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from: torahweb@torahweb.org to: weeklydt@torahweb.org date: Wed, Jul 19, 2017 at 9:52 PM subject: Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky - Kashering and Immersing: Lessons for the Soul

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

Kashering and Immersing: Lessons for the Soul

The halachos that govern kashering and toveling of utensils appear in Parshas Mattos. In addition to the actual practical halachos that comprise this area of kashrus, there are many important lessons concerning avodas Hashem that can be derived from these laws. A utensil that was used for non-kosher food cannot be used until it is kashered. The fundamental principle that dictates the application of this halacha is that the method in which the utensil was used is the method in which it must be kashered. Therefore, a utensil that was used with water, such as a pot, is kashered with boiling water by a process called hag'ala. If the utensil absorbed non-kosher food with direct heat, for example a grill, hag'ala is not sufficient and exposure to a flame is necessary via a process known as libun.

Just as non-kosher food must be removed from a utensil by the appropriate method, so too when one sins the impact of one's actions have to be eradicated in the proper way. Teshuva, which how we cleanse our souls, follows the model of kashering our utensils; the degree of teshuva corresponds to the intensity of the impact of the sin on our souls. If one sins half-heartedly without much enthusiasm, the less intense teshuva is sufficient to atone for the transgression. A sin done with great excitement requires a greater level of teshuva.

We are taught concerning the chet ha'egel that Moshe only broke the luchos upon seeing the Jewish people dancing in celebration. It was their enthusiasm for the sin that made the teshuva process so much more challenging and necessitated the dramatic action of breaking the luchos. Just as hag'ala suffices for an absorption of taste that comes about indirectly through water but libun is necessary when a direct flame was used, so too the kashering of the soul is achieved via an intense degree of teshuva when a sin was penetrated with the flame of enthusiasm.

Kashering by hag'ala is not effective for earthenware vessels. Because of its porous nature, earthenware absorbs substances to such a degree that the non-kosher taste cannot be removed. Yet, Chazal teach us that libun is effective even for earthenware. Rabbeinu Tam explains that even though taste cannot be entirely removed from earthenware, the process of libun mimics the original making of the utensil. Since the earthenware vessel was initially formed in a kiln, the process of libun effectively remakes the vessel and thereby permits its subsequent use. This halachic understanding can be applied in the realm of teshuva as well. Chazal mention the practice of changing one's name when doing teshuva. The Rambam (Hilchos Teshuva 2:4) explains that this symbolizes that the person is not merely connecting specific flaws but rather transforming himself, and in a sense becoming a new person. Even if one doesn't actually change one's name, the mindset of viewing oneself as a new person is a critical component of the teshuva process.

In addition to kashering, any utensil that was manufactured or owned by a non-Jew must undergo tevilla in a mikva before being used. The Talmud Yerushalmi compares this to tevilla that a convert undergoes as an act of sanctification, indicating that even our utensils must be made holy before being used. The mitzvah of tevilas kelim has an important message for us as it relates to our avodas Hashem. It is not sufficient to only avoid sin and rectify its effects through teshuva, rather a tevilla in water is necessary for utensils and a tevilla in symbolic water is necessary for our souls. The Rambam (Hilchos Mikvaos 11:12) elaborates upon the symbolism of the water of the mikva. Just as its waters purify the individual halachically, so too the waters of Torah are essential for spiritual purification. It is the complete immersion in the living waters of Torah study that purify and elevate our souls. As we study and practice the intricate laws of kashering and immersing our food utensils, let us focus on the lessons these halachos can teach us in all the realms of our avodas Hashem.

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More divrei Torah on Parshas Matos

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from: Torah Musings <newsletter@torahmusings.com> via sendgrid.me date: Thu, Jul 20, 2017 at 11:19 AM subject: Torah Musings

Vort from the Rav [**Rav Soloveitchik zt"l**]: Matos Numbers 30:3

If a man makes a vow to the Lord or makes an oath

On the verse and He breathed into his nostrils the soul of life (Gen. 2:7), Nachmanides comments, This verse alludes to the greatness of the soul... This corresponds to the saying of the Rabbis in the Sifri: "Vows are like swearing 'by the life of the King'; oaths are like swearing 'by the King Himself.'" Incongruously, while explaining the metaphysical concept of man's soul, Nachmanides introduces the legal concepts of neder and shevuah.

To understand this passage, one must distinguish between the two. The essence of the dichotomy rests on understanding the precise halachic basis through which a person can prohibit his own use of, or benefit from, an object whose use would otherwise be permissible.

Neder is a formulation that applies to the object being prohibited, an issur cheftza. The typical formula for a neder is, for example: "This chair shall be

prohibited to me just as a sacrifice.” The halachic mechanism that renders a neder effective rests on man’s ability to link the object he wishes to prohibit upon himself with an object that already carries a powerful ban on its use—a sacrifice.

A sacrifice is dedicated entirely to God, with man restricted from gaining any benefit from it until the sacrifice is offered. This linkage is known in halachic parlance as hatfasah. For this reason, when introducing the laws of nedarim in this verse, the Torah uses the term Neder LaShem, similar to the formula for setting aside a sacrifice (Korban LaShem)

In contrast to neder, shevuah involves what is known as an *issur gavra*, a prohibition that is dependent on the person himself. A person has the power to prohibit an action upon himself, the formulation’s emphasis being not on an object becoming prohibited, but on a prohibited action.

The formula of shevuah can be, for example: “I will not go, I will not speak, I will not read, I will not give...” A shevuah requires no hatfasah, no association with an already prohibited object in order to become effective. This *issur gavra* specifically associated with shevuah is derived from the phrase makes an oath to impose a prohibition upon himself.

Now we can begin to understand Nachmanides’ enigmatic statement. Vows are like swearing by the life of the King. The “life of the King” refers to God’s revelation through creation. Nedarim take effect through man prohibiting upon himself any object that God has created. Since man has no right to prohibit any item in God’s creation on his own, it can be done only through the mechanism of hatfasah, linkage of the object to something already proscribed. By contrast, oaths are like swearing by the King Himself. Since man is created in God’s image, he has the ability through the shevuah formulation to act as an agent of God and accept prohibitions without hatfasah. Man has permission to accept upon himself such prohibitions “by the King Himself,” via man’s own *tzelem Elokim*, without any hatfasah mechanism. For this reason, halachah mandates that the shevuah formula must contain God’s name (Shevuot 38b). When a Jew swears, he does so on the name of God, in whose image he was created. (Derashot Harav, pp. 66-68; Mipeninei Harav, p. 404)

from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Thu, Jul 20, 2017 at 4:13 PM subject: Rav Frand Moshe Teaches the Roshei HaMatos A Lesson He Learned the Hard Way I will be quoting two beautiful insights this week that I saw in the sefer *Limudei Nissan* by Rav Nissan Alpert.

Parshas Matos begins with nedarim [vows]. The parsha begins in an unusual manner. Most Torah sections dealing with halacha begin with the words “Vayedaber Hashem el Moshe laymor” [and Hashem spoke to Moshe saying...] However, this parsha begins with the words “Vayedaber Moshe el roshei hamatos l’bnei Yisrael laymor...” [Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of the Children of Israel saying...] [Bamidbar 30:2]. Certainly, Moshe heard these laws from the Master of the Universe, but the pasuk is written as if Moshe Rabbeinu himself was legislating these laws and passing them down to the leadership to teach the Children of Israel.

