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ON TZAV – SHABBOS HAGADOL - 5777

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Rabbi Daniel Stein

Making the Pesach Story Personal

Our Dual Relationship with Hashem

There is an undeniable bond between the mitzvah of offering the korban pesach and the mitzvah of bris milah. They are the only two positive commandments whose violation elicits the punishment of kareis, and as perhaps alluded to by the grave consequences levied against those who neglect these two mitzvos, they are both arguably indispensable ingredients to the Jewish experience. The pasuk states in Parshas Bo, "And should a convert reside with you, he shall make a Passover sacrifice to Hashem," (Shemos 12, 48) from which the Medrash cited by Rashi initially infers that aside from the bris milah and immersion in a mikvah, every convert must offer a korban pesach immediately upon his conversion, no matter what time of year the conversion occurs. The Medrash ultimately rejects this suggestion, but the Meshech Chochma concludes nonetheless that a convert can substitute the korban pesach in place of the typical korban offered by every convert upon their conversion. The relationship between korban pesach and bris milah is further underscored when we consider the unique exclusion "but no uncircumcised male may partake of it", that no uncircumcised Jewish male may participate in the korban pesach. Perhaps these two mitzvos are so intertwined and so central because they represent two critical dimensions to our relationship with Hashem.[1]

The bris milah represents a personal commitment to serving Hashem, modeled after Avraham Avinu who was the first person to perform bris milah, and who independently discovered and forged a relationship with Hashem amidst a polytheistic culture. Whereas the korban Pesach corresponds to the birth of the Jewish nation and is a response to our shared experience of leaving Mitzrayim as a people. This is the platform through which we relate to Hashem not as individuals but as a member of the Bnei

Yisrael. Every Jew as well as every successful convert must subscribe to these two notions. It is not sufficient to create a personal relationship with the Almighty represented by the bris milah, but we must also intimately identify with the history of the Jewish people signified by the korban Pesach. Additionally, the Gemara (Yevamos 47a) mandates that we question interested candidates for conversion, "What reason have you for desiring to become a convert; do you not know that Israel, at the present time, is persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed and overcome by afflictions?" Rav Soloveitchik once suggested that perhaps we inform all potential converts of our standing within the world not because we seek to discourage them, but rather to give them the opportunity to connect with our national identity and destiny, which is a critical component of the conversion process and our relationship with Hashem.

The Blood of the Korban Pesach and the Blood of Bris Milah

Indeed, it was in the merit of these two mitzvos, and these two aspects to our relationship with Hashem, that we were redeemed from Mitzrayim. Rashi (Shemos 12, 6) cites the Medrash which interprets the pasuk "but you were naked and bare" (Yechezkel 16, 7) as reflecting the Jewish people's inferior spiritual status and their unworthiness to be redeemed. In order to elevate Bnei Yisrael and justify their redemption, Hashem provided us with these two mitzvos, "And I passed by you and saw you downtrodden with your blood, and I said to you, 'With your blood, live,' and I said to you, 'With your blood, live'" (ibid 6), referring to the blood of the korban pesach and the blood of bris milah. Targum Yonasan continues that for this reason the blood from both these mitzvos was mixed and placed on the doorpost during the plague of the firstborn. This is perhaps alluded to in the language of the pasuk, which repeats the word "blood" twice, "And the blood will be for you for a sign upon the houses where you will be, and I will see the blood and skip over you," (Shemos 12, 13) referring to both the blood of the korban pesach as well as the blood of bris milah. The Alshich Hakadosh adds that for this reason the blood was placed "on the two doorposts and on the lintel" (12, 7), the two doorposts representing Moshe and Aharon, the leaders of the Jewish nation and our relationship with Hashem as part of the Bnei Yisrael, and the lintel corresponds to Hashem, representing our direct, individual, and personal commitment to Hashem.

However, the blood of these two mitzvos was mixed and placed on the doorpost together, perhaps indicating that these are not two separate notions and dimensions to our relationship with Hashem but one in the same. Each aspect of this relationship informs and compliments the other. In that sense, we must personalize our commemoration of yetzias Mitzrayim through our participation in the korban Pesach and by extension the entire seder experience. We must take the national story of yetzias Mitzrayim and make it our own individual narrative as well, by peppering it with instances of divine intervention and divine providence that we have personally witnessed and benefited from in our own lives. It has been widely observed, that the text of Haggadah has more commentaries than almost any other Jewish text, rivaled only by the Torah itself. Every group, every sect, and every yeshiva, within the Jewish community, has their own observations and interpretations of the Pesach story and the text of the Haggadah. Perhaps this reflects the measure of personal input that we are required to bring to bear on the night of the seder. Through the lens and inspiration of retelling and reexperiencing the story of yetzias Mitzrayim on the night of the seder, every one of us is enjoined to reflect on our own personal encounters with the hand of Hashem, the yad Hashem, and how that has facilitated our own personal arc and destiny.

Moshe's Unique Story

After the plague of hail, Moshe threatened Pharaoh that if he did not immediately release the Jewish people he would suffer a plague of locusts. The Ramban and Baalei Hatosfos note that prior to all the other plagues Hashem informed Moshe as to the nature of the ensuing plague. However,

with regards to the plague of locusts, we don't find any such prior notification. How was Moshe able to correctly predict that the next plague would be locusts if Hashem didn't inform him beforehand? The Ramban claims that just like the other plagues, Hashem must have informed Moshe earlier even though it is not recorded in the text itself. The Baalei Hatosfos suggest that all the plagues were alluded to on Moshe's staff through the abbreviated inscription, detzach, adash, beachav. Rav Shimshon from Ostropol brilliantly suggests that the plague of locusts, arbeh, is foreshadowed in the words "come to Pharaoh", "bo el Paroh" (Shemos 9, 1). The word "bo" is spelled beis aleph, and the letters beis and peh as well as aleph and ayin are interchangeable since they are formed with the same part of the mouth. Therefore, he suggests that the pasuk "bo el Paroh" was instructing Moshe to switch the letters beis and aleph of "bo" for their counterparts in the word "Paroh", spelled peh reish ayin heh, which if rearranged yields the letters aleph reish beis heh, or arbeh, locusts. The Chasam Sofer takes an even more novel approach when he submits that the plague of locusts was in fact Moshe's own idea! After the first seven plagues were successfully dictated by Hashem and implemented by Moshe, Moshe was given the latitude to concoct his own punishment for the Egyptians, and he chose locusts. This provided Moshe with a personal and unique perspective on yetzias Mitzrayim, and a part of the story that was not shared with anyone else.

Perhaps, for this reason that pasuk states, "in order that you tell into the ears of your son and your son's son how I made a mockery of the Egyptians ... and you will know that I am Hashem" (Shemos 10, 2). The pasuk begins in the singular, "your son," and concludes in the plural "you will know." The Belzer Rebbe explains that this is because in the generation of those who left Egypt the only person whose children did not experience yetzias Mitzrayim firsthand was Moshe, whose children who were still in Midyan at the time. Therefore, the pasuk begins in the singular, because initially the only person out of all of the Bnei Yisrael who had a mitzvah to recount the story of yetzias Mitzrayim to their children was Moshe. (This might explain why Moshe's name does not appear throughout the entire text of the Haggadah, because Moshe himself was the original narrator of the story). Nonetheless, the pasuk concludes in the plural, because in subsequent generations all Jews are bound by the duty to teach their children the story of the exodus. However, just like Moshe not only told his children the generic story of the yetzias Mitzrayim, but also his own personal individual account, so too, each one of us must share with our children as well our own unique perspective and personal insight. Only if we color the story of yetzias Mitzrayim with our own individual experiences and encounters with the yad Hashem, thereby fulfilling the first part of the pasuk, "tell into the ears of your son", can our children be successful in attaining the conclusion of the pasuk, "and you will know that I am Hashem."

Shabbos Hagadol

The Tur explains that the Shabbos prior to Pesach is known as Shabbos Hagadol, the Great Shabbos, because it was on the Shabbos prior to yetzias Mitzrayim that the Bnei Yisrael designated their sheep for the korban pesach, thereby fulfilling the pasuk "draw forth or buy for yourselves sheep for your families and slaughter the Passover sacrifice" (Shemos 12, 21). This was indeed a great miracle because the sheep were worshipped as a deity in Egypt, and yet the Egyptians did not protest when the Bnei Yisrael designated thousands of sheep for slaughter. However, the Medrash observes that the pasuk begins "draw forth", because even amongst the Bnei Yisrael, there were still individuals who were worshipping avodah zara. Therefore, before designating a sheep for the korban pesach Moshe instructed them to withdraw their hand, and to cease and desist their practices of avodah zara. However, this is somewhat difficult to understand, after all, Bnei Yisrael were now standing at the culmination of the process of the redemption. How could it be that Moshe waited until this late stage before instructing them to abandon their practices of avodah zarah?

Rav Kalonymus Kalman Shapira (Eish Kodosh) explains that of course Bnei Yisrael had renounced their practices of idol worship long ago, but upon their introduction and exposure to the mitzvah of korban pesach, Moshe was encouraging them not to view the mitzvah as someone else's mitzvah, or as someone else's religion, as avodah zarah, a foreign service, but rather to embrace and make the mitzvah of korban pesach their own. Similarly, we must embrace and transform the national story of the seder night represented by the korban pesach, into our own personal narrative. The Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer comments that the pasuk repeats twice, "and I said to you, With your blood, live," and I said to you, 'With your blood, live,' because just like the redemption from Mitzrayim was precipitated by the unification of the mitzvos of bris milah and korban pesach representing the individual relationship with Hashem and our national relationship with Hashem, so too the final redemption will only materialize when we successfully integrate these two experiences and commitments. Therefore, on the Shabbos before Pesach we are reminded to personalize the Pesach story, to make it our own, because only in this way can we merit to transmit the story to the next generation and to ultimately be zoche to a geulah once again, bemheirah beyameinu amen!

[1] See also *Korban Pesach: A Symbol of Faith and Commitment*
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Rav Frand - A Segulah From Eliyahu To Protect From Evil Thoughts
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Parshas Tzav

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

A Segulah From Eliyahu To Protect From Evil Thoughts

A Segulah From Eliyahu To Protect From Evil Thoughts

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Weekly Portion Torah Tapes: Tape # 675, Going Away for Pesach and Bedikas Chometz. Good Shabbos!

I saw the following thought in the Sefer Tiferes Torah from Rav Shimshon Dovid Pinkus, of Blessed Memory, who was tragically killed in a car accident on the 11th of Nissan. I share this thought in honor of his Yaartzit. The Shaloh Hakodosh (Shaar haOsiyos 30) writes in the name of Rav Moshe Cordevero (1522-1570) that he once heard from an elderly Jew that an effective method (segulah) for removing forbidden thoughts from one's mind is to repeat the following pasuk [verse] over and over: "The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it, it shall not be extinguished." [Vayikra 6:6]. The Shaloh comments that he is sure that the "elderly Jew" who Rav Moshe Cordevero heard this from was the prophet, Eliyahu [Elijah]. However, due to Rav Cordevero's great modesty, he did not want to reveal the true source, since that would have revealed that he was worthy of conversing with Eliyahu.

However, what does this pasuk have to do with forbidden thoughts?

