

## Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Matios Masei 5770

**Jerusalem Post :: Friday, July 9, 2010**  
**LIFE ALWAYS INTERFERES :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

There are many things in life that cause us worry and distress. God forbid, major health problems can suddenly and unexpectedly arise, thwarting all of our plans and programs. Outside occurrences such as natural and man-made disasters, wars, terrorism, violence, and crime both violent and monetary are the everyday stuff of our media reports and of our lives.

Four months ago the fishermen on the Gulf of Mexico near the Louisiana shore were making a fine living for themselves and their families. And then the BP oil well blew its top and today they are on the verge of destitution and bankruptcy. Our future is always an uncertain one because of the fact that the events of life are subject to wild swings and unfortunate dangers, most of which we cannot really control, let alone predict.

Parts of one's body that have performed perfectly for many decades suddenly no longer function correctly or "normally" – as though there is a normalcy to the human existence. Out of necessity we are forced to attempt to have an optimistic view of life, for if we constantly considered all that can possibly go wrong, we would be unable to be productive and mostly sane human beings. We simply could not function.

So we live in a state of limbo, knowing and dreading the omnipresent dangers and uncertainties of life but yet planning and acting as though there is certainty in our future. This is the natural state of tension for all of us and it is one that never departs from our conscious mind no matter how hard we attempt to repress it.

A famous Jewish psychiatrist, Ernst Becker, once wrote an excellent work entitled "The Denial of Death" describing this mechanism of human beings which allows us to live and hope while always being aware that life will always interfere and intervene in our matters.

The Torah stresses that mortality is the human condition from which there is no exception or escape. Yet the Torah demands that we live cheerful lives and teaches us that depression and dwelling on sadness only distances us from our Creator. We are to worship God in a sense of happiness and optimism. Divine inspiration cannot be achieved in sadness and frustration. Judaism, which teaches us that our soul is immortal, faces this reality realistically but still retains a sense of eternity that every human being can attach one's self to. Worrying in advance about the unknown becomes futile, as there are so many events in our lives that we cannot control or predict. However, regarding those things in life that are within our grasp and are part of our daily behavior and actions they have to be viewed as important matters.

We should not procrastinate or delay the doing of good on the promise of tomorrow. The words of Rabi Akiva ring true down the ages: "Do not say I will postpone the study of Torah until tomorrow when I will have time and means for it, for perhaps that tomorrow may never yet come to you." Thus the rule of behavior that the rabbis taught us: "An opportunity to perform a mitzvah should never be allowed to simply pass." Life is too uncertain for us to allow delay and postponement to rule our good instincts and potentially holy behavior.

The Torah emphasized this point to us when it famously stated: "The hidden things in life – the future and the continuing interference of unplanned events in our lives – belong solely to the Lord our God. But what is in our control, our current actions and behavior, is to be subject to the fulfillment of the Torah by us and our progeny forever more!"

Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra once stated succinctly: "The past is gone, the future has not yet arrived and the present is but a fleeting moment, so humans have to make the best of life as it occurs." This follows the advice of the Psalmist – in this case our teacher Moshe – that we should count our days. Every day is a precious commodity and should not be squandered in pettiness, foolishness and sad evil.

The importance of living life in this fashion lies at the essence of all Jewish thought and ritual. In fact, it is the presence of ritual in our everyday life that allows that day – every day – to be special and worthy, for today I am fulfilling an obligation to my Creator and thus binding myself to eventual eternity.

Life truly intervenes and interferes with our plans and certainties but we have to rise to life's occasions and challenges with faith, hope, alacrity and optimism.

Shabat shalom.

---

**Weekly Parsha :: MATOT – MAASEI :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

This week's parshiyot mark the conclusion of the book of Bamidbar, the book with the longest narrative of the events that befell the Jewish people during their sojourn in the Sinai desert. On the whole, the events described in Bamidbar are fairly depressing. The great hopes of marching into the Land of Israel on a short three-day journey which appear at the beginning of the book were dashed by the acts of rebellion and foolishness committed against God and Moshe recorded in the latter part of the book.

Moshe himself is also destined to die now, never to reach the Land of Israel. So the recitation of all of the stops and oases that marked the Jewish journey from Egypt to the Land of Israel conjures up bittersweet memories. There is always a sense of what might have been, of opportunities lost and mistakes made.

I think that is probably true of all of us when we look back at our lives, journeys, decisions and behavior. Life many times is made up of a series of regrets. But the danger is to dwell constantly on those matters. It prevents further positive planning and actions and it weakens one's resolve to live productively and meaningfully.

The recitation of the places in the desert where Israel dwelled is a reminder of both insights. It allows the people to recall the mistakes of the past but it points them towards the fulfillment of their goal of entry into the Land of Israel. One should never operate an automobile without looking regularly into the rear view mirror, yet one's attention must constantly be riveted on looking through the front windshield to see the road and conditions ahead.

Over the long exile of the Jewish people and our complete dispersion over the face of the globe we have stopped at many locales. Sometimes the stop was a relatively short one but most times it was for the duration of many centuries. Babylonia (present day Iraq) was a Jewish home for millennia, while Iberia, North Africa, Poland, Germany and many other European countries housed us for eight hundred years. But, somehow, no matter how long we stayed in a certain place and how productive and secure we may have felt regarding our situation, all of our stops along the way proved to be temporary and impermanent.

The journeys of the Jewish people proved to be, in a manner of speaking, an endless trek. But it always seemingly had a goal. The great Rabbi Nachman of Breslov stated that "every step I take on this earth leads me towards Jerusalem." All of the stops, no matter how long their duration in the Exile of Israel, were eventually nothing more than way stops.

Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk summarized it succinctly in his ringing assessment of Jewish exile: "Woe to the ones who imagine that Berlin is Jerusalem." Well, we now all know that Berlin was far from being Jerusalem but there are names of other current cities in the Jewish Diaspora that can easily be substituted for Berlin in his prescient statement.

We pray that our travels are finally coming to an end and that we can strengthen ourselves in that hope on this Shabat of chazak.

Shabat shalom.

---

**TORAH WEEKLY—Parshat Matot - Masei**

**For the week ending 10 July 2010 / 27 Tammuz 5770**  
**from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu**  
**by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com**

## OVERVIEW

### Matot

Moshe teaches the rules and restrictions governing oaths and vows especially the role of a husband or father in either upholding or annulling a vow. Bnei Yisrael wage war against Midian. They kill the five Midianite kings, all the males and Bilaam. Moshe is upset that women were taken captive. They were catalysts for the immoral behavior of the Jewish People. He rebukes the officers. The spoils of war are counted and apportioned. The commanding officers report to Moshe that there was not one casualty among Bnei Yisrael. They bring an offering that is taken by Moshe and Elazar and placed in the Ohel Mo'ed (Tent of Meeting). The Tribes of Gad and Reuven, who own large quantities of livestock, petition Moshe to allow them to remain east of the Jordan and not enter the Land of Israel. They explain that the land east of the Jordan is quite suitable grazing land for their livestock. Moshe's initial response is that this request will discourage the rest of Bnei Yisrael, and that it is akin to the sin of the spies. They assure Moshe that they will first help conquer Israel, and only then will they go back to their homes on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Moshe grants their request on condition that they uphold their part of the deal.

### Masei

The Torah names all 42 encampments of Bnei Yisrael on their 40-year journey from the Exodus until the crossing of the Jordan River into Eretz Yisrael. G-d commands Bnei Yisrael to drive out the Canaanites from Eretz Yisrael and to demolish every vestige of their idolatry. Bnei Yisrael are warned that if they fail to rid the land completely of the Canaanites, those who remain will be "pins in their eyes and thorns in their sides." The boundaries of the Land of Israel are defined, and the tribes are commanded to set aside 48 cities for the levi'im, who do not receive a regular portion in the division of the Land. Cities of refuge are to be established: Someone who murders unintentionally may flee there. The daughters of Tzelofchad marry members of their tribe so that their inheritance will stay in their own tribe. Thus ends the Book of Bamidbar/Numbers, the fourth of the Books of the Torah.

## INSIGHTS

### The Biggest Oil Spill in The World

"G-d said to Moshe, saying, 'Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against the Midianites.'" (31:2)

Rabbi Berel Wein once remarked, "All of my stories are true; just some of them haven't happened yet."

The following story - though not one of Rabbi Wein's - falls into this category.