Secondly, the term “roshei hamatos” [heads of the tribes] is itself very unique. Usually the Torah refers to these individuals as “princes” [Nesiim]. Every tribe had its Nasi. Why does the Torah refer to the Nesiim here as the “Roshei Hamatos?”

To answer this question, Rav Nissan Alpert cites an issue raised by the Rashbam in Parshas Chukas. Parshas Chukas contains the incident of Mei Meriva, where following the death of Miriam, the people did not have water. They complained to Moshe Rabbeinu and Moshe, upon Divine direction, went to the rock. However, rather than speak to the rock, Moshe struck it. Because of that incident, Moshe and Aharon could not go into Eretz Yisrael.

The pasuk in Parshas Chukas says something strange in describing G-d’s instructions to Moshe. It says, “Take the staff and gather together the assembly, you and Aharon your brother, and you shall speak to the rock before their eyes and it shall give its waters.” [Bamidbar 20:8]. Hashem told

Moshe to take the staff and speak to the rock. Many of the commentaries, including the Rashbam, ask the question — if the Almighty’s intent all along was that Moshe speak to the rock, why does He begin his directive with the words “take the staff?” It is almost like the Ribono shel Olam is setting up Moshe Rabbeinu for failure!

The answer that Rav Nissan Alpert gives (which is not the answer the Rashbam gives) is that the Almighty was trying to give Moshe a message, which he did not recognize, until it was too late. After the sin of Mei Meriva, Moshe Rabbeinu retroactively understood what the Ribono shel Olam was trying to tell him and first realized the nature of his mistake.

The Ribono shel Olam was trying to teach Moshe Rabbeinu a lesson in how to deal with Klal Yisrael. It is possible to get people to do things by one of two ways: One way is to force, coerce, or beat them with a stick. The other way is to speak to and influence through the power of words. The Almighty was trying to teach Moshe that the second way is preferable. This is akin to the commonly heard expression “the pen is mightier than the sword.” Yes, it is possible to get people to do things by the force of the sword, but the “pen” — ideas that convey convincing arguments can be mightier than the sword.

What is true of the “pen” is also true of the spoken word. Speech too can be mightier than the sword. Via the spoken word, a person can have tremendous influence on people. So the Holy One Blessed be He told Moshe Rabbeinu “take the staff... and speak to the rock” to teach Moshe a lesson: Yes, take the stick, but I want you to do something that is more powerful than using a stick — namely speak to the rock!

After the fact, Moshe Rabbeinu realized his mistake. The Ribono shel Olam was not trying to trick him. He was teaching him a lesson that every leader needs to know. Every Rebbi needs to know this. Every Rav needs to know this. The lesson is that the stick is not necessary. A person should “speak to the rock.” The lesson that through speaking one can accomplish more that through physical force is a lesson Moshe Rabbeinu learned in a most painful way.

The parsha of nedarim is the Torah section that highlights the power of human speech. A glatt kosher corn beef sandwich can meet the finest standards of kashrus preparation, but if someone makes a neder forbidding it to himself and then eats it — this is as big a transgression as eating pig. The Torah grants a person a tremendous power to effect halachic imperative through his speech. Likewise, if I take an oath that I will eat a corned beef sandwich tomorrow and I fail to eat it, I have transgressed a lav (a negative Torah prohibition, i.e. — “Do not...”). This is the power of speech.

That is why the parsha begins with the words “And Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes”. Who knew this lesson — about the power of speech — better than anyone else did? Unfortunately, Moshe Rabbeinu learned the lesson the hard way by not adequately considering the power of speech (when he opted to strike the rock rather than speaking to it).

He spoke to the “Roshei HaMatos” — why does it say “Roshei HaMatos” and not “Nesiim?” It is because Matos has a dual meaning. Matos can mean tribes and it can mean stick. Moshe Rabbeinu is telling these future leaders of the nation “I am about to die. You will lead these people in the next generation. You can lead them with the power of the rod or the power of the tongue.” Moshe wants them to know that the power of speech is more effective than the power of the stick. Therefore, he addresses them as the “Roshei HaMatos” indicating to them that although they have the power of the stick (*mateh*) they should try to influence the people by the power of speech, which is even more powerful than that of the stick.

The Lesson That Life Is A Journey — 42 Chapters

The second comment from *Limudei Nissan* comes from Parshas Massei.

The Torah lists the forty-two encampments that Klal Yisrael stopped at during their journey from Egypt into Eretz Yisrael. This information seems like irrelevant ancient history. It happened once and it is never going to happen again. Yet the Torah spends a considerable amount of pesukim telling us every stop, utilizing the formula “They traveled from A and they

encamped at B; and they traveled from B and encamped at C; and so forth” cataloging 40 years and 42 stops of travels in the wilderness.

This seems superfluous, not needed, and irrelevant. This is of course impossible to say about pesukim in the Torah. No letter in the Torah is irrelevant. So what is the lesson of the 42 encampments that the Torah is teaching us?

Many of the names of these stops call to mind less than stellar moments in the history of the Jewish people. For instance, the pasuk writes, “And they traveled from Refidim and they encamped in the Wilderness of Sinai.”

[Bamidbar 33:15] Why was that location called Refidim? Chazal say, “she’Rafu yedeihem min haTorah” (they failed to learn properly) and as a result they were attacked by Amalek. This is not one of the more glorious moments in the history of Klal Yisrael.

“And they traveled from the Wilderness of Sinai and they encamped at Kivros Ha’Taavah” [Bamidbar 33:16]. Kivros Ha’Taavah means the burial place of those who lusted. They complained for food and they were punished. There are several other places with similarly negative associations.

How do people look back on the less than glorious moments in their life’s history? The tendency of human beings is to forget it and to wipe the slate clean. “I do not want to remember all those incidents and places where I tripped up.” The Torah says “No.” It is important to remember our past even if that past includes incidents that do not make us proud.

The only way we will know how to be better in the future is to learn from our past. To paraphrase the American philosopher George Santayana “Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” The reason the Torah catalogs the 42 encampments is to teach us: Yes, there were moments in your past in which you fell down, but you were able to bounce back from those moments. Yes, there were moments in your history in which you did not act properly, but you were able to pull yourselves out by your strength of character. Those are important lessons that a person has to know. A person is the sum total of his experiences — good and bad. To have an attitude “I just want to forget about the past” is going to doom a person to failure again.

The Torah feels it is worthwhile to enumerate the 42 encampments to teach this lesson — that life is a journey. The journey is sometimes not a straight line — it has ups and downs, peaks and valleys. There are glorious moments and less than glorious moments. We should not erase any of them from our memory banks.

Whenever I read Parshas Massai and the enumeration of the 42 encampments, it reminds me on an incident that happened with me. Someone once asked me a shaylah [question seeking practical advice]. I do not know if I answered him properly, but based on Parshas Massai this is what my thoughts were:

I knew someone who had a child who had a very difficult time becoming engaged and married. This can be a very trying experience — for the parents and certainly for the young adults themselves. In the course of the several years that it took this person to become engaged, the person’s parents compiled a loose-leaf notebook of all the different suggestions for shidduchim that were proposed and considered over the years. The notebook was not as thick as a Chumash but it was quite a thick compendium. The person said to himself that when his child finally becomes engaged, “I am going to burn this notebook.”