Rav Pinkus addresses this question by reference to a comment of Rabbeinu Bechayeh on this week's parsha. Rabbeinu Bechayeh cites the pasuk in Proverbs: "Let your feet be scarce in your fellow's house, lest he be satiated with you and come to hate you." [Mishlei 25:17] This is a poetic way of expressing the often heard idea that it is unwise to wear out one's welcome in his friend's home. Too much of a good thing is not good. Even the best of friends can get tired of each other if they are always in each other's houses. The Rabbeinu Bechayeh then quotes a Gemara [Chagiga 7a] which says that this pasuk refers to the Beis HaMikdash. The intent is that one should make himself scarce in the Beis HaMikdash, meaning that he should not have a frequent need to bring Sin Offerings and Guilt Offerings (which may only be brought in the Beis HaMikdash). However, the Gemara says, that it is permissible to bring Olah offerings as often as a person wants – citing the pasuk in Tehillim: "I will enter Your House with burnt offerings; I will fulfill to You my vows." [Tehillim 66:13]

Rabbeinu Bechaye explains the difference between a Sin Offering and an Olah offering. The sin offering (korban chatas) comes from [unintentional] violation of prohibited actions. A korban olah, on the other hand, atones for improper thoughts. Improper thoughts, Rabbeinu Bechaye explains, is something that a person can never totally escape from. Unfortunately, they are very prevalent and they are more prevalent at night than during the daytime. It is for this reason that the Olah offerings are to burn the entire night. Night time is the time when people especially need atonement from improper thoughts. About this it is written: "Command Aaron and his sons, saying: This is the law of the burnt-offering: It is the burnt-offering that stays on the flame, on the altar, all night until the morning, and the fire of the Altar should be kept aflame on it." [Vayikra 6:2]

Now we know what Eliyahu meant when he told Rav Moshe Cordevero that the segulah for ridding oneself of evil thoughts is recitation of the pasuk at the end of the chapter on burnt offerings: "The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it, it shall not be extinguished." [Vayikra 6:6]

Just as we say that one who recites the pasukim associated with the sacrifices is credited (nowadays) as if he brought that offering, so too if one recites this pasuk from the section of the Korban Olah (burnt offering), it is as if he brought a burnt offering and he thereby receives the segulah associated with the Korban Olah – namely protection from evil thoughts.

Matzah: The Bread of Affliction and the Bread of Redemption

The reasons given for eating matzah on the night of the seder are somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand matzah is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate when they were slaves in Egypt (i.e. – the poor slaves did not even have time to let their dough rise due to the oppression of their cruel taskmasters.) On the other hand, we eat matzah because their deliverance came upon them so suddenly that their dough did not even have time to rise before they had to hurry out of Egypt.

The Ramban in his Torah Commentary [Devorim 16:3] points out this dual nature of matzah's symbolism. It is the bread which symbolizes the enslavement and it is the bread which symbolizes the redemption. This is rather strange. Imagine, for 200+ years the slaves were thinking "Oh, what would I give for a piece of soft bread!" For centuries they were salivating over the luscious white bread the Egyptian taskmasters were eating. Bread would have been the appropriate thing to symbolize the redemption! Such was apparently not the Divine Plan. The Almighty said "The same matzah that you ate as a slave, now you eat as a free person."

The message in this is that in order to be a free person, we do not need anything. If a person specifically needs "bread" as opposed to matzah to consider himself free, then he is not a free person. A person who NEEDS the physical pleasure of bread to give him his sense of freedom is not really free. Rather, he is a slave to his physical needs.

The Master of the Universe emphasizes that freedom has nothing to do with externals. It is entirely a phenomenon of one's internal awareness. I can eat the same piece of matzah that I ate as a slave and also eat it now as a free person. This is true freedom.

A friend of mine in the rabbinate once posed the following question to a group of teenagers: What would you prefer – to be poor and happy or rich and unhappy? The unanimous response was to be rich and unhappy. They, unfortunately, did not even understand the question. They could not comprehend why they might be unhappy if they were rich.

The truth of the matter is that the less encumbered one is, the less one needs, the more happy he can be. That is why the bread of redemption could not be rye bread or white bread. It had to be the same matzah they ate as slaves.

This idea is not only taught at the time of Pesach, it is characteristic of Succos as well. Succos, of all the Festivals, is called "The Time of Our Joy" (Zman Simchaseinu). On Succos, we leave the comforts of our home and move into a flimsy little hut. Furthermore, the libation one brings on Succos is not wine (as is the case with all other libations) but is water.

To be happy, a person should not need to retire to a flimsy Succah. To be happy, a person should go out and have wine libations as we do the entire year. The answer is the same. In order to achieve Simcha [joy], the Torah is demonstrating that a person can go out into the flimsy Succah. He does not need the comforts of his home. True happiness does not need externals. It does not even need wine – water will do just fine!

In the prayer after the Priestly Blessing that we say on the holidays, we say "May it be Your Will... that You give me and all the souls of my household our food and sustenance generously and not sparsely... from beneath Your generous Hand, just as you gave a portion of bread to eat and clothing to wear to our father Jacob...". There seems to be something wrong with this prayer. We are asking for generous sustenance... like that provided to Yaakov who was given bread to eat and the shirt on his back to wear? Why don't we ask for sustenance like that given to Shlomo HaMelech [King Solomon]?

The answer is that indeed, what Yaakov had was generous sustenance. Yaakov was 100 percent satisfied with the material blessings he was given. This is all he ever asked for [Bereshis 28:20] and he was happy with it. Generous sustenance (parnasa b'revach) is never related to the amount. It is based on what satisfies the person. This is what we pray for – that we should be as free as Yaakov Avinu was free, namely by being happy with a piece of bread to eat and a single item of clothing to wear.

May we all have a Happy and Kosher Pesach.

This write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah Portion. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrand, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. To Support Project Genesis- Torah.org Rav Frand © 2017 by Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/learn@torah.org> (410) 602-1350

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In Tune With Halachah Halachic Musings By Rabbi Yair Hoffman

Question: What do yeshiva bachurim and seminary girls, Spanish salsa-music fans of Marc Anthony, and French Muslim fans of Algerian Rai music all have in common?
Answer: They all dance to the very same music.

The yeshiva boys and sem girls know it as the music to the words "Hashem melech, Hashem malach, Hashem yimloch l'olam va'ed," which has taken the Jewish world by storm and is sung by the dynamic Gad Elbaz.

The Spanish salsa-music fans of Marc Anthony know it as the tune that he used for his song "Vivir mi Vida"—a song which earned a Latin Grammy in 2013.

And the Algerian Muslims know it as the music for the Arabic and French multilingual song called "C'est la vie" by Khaled Haj Ibrahim of Oran Algeria.

The Spanish version was composed in 2013, the original Muslim version was composed in 2012, and the Gad Elbaz version was released in 2016.

What Does
Halachah Say?

What does halachah have to say about the fact that the music to one of the most popular chasunah songs in contemporary times originally came from an Arab love song with decidedly un-yeshivish lyrics?

The Sefer Chassidim #238 states that one should not use a niggun that was used for avodah zarah worship for praising Hashem. It even states that one should avoid humming a good piece of music in front of one who is apt to use it in the worship of avodah zarah! Does the same apply to songs that allude to impropriety or that have inappropriate lyrics?

The Tzitz Eliezer (volume XIII Siman 12) writes quite clearly that it is "an abomination to dress up words of holiness in malbushei tzo'im [soiled clothing] that give off an odor of promiscuity."

On the other hand, the Bach in Orech Chaim Siman 53 writes that it is only problematic if the tune is generally exclusive to the avodah zarah. Otherwise, the Bach seems to allow it.

If, however, the origin is unknown to the chazzan or singer, then it could perhaps not be such an issue. A manuscript version of the Levush that this author once saw seemed to indicate this position.

The Issue
Of Attribution

Hopefully, whenever this happens, Jewish artists attribute the original artist's contribution and do not attempt to take credit for it. The Rambam writes in the introduction to the Yad HaChazakah that some of the ideas came from a wise man, but since people generally look askance at wisdom from a foreign source, he left the wise man's name anonymous. Most students of philosophy can detect that he is referencing Aristotle.

That same problem exists in music and, as a result, parodies or modified versions of musical pieces usually hint to or allude to the original artist. When we do not attribute it or at least allude to the original author, we may be in violation of something that is quite clearly against a Torah value.

A famous Jewish song titled "Yidden" was originally based upon the music of a West German band called "Dschinghis Khan" who placed their song as their entry in the Eurovision Song Contest of 1979. The composer of the original music was a person named Ralph Siegel. The Jewish song, in this author's recollection, was at least attributed to the artist somewhat anonymously.

A famous children's singer took the music from a Clint Eastwood 1950s western called Rawhide and did not, it appears, attribute the music to its original composer—even anonymously.

King Solomon's Admonition

King Solomon tells us (Mishlei 22:22): "Rob not from a poor person for he is poor." Chazal tell us (Yalkut Shimoni Mishlei 560; Midrash Tanchumah Bamidbar 27) that Shlomo HaMelech is actually referring to plagiarism—to reciting a statement without attributing it to its source.

Just as a poor person has no protector—no guardian to right wrongs and injustices—the same is true with intellectual property. An earlier thinker came up with an idea. Just as the poor person has no protector, the thinker has no protector. Shlomo HaMelech is appealing to our conscience—do not steal from a poor person, for he is poor; he has no protector. Do not cheat or plagiarize for the originator doesn't have a protector either.

Queen Esther (Megillas Esther 2:22) informs her husband, the king of Persia, that Bigsan and Seresh had plotted a coup d'état. She informs Achashveirosh that Mordechai, proficient in 70 languages, overheard and told her. Queen Esther didn't take credit for the information. She specifically told the King that she had obtained the information from Mordechai. Esther was amply rewarded. It is for this action that she merited to be the conduit of the salvation of Israel. Because of Esther it is said, "Whoever says something in the name of its originator brings salvation to the world." What was really going on here? Esther certainly was a righteous woman. Can't we assume that if she thought it better for the king to have assumed that the information came from her, then surely she would have been fully justified?

It would seem not. Even though it may have been in the Jewish interest that Esther gain the king's favor, there is something inherently wrong in not attributing the information to the true source. She knew this. Esther could not stoop to do something that is inherently wrong. It was for this realization—that we are but mere foot soldiers in a campaign and our primary responsibility is to follow Hashem's bidding in what is right and wrong—that she was so amply rewarded.

In Pirkei Avos (6:5) we see that naming the original source of the information is included in the list of the 48 ways in which Torah is acquired.

The Yalkut Yosef (Kivud Av Va'Eim chapter 9) cites a few more sources. The Shelah in Maseches Shevuos says that it is an enormous sin and should be looked at as if one kidnapped human life. Kidnapping is a serious crime, but it seems that it is the parallel emotion that authors feel when their work has been taken from them without attribution.

Photo Finish

There are other artists who constantly feel that pain as well. There are photographers who work hard to get a particular shot and often media sources do not credit the photographer properly. v

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Weekly Parsha TZAV – SHABBAT HAGADOL

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

This year, as is true in most years of the Jewish calendar, the Torah reading of Tzav coincides with the Shabbat preceding Pesach – Shabbat Hagadol. Since on a deep level of understanding there are really no coincidences in Torah matters, the connection between Tzav and Shabbat Hagoal should be explored and explained.

The word "tzav" is one of a mandatory command. It does not present reasons or explanations and does not brook discussion or argument. It is representative of military discipline, of service to a higher purpose even if all of the participants in the project are not really aware of the workings of that higher purpose.

A necessary part of living in society is the mandatory obligations, which are part of everyone's life. If it were not for these rules, mores and practices imposed upon us, life would become so chaotic as to be unlivable. It is the "tzav" part of life that allows all of the other more freedom-of-choice opportunities to be present in our lives.

An ordered society demands that there be commands, not only recommendations or suggestions. There is an understandable reflex built into our emotional system that resists and resents commands from others. Any parent of a three-year old can easily testify to the truth of this observation. Nevertheless, the young child must eventually respond to commands in order to grow, mature and become a successful human being. So, "tzav" plays a vital role.

