satisfied to simply refer to them as “SY’s”?

When the Chabad Shluchim were viciously murdered in Mumbai, India – Klal Yisrael mourned as one. But what about the week before the terrorist onslaught? Were we one people then? Did we acknowledge and applaud the unique Chabad presence all over the world, then? This past summer, we cried as one for the tens of our finest young people, who were lost defending our home, our land. Just weeks earlier, we had mourned as one for our three boys, kidnapped and brutally murdered. But what about before those tragic losses? Did we consistently laud and applaud our chayalim and regularly pray for their safety? Or did we create borders and barriers between our unity? Did we fracture the “oneness” of our community?

Lashon hara is the tip of the cold, deadly iceberg of arrogance and haughtiness. Only by finding a way to appreciate, to engage, to respect the fullness of our community will we ever be truly “one” when it really counts – every single day.