I do not know if they still do this today, but at one time there was such a thing as a “mortgage burning ceremony” when a long term mortgage was finally paid off. The borrower would be so thrilled to be finished with monthly payments on this 30-year mortgage that he would physically burn the mortgage document, celebrating the fact that he now fully owned his home. This is how the parent felt — “When my child finally gets engaged, I’m going to burn this notebook!”

I told him that I was not sure that this was the correct Torah hashkafa [philosophy]. I told him that this experience was a journey in which there were ups and downs (probably mostly downs), but it was a journey that a person hopefully grew from. It is not something to destroy as if it never

happened. This is the lesson of the 42 encampments. It would be much more efficient to say, “They left Egypt; they came to Eretz Yisrael; it took them 39 years, but they finally made it.” However, the Torah does not record it that way. The Torah writes each of the stops and alludes to what happened at each of those stops. We recall the troubles they had at the various stops along the way, their defeats, and the way they behaved. All of this is important. These events made Klal Yisrael and a person’s own history makes him.

Therefore, I advised this parent that in spite of the fact that there were painful moments associated with this notebook, the chronicles of the trying period in which his child was trying to find their destined partner is nevertheless not something that should be burnt. They should be stored and be available so that from time to time it will be possible for both the child and the parent to say, “Look what I went through and look from where I have come.”

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This week’s write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Mattos-Maasei is provided below: # 689 -Leaving Eretz Yisroel # 996 – Tevilas Keilim – The Sticker That Wasn’t Removed and Other Tevila Issues 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.

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from: Esplanade Capital <jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com>

date: Thu, Jul 20, 2017 at 11:53 PM

subject: Rabbi Reisman's Chumash Shiur - Audio and Print Version

Rabbi Reisman - Parshas Matos - Maasei 5777

1 - Topic - Hilchos Nedarim - A point that most people don't know or realize

As we prepare for Shabbos Parshas Mattos - Maasei, the Bain Hametzarim. The Shabbos on which we Bentch Rosh Chodesh Av and we look for areas in which to be Mischazeik towards the days of Aveilos for the Churban. This week's Parsha begins as you know with Dinai Nedarim and it is important to note because Hilchos Nedarim apply far more than people realize, even though we Klal Yisrael have conditioned ourselves to avoid making any type of Neder. Nevertheless, a Hanhaga Tovah, something a person does as a Davar Tov gets the Din of a Neder. I would like touch for a few minutes on the point of Halacha in Hilchos Nedarim and go from there to an Inyan of Machshava.

The Halacha I would like to share with you is simply the Chayei Adam in Klal Kuf Chaf Zayin S'if Ches, Tes and Yud. The Chayei Adam lists three types of Nedarim. In S'if Ches he says somebody who was Noheig a Minhag of Prishus and Chasiddus. Somebody who was Noheig something extra, which is a Hanhaga Yisaira, such as fasting during the Aseres Yemai Teshuva, or fasting Behab, or fasting Yom Kippur Kotton, that is a Din Neder and it is something which he is obligated to continue to do.

In S'if Tes he says the same thing is true with something that you do as a S'yag, as a Geder. The example he gives is someone who waits between Fleishigs and Milchigs 6 hours even though it might not be the Minhag of his family. It gets a Din of a Neder. Something that is a S'yag, a Geder, someone who puts a filter on his computer it is certainly a S'yag and a Geder. It has a Din of a Neder that a person has to keep for the rest of his life.

S'if Yud, a third example. Something that is a Machlokes Haposkim and even though the accepted Psak is to be Maikil but someone is Noheig a Chumra. He gives an example of being Makpid on Chodosh. Something like that also has a Din of a Neder.

So three categories; 1) a Minhag Prishus V'chassidus, 2) something that you do as a S'yag, a Geder or 3) something that you are Makpid on like a Shittah in the Poskim, all of these things have Dinai Nedarim and a person is obligated to stick to it and for the most part it is very difficult to be Matir Neder on these types of things. Of course the most important lesson is to do everything Bli Neder, when you undertake to do anything do it Bli Neder.

There is a fascinating Machlokes Haposkim. Let's say you have a person who is ready to fast Yom Kippur Kotton or Behab and he doesn't feel well, he feels sick one year, so of course he can break his fast. The Shittah of the Shach is that a person has to be Mattir Neder even though when he undertook the Minhag he felt well and now he feels unwell, the Shittas Hashach is Reish Shin Daled in Yor'e Dai'a is that it needs Hataras Nedarim and that is true for any Minhag Tov or any Neder that a person undertakes. He needs Hataras Nedarim. The Chachmos Adam in Siman Kuf Ayin Aleph says the same thing if a person fasts on a Yahrtzeit or makes a Siyum on a parent's Yahrtzeit and one year he is ill or he is weak and he can't, the Shach's Shittah is that he needs Hataras Nedarim.

The Dagum Ber'vava, that is the Node B'yehudain in his notes on the Shach is Matmia says no. If it is because he got old and weak, he never wants to keep to that Minhag anymore then he needs Hataras Nedarim, however, if he plans to keep up fasting on Yahrtzeits or Behab or Yom Kippur Kotton and it is just this year that he doesn't feel well, the Dagum Ber'vava Shittah is that he does not need Hataras Nedarim.

The Netziv in Maishiv Davar Teshuvah Mem Bais Paskens like this Dagum Ber'vava and the Mishnah Brura in Siman Taf Kuf Pei Aleph, Shaar Hatzion Lamed Gimmel says Efsher, perhaps one can rely on this Shittah.

So listen to the Chumra that most people wouldn't understand. Someone who is Noheig a Davar Tov, so certainly he can't stop even if he feels sick and for that reason he wants to stop. There is a Machlokes between Gedolei Haposkim if a person needs Hataras Nedarim. Therefore, a person has to be aware that the things he does that are Hanhagos Tovos and which Yid doesn't look for areas in which he should have Hanhagos Tovos. He is stepping on a minefield of a Chomer of Nedarim. Be careful be Zaru Midivraichem, be careful with the things you say, the things that you do, they have a Din Neder.

If you say to your wife that I am going to learn for an hour then you made a Neder to learn for an hour. If during the hour you have to step out to the bathroom or someone comes and says good morning to you and you interrupt, then you are violating Dinei Nedarim. Say, "I am going to the Bais Medrash for an hour." Don't say, "I am going to learn for an hour" unless you are conscientious to keep it. Be careful with what you say is the main message of Dinei Nedarim.

2 - Topic - A thought on the recent Siyum of Masechta Bava Basra for the Lomdei Daf Yomi

This week, Daf Yomi reached a milestone. Those who learn Daf Yomi made a Siyum on the extraordinary effort of Bava Kamma, Bava Metzia and Bava Basra, learning the three Bavas. More than a year of the Daf Yomi is spent on the learning of the three Bavas, very challenging Masechtos. A Mazal Tov to those who learn Daf Yomi.