A well-known rabbi was standing in line at the "Customs" check at a certain airport. In front of him were two equally religious-looking gentlemen. The customs officer came over to the two and asked them if they had anything to declare. They replied, "No." The customs officer, however, decided to ask them to open their suitcases.

After a few seconds of careful probing in the lining of the case, somewhat reluctantly the cases disgorged a fair number of diamonds. They lay there on the counter. Both men collapsed in tears at the terrible desecration of G-d's name that they had perpetrated.

The custom's officer turned his attention to the next in line, the rabbi, and asked him: "Anything to declare, sir?"

He replied "No, officer."

"Sir, would you mind opening your case, please?"

"Officer, I will happily open my case, but I think I should tell you that you are wasting your time."

"Oh yes, sir. And why might that be?" replied the officer, a cynical smile playing around the corner of his lips. The rabbi continued. "Officer. I am an Orthodox Jew and the Torah strictly prohibits smuggling."

"I see, sir." said the customs officer, sarcastically "And what, pray, are these two religious Jewish gentlemen who preceded you? Martians?"

Replied the rabbi, "Which two religious gentlemen are you referring to, officer? I'm afraid I don't see religious Jews. I see only diamond smugglers."

When an Orthodox Jew behaves in a despicable fashion the damage is felt on the other side of the cosmos. Someone who wears a kippa is an ambassador for the Jewish People to the whole world. However, the world will not only judge Judaism based on the actions of this person. They will also judge its Author.

Everything in this world was created for the honor of its Creator. When a person brings credit to the Jewish People, he also brings honor to He who chose us from all the peoples, and he fulfills the purpose of his creation and Creation itself. If he does the reverse, G-d forbid, he both writes himself out of reality and damages the whole cosmos.

He has blemished Creation more than the biggest crude-oil spill in the world.

But there's another side to chilul Hashem (desecrating G-d's Name). When a Jew sees or hears someone doing an unspeakable act, he thinks to himself, "How could he have done that? I would never do such a thing in a million years! You know something? I'm not such a bad person after all. I'm really a tzaddik. My small transgressions are nothing compared with this guy. You know something? I'm really okay."

It takes a lifetime's work to correct the flaws in our character, both big and small. The only way we have a hope of improving ourselves is if we sensitize ourselves to our shortcomings and realize that we have a long way to go. When someone behaves in a grossly immoral fashion, it makes us think that we are really okay because we would never sink to that level, and thus we give up trying to be better. As a result, not only do we suffer, but the whole world becomes a darker place because we have given up on the light.

In this week's Torah portion, there is an interesting anomaly. G-d says "Take vengeance for the Children of Israel against the Midianites." And in the very next verse, Moshe directs the Jewish People "to inflict G-d's vengeance against Midian." So which is it? Is it G-d's vengeance or is it ours?

The answer is that at the deepest level the Jewish People and G-d are inextricably linked.

When we blemish the good name of the Jewish People, whether through some gross illegal act or the smallest complacency that tells us "I'm okay, Jack!", we cause a diminution of G-d's light in the world.

And when we do something that brings credit to the Jews - even if that act is the smallest attempt to improve our character and about which no one will ever know - we bring the whole of mankind closer to G-d.

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

© 2010 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

---

## Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

### Parshas Mattos/Massei

#### Parshas Matos

#### Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of Bnei Yisrael. (30:2)

Moshe Rabbeinu honored the heads of the tribes by speaking to them first. He later taught the same lessons to the general public, just as he did with all of the other mitzvos in the Torah. The leaders played a critical role in the matter of vows, since they had the authority to annul a vow or oath. In Shoftim 11:31, we read about Yiftach's ill-fated vow, which endangered his daughter's life, and his refusal to go to Pinchas, Klal Yisrael's spiritual leader, to have it annulled. He felt that as the nation's highest ranking leader, it was below his dignity to go to the Navi, Prophet. Pinchas maintained a similar attitude, feeling that the spiritual leader does not humble himself before the nation's secular leader. They remained at an impasse. This seems difficult to grasp. As the nation's spiritual leader, the individual who set the standard for defining true honor, he should have effaced himself and been mochel, overlooked/forgiven, his kavod, honor, for the sake of a Jewish life. The life of Yiftach's daughter was hanging in the balance. This was certainly not the time to assuage one's own ego.

The Gerrer Rebbe, zl, the Bais Yisrael, explains that the power invested in a chacham to annul a vow originates from the fact that the noder, one who makes the vow, condescends himself to the chacham, accepting his leadership. When Pinchas saw that Yiftach was resolute in his arrogance, that he refused to humble himself before the spiritual leader of the generation, he realized that he could not annul the vow. His power was derived from Yiftach, and Yiftach was foolishly refusing to give.

If so, why was Pinchas censured for not going to Yiftach? He was simply acting accordingly. Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, answers this from a practical perspective. Had Pinchas gone to Yiftach, it would have tempered his arrogance and knocked him down a notch. Had Yiftach noted Pinchas' humility, he would have been shamed into submission. During Korach's dispute with Moshe, our leader went to Dasan and Aviram, two of the mutineers, who had been his nemeses as far back as Egypt. His goal was to rebuke them. By going to them, he was intimating to them that he was a better person than they were. Perhaps this would cause them to recant their perfidious position.

This, explains Rav Zilberstein, is how the chacham succeeds in reaching out to people. When he lowers himself, he gets their attention. He shows what he is, and what they are. Thus, he is able to influence them positively in order to return them to Hashem. This is what Moshe achieved by speaking first to the heads of the tribes. The people would take notice and pay greater respect to their leadership. People respond to someone who gives them respect, to someone who humbles himself before them. It makes them feel good and puts them in a positive, "willing to listen," frame of mind. It works. Ask any salesman. When the salesman makes the customer feel good, appreciated, needed, even superior, the customer is more apt to purchase what the salesman is selling. We think with our ego. When it is positively assuaged; we have a greater proclivity to listen to inspirational words, words to which we might otherwise turn a deaf ear.

#### **He shall not desecrate his word. (30:3)**

A Jew's word is sacred. Thus, if he violates his word, it is a desecration. In the Talmud Chagigah 10, Chazal say that while the individual who made the vow may not desecrate his word, others, such as a talmid chacham, Torah scholar, or bais din, court of three qualified adult males, may permit it. This is the capacity with which Hashem has endowed our chachamim. They have the ability to annul a vow, thereby rendering permissible something which had become prohibited by the "tongue" of the individual who made the vow. From where is this unique power derived? How can they permit that which has been prohibited?

In his commentary to the parsha, the Kli Yakar explains that the power of annulment granted to the chacham or bais din, is driven by the same dynamic as the power of a father or husband. When a young, unmarried woman or a woman who is married makes a vow, it is made with the understanding that either her father or husband acquiesces to it. Since she is in their "possession," as a result of the relationship she has vis-?-vis her father or husband, her vows are subject to their approval. Likewise, when an individual makes a vow, he does so based upon the premise that the chachamim are in agreement. Otherwise, no vow exists. It is almost as if one has issued a pre-condition stating that his vow is valid only if the chachamim are acquiescent.

In his Darkei Mussar, Horav Yaakov Neiman, zl, expounds on this concept. Emunas chachamim, faith in the Torah giants, is a basic tenet of our faith. We believe that the talmid chacham who is completely rooted in Torah and who exemplifies every aspect of Torah - spiritually, morally and ethically - is endowed with a high level of abstract thinking and intellectual perfection. After much deliberation, he voices his understanding of the Torah's opinion about a given subject or endeavor. This is the product of rigorous intellectual analysis, spiritual integrity and extreme humility. He has total faith in the Torah and its disseminators, and he studies Torah with this level of conviction. He is worthy of being called a chacham.

Emunas chachamim is essential to Torah acquisition. Without it, one will not advance beyond his own limited way of thinking, stunting his intellectual growth and stymieing his ability to learn from the greatest intellects who lived. This applies equally to those who believe with blind

faith in everything that is said, and those who listen only to those chachamim whose line of thinking most resembles his own intellectual intuition, or emotional attachment. Emunas chachamim enables us to grow by gaining from the ideas and expositions of our sages, by subordinating our yet underdeveloped minds to their superior intellect. Also, since Torah achievement is a gift from Hashem, the Divine Authority, we have a chance to study from those individuals who lay their life on the line to study Torah with extra ameilus, toil, and ultimate love. Their intellectual achievement is the product of this ahavah and ameilus.

Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, venerated gedolei Yisrael to their true pinnacle, as per the Mesorah, tradition of Torah transmission, from generation to generation, with each successive generation digressing as it becomes further removed from Har Sinai, the place where it all originated. The Rosh Yeshivah once "merited" to explain/answer a difficulty he had with a Biur Ha'Gra, commentary of the Gaon, zl, of Vilna. This difficulty plagued Rav Aharon for over twenty years, troubling him greatly, so attached was he to the Gra! His joy in applying the answer knew no bounds; he actually began jumping up and down in ecstasy!

Rav Aharon later commented that Hashem had "opened his eyes" to the true explanation of the Gra's words after so many years, because, in all those years, he had never entertained the notion, the possibility had never entered his mind... if after all these years of intense searching for an answer with no success and his question continued to remain so strong... and David Hamelech did say to Hashem, Shegios mi yavin, "errors are so difficult to be aware of"... perhaps he should assume that his question is chas v'shalom, Heaven forbid, unanswerable. But, no! The thought had never infiltrated his mind! This is the definition of unflinching, unstinting emunas chachamim. I may add that one must himself be a chacham to maintain such emunah, conviction.

Rav Neiman cites Chazal in the Talmud Berachos 3b, who teach us that David Hamelech hung his harp above his bed. When it became midnight, the north wind would blow upon the harp, causing its strings to vibrate and emanate music. David would immediately rise up and learn Torah throughout the night. At daybreak, the chachmei Yisrael, sages, would enter and say, "Our master, the king, your nation requires parnassah, livelihood/sustenance." This passage begs elucidation: What does the nation's material needs have to do with David's harp and his studying Torah throughout the night?

Rav Neiman explains that the Torah encompasses every aspect of Jewish life. It touches upon the religious, social and even material/business aspects of one's life endeavor. He quotes Ramban, who writes that the Torah could not address every aspect of one's daily life. It, therefore, restricted itself only to the mitzvos, commandments, and added sort of a golden rule by which a Jew should live. V'asisa ha'yashar v'hatov, "You shall do what is fair and good in the eyes of Hashem" (Devarim 6:18). Whatever is good and fair, honorable and just, one may do; otherwise; it is prohibited. When one acts justly, he maintains honor and integrity, he is acting in accordance with the Torah. Regrettably, we often tend to think that what we are doing is correct, just and even ethical - according to our self-determined standards. This is why Chazal have included emunas chachamim as one of the forty-eight ways to acquire Torah. One must ask, listen, and believe in what our chachamim tell us. If they say it is wrong - it is wrong!

We now understand why the sages came to David Hamelech to inform him of the nation's material needs. They sought to signify that they are connected with a chacham, such that even a mundane issue as material sustenance was decided by David Hamelech. Last, they came in the morning, after he had studied Torah all night, to demonstrate that they were seeking his counsel - not because he was king, but because he was a talmid chacham. After spending the night engrossed in Hashem's Torah, David could render "sage" advice.

#### **Moshe was angry with the commanders of the army. (31:14)**

Moshe Rabbeinu expressed his annoyance with the officers of the army for allowing the survival of the women who had participated in the orgies which entrapped the Jewish males. It was their responsibility to take

appropriate action. We wonder why Moshe did not simply direct his anger at Pinchas, the commander-in-chief. He was in charge of the army. Thus, every decision that was or was not made fell under his domain of leadership. The Sifre claims that Pinchas defended his commanders, claiming that they had executed Moshe's orders to inflict a crushing defeat upon the army of Midyan. Moshe, however, felt that there was no excuse for sparing the young women who had debased themselves by seducing the Jewish men. They were the catalysts of Klal Yisrael's moral degradation. They brought death and destruction to the Jews. They should pay. All this may be an appropriate complaint, but why not direct it at the leader in charge of the army: Pinchas?

Horav Dov Eliezerov, zl, quotes Chazal in the Talmud Bava Metzia 33a, "The Torah scholars of Bavel would stand up for one another (out of mutual respect). Rashi explains that they learned Torah from each other. Thus, each one felt that he owed honor to his rebbe. Pinchas reminded Moshe of the halachah that Bo'el aramis kanaim pogin bo, "One who cohabits with a gentile, zealous ones shall slay him." For this reason, Moshe considered Pinchas to be his rebbe. Therefore, in his consummate humility, Moshe felt that he could not express anger towards Pinchas. He was his Torah mentor.

I am not sure whether this was a humility issue, or a manifestation of Moshe's profound appreciation for every halachah of the Torah. It is, nonetheless, a notable lesson, which is worth incorporating into our lives. The quintessential Torah rebbe of all Klal Yisrael was "reminded" of a halachah, and as a result of this retrospect, he viewed Pinchas as his rebbe. How distant we are from this degree of achievement.

#### **Parshas Masei**

**Aharon HaKohen went upon Har Hahar at the command of Hashem and he died there, in the fortieth year after the exodus of Bnei Yisrael from the land of Egypt, in the fifth month on the first day of the month. (33:38)**

The yearzeit of Aharon HaKohen occurs on Rosh Chodesh Av. We do not believe in coincidence. A connection must exist between the passing of the individual who personified brotherly love and the advent of the month which heralds a period of national mourning for the losses of our Batei Mikdash. The destruction of the second Bais Hamikdash was precipitated by sinaas chinam, unwarranted hatred, among Jews. Veritably, we do not find anywhere else in the Torah in which the date of the passing of a tzaddik, righteous person, is recorded, except for that of Aharon. It is as if the Torah wants us to remember that this spiritual giant died on Rosh Chodesh Av. Indeed, the Tur Orach Chaim, 580, writes that although it is Rosh Chodesh, one may fast. Chazal refer to this as taanis l'tzaddikim, fast for the righteous. Clearly, this day carries great significance.

Chazal exhort us to "be among the disciples of Aharon, love peace and pursue peace" (Pirkei Avos 1:12). Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, interprets Chazal to be teaching us that we require a mentor to teach us to love peace. Apparently, most people enjoy a good dispute, a raging controversy. It adds zest to life. When things are peaceful and everybody gets along, it is too quiet. Furthermore, when there is peace, too many people are taken for granted. No one notices them; they are not seen or heard. During a machlokes, controversy, these "little guys" suddenly come out of the woodwork, articulating their opinions and making their demands. Suddenly, they have a venue, an audience that will listen to them.

This is why we need a rebbe, mentor, of the calibre of Aharon HaKohen to teach us the significance of living peacefully. People would rather live with strife. In order to promote peace, however, we must first learn to love peace. Only then can we go to the next level in order to create a venue for peaceful coexistence.

Rav Pincus shares an insightful parable which elucidates this point. A young boy chanced upon a fire that was devouring a large building. The excitement that permeated the air was overwhelming: fire trucks blaring their sirens; firemen climbing ladders, carrying hoses, shouting orders; the smoke and flames; the spray of the water; and the rising steam as it extinguished the flames. Even though the boy was nothing more than a spectator, the experience engulfed him, creating an almost "unquenchable"

desire to see more, to experience another such "exhilarating" encounter. Such a boy can be suspected of going as far as to set a fire just for the rush that it brings.

Controversy is similar. Those who are used to a sedentary life become awakened to the fires of strife. It gives meaning to their lives, structuring a mission, to get involved and say their piece. Those who do not have a controversy available will go to great lengths to initiate one, just so they have something to do with their lives. Aharon HaKohen taught us the importance of loving peace and quiet. This is why his passing heralds a period of mourning and weeping for generations. We must always remember what he taught us: love peace - so that you will pursue it.

Many gedolei Yisrael have exemplified this middah, character trait. They understood that if Jews do not get along in peace and harmony there cannot be a kiyum, continued existence, for our nation. One gadol, whom I had the privilege of knowing, particularly exemplified this middah. Indeed, he was a person who absolutely abhorred machlokes. Interestingly, the Bobover Rebbe, Horav Shlomo Halberstam, zl, was niftar, died, on Rosh Chodesh Av. He was our contemporary Aharon HaKohen. The Rebbe's conversation expressed his innermost thoughts. His dialogue always revolved around the needs of others and what could be done to alleviate their pain. He refused to be party to any endeavor that might negatively affect another Jew or to cause strife of any kind. This does not mean that he was not provoked. Much discord is the result of insecurity and discomfort with one's status quo. Regrettably, many insecure people are out there. He focused on the wholeness of Klal Yisrael, not on ways to fractionalize into groups. He was Rebbe to thousands, but focused on the concerns of each individual. His thoughtfulness, his sensitivity to the needs of each individual, catalyzed his love of peace. He simply could not tolerate it if people did not get along.