Perhaps there are no two areas of Jewish life and law that are as complexly intertwined with mandatory commands and laws, as are Shabbat and Pesach. The concepts behind these holy days and their observances represent noble values – serenity, leisure, freedom and independence. But noble ideas alone, without detailed instructions as to their realization, are useless in a practical sense.

The sons who appear in the Torah and the Haggadah all ask the same question – "What relevance do these laws have in our time?" Is it not sufficient that we honor the ideas that Shabbat and Pesach represent and then ignore all of the mandatory commandments that accompany these days, their values and ideals.

Without mandatory commandments no commemorative day, no matter how well meaning and well planned will stand the test of time and changing circumstances. It is the "tzav" component of Shabbat and Pesach that make this Shabbat the Shabbat Hagadol – the great Shabbat that it is.

It is an historical fact that those movements and individuals that ignored or rejected mandatory observances associated with Shabbat or Pesach eventually slipped out of Jewish life and continuity entirely. Again, without "tzav" there can be no Shabbat Hagadol. This is the basic issue that divides much of the Jewish world today. The avoidance of mandatory commandments, attractive and popular as this idea may initially appear, is a sure recipe for Jewish extinction. Shabbat Hagadol comes to remind us of this lesson.

Shabbat shalom

Chag kasher v'sameach

Rabbi Berel Wein

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Many other articles germane to Pesach are available on the website

RabbiKaganoff.com. You can find these articles using the search words:

matzah; chol hamoed; chometz; ga'al yisroel; hallel; omer; mei'ein sheva;

Some of the Basics of Kashering

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Sandwich Maker

"Can I kasher my sandwich maker for Pesach in order to toast vegetables with it?"

Question #2: Better than Boil?

“Is there a way to kasher things that is safer than placing them in boiling water in an open pot?”

Introduction:

Halachah assumes that when cooking food, taste residue remains in the utensil that was used. When this flavor residue, which is called ta’am, comes from something prohibited, it must be removed to allow the utensil to be used again to prepare food. When the flavor is from meat, one must extract it before using the utensil for a dairy product,* if the flavor is from chometz, the utensil must be kashered before it can be used for Pesach-dik products.

Although modern appliances are not mentioned in the Torah, the basic rules for kashering all appliances lie within a careful study of the passages of the Torah, the Gemara and the early authorities on this topic. The Chumash, itself, alludes to the halachic process used to kosher a utensil when it commands, kol davar asher yavo vo’eish ta’aviru vo’eish, “Any item that entered fire, shall be passed through fire” (Bamidbar 31:23), thereby implying that kashering an appliance that became non-kosher through direct contact with a flame requires burning the appliance in a flame -- no other cleaning process will sufficiently kosher this appliance.

Shabbos Hagadol

One of our responsibilities prior to Pesach is to ascertain that we know how to kasher our homes correctly. The piyutim that were traditionally added to the prayers on Shabbos Hagadol include very detailed instructions on proper kashering techniques, and we find that the baalei Tosafos discuss and correct the texts of the piyutim to accommodate the correct procedures. This week’s article will provide some introductory information to this topic, as we explore how the Gemara explains correct kashering procedures.

Let us begin by examining a passage of the Gemara that discusses kashering one’s house for Pesach. The Gemara (Pesachim 30b) quotes a beraisa (halachic source dating from the era of the Mishnah) that if beef fat was smeared onto the walls of an oven, kashering the oven to be pareve again requires firing up the oven, which means building a fire inside the oven. This heating of the oven burns out the residue of the meat fat that is absorbed into the oven walls. The Gemara then recounts that Ravina noted to Rav Ashi that the earlier amora, Rav, had declared that there is no way to kasher chometz-dik pots for Pesach-dik use. Ravina asked Rav Ashi why this was so: Why not simply fire up the pots to make them Pesach-dik, just as one kashers an oven? Rav Ashi provided two answers to the question:

Metal vs. earthenware

(1) The beraisa that permits kashering an oven is referring to one made of metal, whereas Rav was discussing pots made of earthenware. Earthenware pots cannot be kashered, because once food flavor is absorbed into them, normal procedures will not physically remove the ta’am from the vessel. To quote the Gemara (Pesachim 30b, Avodah Zarah 34a), “The Torah testified that one will never be able to extract the flavor from the walls of an earthenware vessel.”

Ovens vs. pots

(2) Rav Ashi’s second answer is that an earthenware oven can be kashered by building a fire inside it, but not an earthenware pot. In those days, cooking was done by building a fire inside the oven and placing the pot inside or on top of the oven. This fire does not provide enough heat in the pot to remove the flavor (ta’am) that is absorbed inside it. Furthermore, building a fire inside the pot is also not a satisfactory method of kashering it. Chazal did not permit this method of kashering, because it may not be performed properly -- the owner may be afraid that the pot might crack if it is heated long enough to kasher it (Rosh and Rabbeinu Chananel ad locum; cf. Rashi, who explains the Gemara somewhat differently.) This concern does not exist regarding an oven, presumably because this is the usual way of heating it.

Some basic rules

From this short passage of Gemara, we can derive some basic rules of kashering:

1. When a concern exists that a particular method of kashering may break an appliance, Chazal prohibited using that method. There are many, many instances where this halachah is put into practice.

One example of this is our opening question. “Can I kasher my sandwich maker for Pesach in order to toast vegetables with it?”

Any method that might kasher the sandwich maker would very possibly ruin the machine. Therefore, it is not possible to kasher it for Pesach use.

2. Earthenware has different properties from those of metal items, resulting in differences in halachah. Regarding metal and other types of items, there is a principle of kebol’o kach polto, that one extracts from a utensil prohibited flavor the same way the flavor was absorbed into the appliance. From the passage of Gemara quoted above, we see that there are exceptional cases when this principle does not apply. Materials such as earthenware can absorb substances that will not be removable afterwards. Rather than becoming completely extracted when one kashers them, some of the absorbed taste

remains and gradually leaches out afterwards with each use, thus spreading prohibited flavor into all subsequent cooking (Tosafos, Chullin 8a s.v. Shelivna).

Exception - kiln kashering

Although the above-quoted passage of Gemara implies that earthenware pots cannot be kashered, Tosafos notes that this rule is not absolute -- there is an acceptable way to kosher them. The Gemara (Zevachim 96a) implies that all earthenware vessels, even pots, can be kashered by firing them inside a kiln used for manufacturing earthenware (Tosafos, Pesachim 30b s.v. Hatorah). The intensity of heat in a kiln, which is far greater than the temperature used when baking or cooking in an earthenware oven, will remove the non-kosher or chometz-dik absorption from the walls. Furthermore, we are not afraid that someone will not kasher the utensil adequately out of concern that it will crack, because heating in a kiln is consistent on all sides and will not cause the utensils to crack (Rosh). It is uneven heating that damages the vessel.

There is an alternative explanation for why there is no concern that the owner will not kasher his pot adequately inside the kiln for fear that it will crack. In this instance, we feel that the owner will allow the pot to remain inside long enough to kasher properly because once the owner has placed the pot inside a kiln, this demonstrates that he has no concern about the pot breaking. This halachic conclusion is followed by the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 451:1).

Purchase from gentile

We will now examine a different passage of Gemara to learn more about the rules of the kashering procedure.

The Mishnah (Avodah Zarah 75b) teaches that upon purchasing used kitchen equipment from a gentile, one kashers the equipment via one of the following procedures:

- 1) That which is usually used for cooking in liquid medium must be kashered in hot water, which is called hag’alah.
- 2) That which is used to broil or roast food directly in fire must be kashered directly in fire, called libun. As examples of the latter rule, the Mishnah chooses a barbecue spit and a grate used for roasting. Since these appliances absorbed non-kosher ta’am directly through fire, they must be kashered by burning them in fire.

Kebol’o kach polto

From this Mishnah, we learn a new rule -- that there is a hierarchy in kashering. If an appliance absorbed flavor directly through fire, boiling it will not remove the residues of prohibited substance sufficiently to kasher it. This explains in more detail the rule I mentioned above, called kebol’o kach polto, which teaches that extracting food residue requires the same method that caused the absorption initially, or a method that is more intense, as I will explain shortly. Therefore, if a prohibited food was cooked in a pot, it can be kashered by hag’alah, which is a method of boiling out what was absorbed. However, if a spit or rack absorbed prohibited food directly through fire and not through a liquid medium, hag’alah will not suffice to kosher it.

Libun versus hag’alah

It is axiomatic that a stronger method of kashering will work for vessels requiring a lower level of kashering (for items other than earthenware). Thus, a metal pot used to cook non-kosher can be kashered by libun, although it is not necessary to use this method.

Iruy, miluy ve’iruy

There are other methods of kashering, such as iruy, which means pouring boiling water onto an item or surface, and miluy ve’iruy, which means submerging an appliance in water for three 24 hours periods. In this article, we will not discuss these methods of kashering.

How long?

At this point, we are ready to go to the next step in understanding how to kasher properly. The first question we will explore is germane to kashering directly by fire, which is called libun. The question is: How long must the spit or rack be held in a fire for it to be kashered? At what point can we assume that all the prohibited absorption will be removed?

We find two statements of the Gemara answering this question, one in the Talmud Yerushalmi and the other in the Talmud Bavli. The Talmud Yerushalmi (end of Avodah Zarah) states that one must heat it until sparks begin to shoot off. The Talmud Bavli (Avodah Zarah 76a) explains that you must keep it in the fire “until you remove the surface.” In practice, the halachah is that one needs to heat it until sparks shoot off (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 451:4).

Summing up

To sum up: From these two passages of Gemara, we have learned three basic rules of kashering:

1. Removing the residue of a prohibited substance from an appliance requires performing on it a procedure that is similar to or stronger than what caused the absorption in the first place.
2. When a concern exists that a particular method of kashering may break an appliance, one may not kasher it that way.

3. One cannot kasher earthenware items through conventional household methods.

Contradiction

However, a different Mishnah seems to dispute one of the principles that we have just explained. The Torah teaches that there is a mitzvah to eat parts of the korbanos offered in the Beis Hamikdash, but that there is a time limit within which they may be eaten.

After the korban's time limit has passed, the leftover meat is called nosar, literally, leftover, and must be burnt. Eating it after this time violates a serious prohibition of the Torah.

What happens to the equipment used to cook the korban? The leftover flavoring remaining in the equipment becomes nosar and the equipment must be kashered. This means, essentially, that equipment used to prepare kodoshim must constantly be kashered.

How does one kasher the equipment? One would think that we would apply the same rules presented by the above-mentioned Mishnah in Avodah Zarah. However, the Mishnah states that a grill used to barbecue a korban requires only hag'aloh (Zevachim 97a). This suggests that there is a one-size-fits-all approach to kashering – and that hag'aloh can be used to kasher anything, even that which absorbed the food directly via fire. This approach does not fit the rule of kebol'o kach polto discussed above.

As you can imagine, we are not the first ones to raise this question. The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 76a) does, and provides several answers. The conclusion of the Gemara is that when the prohibited substance was permitted at the time of absorption, a concept that the Gemara calls heteira bala, hag'aloh is sufficient to kasher it. The absorption of korban meat in equipment qualifies as heteira bala because, until the time that it becomes nosar, it is permitted to eat the meat; therefore, hag'aloh suffices.

The opposite of heteira bala is issura bala, which means that the food was prohibited at the time that the absorption took place. The Mishnah in Avodah Zarah discussing used equipment purchased from a gentile is teaching the laws regarding issura bala.

Heteira bala

Why does heteira bala create a basis to be more lenient?

Some explain this phenomenon as follows: When prohibited substance is absorbed through a medium, such as by cooking in water, hag'aloh, boiling out the non-kosher vessel, will remove all of the prohibited substance. However, when the substance absorbed directly by fire, boiling it will not remove all of the prohibited substance. Nevertheless, it does remove most of the substance. When the vessel initially cooked non-kosher, non-kosher food absorbed into it and must be fully removed. But when the absorbed substance was kosher at the time that it absorbed, the residue left over after the pot was boiled is not enough to be considered non-kosher.