I would like to share with you a thought that I saw in one of the Kadmonim. The three Bavas, Bava Kamma, Bava Metzia and Bava Basra are Remazim, hints to the three stages in a life of a human being. The earliest stage when a person grows up and reaches maturity, he is like a Mazik, a Chovel. He is somebody who is not careful with others adequately before he reaches maturity. In that, the Remazim are in Bava Kamma the ideas of a person. Even if he is a Tam he does things a few times not to become a Muad

(B'geder Remez of course). A person being careful in everything he does in paying back damage that he causes.

Bava Metzia is the stage where a person reaches maturity and sets up a family. Shnayim Ochzim B'tallis is a Remez to a Chassan and Kallah under a Chuppa who set out in life and in that middle stage of life a person generally has a Parnasa, gathers assets. Hasoche Es Ha'umnim, Hasoche Es Hapoalim. He has the years in which he does business and he needs to know Hilchos Ribbis and the rules of Hazav Koneh Es Hakesef, of owning things and purchasing things. That is the middle stage of a life.

Bava Basra is Merameiz on the third and last stage of a person's life where a person comes L'sof Chayov and he is generally getting rid of his Asakim, it is a place of Hamocheir Es Hapeiros. He is holding already in Chezkas Habatim, he has a Chazakah in his life where he is holding and Hasocheir Es Ha'umnim and at that stage he is heading towards Perek Bais Kur talks about Kevarim. Perek Ches and Tes talk about Yeish Nochalin, about Yarshining and being Moresh what you own. These are Remazim to the three Bavas and they have a lesson of their own.

What I want to add today is that Masechtah Sanhedrin follows. Masechtah Sanhedrin follows because it adds to a person the Mussar of the Yemai Hadin, of the Din which follows his lifetime. The Remazim of Sanhedrin is that every part of a person's life he has a Din. It starts with Dinai Mamanus Bishlosa, when a person dies his first Din in Shamayim is Nasata V'nasata B'emunah, to be honest in Dinai Mamanus.

Followed by Perakim which talk about Eilu Hein Haniskalin, Eilu Hein Hanechnakin all of the things a person does he is Asid Litein Din V'cheshbon and finally we end with Kol Yisrael Yeish Lahem Cheilek L'olam Habo. The Remazim of a person in his lifetime preparing for the Yom Hadin. That is Merumaz in Sanhedrin following the three Bavas. An aspect of life that Hachai Yitein Es Libo. As we said a person should be careful to pay attention to and as you learn Masechtah Sanhedrin to know where it is pointed and where it is headed.

And so, honesty in Dinei Mamon and the seriousness of these days, the Bain Hametzorim, knowing where we are headed to the Yemai Hadin. HKB"H is M'aneish the Ovrei Mitzvosav. It is not like a nice kind Zaidy who you just say I am sorry to and it is all good. HKB"H runs his world with Din V'cheshbon. That is what these days are supposed to remind us of.

from: Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com> reply-to: rav-kook-list+owners@googlegroups.com to: Rav Kook List <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com> date: Wed, Jul 19, 2017 at 3:18 AM subject: [Rav Kook Torah] Matot: Keeping Vows

Matot: Keeping Vows

One who makes a vow should take care to fulfill it:

"If a man makes a vow to God, or makes an oath to prohibit [something] to himself, he must not break his word. He should do all that he expressed verbally." (Num. 30:3) Oaths and vows are a natural human response in times of intense emotions. Particularly when we sense danger or trouble, we spontaneously begin to bargain with God. We pledge to improve ourselves or repay some undeserved kindness. Why do people act this way?

The Intellect and the Emotions

Two major facets of the soul are the intellect and the emotions. Fortunate is the individual who has succeeded in refining both intellectual and emotional aspects, so that they work together and complement each other.

Torah study and mitzvot help us grow in both of these areas. Some mitzvot are primarily geared towards developing the intellect. They guide us towards an accurate outlook on the world, and help us focus our powers of analysis and introspection. Other mitzvot are more related to our emotional lives. They guard and direct the emotions, refining them so that they will harmonize with the rational intellect.

Where do vows and oaths fit in? They are associated with the realm of emotions. Vows are usually the result of an outburst of feelings - an overpowering sense of holiness, awe, fear, or gratitude - that fill one's heart

and inspire one to make a vow. The Torah admonishes us to be careful to fulfill our pledges. We need to recognize the value of these holy feelings. One who belittles and disregards his vows is in fact rejecting the great benefit of this natural asset, for vows can direct us to live an emotionally refined life that complements our intellectual attainments.

Keeping One's Wife

Rabbi Natan, the second-century scholar, made a statement that is difficult to understand: "A man loses his wife as punishment for breaking vows" (Shabbat 32b). What is the connection between keeping one's vows and keeping one's wife?

The principal differences in the psychological makeup of men and women are rooted in the spheres of intellect and emotion. Women excel in emotional intelligence. They feel more acutely the good and the evil in moral choices, the true and the false in practical studies, the beautiful and the ugly in lifestyles.

Men, on the other hand, are more focused on their intellectual faculties. For them, emotions take on a supporting role.

A woman of valor is called "her husband's crown" (Proverbs 12:4). Her talents complement that which is lacking in her husband, namely the emotional component. His powers of introspection are bolstered and sustained by her heightened sense of good and evil, truth and falsehood.

One who disparages the importance of vows, and their usefulness in refining the emotions, has also lost sight of the sublime value provided by a virtuous woman when her talents are properly appreciated. One who disregards his oaths undermines the significance of emotions in life and spiritual growth. Such a person, Rabbi Natan taught, has 'lost' his wife and her unique contribution. His path in life, both spiritual and material, is limited, for only a woman of valor "does him good and not evil all the days of her life" (Proverbs 31:12).

(Gold from the Land of Israel (now available in paperback), pp. 280-281. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. III, p. 176)

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The Prophetic Voice

by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Masay(Numbers 33-36) The Prophetic Voice During the three weeks between 17 Tammuz and Tisha b'Av, as we recall the destruction of the Temples, we read three of the most searing passages in the prophetic literature, the first two from the opening of the book of Jeremiah, the third, next week, from the first chapter of Isaiah. At perhaps no other time of the year are we so acutely aware of the enduring force of ancient Israel's great visionaries. The prophets had no power. They were not kings or members of the royal court. They were (usually) not priests or members of the religious establishment. They held no office. They were not elected. Often they were deeply unpopular, none more so than the author of this week's haftara, Jeremiah, who was arrested, flogged, abused, put on trial and only narrowly escaped with his life. Only rarely were the prophets heeded in their lifetimes: the one clear exception was Jonah, and he spoke to non-Jews, the citizens of Nineveh. Yet their words were recorded for posterity and became a major feature of Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible. They were the world's first social critics and their message continues through the centuries. As Kierkegaard almost said: when a king dies, his power ends; when a prophet dies his influence begins.(1) What was distinctive about the prophet was not that he foretold the future. The ancient world was full of such people: soothsayers, oracles, readers of runes, shamans and other diviners, each of whom claimed inside track with the forces that govern fate and "shape our ends, rough-hew them how we will." Judaism has no time for such people. The Torah bans one "who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead" (Deut. 18:10-11). It disbelieves such practices because it believes in