A short vignette is very telling. When he was in the hospital, the people who sent him food often forgot to include his attendants. The Rebbe would proceed to cut each portion into four parts and partake only after each of his attendants had eaten his fill.

**You shall arrange cities for yourselves, cites of refuge they shall be for you. (35:11)**

In his commentary to Devarim 4:41, the Kli Yakar cites the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos 4:18, Hevai goleh li'm'kom Torah, "Exile yourself to a place of Torah." He explains that the inadvertent murderer was exiled to the Arei Miklat, Cities of Refuge, where he was protected and safe from harm. He was to flee there, so that "he may live." Likewise, the Torah and mitzvos are a source of life, V'chai bahem, "And live by them" (Vayikra 18:5). Thus, one should literally exile himself to a makom Torah, which will be his ir miklat, city of refuge. The yeshivah, its pristine Torah environment, protects one from the spiritually harmful elements that prevail in the "outside" world.

Perhaps this is the reason that the Tanna chooses the word, goleh, exile, which is a strong term reflecting banishment, expatriation, basically a forced separation from his present society. It certainly does not imply anything of a positive nature. The purpose of galus for the inadvertent murderer is to protect him from the wrath of the go'el ha'dam, relative/redeemer of the blood, who has a right to kill him if he is not in the city of refuge. Yes, he is compelled to go there against his will, but it is for his own protection. Likewise, the ben Torah is exiled, so to speak, to the makom Torah, but it is for his protection. The alternative is hardly acceptable.

The sister of Horav Eliezer M. Shach, zl, related that, as a young girl, she never saw her brother. He had been studying Torah in another city. When World War I broke out, the borders were shut down. Rav Shach's mother, together with her neighbor, whose son studied in the same yeshivah as Rav Shach, resolved to meet her son at the border. The women would give their sons some packages of food and necessities, spend some time together and return home. They sent letters to the "boys" and made up to meet at a specific time and place.

The three women, two mothers and Rav Shach's sister - all arrived at the appointed place with time to spare. They waited anxiously for their sons to

appear. Suddenly, one of the students appeared, and with him, he carried a letter from Rav Shach to his mother. In it, he apologized for not coming to the meeting. Certainly his mother would remember that she had told him at the beginning of the war, "The safest place was the bais ha'medrash." He feared that if he came to the meeting, his mother, who was a widow, would be so overcome with emotion that she might not want him to return to the yeshivah. He was, therefore, certain that she would forgive his absence. It was just not safe to leave the yeshivah.

You shall designate cities for yourselves, cities of refuge shall they be for you, and a murderer shall flee there - one who takes a life unintentionally... he shall dwell in it until the death of the Kohen Gadol. (35:11,25)

In the Talmud Makkos 11b, Chazal posit that if the current Kohen Gadol died just before the bais din had the chance to issue forth its decision that would send the unintentional murderer to the city of refuge, the rotzeiach, murderer, would be obligated to remain in the ir miklat, city of refuge, until his death. The Talmud questions this halachah. After all, what was this new Kohen Gadol to do? Why should he be the subject of the murderer's entreaty that he die, just so that the murderer could leave? Chazal reply that during that short interval between his appointment as Kohen Gadol and rendering the final decision concerning this man's being exiled for the life of the Kohen Gadol, he should have prayed that the bais din finds the defendant completely innocent, so that they would have exonerated him!

What a powerful statement! What an amazing lesson! Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl, observes that the time involved between the Kohen Gadol's appointment and the rendering of the decision by bais din is extremely short. It is the ultimate moment of joy of the new Kohen Gadol. Klal Yisrael has selected the next Kohen Gadol, the preeminent spiritual position in Jewish hierarchy. He is to serve as the intercessor between the people and Hashem, and he is to enter on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, into the Kodosh HaKodoshim, Holy of Holies, to effect atonement for the nation.

This is the simchah, joy, that the greatest and the finest can only dream of. One of them ascends to the position - a dream come true. Yet, at this moment of heightened joy, he must drop everything and intercede on behalf of the unintentional murderer! This is the obligation of the Kohen Gadol. It goes with the territory. No time for personal joy. The nation is in need. He must immediately perform the function for which he was selected.

Rav Zaitchik takes this idea to the next level: the contemporary. Let us imagine that one is informed that he has been chosen, above thousands of others, to become the leader/director of a distinguished world entity/organization. He would be totally suffused with joy, savoring every moment, enjoying every declaration of congratulations and good wishes. Would he for one moment think about the wretched, the poor, the broken-hearted, the sick and infirm, the "little guy" in need? Absolutely not! This is his moment. He will empathize and address their needs at a later date. He will certainly attend to his responsibilities, but this is his moment! After all, the prevalent rule of modern society is that there is a time and place for everything. Today happens to be my time of joy. Tomorrow I will deal with your issues, but today is for me.

Our Torah does not conform with the contemporary line of thinking. The demands placed upon the ish ha'klal, communal leader, are quite different. He has no "down" time. The new Kohen Gadol cannot take time out to allow his new status to sink in. He must "hit the ground running." At this moment, when others would party and enjoy, he must remember and pray for those in need. After all, it is for this that he was chosen.

Furthermore, it is specifically during the new Kohen Gadol's moment of heightened joy that his prayers on behalf of the wretched and needy will have their greatest efficacy. He is taking his moment and making it their moment. This has the opportunity to catalyze Hashem's positive response.

**U'matzasa es levavo ne'eman lefanecha. And you found his heart loyal before You.**

Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, notes the specific vernacular used in this pasuk and interprets it accordingly: U'matzasa, "And You found." It does not simply say his heart was loyal to You, but, You found his heart loyal. Hashem Himself attests to Avraham's fidelity. Hashem sees into a person's heart and knows whether his convictions are real, whether they are true. Second, the word levavo is used, as opposed to libo. Levavo is a stronger term, which implies the innermost chambers of the heart, while libo is a reference to the surface or external heart. Avraham Avinu was subjected to a battery of tests which demonstrated his loyalty to Hashem under all situations, in all aspects of emotions and attitudes.

Last, the word used to describe Avraham's relationship with Hashem is ne'eman, loyalty. This indicates that Avraham's primary significance was not merely in the remarkable deeds which he performed. His acts of chesed, loving-kindness; his striving to reach out to a pagan world and teach them monotheism; his willingness to walk into a fiery furnace in support of his convictions: all these are impressive. It was his loyalty, however, his ordinary deeds which he performed with complete fidelity, total equanimity, solely for the sake of Hashem, that earned him Hashem's recognition. Avraham lived solely for Hashem. His most mundane daily activities were all carried out for the sole purpose of performing the will of Hashem. This is why he and his son and his grandson were chosen to be our Patriarchs.

li"n Roiza Rachel bas R' Moshe Aryeh a"h niftar 8 Av 5756 Shelley Horwitz a"h

---

### Rabbi Mayer Twersky

**The Virtue of Abstinence** (The TorahWeb Foundation)

Moderate abstinence (prishus) is a sine qua non for a life of avodas Hashem, and kirvas Elokim. Practically as a way of life, this fundamental truth can be very challenging; philosophically, as a matter of study, it is easily understood. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is purely spiritual. Accordingly, a materialistic person who pursues physical pleasure or wealth etc. distances himself from Hakadosh Baruch Hu and is ill prepared for the spiritual existence of olam haboh.

The indispensability of moderate abstinence underlies and informs parshas nedarim. The Torah severely criticizes one who is noder or nishba, "Lo dayecha ma she'asra Torah - the Torah's prohibitions do not suffice for you!" It is an act of hubris, bordering on the heretical, to override the Torah's divinely calibrated balance with nedarim u'shavuos. By way of example, if wine ought to have been categorically prohibited, the Torah would have done so. One can not be "frumer" than the Torah in this, or any other, respect.

This critique holds true when the neder or shavua is prompted by a misplaced sense of idealism. When, however, they are undertaken as a corrective measure, a neder or shavua represents a bona fide way of serving Hashem. Following up on our previous example, if one has previously abused alcohol and looks to a neder as a necessary safeguard, he is serving Hashem in accepting such a neder. He seeks not to override, but rather uphold the Torah's system of moderate abstinence. The Torah allows for a neder to address his individual, exceptional susceptibility.