Kashering from fleishig

The Gemara mentions the concept of heteira bala relative to the absorption of permitted kodoshim, which will later become prohibited nosar. It is obvious that if one has equipment that absorbed fleishig residues and one wants to make it pareve, this is a case of heteira bala and will require only hag'aloh. Here is an actual example:

In a food service operation, some pareve baking trays had mistakenly been used to bake chicken. Assuming that the chicken was placed directly onto the trays, one might think that kashering these trays would require libun, since the absorption was direct from the meat into the tray, without any liquid medium. However, because of the principle of heteira bala, only hag'aloh was required.

Is chometz considered heteira bala?

Since chometz is permitted to be eaten anytime but Pesach, it would seem that chometz should be considered heteira bala. This would mean that kashering chometz equipment for Pesach use would never require more than hag'aloh. However, we find that there is a dispute among halachic authorities whether chometz is considered heteira bala or issura bala. Those who follow the stringent approach rule that at the time of its use, chometz is what was absorbed into the walls of the pot, and chometz may not be used on Pesach. The concept of heteira bala is applicable, in their opinion, to kodoshim products since, at the time that the grills were used, they were not nosar. They could not become nosar afterwards since the small remnant remaining after the hag'aloh will not be considered nosar.

Whether chometz is considered heteira bala or not is very germane in practical halachic terms. If it is considered heteira bala, then hag'aloh will suffice to kasher all items for Pesach, and one is never required to kosher items with libun to make them Pesach -dik. How do we rule?

Both the Shulchan Aruch and the Rema (451:4) conclude that chometz is considered issura bala. Therefore, one cannot kosher a grill used for chometz through hag'aloh, but it requires libun. However, in case of major financial loss (hefsed merubeh), one may rely on the opinion that chometz is heteira bala (Mishnah Berurah 451:32, citing Elya Rabbah and Gra).

Libun kal

So far we have discussed kashering through libun, by means of a high temperature of direct fire. We have also discussed hag'aloh, which is kashering through boiling in

water. The rishonim discuss an in-between method of kashering, which is called libun kal, easier libun. Libun kal also uses direct heat to kasher, but it does not reach as high a temperature as does the libun we have been referring to until now, which is sometimes called libun chamur, strict libun, to avoid confusion. Libun kal is defined as heating metal hot enough that one sees that the heat has permeated through the metal fully (Mordechai, Avodah Zarah, end of 860). An alternative definition is that it is hot enough to burn straw. The poskim rule that when hag'aloh would be sufficient to kasher, one may use libun kal as an alternative, but that it should not be used when there is a requirement to kasher via libun chamur (Mordechai, Avodah Zarah, end of 860). How hot is libun kal?

At what temperature does straw burn? Based on experiments that he himself conducted, Rav Yisroel Belsky concluded that this is accomplished by a combination of temperature and time. His conclusion was that an oven heated to 550° F takes an hour to burn paper, at 450° it takes 1½ hours and at 375° it takes 2 hours. Thus, kashering with libun kal would require a longer amount of time at lower temperatures. We can thus answer another of our opening questions:

“Is there a way to kasher things that is safer than placing them in boiling water in an open pot?”

The answer is that since libun kal can be used whenever hag'aloh suffices, one could kasher any items that require hag'aloh by libun kal in a household oven, if one keeps the item in the oven long enough.

Conclusion

This article has provided a small introduction to some of the ideas of kashering, particularly to the concepts of libun and hag'aloh. We have not yet dealt with several other types of kashering, including iruy, kli rishon, and miluy ve'iruy, all of which we will need to leave for a future time. We should always hope and pray that the food we prepare fulfills all the halachos that the Torah commands us.

* There is discussion among the halachic authorities whether one may kasher an appliance that is fleishig to use with dairy and vice versa. We will leave the discussion of that topic for a different time.

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Hilchos Pesach

6883. If one forgot, or was unable to make the Bedikah on Sunday night one should make the Bedikah on Erev Pesach, as early as possible, by candlelight, with a beracha. If the Bedikah was not done on Erev Pesach, a Bedikah should be done on Chol Hamoed with a beracha, (not on Shabbos or Yom Tov), as soon as one remembers. If one did not remember until after Pesach, a Bedikah should be done after Pesach without a beracha (to prevent any issur of Chometz She'ovar Ol'ov Ha'pesach). Shulchan Aruch w/Mishnah Brurah 435:1

6884. If one is traveling for Pesach and will not be home on Sunday evening to do the Bedikah, one should do the Bedikah the night before traveling without a beracha, followed by the bittul (nullification) of Chometz that normally follows the Bedikah (as printed in the siddur). Shulchan Aruch w/Mishnah Brurah 436:1

6885. If one will not be at home for Pesach (and will not be able to make a Bedikas Chometz on Sunday night one should preferably ask the Rov in advance to sell their Chometz and rent their home/apartment to the non-jew on Sunday during the day. {There are however lenient opinions that do not require this early transfer}. Laws of Pesach, R' A. Blumenkrantz

6886. If one will be staying in a hotel for Pesach; if one arrives before Sunday night or anytime during the night, one should search the room with a beracha. If one arrives Erev Pesach, one should search the room without a beracha. Shulchan Aruch w/Mishnah Brurah 437:1,2, Laws of Pesach R' A. Blumenkrantz

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Subject: Rabbi Riskin and Rabbi Stav on the Torah Portion

Parshat Tzav (Leviticus 6:1 – 8:36) – Shabbat Hagadol

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – “Behold, I send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And he [Elijah] will turn [back to God] the hearts of the parents through their children and the hearts of the children through their parents” (Malachi 3:23-24).

The Shabbat before Passover is called Shabbat Hagadol (the Great Sabbath), a phrase deriving from the last verse of the prophetic portion read on that day which declares that God will send Elijah the Prophet on the “great day” of the Lord right before the coming of the redemption.

Let us attempt to link Elijah to our Passover Seder in a way more profound than merely opening the door for him and offering him a sip of wine.

Our analysis begins with another Seder anomaly, the fact that we begin our night of freedom with the distribution of an hors d’oeuvre of karpas (Greek for vegetation or vegetable, often parsley, dipped in a condiment).

The usual explanation for this is that vegetation emerges in the springtime; Passover is biblically called the Spring Festival, and so we dip a vegetable in salt water, reminiscent of spring renewal emerging from the tears of Egyptian enslavement. Rabbi Shlomo Kluger, in his late 19th-century Haggada, suggests another interpretation. The Hebrew word “karpas” appears in the opening verses of the Book of Esther, in the description of the “hangings” that were found in the gardens of King Ahasuerus’s palace, where the great feast for all his kingdom was hosted; karpas white cotton joined with turquoise wool. Rashi connects the term “karpas” in the sense of material with the ketonet passim, the striped tunic that Jacob gave to his beloved son, Joseph.

The Jerusalem Talmud additionally suggests that we dip the karpas in haroset (a mixture of wine, nuts and dates), adding that haroset is reminiscent of the blood of the babies murdered in Egypt. In our case, the karpas would become symbolic of Joseph’s tunic, which the brothers dipped into goat’s blood and brought to their father as a sign that his son had been torn apart by wild beasts when in fact they had sold him into Egyptian slavery.

Why begin the Seder this way? The Talmud criticizes Jacob for favoring Joseph over the other brothers and giving him the striped tunic. This gift, a piece of material with little monetary value, engendered vicious jealousy resulting in the sale of Joseph and the eventual enslavement of the Israelites for 210 years.

The point of the Seder is the retelling (“haggada”) of the seminal experience of servitude and freedom from generation to generation. Through this, all parents become teachers. They must inspire their children to continue the Jewish narrative of identification with the underdog and the outcast. They must imbue in their offspring insistence upon freedom for every individual created in God’s image and faith in the ultimate triumph of a world dedicated to peace and security for all.

This places an awesome responsibility on the shoulders of every parent: to convey the ethical monotheism, rooted in our ritual celebrations and teachings, to their children and eventually to all of humanity. Hence, parents must be warned at the outset not to repeat the tragic mistake of Jacob, not to create divisions and jealousies among their children. Instead, we must unite the generations in the common goal of continuing our Jewish narrative.

What has this to do with Elijah the Prophet, who is slated to be the herald of the Messiah, the announcer of the “good tidings of salvation and comfort”?

Our redemption is dependent on our repentance and the most necessary component of redemption is “loving our fellow as we love ourselves” – the great rule of the Torah taught by Rabbi Akiva.

Loving humanity must begin with loving our family; first and foremost our nuclear family. We read in the prophetic portion of this Shabbat that Elijah will bring everyone back to God by uniting parents with their children and children with parents. The biblical source of sibling hatred (the Joseph

story), which has plagued Jewish history up to and including the present day, will be repaired by Elijah, who will unite the hearts of the children and the parents together in their commitment to God.

Toward the end of the Seder, we open the door for Elijah and welcome him to drink from the cup of redemption poured especially for him. But if Elijah can visit every Seder throughout the world, surely he can get through even the most forbidding kind of door.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson, teaches that we open the door not so much to let Elijah in as to let ourselves out. The Seder speaks of four children; But what about the myriad “fifth children” who never came to a Seder? We must go out after them and bring them in – perhaps together with Elijah, whom we will need desperately to unite the entire family of Israel around the Seder table.

Shabbat Shalom

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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Tzav

For the week ending 8 April 2017 / 12 Nisan 5777

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Insights

A Burning Sensation

“...Command Aharon and his sons, saying: This is the Torah of the Olah: it is the elevation-offering that stays on the flame... and the flame of the Altar should be kept aflame on it.” (13:17)

Korbanot — animal sacrifices — don't make sense.

How can the offering of an animal on the Altar be atonement for our wrongdoing?

The Ramban explains that the essence of a korban is that the offender should watch the shechita of the korban and think: “That should be me!”

It is his neck that really should be feeling the slaughterer’s knife, and only through G-d’s great mercy is the wrongdoer allowed to substitute the body of an animal for that of his own.

But it doesn't stop there. This feeling must also lead the offender to repentance, to turn aside from his wrongdoing and mend his ways.

This idea is hinted to in the Torah text:

“...Command Aharon and his sons, saying, ” — meaning that they should say to every Jew who brings a korban, “This is the Torah of the elevation-offering...” — this is the essence and the purpose of the korban — that “it (can also be translated as ‘he’) is the elevation-offering” — he should see himself as though everything being done to the korban should really be done to him.

“And the flame of the Altar should be kept aflame on it (him).” In other words, the flame should be kept burning his body, but G-d in His Mercy accepts the korban as a substitute.

Sources: *HaDrash V'ha'Iyun in Mayana shel Torah*

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Drasha Parshas Tzav

Bloodsport

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Blood. At worst, it invokes ghastly images of death and war. At best, it represents life-saving transfusions. On any scale it is not appetizing. It is for that reason that it is difficult to comprehend the repeated warnings and admonitions that the Torah makes concerning the consumption of blood. Beginning this week, there are three warnings in the Torah concerning the prohibition of consuming blood. There is a specific verse that tells parents to

admonish their children and discourage any thought they may have of eating or drinking blood.

Leviticus 22:26-27: You shall not consume blood... from fowl or animal. Any soul that consumes blood will be cut off from his people.

Leviticus 17:10-12: Any man of the House of Israel and of the proselyte who dwells among them, consume any blood — I shall concentrate My attention upon the soul consuming blood, and I will cut it off from its people.

Deuteronomy: 12:23: Only be strong as not to eat blood...