human freedom. The future is not pre-scripted. It depends on us and the choices we make. If a prediction comes true it has succeeded; if a prophecy comes true it has failed. The prophet tells of the future that will happen if we do not heed the danger and mend our ways. He (or she - there were even biblical prophetesses) does not predict; he warns. Nor was the prophet distinctive in blessing or cursing the people. That was Bilaam's gift, not Isaiah's or Jeremiah's. In Judaism, blessing comes through priests not prophets. Several things made the prophets unique. The first was his or her sense of history. The prophets were the first people to see God in history. We tend to take our sense of time for granted. Time happens. Time flows. As the saying goes, time is God's way of keeping everything from happening at once. But actually there are several ways of relating to time and different civilizations have perceived it differently. There is cyclical time: time as the slow turning of the seasons, or the cycle of birth, growth, decline and death. Cyclical time is time as it occurs in nature. Some trees have long lives; most fruit flies have short ones; but all that lives, dies. The species endures, individual members 'do not. Kohelet contains the most famous expression of cyclical time in Judaism: "The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course ... What has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun." Then there is linear time: time as an inexorable sequence of cause and effect. The French astronomer Pierre-Simon Laplace gave this idea its most famous expression in 1814 when he said that if you "know all forces that set nature in motion, and all positions of all items of which nature is composed," together with all the laws of physics and chemistry, then "nothing would be uncertain and the future just like the past would be present" before your eyes. Karl Marx applied this idea to society and history. It is known as historical inevitability, and when transferred to the affairs of humankind it amounts to a massive denial of personal freedom. Finally there is time as a mere sequence of events with no underlying plot or theme. This leads to the kind of historical writing pioneered by the scholars of ancient Greece, Herodotus and Thucydides. Each of these has its place, the first in biology, the second in physics, the third in secular history, but none was time as the prophets understood it. The prophets saw time as the arena in which the great drama between God and humanity was played out, especially in the history of Israel. If Israel was faithful to its mission, its covenant, then it would flourish. If it was unfaithful it would fail. It would suffer defeat and exile. That is what Jeremiah never tired of telling his contemporaries. The second prophetic insight was the unbreakable connection between monotheism and morality. Somehow the prophets sensed - it is implicit in all their words, though they do not explain it explicitly - that idolatry was not just false. It was also corrupting. It saw the universe as a multiplicity of powers that often clashed. The battle went to the strong. Might defeated right. The fittest survived while the weak perished. Nietzsche believed this, as did the social Darwinists. The prophets opposed this with all their force. For them the power of God was secondary; what mattered was the righteousness of God. Precisely because God loved and had redeemed Israel, Israel owed Him loyalty as their sole ultimate sovereign, and if they were unfaithful to God they would also be unfaithful to their fellow humans. They would lie, rob, cheat: Jeremiah doubts whether there was one honest person in the whole of Jerusalem (Jer. 5:1). They would become sexually adulterous and promiscuous: "I supplied all their needs, yet they committed adultery and thronged to the houses of prostitutes. They are well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for another man's wife" (Jer. 5:7-8). Their third great insight was the primacy of ethics over politics. The prophets have surprisingly little to say about politics. Yes, Samuel was wary of monarchy but we find almost nothing in Isaiah or Jeremiah about the way Israel/Judah should be governed. Instead we hear a constant insistence that the strength of a nation - certainly of Israel/Judah - is not military or demographic but moral and spiritual. If the people keep faith with God and one another, no force on earth can defeat them. If they do not, no force can save them. As Jeremiah

says in this week's haftara, they will discover too late that their false gods offered false comfort: 'They say to wood, 'You are my father,' and to stone, 'You gave me birth.' They have turned their backs to me and not their faces; yet when they are in trouble, they say, 'Come and save us!' Where then are the gods you made for yourselves? Let them come if they can save you when you are in trouble! For you have as many gods as you have towns, O Judah. (Jer. 2:27-28) Jeremiah, the most passionate and tormented of all the prophets, has gone down in history as the prophet of doom. Yet this is unfair. He was also supremely a prophet of hope. He is the man who said that the people of Israel will be as eternal as the sun, moon and stars (Jer. 31). He is the man who, while the Babylonians were laying siege to Jerusalem, bought a field as a public gesture of faith that Jews would return from exile: "For this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land" (Jer. 32). Jeremiah's feelings of doom and hope were not in conflict: there were two sides of the same coin. The God who sentenced His people to exile would be the God who brought them back, for though His people might forsake Him, He would never forsake them. Jeremiah may have lost faith in people; he never lost faith in God. Prophecy ceased in Israel with Haggai, Zekharia and Malachi in the Second Temple era. But the prophetic truths have not ceased to be true. Only by being faithful to God do people stay faithful to one another. Only by being open to a power greater than themselves do people become greater than themselves. Only by understanding the deep forces that shape history can a people defeat the ravages of history. It took a long time for biblical Israel to learn these truths, and a very long time indeed before they returned to their land, re-entering the arena of history. We must never forget them again. NOTE 1. Kierkegaard actually said: "The tyrant dies and his rule is over; the martyr dies and his rule begins." Kierkegaard, Papers and Journals, 352.

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Parshas Masei
 Jewish Movement

There is a trend amongst all biblical commentators in the Jewish world to view the biblical description of past events that occurred to our ancestors from the time of Abraham through the beginning of Second Temple times as being not only a description of past events but to also subtly indicate the course of all events that would befall the Jewish people.

This type of idea perhaps helps us to understand why the Torah goes into such detail in the naming all of the way stops of the Jewish people during their forty-year sojourn in the Sinai Desert. The Torah indicates to us that the Jewish people were and are a wandering and traveling group.

Even though the commentators point out to us that the Lord favored Israel by allowing it to remain in place at one oasis for thirty-eight years and that all of the many other way station stops listed in this week's Torah reading took place only over a relatively short period of time, of approximately two years, the list of stops and starts is impressive if not even astounding.

Since most of these locations are unknown to us today and have limited meaning to later generations, the broader message encompassed in this travelogue is to be considered and studied. All of the commentators to the Bible have advanced insights and explanations to enlighten us as to the reasons for this detailed accounting of the travels of Israel in the desert of Sinai.

Rashi sees it as a type of recollected history of the events, failings and triumphs of the Jewish people on the road from Egyptian slavery to the settling of the Land of Israel. The Torah, in its usual cryptic style, only records the names of the places and we are to fill in the missing event that should be part of our memory bank. But that requires a certain amount of knowledge, sophistication and national memory. These items are always in short supply in every generation.

If one views Jewish history as a whole, then one realizes that this pattern of movement, stops and starts, continuing travel and social instability recorded for is in this week's Torah reading, is really an ongoing pattern in all of Jewish history. The Jewish people, again as a whole or in its many subdivisions, have literally seen the entire world in their wanderings.

Already in First Temple times the prophet describes Jewish mercantile activity in faraway places of the ancient world. In the long exile and in the far-flung diaspora of the Jews, there is no place on our globe that has not seen Jewish settlement or activity.

Many commentators saw this phenomenon as a positive thing – the spreading the ideas of monotheism and of Torah values to a pagan and uncaring world. Others have seen it as the source of the angst and punishment of Israel for its betrayal of those very same values and beliefs. Perhaps both approaches are correct and have meaning for us.

Nevertheless, we now live in a shrinking Jewish world. Entire ancient Jewish communities no longer exist and the Jewish people are concentrated in a relatively small number of national enclaves, basically in the Western world and the Land of Israel. One would hope that both our travels and travails will soon come to an end.