The parsha of nedarim thus highlights the vital need for moderate abstinence. Everything the Torah's balanced system permits is intended for moderate consumption, on a per need basis. As necessary, one is allowed to accept vows/oaths to restore that balance which is so critical for avodas Hashem.

Copyright © 2010 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.



## פרשת השבוע - פרשת מטות מסעי מאמרו של הגאון רבי זבדיה הכהן שליט"א, חבר בית הדין הרבני בתל אביב, עבור הלכה יומית

גליון זה קדוש כדן שאר דברי תורה המודפסים, נא לנהוג בו בקדושה ואחר מן  
להניחו בגניזה

השבת נקרא על עניין הנדרים. בתורה נאמר "איש כי ידור נדר, או השבע שבועה,  
לאסור איסור על נפשו, לא יחל דברו, ככל היוצא מפיו יעשה

שלמה המלך אמר בקהלת (פרק ה פסוק ג-ה) "כאשר תידור נדר לאלהים, אל  
תאחר לשלמו, כי אין חפץ בכסילים, את אשר תידור שלם, טוב אשר לא תידור  
משתדור ולא תשלם". ובגמרא במסכת נדרים (דף ט' ע"א), רבי מאיר אומר, טוב  
מזה ומזה, שלא תידור כלל. וכך נפסק להלכה בשלחן ערוך בהלכות נדרים (יורה  
דעה סימן רג סעיף א-ו) 'אל תהי רגיל בנדרים, צריך להיזהר שלא ידור שום דבר,  
כל הנודר ואפילו מקיימו נקרא רשע, ונקרא חוטא, ואפילו צדקה אין טוב לידור,  
אלא אם ישנו בידו, יתן מיד, ואם לאו, לא ידור, עד שיהיה לו, ואם פוסקים צדקה,  
וצריך לפסוק עמהם, יאמר בלי נדר'. עד כאן. ובמסכת שבת (דף ל"ב ע"ב) דרשו  
רבתינו דברים חמורים על הנודר ולא מקיים

וצריך להבין מדוע החמירו כל כך בעוון נדרים יותר אפילו מחטא ועוון שיש עליהם  
תשובה, ואפילו על אדם שנודר ומקיים נאמר רשע, וחוטא, מה חורי האף הגדול  
זה

כדי להבין זאת, נקדים, מעשה בבחור צעיר לימים שחיפש עבודה, בלשכת  
העבודה שלחו אותו לשירות בתי הסוהר, שם חיפשו סוהרים, ואכן הבחור הנ"ל  
קיבל את העבודה, לבש את מדי הסוהר, והחל בעבודתו. סיר הסוהר החדש  
בבית הכלא, וראה אסירים עם אזיקים, חלקם בתאים רגילים, וחלקם בצינוק  
ובידוד, אך מה רבה היתה הפתעותו, כשראה בפינת הכלא, אסיר שמתהלך  
באופן חופשי ללא אזיקים, בתא מרווח, ואין לא שום מגבלות. לשאלתו, ענה לו  
מנהל הכלא, כי אסיר זה אינו כשאר האסירים, כיון שלא עבר שום עבירה פלילית,  
אלא הוא סוחר גדול שנקלע למצוקה כלכלית וחובות רבים עקב המצב הכלכלי  
הקשה, ויש לו בעלי חובות אשר תבעו אותו לדון, והוא עצור לימים ספורים, עד  
שבית המשפט יכריז עליו שהוא "פושט רגל", שאז לפי החוק, חובותיו ימחקו  
ויוכל לצאת לחופשי, לכן תנאו טובים בכלא

שמע זאת הסוהר החדש ואמר לעצמו, מה לי בעבודה קשה זו? אני אסתדר יפה  
בחיים, יש לי פתרון יפה לחיים טובים. מיד הודיע על פרישתו מהעבודה, ושכר  
לעצמו חדר במלון מפואר 5 כוכבים והחל ליהנות מהחיים. עברו שבועיים, ובעל  
המלון קרא לו ובקש תשלום, ענה הסוהר ואמר, אין לי כסף, אבקש להכריז עלי  
כעל פושט רגל ולמחוק את חובותי, מיד הזעיק בעל המלון שוטרים שעצרו את  
האיש והחזירוהו לכלא, והפעם כאסיר ולא כסוהר. למחרת נלקח להארכת מעצר  
לפני שופט, ושם שאל, מדוע על הסוחר ההוא הכריזו שהוא פושט רגל ומחקו את  
חובותיו ולי אין עושים כן? ענה לו השופט, אין הנידון דומה לראיה, שם הסוחר  
פתח עסק על מנת לשלם למכור ולקנות והכול בהגינות, אך שלא באשמתו נקלע  
לקשיים וחובות עקב מצב כלכלי עולמי, והוא עצמו מיצר על כך שאין בידו לשלם,  
על אדם כזה מכריזים כעל פושט רגל, אך אתה הולך מלכתחילה ליצור חובות,  
ואתה מכניס את עצמך להתחייבויות שאין צורך בהם, ודאי שעל זה לא ניתן לומר  
פושט רגל ולמחוק חובות, אלא מדובר בפושט שעליו ליתן את הדין

זה ההבדל בין אדם שחטא בחטא רגיל לבין נודר נדרים, בנדרים, אדם מכניס את  
עצמו לחיובים שאין הוא חייב בהם, ולא יכול לבוא אחר כך ולטעון זה לא בידי, אין  
ביכולתי לקיים וכדו', ולכן אין לו לידור מלכתחילה ולהיכנס לחיובים חדשים, כיון  
שאינו בידו באותו רגע לדעת מה יהיה בעתיד, ודיינו בתרי"ג מצוות שנתנה לנו  
התורה ועלינו לקיימם כדבעי

נרגיל עצמנו לחשוב על כל מילה טרם שנוציא אותה לאוויר העולם, בבחינת "סוף  
מעשה במחשבה תחילה

**Rav Kook on the Torah Portion**  
**Three Weeks: Rebuilding the World with Love**  
**Rectifying Baseless Hatred**

Why was the Second Temple destroyed? The Sages in Yoma 9b noted that the people at that time studied Torah, observed mitzvot and performed good deeds. Their great failure was in *sinat chinam* - baseless hatred. It was internal strife and conflict that ultimately brought about the Temple's destruction.

How may we rectify this sin of *sinat chinam*? Rav Kook wrote, in one of his most oft-quoted statements:

"If we were destroyed, and the world with us, due to baseless hatred, then we shall rebuild ourselves, and the world with us, with baseless love (*ahavat chinam*)." (Orot HaKodesh vol. III, p. 324)

This call for baseless love could be interpreted as following Maimonides' advice on how to correct bad character traits. In the fourth chapter of *Shemonah Perakim*, Maimonides taught that negative traits are corrected by temporarily overcompensating and practicing the opposite extreme. For example, one who is naturally stingy should balance this trait by acting overly generous, until he succeeds in uprooting his miserliness. Similarly, by going to the extreme of *ahavat chinam*, we repair the trait of *sinat chinam*.

This interpretation, however, is not Rav Kook's line of thought. *Ahavat chinam* is not a temporary remedy, but an ideal, the result of our perception of the world's underlying unity and goodness.

### The Source of Hatred

Why do we hate others? We may think of many reasons why, but these explanations are not the real source for our hatred of other people. They are merely signs and indications of our hatred. It is a lack of clarity of thought that misleads us into believing that these are the true causes of hatred.

The true source of hate comes from our *otzar hachaim*, our inner resource of life. This fundamental life-force pushes us to live and thrive, and opposes all that it views as different and threatening. Ultimately, our hate is rooted in *sinat chinam* - groundless and irrational animosity, just because something is different.

Yet even in hatred lies a hidden measure of love. Baseless love and baseless hatred share a common source, a love of life and the world. This common source hates that which is evil and destructive, and loves that which is good and productive.

How can we overcome our hatred? If we can uncover the depth of good in what we perceive as negative, we will be able to see how good will result even from actions and ideas that we oppose. We will then recognize that our reasons for hatred are unfounded, and transform our hatred into love and appreciation.

### 'I Burn with Love'

This idea of *ahavat chinam* was not just a theoretical concept. Rav Kook was well-known for his profound love for all Jews, even those far removed from Torah and mitzvot. When questioned why he loved Jews distant from the ideals of Torah, he would respond:

"Better I should err on the side of baseless love, than I should err on the side of baseless hatred."