Rashi quotes the words of Rav Shimon Ben Azai: "if blood, which is so repulsive, needs such dire warnings surely one must take great precaution not to succumb to sins that are appealing." Rabbi Yehudah explains the repetitive admonitions in the context of history. During that era, many nations would actually indulge in blood-drinking ceremonies. Thus the Torah exhorts the Jewish nation on that matter. In any case, it is quite apparent that both Rabbi Shimon and Rabbi Yehudah were bothered by repeated warnings, which should be unnecessary. It is difficult to comprehend why the Torah spends more energy warning, admonishing, and exhorting the Jews against blood-consumption than against most other prohibitions that are much more alluring.

Also, why is this one of only two prohibitions that our sages interpreted an extra verse, as "a warning for parents to admonish their children." Why does this prohibition surpass the norm of parental supervision that is required by any other Mitzvah?

An old Jewish story has a devoutly religious woman running into a Chasidic Rebbe as she was crying uncontrollably.

"Rebbe," she cried, "it's my son. He went absolutely meshuga. He started acting totally insane. Even you won't be able to help him. He needs a psychiatrist!"

"What's the matter?" Asked the Rebbe.

"The matter?" She cried. "He's crazy! He's acting like a gentile! He dances with gentile women and began dining on pig!"

The Rebbe looked to the poor woman as he tried to put her problems in perspective.

"If he would dance with pigs and dine on women, I would say that he is crazy. But the way you describe him he is not crazy at all. I'd just say that he is becoming a very lascivious young man. And I can deal with that."

On a homiletic note, perhaps, we can explain the Torah's passionate admonitions about blood. The Torah understood the test of time. Acts that are considered vile and obscene by today's standard may be accepted as the norm tomorrow. Societies change and attitudes change with them. The ten greatest problems of the 1950's public school class may be considered decent, if not meritorious, behavior today. The Torah understood that society changes. Therefore it admonishes us on the lowest form of behavior with the same intensity as if it would be the normal custom. And it tells us to pass these specific admonitions to our children. We can not dismiss the warnings by thinking, "drinking blood is bizarre behavior. Why should my children need to worry about it?" The Torah says, even if something may be base and bizarre to our generation, if it's Torah it must be told to our children. It is impossible to know what the next generation will consider repulsive and what it may consider fashionable. Today's revulsion may be tomorrow's bloodsport. Times change and people change, but Torah remains eternal.

In honor of the marriage of Luba Esther Reisman to Shmuel Meth Good Shabbos!

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Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

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The Jerusalem Post

Parashat Tsav: Taking the flame from within our lives

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

April 06 2017 | Nisan, 10, 5777

In the Torah portion we read this Shabbat, Parashat Tzav, we read many details pertaining to halachot (Jewish laws) of sacrifices and how they are to be sacrificed in the Temple.

These verses dealing with the Temple, which was destroyed about 2,000 years ago, seem irrelevant now that we are living in such a different culture and time. However, it is fascinating to continuously discover that they contain significant ideas that shed light on a person's life in general, and a Jew's life in particular, even thousands of years after they were written.

The parasha begins with a halacha pertaining to the flame that burned on the altar; the one into which the organs of the animals/sacrifices were thrown after they were slaughtered. Pieces of wood were placed at the base of this flame that would burn all the time.

Even though the sacrifices were made only during the daytime hours, the Torah forbids extinguishing the fire at any time of day or night.

"And the fire on the altar shall burn on it; it shall not go out." (Leviticus, 6:5) And then again: "A continuous fire shall burn upon the altar; it shall not go out." (Lev. 6:6) This seemingly unnecessary repetition led the sages of the Talmud to examine these verses and learn another halacha. The fire burning on the altar was not meant only for the sacrifices, but for something else in addition. Two other actions were performed daily at the Temple using fire: lighting the menorah, and lighting the incense that gave off a pleasant smell in the Temple. These two actions were performed using the same flame that burned on the altar.

At first glance, these halachot seem irrelevant when the Temple is not standing. There is no menorah and there is no incense. However, one of the great commentators of the Bible, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Germany, 19th century), deduced an idea, or a message, from these halachot that is relevant to every person in every generation.

The actions performed at the Temple were for the most part symbolic, representing different ways in which man can worship God. Thus, the menorah symbolized light and purity. It is for this reason that we light a yearzeit memorial candle on the anniversary of the passing of those dear to us. The flame represents life, the soul which burns in all of us, as it is written, "Man's soul is the Lord's candle" (Proverbs 20, 27). The incense – giving off a pleasant smell – symbolized the special spiritual state. On the other hand, it is difficult to find spiritual symbolism in the act of sacrifice. It is a physical act done to animals – slaughter, throwing blood, burning organs... All these represent deeds that are not in essence spiritual. But these actions, when done with purity of the heart and proper intentions, also become sacred.

The flame used for spiritual acts, says Rabbi Hirsch, has to be taken from that same fire used for the sacrifices.

Every person has the tendency to disconnect the spiritual experience – the ideals, values and sense of purity that accompanies them – from the physical and materialistic. Sometimes we think that only by disconnecting ourselves completely from our daily lives will we succeed in experiencing those transcendental spiritual experiences. But the Torah guides us to the contrary, telling us that we should create the spiritual experiences from those same physical actions.

When we disconnect the spiritual experiences from daily life, they remain isolated and cannot affect our lives. A person can undergo a hugely significant and wonderful experience, but if it does not come from within his or her life, it cannot influence that life. It will not change the life and make it better. Only by linking our spiritual experiences to our everyday life can we fulfill the hope and role given to every human being: "To repair the world in the Kingdom of God."

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

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Rav Kook Torah
Passover: Who is Free?

The main theme of the Passover holiday is, undoubtedly, freedom. But we must understand what this freedom is all about. Does it refer simply to the end of Egyptian slavery? Is it only political freedom — a luxury which has eluded the Jewish people for most of their 4,000 year existence?

True to Our Inner Essence

The difference between a slave and a free person is not merely a matter of social position. We can find an enlightened slave whose spirit is free, and a free man with the mentality of a slave.

True freedom is that uplifted spirit by which the individual — as well as the nation as a whole — is inspired to remain faithful to his inner essence, to the spiritual attribute of the Divine image within him. It is that quality which enables us to feel that our life has value and meaning.

A person with a slave mentality lives his life and harbors emotions that are rooted, not in his own essential spiritual nature, but in that which is attractive and good in the eyes of others. In this way, he is ruled by others, whether physically or by social conventions.

Vanquished in exile, we were oppressed for hundreds of years by cruel masters. But our inner soul is imbued with the spirit of freedom. Were it not for the wondrous gift of the Torah, bestowed upon us when we left Egypt to eternal freedom, the long exile would have reduced our spirits to the mindset of a slave. But on the festival of freedom, we openly demonstrate that we feel ourselves to be free in our very essence. Our lofty yearnings for that which is good and holy are a genuine reflection of our essential nature.

(Adapted from Ma'amerei HaRe'iyah, Celebration of the Soul, pp. 141-143)

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Ohr Somayach

Insights into Halacha

The Halachic Adventures of the Potato

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

For the week ending 1 April 2017 / 5 Nisan 5777

With the countdown to Pesach beginning, many are starting to already stockpile their potatoes in anticipation of Yom Tov. What would Pesach be without potatoes?

Although nowadays we all take the potato for granted, it actually has a fascinating history: one which not only has impacted halachah, but, due to its travels, enshrined its 'discoverer', Sir Francis Drake, as one of the Chasidei Umos HaOlam (righteous gentiles of the world)! [1] This article sets out to 'explore' the halachic impact the potato has made in several different areas.

Ever since first 'making the scene' via the victorious Spaniards shipping them from the conquered Incas to their own colonies and armies throughout Europe in the late 1500s, the ubiquitous potato has been a considerable mainstay on the world stage. From circumnavigating the globe with Sir Francis Drake, to famed French physician Antoine Parmentier waxing poetic about this nightshade's nutritional value, to Queen Marie Antoinette wearing a headdress of potato flowers at a fancy ball (obviously while she still had her head), by the 1770s the potato had become a staple crop throughout Europe. What other vegetable has been credited with helping facilitate such diverse events as the Industrial Revolution, the Great Irish Famine of 1845 (due to their susceptibility to blight), Russia's proclivity for vodka, a U.S. Vice President's public spelling debacle, and a themed toy version of itself so popular that it was inducted into the National Toy Hall of Fame? Yet, aside for the tuber's worldly presence, it also holds a unique place in the annals of Halachah, and not just by its significance in latkes, cholent, Pesach cooking, and fresh hot potato kugel.

Brachah Brouhaha - Mind Your K's And T's

If one were to take a poll as to the potato's proper brachah (blessing required before eating) the vast majority would respond that since the potato is a vegetable and grows and gets its nourishment from the ground, its proper brachah is "borei pri ha'adama". [2] Yet, although this seems clear-cut, interestingly, there are those who make a different blessing: shehakol, usually reserved for food items not naturally grown.

The source of this remarkable ruling seems to be an enigmatic translation by the Aruch, Rav Nosson M' Romi (lit. of Rome; d. 1106), a contemporary of Rashi. [3] When referring to the proper brachah of mushrooms and other food items that do not actually get their nourishment from the earth and consequentially their bracha being shehakol, [4] the Aruch translates them as "Tartuffel". Not familiar with the archaic word, the famed Yismach Moshe [5] maintained that the Aruch must have been referring to "Kartuffel", colloquially known as the potato. He added that the great Rav Naftali of Ropshitz made a shehakol on potatoes as well.

This rationale is also found in several other sefarim, and there are prominent authorities who therefore made a shehakol brachah on potatoes. [6] In fact, Sanz and Kamarna Chassidim, among others, follow this custom.

The Klausenberger Rebbe, the Tzhelemer Rav, and Rav Shraga Feivel Schneebalg [7] staunchly defend the practice of making a shehakol on potatoes. The Klausenberger Rebbe adds another reason to do so: Since one can make flour out of potatoes and potatoes satiate and are filling, it might be considered in the same category of rice, whose proper brachah is mezonos. [8] The rule is that if one is unsure what the proper brachah is he should make a shehakol. He therefore opines that potatoes should also be shehakol.

On the other hand, it must be noted that the Steipler Gaon [9] strongly disagreed with this reasoning, maintaining that the Gemara (Brachos 36b - 37a) expressly singled out rice for this special halachah of mezonos, and that it therefore does not apply to other foods.

The Kamarna Rebbe of Yerushalayim's son personally told this author a similar reasoning as the Klausenberger Rebbe's why Kamarna Chassidim make a shehakol. [10] He added that anyway if one makes a shehakol on any food he is yetzei b'dieved, so kol shekein one may do so with a potato when many great Rabbanim have said to do so.

However, the facts do not seem to corroborate that potatoes should be in the same category as mushrooms, as potatoes not only grow and root in the ground, but they also get their nourishment from the ground, as opposed to mushrooms and their ilk. Several contemporary authorities point out [11] that it is highly unlikely, if not impossible, for the Aruch, who lived in Europe in the 11th century, to have been referring to "Kartuffel" as the proper translation for mushrooms, as tubers were unknown on that continent until almost five hundred years later! Therefore, the vast majority of authorities rule that the proper blessing on the potato is indeed "borei pri ha'adama". [12]

Kitniyos Clash

Another interesting issue related to the potato is its exclusion from the Ashkenazic prohibition of eating kitniyos (legumes; ostensibly based on its semi-literal translation: 'little things') on Pesach. It is well known that the actual prohibition of chametz on Pesach pertains exclusively to leavened products produced from the five major grains: wheat, barley, oats, spelt, or rye. [13] Yet, already in place from the times of the Rishonim, [14] there was an Ashkenazic [15] prohibition against eating kitniyos (legumes; literally 'little things') on Pesach, except in times of famine or grave need. [16] Although several authorities opposed this prohibition [17]; nonetheless it is binding on Ashkenazic Jewry in full force, even today. [18]

Although referred to slightly differently by our great luminaries, i.e. the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch references it as an 'issur', the Mishnah Berurah as a 'chumrah', the Aruch Hashulchan as a 'geder', Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank zt"l as a 'gezeirah', Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l as a 'minhag', and the Klausenberger Rebbe zt"l as a 'takanah', nonetheless, they all maintain that the kitniyos prohibition is compulsory on all Ashkenazic Jewry. [19] In fact, the Aruch Hashulchan avers that 'once our forefathers have accepted this prohibition upon themselves, it is considered a 'geder m'din Torah' and one who is lenient is testifying about himself that he has no fear of Heaven". He adds, echoing Shlomo Hamelech's wise words (Koheles Ch. 10: 8) regarding a 'poretz geder', that one who breaks this prohibition deserves to be bitten by a snake.