Shabbat shalom, Rabbi Berel Wein

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from: **Rabbi Kaganoff** <y mkaganoff@gmail.com> reply-to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Tue, Jul 18, 2017 at 5:38 AM subject: **Where do I Toivel my Keilim?**

Since this is the parsha in which the mitzvah of **tevilas keilim** is taught, we ask:

Where do I Toivel my Keilim? By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Gently in the stream "Where I live, there is no mikveh that can be used for immersing new cutlery. May I dip the flatware in a local stream?"

Question #2: Make my own mikveh "Alternatively, how difficult is it to make my own keilim mikveh?"

Question #3: Tap water mikveh "If I make my own mikveh, may I use regular tap water exclusively?"

Background: Metal and glass food implements that were previously owned by a gentile must be immersed in a spring or a mikveh prior to using them (Avodah Zarah 75b). I have written articles in the past on many of the halachos of this mitzvah. However, I have never written on the questions pertaining to where one may immerse these implements, so that will be the topic of this article. As always, the discussion here is not intended to provide final halachic guidance – that is for one's rav or posek. The purpose of this article is to provide halachic background. In many communities, a local keilim mikveh exists that was built under rabbinic supervision to expedite observance of this mitzvah. However, not all communities have such a facility, forcing people to seek alternative arrangements. Also, at times a person is traveling and needs to immerse some items that he has just acquired to use on the trip. May one use a nearby stream for this purpose? This is one of the questions we will be addressing in this article.

Introduction: The Torah describes many different types of tumah (spiritual contamination), each with its own highly detailed laws. Although people or items contaminated by some of the more severe types of tumah, such as tumas meis or tzaraas, require other steps prior to immersion to become tahor (spiritually clean), the common denominator to remove all types of tumah is the requirement to immerse them in water. This means submerging the entire tamei person or item at one time, either in a spring or in a mikveh. (As we will see shortly, one category of tamei person, a zav, can become

tahor only by immersion in a spring, not in a mikveh, and only in a spring whose water is potable.)

Conversion and tevilas keilim In addition to purification from tumah, there are two other instances that require immersion in order to create sanctity. Someone converting to Judaism completes the process by immersing in a spring or mikveh. Similarly, a metal or glass food utensil previously owned by a gentile requires immersion when it is acquired by a Jewish person (see Talmud Yerushalmi, Avodah Zarah 5:15; Issur Vaheter 58:76; Ritva, Avodah Zarah 75b).

Ma'ayan versus mikveh There are two types of water that can be used for these required ablutions. One is a natural spring that runs from underground, which is called a ma'ayan in Hebrew. The other type is a mikveh consisting of rainwater. There are several halachic differences between a ma'ayan and a mikveh. As I mentioned before, although the immersion for virtually all types of tumah may be performed either in a mikveh or in a spring, the Torah specifies that one type of tumah, zav, becomes tahor only via immersion in a spring consisting of potable water (Mikva'os 1:8). There are two other halachos where use of drinkable spring water is essential. The ashes of a parah adumah must be mixed into spring water for its purification to be valid, and the purification of a metzora that involves two birds requires the use of spring water. In both of the latter instances, a small amount of spring water is drawn into a vessel to facilitate the procedure. For the purposes of the rest of our article, we will focus on a different, critical distinction that exists between a mikveh and a ma'ayan. Whereas a spring can make things tahor even when its water is flowing, a mikveh's water must be stationary for it to make people or items tahor. Even a leak in a mikveh could invalidate it; one should consult a rav for guideline as to when a leak is severe enough to nullify the mikveh.

Snow We should also note that snow is treated like rain, and that, therefore, snow, or the water that results when snow melts, can be used for immersion only when it is stationary. We will soon learn of a major halachic ramification that results from this information.

Minimal mikveh The minimal quantity of water required for a mikveh is 40 sa'ah, which Chazal say is the amount required for someone to immerse fully and properly at one time. There are many opinions how much this equals in contemporary measures of volume. Accepted practice is to construct mikva'os that are far larger than halachah requires, even when building a mikveh that is meant only for keilim.

Mekabeil tumah An essential requirement is that nothing that can become tamei may be part of the mikveh, may move the water into the mikveh or may be used to keep its water stationary. This means that the piping used to transport the rainwater to the mikveh must not be susceptible to become tamei, and that no part of the mikveh itself be made of anything that is mekabeil tumah. Therefore, if a mikveh has a plug somewhere, it may not be made of material that is susceptible to tumah. To apply this halachah, we need to define what it means that something is mekabeil tumah. Usually, it means that the item has been fashioned in a way that it is now considered to be a "vessel" or a "utensil." Most vessels that can hold a liquid qualify as mekabeil tumah, although the term mekabeil tumah is not restricted to such utensils. For example, a metal plug is mekabeil tumah and therefore cannot be used as a stopper in a mikveh. If a mikveh requires a stopper, a rubber plug is used, since this is an item that is not susceptible to tumah. A full treatment of the topic of what is mekabeil tumah is beyond the parameters of this article, and it is one reason why someone who is constructing a mikveh should always be in contact with a posek familiar with mikveh construction, even if it is meant only for keilim.

Drawn water For a mikveh to be kosher it must also meet several other requirements. The mikveh must, originally, be filled with water that was never inside a vessel. Water that was once in a bucket, drum or similar container is called she'uvim (literally, drawn) and invalid for use for purification, unless it became connected to a kosher mikveh or spring. The laws here are highly complicated, again providing a reason why one should

not construct a mikveh without guidance from someone well familiar with these halachos. Once a mikveh contains the minimal amount of water needed to be kosher, one may add she'uvim water to the mikveh, and it remains kosher. There are early authorities who contend that this holds true only as long as one is not actively removing water from the mikveh, but that once one begins to remove water from the mikveh one must be certain that the majority of the remaining water in the mikveh is not she'uvim. Although many authorities rule that one does not need to be concerned about this minority opinion, the Shach (Yoreh Deah 201:63) and others rule that one should build a mikveh that is kosher even according to this opinion, and that is the usual practice. (However, see Shu"t Chasam Sofer, Yoreh Deah #203, 212, 214, who did not feel it necessary to take this into consideration when constructing a mikveh.) In order to accommodate the Shach's concern, most mikva'os are built according to one of three basic designs or a combination of them. In one design, a mikveh that was originally filled with rainwater lies alongside the pool used for immersion, but with a concrete wall between them in which there is an opening in the concrete above the point to which the pool will be filled. Regular tap water is added to the mikveh until its water rises high enough so that it spills through the hole into the adjacent pool that is meant for immersion. After this process is performed, the pool may be used for ablation according to all opinions. This approach, which is called zeriya, was the approach recommended

by the Chazon Ish (Yoreh Deah 123:5) and the Taharas Hamayim (Chapter 46), and is the most common construction used in most mikva'os today. The second approach has a similar appearance, in that there are two adjacent pools separated by a concrete wall which has an opening between them that is high on the wall. However, in this instance, the water is added to the side that is used for immersion until the water level raises high enough that its water touches the mikveh water which is located adjacent to it. The minimum size for such an opening is kishefoferes hanod, the opening of a flask, which means that it is large enough for one to place two fingers inside and rotate them comfortably. This approach is called hashakah. A third approach, used in some mikva'os, is that they are constructed such that there is an additional rainwater mikveh immediately below or alongside the ablation pool, and that there remains a small opening between the ablation pool and the mikveh that is always open. This approach is called hashakah beshaa tevilah. The intrepid reader wishing to read up on the controversy concerning this mikveh will read Shu"t Divrei Chayim 2:98 and Pischei Mikva'os by Rav Yaakov Blau, Chapter 9, footnote 41.