Stories abound of Rav Kook's extraordinary love for other Jews, even those intensely antagonistic to his ways and beliefs. Once Rav Kook was publicly humiliated by a group of extremists who showered him with waste water in the streets of Jerusalem. The entire city was in an uproar over this scandalous act. The legal counsel of the British Mandate advised Rav Kook to press charges against the hooligans, promising that they would be promptly deported from the country.

The legal counsel, however, was astounded by the Chief Rabbi's response. "I have no interest in court cases. Despite what they did to me, I love them. I am ready to kiss them, so great is my love! I burn with love for every Jew."

### Practical Steps towards Ahavat Chinam

In his magnum opus *Orot HaKodesh*, Rav Kook gave practical advice on how to achieve this love.

Love for the Jewish people does not start from the heart, but from the head. To truly love and understand the Jewish people - each individual Jew and the nation as a whole - requires a wisdom that is both insightful and multifaceted. This intellectual inquiry is an important discipline of Torah study.

Loving others does not mean indifference to baseness and moral decline. Our goal is to awaken knowledge and morality, integrity and refinement; to clearly mark the purpose of life, its purity and holiness. Even our acts of loving-kindness should be based on a hidden Gevurah, an inner outrage at the world's - and thus our own - spiritual failures.

If we take note of others' positive traits, we will come to love them with an inner affection. This is not a form of insincere flattery, nor does it mean white-washing their faults and foibles. But by concentrating on their positive characteristics - and every person has a good side - the negative aspects become less significant.

This method provides an additional benefit. The Sages cautioned against joining with the wicked and exposing oneself to their negative influences. But if we connect to their positive traits, then this connection will not endanger our own moral and spiritual purity.

We can attain a high level of love for Israel by deepening our awareness of the inner ties that bind together all the souls of the Jewish people, throughout all the generations. In the following revealing passage, Rav Kook expressed his own profound sense of connection with and love for every Jewish soul:

"Listen to me, my people! I speak to you from my soul, from within my innermost soul. I call out to you from the living connection by which I am bound to all of you, and by which all of you are bound to me. I feel this more deeply than any other feeling:

"That only you - all of you, all of your souls, throughout all of your generations - you alone are the meaning of my life. In you I live. In the aggregation of all of you, my life has that content that is called 'life.' Without you, I have nothing. All hopes, all aspirations, all purpose in life, all that I find inside myself - these are only when I am with you. I need to connect with all of your souls. I must love you with a boundless love....

"Each one of you, each individual soul from the aggregation of all of you, is a great spark from the torch of infinite light which enlightens my existence. You give meaning to life and work, to Torah and prayer, to song and hope. It is through the conduit of your being that I sense everything and love everything." (Shemonah Kevatzim, vol. I sec. 163)

(Adapted from Orot HaKodesh vol. III, pp. 324-334; Malachim K'vnei Adam pp. 262, 483-485)

Comments and inquiries may be sent to: <mailto:RavKookList@gmail.com>

---

## It's All in Middos

**Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski** (The TorahWeb Foundation)

After Bnai Yisroel conquered Eiver HaYardern, the tribes of Reuven and Gad approached Moses, saying that they had much livestock, and inasmuch as Eiver HaYardern is rich pastureland, they wished to settle in Eiver HaYardern and were willing to waive their portions in Canaan. Moses rebuked them sharply. "Your brethren will go to battle and you will remain here? Why are you discouraging the nation from going into the land that G-d promised them? This is what your fathers did when they rejected Canaan, resulting in our wandering in the wilderness for forty years. And now you are following in your fathers' footsteps, a society of sinful people." (Bamidbar 32:1-34)

The tribes of Reuven and Gad then explained that they never intended to shirk their responsibilities to conquer Canaan. Rather, they were willing to be the vanguard, and after Canaan is conquered, they would settle in Transjordan.

The obvious question is why was Moshe so severely harsh with them, calling them "as sinful as their fathers," and not giving them the opportunity to explain themselves.

I believe the answer can be found in Moshe's words when he recounts their history. Referring to the tragic episode of the spies, Moshe said, "All of you approached me," (Devarim 1:22). Rashi comments that Moshe was saying, "You approached me as a mob, the young pushing themselves ahead of the old, and the old pushing themselves ahead of the leaders." Essentially Moshe was saying, "I should have known that no good could come out of a venture that was totally lacking in respect."

Let us now look carefully at the narrative in Bamidbar. "The children of Reuven and the children of Gad had abundant livestock." Reuven was the oldest of the tribes, and Gad was much younger. The Torah, therefore, appropriately lists Reuven first. However, when they approached Moshe, "The children of Gad and the children of Reuven came to Moshe, the younger pushing himself ahead of the older. Seeing this lack of respect, Moshe said, "This is a repetition of what happened before," and he accused them of being as sinful as their fathers had been.

Their lack of middos can be further seen from the words of the two tribes, who said, "We will build pens for our livestock and cities for our children," giving priority to their possessions over their families. Moshe corrected them, saying, "Build cities for your children first and then pens for your livestock."

People who are derelict in one middah are often lacking in other middos as well. Ramban, in his famous letter to his son, tells him to begin by bringing his anger under control, and this would then lead to refinement of other middos.

Middos are primary in Yiddishkeit. Rebbe Chaim Vital, the disciple of the Ari z"l said that one must exercise even greater caution with refinement of middos then with than with the observance of mitzvos (Shaar Hakedusha 2:2).

The 613 mitzvos are the building blocks of which a Torah life is constructed. However, a pile of building blocks do not yet make a structure. The middos of Torah are what gives Yiddishkeit its structure.

Editor's Note: for further development of this theme by Rav Dr. Twerski, see *Glatt Kosher Is Not Enough and Am I Really Frum?*

Copyright © 2010 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

---

## Weekly Halachah

**Rabbi Doniel Neustadt** ([dneustadt@cordetroit.com](mailto:dneustadt@cordetroit.com))

**Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit**

## Vacation Situations

Question: Is it appropriate to remove one's tallis katan while playing sports or engaging in strenuous activities that make one hot and sweaty?

Discussion: Some poskim write that it is not appropriate to do so.<sup>1</sup> While it is true that neither Biblical nor Rabbinic law obligates one to wear a tallis katan at all times,<sup>2</sup> it has become the accepted custom that every male wears a tallis katan all day long.<sup>3</sup> Rav M. Feinstein rules that since it has become customary to wear a tallis katan all day long, one may no longer deviate from this practice, and one who does so transgresses the dictum of al titosh Toras imecha.<sup>4</sup>

What are the origins of this custom? Why did men choose to be meticulous about donning a tallis katan even when they were not required to do so? The poskim mention two basic reasons: 1) Wearing tzitzis gives us the opportunity to be constantly reminded of our obligations as a Jew, as it is written in Bamidbar (15:39), "That you may see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem and perform them."<sup>5</sup> 2) The Talmud<sup>6</sup> tells us that wearing a tallis katan serves as protection from "Hashem's wrath"; when He observes His children performing mitzvos — such as tzitzis — that they are not even obligated to perform, His anger is contained and He views us more favorably.<sup>7</sup>

It follows, therefore, that no matter the heat or discomfort, one should still be particular not to remove his tallis katan: One constantly needs a reminder of his status as a servant of Hashem, and one should

always take advantage of the protection that the tallis katan offers to those who wear it.<sup>8</sup>

There are, however, contemporary poskim who question this ruling. They argue that the mitzvah of tzitzis is only properly fulfilled when one is wearing a garment which benefits him in some way, e.g., it protects or warms him.<sup>9</sup> If, however, the garment does not benefit its wearer in any way, and on the contrary — it makes him uncomfortable or bothers him, then it is possible that the tallis katan no longer falls under the category of a “begeg” (a useful garment), and one who wears a useless begeg does not fulfill the mitzvah of tzitzis by wearing it.<sup>10</sup>

Question: Are pets muktzeh on Shabbos and Yom Tov?