Several reasons are given for the actual prohibition [20] including that kitniyos often grow in close proximity to grain; are commonly stored together with grain and actual chametz might actually end up mixed inside the kitniyos container; cooked dishes made from grain and kitniyos look similar; and that kitniyos can likewise be ground up into flour - a 'bread' of sorts can actually be made from them. Since there are many who will not be able to differentiate between them and their biblically forbidden chametz counterparts, kitniyos was likewise prohibited.

A Hot Potato?

So how do our spuds measure up? It would seemingly be quite difficult for anyone to mix up potatoes with chametz grain, so that rationale to regard potatoes as kitniyos is out. But, potatoes can be and are made into potato flour and potato starch, and there are those who do bake potato 'bread'! If so, why would potatoes not be considered kitniyos? Shouldn't they be consequentially forbidden for Ashkenazim to partake of on Pesach? In fact, and this is not widely known, the Chayei Adam does actually rule this way, and the Pri Megadim mentions that he knows of such a custom, to prohibit potatoes on

Pesach as a type of kitniyos.[21] However, the vast majority of authorities rule that potatoes are not any form of kitniyos and are permissible to all on Pesach.[22] One of the main reasons for this is that at the time when the Ashkenazic Rishonim established the decree prohibiting kitniyos, potatoes were completely unknown! It is possible that had they been readily available they might have found themselves on the “forbidden list” as well! Yet, since they were never included, as well as do not fit most of the kitniyos criteria, contemporary authorities could not add “new types” to the list.[23]

However, it must be noted that there are other important reasons as well why potatoes were excluded. Of the four criteria given for the gezeira of Kitniyos, potatoes only fit one, that it can be made into flour and a ‘bread’ of sorts can be baked from it. No one would mix up a potato with a grain kernel![24]

As Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt”l noted,[25] Klal Yisrael never accepted the Kitniyos prohibition to include potatoes.

Cooking Quarrel

The potato was viewed quite differently by many, respective of the time and place. For example, as noted previously, it was prized by French nobility in the 1770s. Yet, by the mid 1800s tubers were considered peasant fare in many locales, including Ireland and Russia. This divergence of attitude actually has a halachic impact.

If a non-Jew cooks kosher food (from start to finish), it still might be prohibited for a Jew to consume it, based on the prohibition of Bishul Akum, literally - food cooked by a non-Jew. This is a Rabbinic decree, intended as a safeguard to combat the plague of assimilation and intermarriage. However, in order for food to be included in this prohibition, it must meet two requirements: be unable to be eaten raw, and it must be ‘Oleh Al Shulchan Melachim’ - fit for a King’s table. Any kosher food cooked by a non-Jew that does not meet these requirements (obviously with no other kashrus concerns) is permitted to be eaten.[26]

A common concern is figuring out which foods are considered ‘Fit for a King’s Table’. The Chayei Adam, Rav Avraham Danzig, who lived in Vilna (located in modern-day Lithuania) in the early 1800s, ruled that potatoes are considered an important food item, fit for nobility.[27] As such, they are ‘Fit for a King’s Table’ and any cooked potato dish must be cooked by a Jew, or else will be prohibited as Bishul Akum.

However, the Aruch Hashulchan, Rav Yechezkel Michel Epstein, writing in the 1890s in Novardok (located in modern-day Belarus), vigorously disagreed; maintaining that potatoes are food for the common man, and nobles would only partake of them due to the land’s overabundance of them, and not due to any inherent importance.[28]

Interestingly, and although written more than a century earlier, and in Germany, Rav Yaakov Emden similarly wrote that potatoes are exclusively “peasant fare”. The Aruch Hashulchan adds that it is entirely possible that in the time and place of the Chayei Adam a potato dish might have been considered important, but by his time, the potato’s widespread popularity ensured that it no longer could have been rendered ‘Fit for a King’s Table’, and consequentially is excluded from the Bishul Akum prohibition. It is interesting to note that nowadays potato’s relevance is once again a matter of dispute among contemporary authorities regarding this important halachah.

The Maharsham, Rav Shalom Mordechai Schwadron, maintained that in his time (1890s, Berezhn, modern-day Ukraine), a cooked potato was considered ‘Oleh Al Shulchan Melachim’; however, if it was roasted it was not, and would not fall under the issur of Bishul Akum. The Debreciner Rav understands this to include potatoes roasted in oil (frying), and adds that nowadays any type of fried potato (french / freedom fries, anyone?) would definitely not be ‘fit for a king’s table’. Other contemporary authorities are even more lenient. For example, Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin and the Yaskil Avdi seem to accept the Aruch Hashulchan’s position that standard potatoes are not ‘Olah Al Shulchan Melachim’, even nowadays.[29]

On the other hand, Rav Shmuel Halevi Wosner and Rav Moshe Sternbuch are machmir for the Chochmas Adam’s opinion and maintain that nowadays potatoes can be considered ‘Olah Al Shulchan Melachim’, and conclude that even concerning fried potatoes one should be machmir. It should be noted that Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky and Rav Moshe Feinstein seem to rule that potato chips and French fries are ‘Olah Al Shulchan Melachim’, but for a different reason (they do seem to accept that nowadays potatoes are chashuv; Rav Moshe’s talmid, Rav Aharon Felder, wrote that indeed Rav Moshe held that potatoes in modern times have the status of an important food and are subject to the strictures of Bishul Akum).[30]

However, Rav Yisroel Halevi Belsky[31] disagrees, maintaining that fried and roasted potatoes are in no way nowadays considered ‘Olah Al Shulchan Melachim’, and explains at length that Rav Moshe and Rav Yaakov would certainly agree. Come what may, it is well known that the Badatz Eidah Chareidis of Yerushalayim is stringent for the machmir opinion and makes sure that potato chips under their hashgacha are strictly Bishul Yisrael (a much simpler proposition to ensure in Eretz Yisrael than in Chutz La’aretz).

This Spud’s For You!

It’s amazing how not only ours, but the entire world’s, eating habits have been changed by this simple vegetable. Can anyone even imagine Shabbos without cholent or kugel, or Chanuka without latkes, or Pesach without the potato? The common potato certainly has an uncommon and fascinating history, especially when viewed through the lens of Halachah.

This author was recently interviewed on the ‘Kashruson the Air’ radio show, discussing the topic of Potatoes and the Kitniyos prohibition, as well as whether Quinoa should be considered Kitniyos. To hear a recording of this show go to: This article was written L’Iluy Nishmas R’ Chaim Baruch Yehuda ben Dovid Tzvi, L’Refuah Sheleimah for R’ Shlomo Yoel ben Chaya Leah, and Rochel Miriam bas Dreiza Liba, and l’zechus Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v’chol yotzei chalatzeha for a yeshua sheleimah! For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomos / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu. Rabbi Yehuda Spitz serves as the Sho’el U’ Meishiv and Rosh Chabura of the Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel at Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim. He also currently writes a contemporary halacha column for the Ohr Somayach website titled “Insights Into Halacha”.

*Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority. L’Iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R’ Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R’ Boruch Yehuda, and l’zechus for Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam and her children for a yeshua teikef u’miyad!
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Ohr Somayach

Insights into Halacha

For the week ending 8 April 2017 / 12 Nisan 5777

Understanding Urchatz

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Have you ever wondered why, during the annual Pesach Seder, when we dip Karpas vegetables in saltwater to symbolize our ancestor’s tears while enslaved at the hands of the cruel Egyptians, we precede it by washing our hands (Urchatz)? Isn’t handwashing exclusively reserved for prior to ‘breaking bread’? And furthermore, why is this only performed at the Seder? Is there a specific message this action is meant to convey?

All About the Children

The answer to these questions might depend on a difference of understanding. The Gemara in Pesachim (114b) asks why at the Pesach Seder we perform two dippings [i.e. Karpas in Saltwater and later the Maror into Charoset]. The Gemara succinctly answers ‘Ki Heichi D’lehavai Hekeira L’Tinokos, in order that there should a distinction for children’. Both Rashi and his grandson, the Rashbam, explain[1] the Gemara’s intent is that this act is done in order so that the children should ask why we are performing this unusual and uncommon action on Leil Haseder, as this action serves as a ‘hekeira tova’, an excellent distinction. This is one of the ways we ensure that the Seder Night’s Mitzvah of ‘Vehigadta L’Vincha’, retelling the story of our ancestors’ exile, enslavement, and ultimately exodus from Egypt, is properly performed.[2]

But a question remains. Which exact action is the one that is meant to evoke the children’s questions? The answer may surprise you. The Tur specifies that it is not the seemingly odd act of handwashing for vegetables that is peculiar,[3] but rather the timing of the dipping. He asserts that it is unusual to dip food items at the beginning of a seudah. Most other days we also dip, but in the middle of the meal. In other words, the only change we make to evoke children’s questions is to perform the dipping right then.

What then of the seemingly atypical handwashing just for vegetables? Isn’t that an uncharacteristic change from the ordinary? ‘No’, the Tur would respond, ‘one certainly would have to wash his hands before dipping his vegetables’.

Drip and Dip

But in order to properly understand this, we must first digress to a different Gemara in Pesachim (115a). Rabbi Elazer states in the name of Rav Oshia: “Any food item that is dipped in a liquid (davar hateebulo b’ mashkeh)

requires handwashing before eating". On this, Rashi and Tosafos[4] (among others) differ as to the correct understanding his intent.

Rashi maintains that this ruling is still applicable nowadays, as it is similar to the requirement to wash before eating bread, while Tosafos is of the opinion that this law is only relevant during the times of the Beis Hamikdash, as it is conditional to Taharos, Ritual Purity, which, in this day and age, is non-applicable. Although the Maharam M'Rottenberg, and several later poskim, are of the opinion that one may indeed rely on the lenient view,[5] it should be noted that the majority of Halachic decisors including the Rambam, Tur, Shulchan Aruch, Rema, Vilna Gaon, Chayei Adam, Shulchan Aruch Harav, Ben Ish Chai, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, Mishnah Berurah, Kaf Hachaim and Chazon Ish,[6] hold that even nowadays one should do his utmost to be stringent with this and wash hands before eating a food item dipped in liquid.[7]

The lenient opinion is taken into account, however, and that is the reason why, according to the majority of poskim, this washing is performed without the prerequisite blessing, as opposed to the washing before eating bread.[8] This is due to the halachic dictum of "Safek Brachos Lehakel", meaning that in a case of doubt regarding the topic of brachos, we follow the lenient approach and do not make the blessing, to avoid the possibility of making a blessing in vain.