Sink or swim As we have now seen, constructing a mikveh requires that one knows how to do so in a halachically correct way. It is unlikely that someone without this knowledge will be able to construct a mikveh correctly. It is for this reason that one should be careful not to use a mikveh without finding out which halachic authority sanctioned it. I have found mikva'os in hotels that were halachically problematic, because they were not constructed according to proper halachic instruction. Similarly, in many places it is common that hardware and houseware stores construct their own keilim mikveh on the premises. These mikva'os may indeed be kosher, but one should not rely on their kashrus without finding out which rav verifies that the mikveh was manufactured correctly or having the mikveh checked by someone familiar with the laws of mikva'os.

Make my own mikveh The simplest type of mikveh, far easier to make than those described above, is sometimes constructed for immersing vessels. In these instances, water, usually gathered from the roof of an adjacent building, is channeled into a concrete basin. The pipes used for this endeavor may not be mekabeil tumah, susceptible to tumah, something not difficult to arrange, and the walls of the mikveh must be constructed in a way that they contain nothing that is mekabeil tumah. By the way, there is nothing wrong with having steel mesh reinforcing the concrete walls of a mikveh. Although a steel vessel would be mekabeil tumah and is therefore unacceptable in the construction of a mikveh, steel mesh is not itself an implement and it may therefore be used to reinforce the concrete basin of a

mikveh. At this point, we can address the second of the questions raised at the beginning of this article: “How difficult is it to make my own keilim mikveh?”

If someone is looking to make a small keilim mikveh, it is not that difficult or expensive a project. However, prior to making the mikveh, he should contact a rav or posek who knows how a mikveh is constructed. Indeed, someone building a proper keilim mikveh is performing a major chesed for his community and receives reward for everyone who ultimately uses it. Let me explain what one needs to do. A keilim mikveh requires two basic factors: a pool where the keilim will be dipped, and the means of draining rainwater into that pool. The manufacture of the pool requires only that one pour concrete in a way that the pool will hold the requisite volume of water. Since this is being used only for vessels, there is no need to construct any building around it, and one does not need to be concerned about hot water, plumbing, or heating. Again, I suggest that this construction should not be undertaken without first consulting with someone who has the halachic expertise to ascertain that it is done properly.

City water Why don't we use only regular tap water for the mikveh? What could be wrong with this? Although indeed some have advocated that regular piped water does not qualify as she'uvim and can therefore be used all by itself for filling mikva'os (see, for example, the work, The Secret of the Jew, by Rabbi David Miller), most authorities are hesitant in recommending its use. To understand why, there is a thorough essay on the topic in Chapter 40 of Taharas Hamayim, an encyclopedic work on the laws of mikveh with an emphasis on contemporary issues, authored by the late Rav Nissen Telushkin. In that chapter, Rav Telushkin describes how he made an exhaustive study of the New York City water system, and includes the various sources of water that New York City used in the 1950's when he performed his study. The chapter includes detailed diagrams and descriptions of the various pumps, holding tanks, filters, meters, and pressure tanks that were used then in the processing and the transporting of the water. Rav Telushkin carefully analyzed each piece of equipment to see whether it was mekabeil tumah. He concluded that, in his day, in most places of New York City, the city water supply could be used, if needed, as the main source for the water in a mikveh, but that there were areas where this would not be allowed. The reason for these exceptions was that in these places, the water was transported through a pressure tank that, halachically, might have been equivalent to it being in a vessel. Based on all his research, he concludes that one should never use the publicly-supplied tap water as the original water of a mikveh unless one has done the exhaustive research necessary to see that in your locale such water is indeed kosher for mikveh use.

In the stream At this point, let us examine the first of our opening questions: “Where I live, there is no mikveh that can be used for immersing new cutlery. May I dip the flatware in a local stream?” Obviously, this stream is not a kosher mikveh, because its water is flowing. The question that we need to determine is whether a stream qualifies as a ma'ayan, according to

halachah, in which case it can be used, even though its water is flowing constantly. How does halachah determine whether the water source of a stream is a spring, or whether it is rainwater? Halachah recognizes three types of streams. One is a stream which is fed mostly by spring water, but has a minority of its water (that is, less than fifty percent) from rainwater. Since a majority of its water volume is composed of spring water, this stream can be used while it is flowing (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 201:2). A second type is a stream that normally consists of spring water but that now has swollen to more than twice its volume after a rainfall, or when the snow melts. According to the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch, since most of the volume of the stream is now rainwater, it may not be used to make items tahor, unless one can make its waters stationary. The Rema (ad loc.), however, rules that, although it is preferable to follow this ruling, there was a prevalent custom based on halachic sources to permit use of this stream,

even when it is flowing. He concludes that one need not correct someone who relies on this approach.

The third type of stream The third type is a stream that dries up completely when there has been no rainfall. Such a stream may not be used as a spring and can be used only if one can make its water stationary (Rema ad loc.). We can now answer the question raised: May a stream be used to dip vessels that require immersion? When the stream's volume does not double after a rainfall, all opinions agree that one may use it, even when its water is flowing. When its volume is doubled, or more, there is halachic basis to permit its use when its water is flowing, although the Shulchan Aruch and others prohibit this. A stream that dries up completely when there is no rain may be used to immerse utensils only as a mikveh, which means one would have to make the water stationary in order to use it.

Conclusion The Torah provides us with a mitzvah to immerse food utensils, because this immersing elevates their sanctity so that they can now be used for a Jew's table. Thus, we see that not only is the food that a Jew eats required to have special care, but also the equipment with which he prepares and eats that food.

This Sidrah has 35 sections (Parshios). To subscribe send an email with the word “subscribe” and your zipcode in the subject line to yairhoffman2@gmail.com. Sponsorship opportunities are available as well. [Rabbi Yair Hoffman]

This Sidra has 8 Parshios

1. The laws of Nedarim – vows. Moshe taught these halachos to the heads of the tribes: Nedarim must be kept. A father can undo a vow that day for a daughter age 11-12 and a half. A husband can also annul a wife's vow. A person should not make his words profane by not keeping his vows. Why was it just to the heads of the tribes? The Ramban explains that it teaches us that judgment must be used when teaching certain things to others because they might take things lightly, if they are taught that vows can be undone. We see from this Ramban how very important it is to plan out how we present and teach lessons to others.

2. Attacking the Midyanim – Hashem told Moshe to take revenge on the Midyanim, and then after he would die. One thousand men from each tribe volunteered for a surprise attack. They succeeded and also killed Midyan's five kings and Bilaam. Moshe, meeting them outside the camp, was angry with them for allowing those who caused Klal Yisroel to sin to remain alive. Anyone who became impure had to remain outside the camp for 7 days and be purified on the third and seventh day. The Midrash explains that Moshe knew that he would die immediately after the battle with Midyan, yet battled without delay. Yehoshua, on the other hand, when given the same instructions - stretched out the battles. His rationale was that Klal Yisroel needed his presence in order for them to remain on a lofty level. He was punished. Rav Henschel Leibowitz zt"l, pointed out that when following Mitzvos, it is important not to make our own rationales. We have to look at it as if we are foot soldiers, and not generals – creating our own strategies. This directive even outweighs Yehoshua's correct rationale.