Discussion: The Talmud<sup>11</sup> states that it is forbidden to move animals on Shabbos. In halachic terms, animals are considered like sticks and stones which have no permissible Shabbos use and are muktzeh machmas gufo, severe muktzeh, which may not be moved for any reason. This ruling is quoted by Shulchan Aruch<sup>12</sup> and most of the later poskim, and no distinction is drawn between farm animals and household pets; all are considered severe muktzeh. Some poskim expressly include “playful animals” in this prohibition.<sup>13</sup>

There are, however, other poskim who do distinguish between farm animals and household pets. In their opinion, a pet is considered like a household item, similar to a toy or a picture, and is not classified as muktzeh at all.<sup>14</sup> While it is advisable to follow the majority opinion and not carry or move pets on Shabbos,<sup>15</sup> those who are lenient have a halachic authority upon whom to rely.<sup>16</sup> Certainly, if the pet is in distress, one may be lenient and move it or carry it.<sup>17</sup>

All opinions agree that it is permitted to touch (without moving) or feed one’s pets on Shabbos. It is also permitted to hold onto a leash and walk a dog in an area which is enclosed by an eiruv.<sup>18</sup> It is permitted to place a leash on a dog on Shabbos.<sup>19</sup>

Question: How mandatory is Chazal’s advisory that a guest should not change his customary lodging place?

Discussion: Rashi<sup>20</sup> explains that there are two reasons behind this advisory:

\* Switching lodgings discredits the guest, since he will be considered hard to please or disreputable in some way.

\* Switching lodgings harms the host’s reputation, since it gives the impression that his lodgings were unsatisfactory.<sup>21</sup>

If a guest has a bona fide reason to change his lodging place, however, the halachah will not restrict him from doing so. For example, if a guest customarily lodged at a certain home, but came to town for a simchah and wants to stay at the home of the ba’al simchah, that would be permitted. If a guest customarily lodged at a certain home, but upon his return visit the original host was out of town or indisposed, or no longer had the space for guests, the halachic advisory would not apply and the guest could stay elsewhere.<sup>22</sup>

Question: On Shabbos or Yom Tov, is it permitted to use suntan lotion in order to prevent sunburn?

Discussion: Suntan lotion which is in cream, ointment or thick, slow-pouring oil form, is forbidden to be used on Shabbos, as it may be a violation of the Shabbos Labor of Smoothing.<sup>23</sup> It is permitted, however, to use suntan protection which is in a liquid spray form, since Smoothing does not apply to runny, non-viscous liquids such as liquid spray.

Although there is a Rabbinic injunction against taking medicine on Shabbos, suntan protection is not considered medication, since its purpose is not to heal but to protect. It is similar to using insect repellent on Shabbos, which is permitted since its function is also not to heal but to protect.<sup>24</sup>

Taking medication for ordinary sunburn, however, even if it is in spray or liquid form, could be a violation of the Rabbinic injunction against taking medicine on Shabbos. In the atypical case where the sunburn is so severe that one feels “weak all over” or bad enough to

require bed rest because of it, liquid or spray medication is permitted.<sup>25</sup> If there is a chance that infection will set in, all medications and ointments are permitted to be used.<sup>26</sup>

Note: Our discussion regarding suntan protection pertains to those who might get sunburned while fulfilling a Shabbos mitzvah, e.g., those who need to walk a long distance to shul on Shabbos. But to deliberately sit in the sun in order to get a suntan is not in keeping with the spirit of Shabbos, and indeed, is forbidden on halachic grounds by some contemporary poskim.<sup>27</sup>

- 1 Mahri Elgazi, quoted in Tzitz Eliezer 14:49-2; Rav B. Zilber, Yagel Yaakov, pg. 165.
- 2 The Torah requirement is to place tzitzis on a four-cornered garment when one is wearing such a garment. The Torah, however, does not require that one specifically put on a four-cornered garment so as to be obligated to wear tzitzis; O.C. 24:1.
- 3 Aruch ha-Shulchan 8:2; Tzitz Eliezer 8:4; Yechaveh Da’as 4:2.
- 4 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:4; O.C. 5:20-25.
- 5 O.C. 24:1. See Rambam, Hilchos Tzitzis 3:11.
- 6 Menachos 41a.
- 7 See Tosafos, Pesachim 113b, s.v. v’ein, and Gilyon ha-Shas; Rokeiach 331: Kesef Mishneh, Hilchos Tzitzis 3:11.
- 8 See Halichos Shelomo 1:3, Devar Halachah 25; Tzitz Eliezer 14:49-2.
- 9 See Koveitz Shiurim, vol. 2, 23:8.
- 10 Rav Y.S. Elyashiv and Rav C. Kanievsky, quoted in Rivevos Efrayim 7:265 and Yagel Yaakov, pg. 166. See also Ashrei ha-Ish, Tzitzis 2:23, Nezer ha-Chayim, pg. 164, and Doleh U’ mashkeh, pg. 27.
- 11 See Shabbos 128b.
- 12 O.C. 308:39
- 13 See Tosafos, Shabbos 45b, s.v. hacha; Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 308:78; Da’as Torah, O.C. 308:39; Kaf ha-Chayim 308:235.
- 14 Minchas Shabbos 88:10, quoting Nezer Yisrael and Halachos Ketanos; Az Nidberu 8:36.
- 15 Minchas Shabbos, 88:10; Yabia Omer 5:26.
- 16 Rav S.Z. Auerbach; see Shulchan Shelomo, O.C. 308:74-4; B’tzeil ha-Chochmah 5:33-34. There are conflicting sources concerning Rav M. Feinstein’s opinion on this subject; see Sefer Tiltulei Shabbos, pg. 119, and Igros Moshe, O.C. 5:22-21.
- 17 See Mishnah Berurah 305:70 and Chazon Ish, O.C. 52:16.
- 18 Under certain, very specific conditions, it is even permitted to walk a dog with a leash in a public domain; see O.C. 305:16 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 5.
- 19 O.C. 305:1, 8, 10.
- 20 Arachin 16b.
- 21 Accordingly, one should not change even from one Jewish-owned hotel to another ? unless he has a bona fide reason for doing so ? as it discredits the hotel where he stayed.
- 22 See Piskei Teshuvos 170:6, quoting Ohalecha b’Amisecha.
- 23 Based on Da’as Torah, O.C. 328:26; Chazon Ish, O.C. 52:16 and Tzitz Eliezer 7:30-2.
- 24 Based on O.C. 328:23. See also Mishnah Berurah 301:108.
- 25 See The Monthly Halachah Discussion, pgs. 90-91.
- 26 See The Monthly Halachah Discussion, pgs. 101-102, for more details.
- 27 See Chelkas Yaakov 4:17; Minchas Yitzchak 5:32; Az Nidberu 2:30; Machazeh Eliyahu 65:24.

---

**Orthodox Union / www.ou.org**  
**Matot-Masei - Birkhat Kohanim Without Shoes**  
**Rabbi Asher Meir**

One of the nine decrees of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai is that the Kohanim are not allowed to wear sandals when they ascend the duchan to bless the congregation (Rosh HaShana 31b). Since most of the other decrees are related to the Temple and especially to adjusting to the destruction of the Mikdash, the natural tendency would be to assume that this decree too is a commemoration of the Temple, where the Kohanim were forbidden to wear any kind of footwear. This seems to find an echo in the Rambam, who writes that the Kohanim are not allowed to wear shoes

and then makes the seemingly superfluous addition, "rather they stand barefoot" (Mishneh Torah Tefilla 14:6).

However, we find that the later Sages gave a much different interpretation to this law. In Sota 40a, the gemara gives various examples of the great "awe of the public", the honor which needs to be given to the congregation. One example given is the prohibition for Kohanim to wear shoes on the dachan; Rashi explains that since the shoes are dirty it is not really respectable for the Kohanim to wear them as they bless the people. This approach finds expression in the ruling that the shoes themselves should be placed out of sight so that the congregation won't be offended by seeing them (MB 128:15), and in the rule that even socks shouldn't be worn if they are commonly worn outside and get dirty (MB 128:18).

Yet Rav Ashi, one of the latest sages of the Talmud, gives an entirely different rationale for this decree: "Lest his shoelace become untied, and when he steps aside to tie it people will say that he is the son of a divorcee", and therefore not a Kohen. For this reason even indoor shoes (such as fabric slippers) are forbidden if they have laces (Arukh HaShulchan OC 128:12).

Let us examine the factual basis for Rav Ashi's explanation. On the one hand, shoes add to our dignity. Yet they may sometimes come undone; then they become a disgrace. The Kohen would rather step aside from the dachan and endure rumors that he is not a kosher Kohen than remain on the dachan and endure the embarrassment of having everyone see his shoe untied. Evidently Rebbe Yochanan ben Zakai concluded that it is better if all Kohanim dispense with shoes altogether; then there is no embarrassment in ascending the dachan barefoot.