This all ties in to our Seder. In fact this, explains the Tur and echoed by later authorities, is the reason why we wash Urchatz prior to dipping the Karpas into saltwater. As this is classified as a *davar hateebulo b'mashkeh*, it requires handwashing before eating. Although the Tur himself, as well as the Levush and Vilna Gaon, aver that Urchatz actually necessitates a *brachah* of *Netillas Yadayim*,[9] conversely, the vast majority of poskim conclude that we do not make *Netillas Yadayim* at this Seder handwashing,[10] but rather exclusively at *Rachtzah* immediately prior to *Motzie - Matzah*. This is indeed the common custom.

The Chida's Chiddush

The Chida, in his *Simchas HaRegel* commentary on the Haggada,[11] explains that this is the background, as well as the reason, for the added 'vav' by Urchatz at the Pesach Seder, as it is the only one of the Seder *Simanim* that starts with that conjunction. We find a parallel by the *brachah* that our patriarch Yitzchok Avinu bestowed on his son Yaakov (Bereishis, Parshas Toldos Ch. 27: verse 28), 'V'Yitein L'cha' – 'And Hashem should give you'. According to the Arizal, the extra conjunctive 'vav' means 'yitein yachzor v'yitein' – that Hashem should continually and constantly give. Likewise, the Chida explains the extra 'vav' in Urchatz. The Baal Haggada is transmitting a message to us. Just as during the Seder we all wash before dipping a vegetable in salt water, that extra 'vav' is telling us - 'rachtz yachzor v'rachtz' – that we should continue to wash our hands anytime we want to eat a food dipped in liquid, year round.

The Chasam Sofer and his son-in-law, the Chasan Sofer, write in a similar vein in their Haggada, that Urchatz is meant to serve as a *tochacha* (rebuke) and yearly reminder to those who are lackadaisical with the observance of this halacha, in order to remind everyone that this applies year-round as well. Indeed, the Taz actually writes similarly, and concludes that at least during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuva* one should be stringent. The Ben Ish Chai remarks comparably when discussing Urchatz, that praiseworthy is one who is careful with this handwashing year-round.[12]

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l adds that the 'Vav' is connecting 'Urchatz' to 'Kadesh' – meaning 'Kadesh Urchatz' – (as a command) that we should be mekadeish ourselves and continue to wash for food items dipped in liquid – even if not stringent with this all year round.[13]

The Medium is the Message

Yet, it is important to note that other poskim take an alternate view. Rav Yaakov Reisher in his *Chok Yaakov* argues[14] that since the great Maharam M'Rottenberg, as well as the Lechem Chamudos and Magen Avrohom among others, ruled leniently with washing before eating a food item dipped in liquid following Tosafos' precedent, and most people do not

follow the opinion mandating it nowadays, this simply cannot be the reason why we perform Urchatz at the Seder.

Rather, he explains that the Gemara's intent in stating that Urchatz is performed in order that there should be a distinction for children to ask, is that the handwashing itself for eating dipped vegetables is what is out of the ordinary, not the timing of the washing. According to this understanding, it is the Urchatz itself that is essentially the "hekker", highlighting that something different than the norm is occurring, to enable children to ask what is different on Seder night. Meaning, although most do not wash before eating a dipped item year-round, at the Seder we do, and that is the atypical action we do to arouse the interest of the children.

Not a *Daas Yachid* (lone dissenting opinion), both the Chayei Adam and Aruch Hashulchan seem to favor this explanation, and it is cited by the Mishnah Berurah in his *Shaar Hatziyun* as well.[15]

On the other hand, the Levush understands Urchatz somewhat differently. He explains that the dipping of Karpas at the Pesach Seder is due to 'Chovas (or in some editions 'Chibas') HaRegel, extra obligation or devotion for the *Yom Tov*'. Ergo, the handwashing is specifically performed at the Seder, as due to its inherent holiness, 'we go the extra mile' to strive for an increase in purity, as opposed to year round, when in his opinion, it would not be mandated.[16]

Another idea, cited by the Rema in his *Darchei Moshe*,[17] is that the Haggada is akin to a *Tefillah*, that we are relaying thanks and praise to Hashem for all he has done for our ancestors and us. Therefore, immediately prior to the recital of the Haggada we wash our hands in preparation without a *brachah* similar to the requirement before *davening*.

Divergences of Dipping

Interestingly, Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank zt"l, the former Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim, opines that the dispute among *Rishonim* whether only the head of the household is supposed to wash Urchatz or if everyone at the Seder does as well (the most common custom) might be dependent on this debate of why the handwashing at the Seder was instituted.[18] According to the majority opinion that Urchatz was enacted due to the halacha of *davar hateebulo b'mashkeh*, then everyone would be mandated to wash.

However, according to the opinions that this handwashing is only performed on Pesach at the Seder, it is possible that only the head of the household need wash Urchatz, as that should be deemed sufficient enough to arouse the interest and subsequent questions of the children.

Practically, as mentioned previously, the most common custom is that everyone washes Urchatz.[19] Yet, a notable minority *minhag*, performed mainly by *Sanz Chassidim*, as well as *Lelov* and *Satmar Chassidim*, is that only the head of the household wash.[20] So it is remarkable that this modern divergence of *minhagim* might actually depend on how poskim understood the brief statement of the Gemara regarding children's questions.

Finger Food?

Another interesting *machlokes* that might depend on which *hekker* the Gemara intended is how to dip the Karpas into the saltwater. If the reason Urchatz was mandated is due to the halacha of *davar hateebulo b'mashkeh*, then it stands to reason that if one used a fork or other utensil to dip and did not actually get 'ones's hands dirty' then many poskim would hold that handwashing is technically not required.[21] On the other hand, if the washing prior to dipping is considered the unusual action, then we should perform Urchatz irregardless of utensil.

Practically, although there are contemporary authorities, including Rav Moshe Sternbuch and Rav Nissim Karelitz,[22] who maintain preference for dipping the Karpas by hand in order that it should satisfy all opinions, nonetheless, due to the other understandings of Urchatz's role, many poskim rule that even if one used a fork for the dipping, we should still perform the handwashing prior.[23] Just another insight into the seemingly simple and straightforward, yet remarkable, Urchatz.

Urchatz Everyday!

The Chida continues that although many are aware of the halacha of davar hateebulo b'mashkeh, they do not realize that it even applies to something as ubiquitous as dipping cake into coffee! [24] One might contend that the connection between vegetables in saltwater to tea biscuits in coffee seems tenuous, but actually, according to the majority of authorities, from a halachic perspective they are remarkably similar.

So the next time you get that dunkin' urge, it might be prudent to be conscientious by following the Haggada's hidden exhortation, and head to the sink before diving into your cup-of-jo.

Thanks are due to my 12th-grade Rebbe in Yeshiva Gedolah Ateres Mordechai of Greater Detroit, Rav Yitzchok Kahan, for first enlightening me to this passage of the Chida's.

This article was written l'zechus Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v'chol yotzei chaltzeza for a yeshua sheleimaim teikif u'miyad!

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[1] Rashi and Rashbam (ad loc. s.v. dilma).

[2] Well, if this is the question that children ask, then what is the answer? The Bach (Orach Chaim 473: 8 s.v. v'loke'ach; and later cited by the Pri Megadim ad loc. Mishbetos Zahav 7) cites three diverse solutions: 1) That we are showing Derech Chetivus, that free men dip before a Seudah to whet the appetite. 2) It serves as a small taste, as the Seder's Seudah is much later, after Haggada and Hallel, so we should not sit so long without eating anything. 3) Citing the Maharal M'Prague (Gevuros Hashem Ch. 50), that the first dipping before the Seudah shows that the second dipping by Maror is performed exclusively for the Seder Night's special Mitzvah of eating Maror; otherwise, as many people dip during their meals, it would not appear out of the ordinary. The Taz (ad loc. end 7 s.v. u' me'od) offers an alternate approach, that the fact that the first dipping is done prior to the Seudah shows that it is not actually performed as part of the Seudah, so too, it proves that the second one, Maror, is also not done as part of the Seudah but rather for its unique Mitzvah.

[3] Tur (Orach Chaim 473: 6). Many later authorities, (ex. Shulchan Aruch Harav ad loc. 14, and Kaf Hachaim ad loc. 105) understand the Gemara this way as well.

[4] Rashi and Tosafos (ad loc. s.v. hakol).

[5] Including the Maharam M'Rottenberg (cited in Tashbatz Kattan 99 and Tur ibid.), Rashbat (cited by the Mordechai on Pesachim 34a), Baal HaTur (Aseres HaDibros Matzah U' Maror pg. 134b, third column), Maharshal (Yam Shel Shlomo on Chullin, Ch. 8: 18), Lechem Chamudos (Divrei Chamudos on the Rosh, Chullin Ch. 8: 41), Levush (Orach Chaim 473: 6), Magen Avrohom (Orach Chaim 158: end 8), Ateres Zekeinim (Orach Chaim 158: 4, end s.v. oh hapri), Chok Yaakov (Orach Chaim 473: 28), and Aruch HaShulchan (Orach Chaim 158: 4 & 5). The Ya'avetz (Mor U'Ketziyah 158 end s.v. v'ha) is also melamed zechus for those who are lenient with this. On a more contemporary note, the Kozoglover Gaon, Rav Aryeh Leib Frommer zt"l (Shu"t Eretz Tzvi vol. 1: 32) and Rav Shalom Meshash zt"l (Shu"t Shemesh U'Magein vol. 2: 45) defend the common practice not to wash before eating dipped food items. See also footnote 7.

[6] Rambam (Hilchos Brachos Ch. 6: 1), Tur (Orach Chaim 158: 2 and 473: 6), Shulchan Aruch and Rema (Orach Chaim 158: 4), Biur HaGr"a (Orach Chaim 158: 4 s.v. blo bracha), Chayei Adam (vol. 1, 36: 4), Shulchan Aruch Harav (Orach Chaim 158: end 3), Ben Ish Chai (Year 1, Tazria 19), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (40: 17), Mishnah Berurah (Orach Chaim 158: 20), Kaf Hachaim (Orach Chaim 158: 13 & 25), and Chazon Ish (Orach Chaim 25: 14 & 15 s.v. kasav b'M"B). The Chazon Ish and Steipler Gaon were known to be very stringent with this - see Orchos Rabbeinu (5775 edition; vol. 1, pg. 153 - 154, Dinei Netillas Yadayim V'Seudah 6 and 7). See also next footnote.

[7] Other authorities who hold this way include Rabbeinu Yonah (Brachos 41a s.v. kol), the Rosh (Chullin Ch. 8: 10), the Knesses HaGedolah (Shiyurei Knesses HaGedolah, Orach Chaim 158 Hagahos on Beis Yosef 3), Matheh Yosef (Shu"t vol. 2, 18: 19 - who uses extremely strong terms against those who are lackadaisical with this), Taz (Orach Chaim 473: 6; who concludes that at the very least one should be makpid during the Aseres Yemei Teshuva), Chida (Birkei Yosef, Orach Chaim 158: 5), Shlah (Shaar Ha'Osiyos 81b, haghah), and Ba'er Heitiv (Orach Chaim 158: 11). See also Halichos Shlomo (Moadim vol. 2, Ch. 9, pg. 253, footnote 184) which quotes Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l as maintaining that even though in previous generations many were lenient with this issue, adding that the Chayei Adam, in his hesped for his son (titled 'Matzeves Moshe') stressed that the niftar was a tzaddik and illustrated this by stating that he was makpid to always wash his hands before dipping food items into liquid, implying that even in his time and place it was an uncommon procedure. Nevertheless, nowadays we should definitely do our utmost to fulfill this halacha. Likewise, Rav Shmuel Halevi Wosner zt"l is quoted (Kovetz M'Beis Levi vol. 17, pg. 17, 3) as sharing a similar assessment, that although the common custom seems not to be makpid, nonetheless, it is indeed preferable to strive to do so. Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Chazon Ovadia vol. 1 - Pesach, Hilchos Leil HaSeder pg. 32, Urchatz 1.) likewise stresses that since the majority of poskim, including the Shulchan Aruch, hold that one need be makpid year-round, 'b'yaday hachi naktinan'. For more on this topic, as well as which Gedolim over the ages were or were not makpid, see Rabbi Eliezer Brodt's Bein Kesseh L'Essor (Ch. 9, ppg. 148 - 153).