3. Purifying Items and People – Elazar HaKohain told the soldiers: Any metal that was used over fire must be koshered with fire. Then it must be purified with water. Any vessel that was not used over fire must be brought through water. The soldiers and garments must also be purified. This section was said by Elazar. Why? The Gemorah (Psachim 66b) points out that Moshe's anger caused him to forget the halachos of purifying items, which had to be said by Elazar. Rav Chaim Shmulevitz points out that anger, no matter how justified, brings to error. This is an important lesson.

4. Dividing the Spoils – The spoils were divided in half between the soldiers and the people. The soldiers paid a Meches – a tax of 1 out of 500 which went to Elazar the Kohain. The people paid a tax of 1 out of 50 which went to the Leviim. There were 675,000 sheep, 72,000 cows,

61,000 donkeys, and 32,000 people. The officers said that since they lost not one man they wanted to offer all the gold that they obtained as an atonement offering to Hashem. Moshe and Elazar took it to the Ohel Moed as a commemoration.

Parshas Matos Why did they only divide the spoils of living things and not the gold and silver? The Shach explains that there was so much that was captured, there was a concern that those who did not go to war would come to hate them – so the Torah commanded that the booty that did not involve excessive carrying be split. However, the Torah did not command that they split the items that had to be physically carried. We see from this Shach how concerned we must be for the psychological dimension of how people would react for all parties concerned.

5. The Request of Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuvain for Other Land – The Bnei Reuvain had much livestock, and Bnei Gad had strong livestock. They asked Moshe for nine cities in the area that was conquered (on the East side of the Jordan River), saying it was suitable land for livestock and they had livestock. Why did Bnei Reuvain have so much livestock? The Abarbanel suggests that perhaps it was their focus that was more on livestock since they had lost the birthright, their tendency was to shy away from the others and live more on their own. We see from this Abarbanel the repercussions of a loss of face, and that such feelings continue from generation to generation.

6. Moshe Objecting – They continued in their request for the land and that they did not wish to settle past the Jordan. Moshe attacked their intentions and said that they were discouraging the rest of Klal Yisroel. He said that this is what their fathers had done which caused the 40 years of wandering in the first place. What was Moshe Rabbeinu's reasoning? The Seforno, Ohr HaChaim, and Malbim all explain that Moshe Rabbeinu told them that this will cause your brothers anguish if you sit here in peace while they fight. It seems from this Malbim that it is both unfair and a grave injustice to allow such disparity within the nation. Fairness is key to the nation's morale. This is the lesson that Moshe Rabbeinu is teaching.

7. Reuvain and Gad Pledge Assistance – They approached and answered Moshe: They would build pens for the cattle, and cities for the children, and would serve on the front lines before Bnei Yisroel. They would not return until Klal Yisroel got their inheritance. Why on the frontlines? The Chezkuni explains that it is only fair that they do so, since they got their land first – they should be the first to fight. We see from this Chezkuni that there should be an underlying fairness in any initiative. The Bnei Reuvain and the Bnei Gad recognized this too. This is an important lesson.

8. Moshe Gives Conditions and the Actual Conquests – Moshe agreed but made sure that the conditions were fully expressed – positively and negatively. The Bnei Gad, the Bnei Reuvain, and half of Shaivet Menashe said they would do as Moshe said and got the lands. The Bnei Machir (a son of Menashe) captured and were given the Gilad. Menashe's (great) grandson captured cities and he was given them and named them Chavos Yair. Novach (another descendant of Menashe) captured Knas and named it Novach. Why did Moshe agree to this? It was not in accordance with the initial plan! The Seforno explains that he did so in order to avoid *machlokes* – internal strife. We see how important it is to prevent *machlokes* – but at the same time, the underlying issues must still be met. Moshe addressed both issues with a third solution. This is an important lesson.

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AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER ZT'L

“And you shall remember the entire journey that Hashem your G-d led you these forty years in the wilderness.” (8:2)

When Rabbenu Yonah wished to point out the great importance of a Mitzvat Aseh (positive Commandment), he states that some of the most obligatory duties required

by Hashem are expressed in the form of a Mitzvat Aseh. This verse is among the examples of such great duties and principles cited by Rabbenu Yonah (Shaare Teshuva 3:17): “The great virtues of remembering His kindnesses and of meditating upon them, as is said ‘And you shall remember the entire journey’ and it is said ‘They meditated in the kindnesses of Hashem’ (Tehillim 107:43).”

Thus we learn that this verse, “You shall remember”, refers not only to the nation in general and not only to the journeys in the Wilderness. But, it imposes the obligation upon every individual to look back upon his own journeys in life and to spend some time meditating upon them in order to appreciate more greatly how much he must be grateful to Hashem for His many kindnesses.

In one's journey through life many perils and illnesses and misfortunes and evil influences hovered nearby, even though he was totally unaware of them. And Hashem continued to protect him as he journeyed from childhood to adolescence and on to adult maturity.

He must be grateful also for the continued well being of his wife and children. And, he must always be aware of the tragedies that others had suffered but from which he had been protected by Hashem. This is an example of the method of utilizing commandments to the nation in general as admonitions for each individual.

When R' Miller was asked by a grandchild to reminisce upon his youth, the Rabbi responded. “Talking about the olden days is a waste of time. However, in the context of ‘you shall remember’ (see above), it is a Mitzvah.”

On one Erev Shabbat, the Rav told me 4 personal stories with the lessons of remembering the kindnesses done by Hashem.

- When I was about 3-4 years old in Baltimore, I was walking & tripped on a wooden board which had a nail protruding from it. The nail struck me in the head above my brow (the Rav pointed to the spot).

I was taken to the hospital for stitches. If the nail had struck a bit lower in my eye, maybe there wouldn't have been a Rabbi Miller! But...Baruch Hashem, I am still here!

- When I was in school it was a very cold day & there was a chubby fellow playing & sweating in the yard.

When he returned to the school he drank cold water. He caught pneumonia & fell sick & did not return.

But...Baruch Hashem, I am still here!

- I knew a young man of 20 years old; he did not make it to 21.

But...Baruch Hashem, I am still here!

- I was learning in Slobodka Yeshiva, 1932-1938. The Nazis Y"SS killed all my chaverim (friends) (the Rav sobbed when he recalled this).

But...Baruch Hashem, I am still here!

I was told that the Rav always reviewed the thousands of kindnesses that he kept recorded in his mind. He wrote this Pasuk, ‘To remember all the journeys in your life’, in his instructions given to his family before he passed away. This is what he held as a Purpose of life. Hakarat Hatov!

I went to visit Rebbetzen Miller a"h in the Lakewood hospital. She had recently fallen into a coma. I asked her grandchildren if I could go in to see her & read this divre Torah. When I read this she opened her eyes and seemed to wake up. The grandchildren immediately called Rbtzn Brog. She asked me “what did you read to my mother?” I told her the Pasuk. She said “no wonder! This is what the Rav wrote to us in his last instructions”.