We may conjecture that shoes did not come untied so often that unsavory rumors were really a widespread problem. But the very hypothetical situation of the untied shoelaces is a symptom of a grave problem; there is something inherently wrong with our attachment to our shoes if we consider an untied shoe more of a disgrace than a blemished pedigree! In this context, even a tied shoe loses its aura of dignity; it comes to symbolize subjugation to social convention rather than human elevation.

There is nothing wrong with conventions and customs, and the dignity we attach to them. But we also have to know when to put these petty observances aside and focus on our inherent human dignity. As the Kohanim ascend the dachan to bless the people, they need to put aside accouterments of mere social and conventional elevation. They should be concentrating on the unique spiritual elevation which their descent gives them, and which alone enables them to be the vehicle of the special Divine blessing of Birkhat Kohanim.

Rabbi Asher Meir is the author of the book Meaning in Mitzvot, distributed by Feldheim. The book provides insights into the inner meaning of our daily practices, following the order of the 221 chapters of the Kitzur Shulchan Arukh.

---

## TALMUDIGEST - Shavuot 15 - 21

For the week ending 10 July 2010 / 27 Tammuz 5770

from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

### KIDDUSH FOR WOMEN \* Shavuot 20b

Although women are generally exempt from mitzvot with a time orientation, one of the exceptions to this rule is the mitzvah of saying kiddush on Shabbat.

The command to honor the holy day with kiddush is found in the Ten Commandments: "Remember the Shabbat to sanctify it." (Shmot 20:8) The command to desist from creative labor on Shabbat is also found in the Ten Commandments: "Safeguard the Shabbat to sanctify it." (Devarim 5:12)

While there would appear to be a clash between the two commands, our Sages resolve this conflict by informing us that both Zachor (Remember) and Shamor (Safeguard) were said simultaneously at Sinai, something which only G-d Himself could do. This matching of the two teaches us that whoever is obligated in the mitzvah of Shamor is also obligated in the mitzvah of Zachor. Since women are obligated in regard to all

transgressions - such as violating the Shabbat - they are also obligated in the positive commandment to observe the Shabbat with kiddush.

Tosefot cites a gemara in Mesechta Nazir which seems to indicate that the mitzvah to make kiddush over wine on Shabbat is not of Torah origin, only a rabbinic law. The conclusion reached by Tosefot is that there is definitely a mitzvah of Torah origin to say the words of the kiddush but the requirement to do so over wine is only of rabbinic origin.

### WHAT THE SAGES SAY

"Whoever makes havdalah over wine at the conclusion of Shabbat will be blessed with sons."

Rabbi Chiya bar Abba in the name of Rabbi Yochanan - Shavuot 18b

© 2010 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

---

## The Blackmailer's Paradox: Arab-Israel Negotiations are a Game Tammuz 23, 5770, 05 July 10 11:30

by Prof. Yisrael Aumann (Israelnationalnews.com)

Two men—let us call them Reuben and Simon—are put in a small room containing a suitcase filled with bills

totaling \$100,000. The owner of the suitcase announces the following:

"I will give you the money in the suitcase under one condition...you have to negotiate an agreement on how to divide it. That is the only way I will agree to give you the money."

Reuben is a rational person and realizes the golden opportunity that has fallen his way. He turns to Simon with the obvious suggestion: "You take half and I'll take half, that way each of us will have \$50,000."

To his surprise, Simon frowns at him and says, in a tone that leaves no room for doubt: "Look here, I don't know what your plans are for the money, but I don't intend to leave this room with less than \$90,000. If you accept that, fine. If not, we can both go home without any of the money."

Reuben can hardly believe his ears. "What has happened to Simon" he asks himself. "Why should he get 90% of the money and I just 10%?" He decides to try to convince Simon to accept his view. "Let's be logical," he urges him, "We are in the same situation, we both want the money. Let's divide the money equally and both of us will profit."

Simon, however, doesn't seem perturbed by his friend's logic. He listens attentively, but when Reuben is finished he says, even more emphatically than before: "90-10 or nothing. That is my last offer."

Reuben's face turns red with anger. He is about to punch Simon in the nose, but he steps back. He realizes that Simon is not going to relent, and that the only way he can leave the room with any money is to give in to him. He straightens his clothes, takes \$10,000 from the suitcase, shakes Simon's hand and leaves the room humiliated.

This case is called "The Blackmailer's Paradox" in game theory. The paradox is that Reuben the rational is forced to behave irrationally by definition, in order to achieve maximum results in the face of the situation that has evolved. What brings about this bizarre outcome is the fact Simon is sure of himself and doesn't flinch when making his exorbitant demand. This convinces Reuben that he must give in so as to make the best of the situation.

### The Arab-Israeli Conflict:

The relationship between Israel and the Arab countries is conducted along the lines of this paradox. At each stage of negotiation, the Arabs present impossible, unacceptable starting positions. They act sure of themselves and as if they totally believe in what they are asking for, and make it clear to Israel that there is no chance of their backing down.

Invariably, Israel agrees to their blackmailing demands because otherwise she will leave the room empty handed. The most blatant example of this is the negotiations with Syria that have been taking place with different levels of negotiators for years. The Syrians made sure that it was clear from the beginning that they would not compromise on one millimeter of the Golan Heights.

The Israeli side, eager to have a peace agreement with Syria, internalized the Syrian position so well, that the Israeli public is sure that the starting point for future negotiations with Syria has to include complete withdrawal from the Golan Heights, this despite its critical strategic importance in ensuring secure borders for Israel.

**The Losing Solution:**

According to game theory, Israel has to change certain basic perceptions in order to improve her chances in the negotiations game with the Arabs and win the long term political struggle:

**a. Willingness to forego agreements:**

Israel's political stand is based on the principle that agreements must be reached with the Arabs at any price, that the lack of agreements is untenable. In the Blackmailer's Paradox, Reuben's behavior is the result of his feeling that he must leave the room with some money, no matter how little. Because Reuben cannot imagine himself leaving the room with empty hands, he is easy prey for Simon, and ends up leaving with a certain amount of money, but in the role of the humiliated loser. This is similar to the way Israel handles negotiations, her mental state making her unable to reject suggestions that do not advance her interests.

**b. Taking repetition into account**

Game theory relates to onetime situations differently than to situations that repeat themselves. A situation that repeats itself over any length of time, creates, paradoxically, strategic parity that leads to cooperation between the opposing sides. This cooperation occurs when both sides realize that the game is going to repeat itself, and that since they must weigh the influence present moves will have on future games, there is a balancing factor at play. Reuben saw his problem as a onetime event, and behaved accordingly. Had he told Simon instead that he would not forego the amount he deserves even if he sustains a total loss, he would have changed the game results for an indefinite period. It is probably true that he would

still have left the game empty handed, but at the next meeting with Simon, the latter would remember Reuben's original suggestion and would try to reach a compromise.

That is how Israel has to behave, looking at the long term in order to improve her position in future negotiations, even if it means continuing a state of war and fore going an agreement.

**c. Faith in your opinions**

Another element that crates the "Blackmailer's Paradox" is the unwavering belief of one side in its opinion. Simon exemplifies that. This faith gives a contender inner confidence in his cause at the start and eventually convinces his rival as well. The result is that the opposing side wants to reach an agreement, even at the expense of irrational surrender that is considerably distanced from his opening position. Several years ago, I spoke to a senior officer who claimed that Israel must withdraw from the Golan Heights in the framework of a peace treaty, because the Golan is holy land to the Syrians and they will never give it up. I explained to him that first the Syrians convinced themselves that the Golan is holy land to them, and then proceeded to convince you as well. The Syrians' unflinching belief that they are in the right convinces us to give in to their dictates. The only solution to that is for us to believe unwaveringly in the righteousness of our cause. Only complete faith in our demands can succeed in convincing our Syrian opponent to take our opinion into account.

As in all of science, game theory does not take sides in moral and value judgments. It analyzes strategically the behavior of opposing sides in a game they play against one another. The State of Israel is in the midst of one such game opposite its enemies. As in every game, the Arab-Israeli game involves interests that create the framework of the game and its rules. Sadly, Israel ignores the basic principles of game theory. If Israel would be wise enough to behave according to those principles, her political status and de facto, her security status, would improve substantially.

[www.IsraelNationalNews.com](http://www.IsraelNationalNews.com)