[8] Beis Yosef, Shulchan Aruch, and Rema (Orach Chaim 158: 4), Taz (ad loc. 6), Chayei Adam (vol. 1, 36: 4), Shulchan Aruch Harav (158: 3), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (40: 17), Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 158: 5), Ben Ish Chai (Year 1, Parshas Tazria 17), Mishnah Berurah (158: 20), and Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 13; citing 'the Acharonim'). However, the Vilna Gaon (Biur HaGr"a ad loc. 11 and Maaseh Rav 81) actually does mandate a brachah on the washing for a davar hateebulo b'mashkeh. See next footnote.

[9] Tur (ibid.), adding that although the Maharam M'Rottenberg and Baal Ha'Tur (ibid.) are of the opinion that nowadays it is not necessary, nevertheless, as the Gaonim, as well as Rashi, as quoted by Rav Shmayah, mandate it, the ikar is to make Netillas Yadayim by Urchatz. The Rambam (Hilchos Chametz U'Matazah Ch. 8: 1) rules this way as well. The Levush (Orach Chaim 473: 6) and Vilna Gaon (Biur HaGr"a ad loc. 30 and Maaseh Rav beg. 191; also cited in Shaar Hatziyun ad loc. 70) also rule this way by Urchatz. Interestingly, in the famous 1526 Illuminated Prague Haggada, it cites that Urchatz should be recited with a brachah. Thanks are due to Rabbi Eliezer Brodt for pointing this out. However, there is a practical difference between the shittos of the Levush and Gr"a. The Gr"a maintains that Urchatz shares the same status as any davar hateebulo b'mashkeh, which in his opinion is obligated in handwashing with a brachah. However, and quite conversely, the Levush maintains that generally we rule that nowadays a davar hateebulo b'mashkeh does not require handwashing. It is only at the Seder, due to Chovos HaRegel (some editions have Chibos HaRegel) that we do so by Urchatz. Accordingly, since we are performing this handwashing specially for the Seder, it requires the full status of the Gemara's ruling and therefore, in his opinion, does require Netillas Yadayim as well. See also footnote 16. On the other hand, the Taz (ad loc. end 7 s.v. u' me'od) questions the Tur's (and Levush's) ruling, as by Pesach he mandates Urchatz with a brachah, whereas year-round rules one does not make the brachah for such handwashing at all. The Taz states that it is inconceivable that the same action for the same purpose can require a brachah parts of the year, whereas other times not. Interestingly, in his Darchei Halacha glosses to the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (119: 8), Rav

Mordechai Eliyahu writes that those who generally follow the rulings of the Rambam should wash with a brachah for Urchatz, and not like the common halachic consensus.

[10] Beis Yosef (Orach Chaim 173: 6 s.v. u'm"sh Rabbeinu) and Darchei Moshe (ad loc. 12), and conclusively ruled in Shulchan Aruch (ad loc.), and followed authoritatively by the Bach (ad loc. s.v. ul'inyan halacha), Taz (ad loc. 7), Elyah Rabbah (ad loc. 23), Hagahos Mohar"a Azulai (on the Levush ad loc. 6), Malbushei Yom Tov (ad loc. 3), Pri Chodosh (ad loc.), Shulchan Aruch Harav (ad loc. 19), Pri Megadim (Mishbetos Zahav ad loc. 6), Chayei Adam (vol. 2, 130, HaSeder B'Ketzara 4, s.v. Urchatz), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (119: 3), Ben Ish Chai (Year 1, Parshas Tzav 31), Mishnah Berurah (473: 52), Aruch Hashulchan (ad loc. 18), and Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 106). This is also cited lemaaseh in most Haggados. There is also some discussion as to if one eats less than a kezayis of dipped Karpas if he may be lenient with washing with a brachah according to the opinions who mandate it. One can posit that this idea is logical, as the Rambam, Levush, and Vilna Gaon, who all mandate Urchatz with a brachah, also hold that one should eat a kezayis of Karpas. Therefore, it would stand to reason that if one eats less than that amount, washing with a brachah is not necessitated. On the other hand, the Tur also mandates washing with a brachah but writes that eating a kezayis is not necessary. See Shaar Hatziyun (ad loc. 70), Biur Halacha (ad loc. s.v. pachos m'kezayis), Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. end 106 and 158: 20), and the Mekoros U'Biurim to the recent Weinreb edition of Maaseh Rav (191: footnote 58, pg. 210).

[11] The Chida's Simchas HaRegel Haggada - in the end of his passage explaining Urchatz.

[12] Haggada of the Chasam Sofer and Chasan Sofer (Urchatz), Taz (Orach Chaim 473: 6), and Ben Ish Chai (Year 1 Parshas Tzav 31).

[13] Halichos Shlomo (Moadim vol. 2, Seder Leil Pesach, pg. 253, Orchos Halacha 184).

[14] Chok Yaakov (473: 28). See also footnote 5.

[15] Chayei Adam (vol. 2, 130, HaSeder B'Ketzara 4, s.v. Urchatz), Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 473: 18), Shaar Hatziyun (ad loc. 69). Interestingly, in his Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 51), he implies conversely, like the basic understanding of the Tur and most commentaries, that the Urchatz handwashing is due to the halacha of davar hateebulo b'mashkeh.

[16] The Levush (Orach Chaim 473: 6) understands Urchatz differently than the other two main opinions. He explains that since the dipping of Karpas at the Pesach Seder is due to "Chovos HaRegel" and is considered a "Tevillah shel Mitzvah" we should therefore strive for an increase in purity and that is why the handwashing is performed, even though the rest of the year it is deemed non-mandatory; quite the opposite of the Chida's and Chasam Sofer's understanding. Rav Shmuel Avigdor zt"l (Haggada shel Pesach im Pirush Maharsha; cited in Bein Kesseh L'Essor, Ch. 9, pg. 152 - 153), the Pri Megadim (ad loc. Mishbetos Zahav 6; although he implies that it should apply equally to every Yom Tov) and Shlah (Shaar Ha'Osiyos ibid.) understand Urchatz akin to the Levush. This idea is also cited by the Kozoglover Gaon (Shu"t Eretz Tzvi vol. 1: 32 s.v. amam), and later by Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l (Halichos Shlomo ibid.). For more on this topic, as to Urchatz being mandated due to the inherent extra-Kedusha of the Chag, see Bein Kesseh L'Essor (Ch. 9, ppg. 152 - 153).

[17] Darchei Moshe (Orach Chaim 473: beg. 12). Washing before Tefillah (and without a brachah) is based on Gemara Brachos (15a) and ruled accordingly in Shulchan Aruch and Rema and main commentaries (Orach Chaim 92: 4 and 5).

[18] Mikraei Kodesh (Pesach vol. 2: 39, pg. 142). This logic is also later cited in Minhag Yisrael Torah (vol. 3, pg. 133 - 134: 14), and Rabbi Yaakov Skocylas's Ohel Yaakov (on Hilchos U'Minhavei Leil HaSeder, pg. 51, footnote 4). Although there does not seem to be a direct dispute regarding whether everyone at the Seder or just the head of the household wash by Urchatz, it is implied by their specific writings. For example, the Rambam (ibid.), when discussing the customs of the Seder, uses plural tense (lashon rabbim) for almost all of the minhagim, except Urchatz, for which he uses the singular tense (lashon yachid), implying that in his opinion only the one leading the Seder needs to wash. On the other hand, from the way the Ritva (Pesachim, Seder Hahaggada), Maharil (Seder Hahaggada), Abudraham (Seder Hahaggada), and Mordechai (Orach Chaim 37b; cited by the Beis Yosef ibid. s.v. u'm"sh v'lo) discuss the topic, it is clear that they are of the opinion that everyone should be washing.

[19] As aside for the above mentioned Rishonim, it is also explicitly cited by the Seder HaYom (Seder Teffillas Arvis V'Kiddush [shel Pesach] s.v. achar), and Misgeres Hashulchan (on the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 119: 3). See also Halichos Even Yisrael (pg. 163, Urchatz 1 and footnote 6), Haggada shel Pesach of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l (pg. 109), Haggada shel Pesach Chazon Ovadiah ("Urchatz"; at the end of Sefer Chazon Ovadiah vol. 1 - Pesach), Netei Gavriel (Hilchos Pesach vol. 2, Ch. 81: 11), and Ohel Yaakov (ibid.; citing Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l and others).

[20] In Rav Asher Weiss's Haggada shel Pesach Minchas Asher (pg. 30, Urchatz 5) he cites this as Minhag Sanz, following the precedent of the Divrei Chaim and Kedushas Yom Tov. See also Vayaged Moshe (15: 2), Netei Gavriel (Hilchos Pesach vol. 2, Ch. 81: 11, and footnote 20 and 21), Minhag Yisrael Torah (ibid.), and Ohel Yaakov (ibid.) who cite different minhagim on this. Sanz, Satmar, Levol, and Ziditchov, as well as Rav Shmuel Elyashiv Wosner zt"l, maintain that only the Baal Habayis needs to wash, and that this was also the personal hanhaga of the Chasam Sofer, while Belz, Gur, Ropshitz, Spinka, Skver, Boyan, and Chabad hold everyone washes. Vizhnitz minhag is that only once one is married do they wash for Urchatz.

[21] Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank zt"l (Mikraei Kodesh ibid.) makes this distinction as well. Rav Yaakov Emden (Mor U'Ketziyah 158 end s.v. v'ha) writes lishitaso that those who dipped with a fork or spoon are not required to wash their hands. Many other authorities rule this way about a davar hateebulo b'mashkeh that is always eaten with a spoon (or fork etc.) including the Taz (Orach Chaim 158: 9), Shulchan Aruch Harav (ad loc. 3), Derech Hachaim (Din Netillas Yadayim L'Seudah 5), Chayei Adam (vol. 1, 36: 8), Magen Giborim (Shiltei Hagiborim 7), Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 158: 12), and Mishnah Berurah (ad loc. 26). However, see Kaf Hachaim (ad loc. 23) who cites several authorities who differ and rules that even though there is what to rely upon, nevertheless one should be stringent and wash his hands. This machlokes of understanding between the Ya'avetz and Kaf Hachaim (citing mekubalim) is extant in many issues of handwashing, including that between milk and meat and Mayim Acharonim. See previous articles titled 'Mayim Acharonim Chovah?' and 'The Halachic Power of a Diyuk'.

[22] Haggada shel Pesach Moadim Uzmanim (pg. 58) and Chut Shani on Hilchos Pesach (Ch. 17: 16); cited in Ohel Yaakov (ibid. pg. 52: 3 and footnote 6).

[23] See Mikraei Kodesh (ibid.), Haggada shel Pesach Minchas Asher (pg. 30, Urchatz 7), Netei Gavriel (Hilchos Pesach vol. 2, Ch. 81: 5), Ohel Yaakov (ibid.). Also, the fact that this issue is not even raised by the majority of poskim proves that they were of the opinion that it should not matter lemaaseh regarding Urchatz.

[24] See also Orchos Rabbeinu (5775 edition; vol. 1, pg. 153, 154, and 159 Dinei Netillas Yadayim V'Seudah 6, 7, and 27) which records that the Chazon Ish and Steipler Gaon were known to be very stringent with this halacha, and always washing before dipping cake into tea, eating washed fruit, and even fruit taken from the fridge that is slightly damp.

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority.

Il'yuy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda, and l'zechus for Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam and her children for a yeshua teikef u'miyad!

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