

Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Ki Savo 5770

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HOT WEATHER :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The recent spell of extreme heat here in Jerusalem has been the topic on the street and in all gathering places. Mark Twain's comment about the weather, "Everyone talks about it but no one can do anything about it" is certainly an accurate observation about how weather affects our life.

Though I would imagine that Bedouins living in the Arabian desert in July do not discuss the weather they face in July and August with the same intensity and frequency that we Jerusalemites did last week. It is not only the weather per se that is the subject of our preoccupation, it is that we deem it unusual, exceptional, and extreme that drives our thoughts and conversations.

We ask others older than us if they can recall such a spell of extremely hot temperatures in Jerusalem in their lives. We wish to somehow be certain that this was really an unusual experience, a fluke of nature, something to be endured temporarily and not likely to return in the foreseeable future. Of course, on second thought, we know that all of the above is nonsense.

It is the unusual that is usual in life and that the unexpected and unplanned that is the basic fabric of life's existence. Professors pontificate about global warming caused by modern human habits of consumption and abusive technology but who knows if this warming trend, if it really does exist, is merely part of a cycle of warming and is part of a cycle of nature that nature follows over many millennia. Who knows? In any event, it really was very hot last week here in Jerusalem.

The Torah views extreme weather conditions, unusual for the place and season as evidence of God's presence in history and part of His constant revelation, so to speak, to humans. The devastating floods in Pakistan, the hurricane in Haiti, the tsunami in East Asia are all somehow manifestations of God's authority over us.

Even though there is no way for us to understand or explain why these events occurred and why they happened to those sections of humanity – as the ways of the Lord are completely hidden from us – there is no doubt that they serve to illustrate human puniness in the face of God's natural forces.

When I was a rabbi in Miami Beach, my family and I experienced a number of hurricanes. These hurricanes invariably arrived before Rosh Hashanah during the month of Elul. I always remarked to my children, to my students at the local yeshiva and to my congregants that the hurricane was the strongest and most influential mussar - ethical and religious lecture - that anyone could deliver at that time of introspection and attempted self-improvement.

The prophet Samuel, to prove his message to Israel about the dangers of monarchical rule, invoked a rainstorm in Israel in mid-summer when it usually never rains. Moshe, in attempting to convince Pharaoh to free the Jews, brought major natural disasters upon Egypt to prove his point and illustrate God's will to the hard-hearted king.

Throughout the Bible it is the unexpected and unusual natural phenomenon that is employed to remind a stubborn people of their duties and obligations to God and His value system and Torah.

There is no power of prophecy extant in our midst today. No one can point to natural exceptionalism and teach us an immediate lesson from its occurrence. But as the Days of Awe approach it is obvious to us that the beginning of faith and religious accomplishment lie not so much in the minutiae of the law, as important and vital and necessary as that undoubtedly is, but rather in the acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Divine will in human affairs.

Rosh Hashanah is, in reality, a coronation service and commemoration. God is referred to as king and not only as God. It is the existence of the all powerful force, not understood nor controlled in any way by human

resources and wisdom that governs our lives. So in a strange way, talking about the weather and its extremes leads us to talking or at least thinking about our Creator and His influence on our lives.

So-called normalcy, in weather, personal and national events, or even in mundane events breeds complacency and apathy. It is the unusual event, the "black swan," that stirs the pot and causes humans to assess their true thoughts, beliefs and positions in life.

So, even though I am convinced that all of you, like me, are delighted that it has cooled off outside even slightly, we should gain spiritually and emotionally from the experience of the recent exceptional weather as we prepare for the High Holy Days.

Shabat shalom.

Weekly Parsha :: KI TAVO :: Rabbi Berel Wein

This week's parsha, as do the next few parshiyot of the Torah as well, combines in its text exalted hopes and blessed situations as well as dire predictions and warnings of wretched events that will somehow all occur to the Jewish people. There are wonderful blessings and predictions of happiness and stability and unlimited success in the parsha. But there are also almost unspeakably dire predictions of how close the Jewish people will come to annihilation and disappearance in the future.

It is as though, so to speak, on the surface of the text, the Torah cannot make up its mind regarding the Jewish future and destiny. And it must also be noted that the Torah makes little provision in its statements for an "ordinary" existence. It always seems to be an "all or nothing" situation for the Jewish people – great moments of triumph and/or desperate times of persecution, discrimination and potential destruction.

Part of the main unfulfilled hope of secular Zionism was to make the Jewish people "normal" – to avoid the extreme swings of Jewish life and history. But it is obvious that the State of Israel, the crowning achievement of Zionism, has not succeeded in making us "normal."

We are not Paraguay or Australia. In the short space of sixty-two years of Israel's as an independent sovereign nation - only a blink of an eye in terms of history - it and the Jewish world has experienced soaring moments of success and miraculous accomplishments as well as terrible times of tension, pressures, fear and loss. Apparently this pattern is destined to continue and it has truly been the hallmark of Jewish life over the past century of our existence.

As the Torah indicates, the end of the pendulum we will be on is partially dependent upon us - on our behavior and spiritual thoughts, plans and acts. Just as the events of Jewish life always appear to us as being somewhat extreme, so our goals and behavior are also judged in the extreme, so to speak.

We always have to aim high for ourselves - very high - when it comes to matters of personal development, spiritual attainment and Torah observance. The status quo is an unacceptable state of being in the matter of spirit and tradition. A business that does not grow at least incrementally will surely sink. The same is true for human beings in their spiritual growth.

This is essentially the message of Elul and the High Holy days now upon us – the message of how to attain blessings. Even though spirituality and faith exist in extremes, as I have pointed out above, all extremism must be tempered by the recognition of one's true self and capabilities. Reasonable and reachable goals should always be our true agenda.

Religious life is not a sprint race. It is a long marathon requiring pace, consistency, training and commitment. There will be a day of greatness and tranquility for the Jewish people. So we are told by our prophets who

have never misled us. But we have to do our part to make that promise a reality.

Shabat shalom.

Torah Weekly - Parshat Ki Tavo

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OVERVIEW

When Bnei Yisrael dwell in the Land of Israel, its first fruits are to be taken to the Temple and given to the kohen in a ceremony expressing recognition that it is G-d who guides the history of the Jewish People throughout all ages. This passage forms one of the central parts of the Haggadah that we read at the Passover Seder. On the last day of Pesach of the fourth and seventh years of the seven-year shemitta cycle, a person must recite a disclosure stating that he has indeed distributed the tithes to the appropriate people in the prescribed manner. With this mitzvah Moshe concludes the commandments that G-d has told him to give to the Jewish People. Moshe exhorts them to walk in G-d's ways, because they are set aside as a treasured people to G-d. When Bnei Yisrael cross the Jordan River they are to make a new commitment to the Torah. Huge stones are to be erected and the Torah is to be written on them in the world's seventy primary languages, after which they are to be covered over with a thin layer of plaster. Half the tribes will stand on Mount Gerizim, and half on Mount Eval, and the levi'im will stand in a valley between the two mountains. There the levi'im will recite 12 commandments and all the people will answer "amen" to the blessings and the curses. Moshe then details the blessings that will be bestowed upon Bnei Yisrael. These blessings are both physical and spiritual. However if the Jewish People do not keep the Torah, Moshe details a chilling picture of destruction, resulting in exile and wandering among the nations.

INSIGHTS

To The Lifeboat

"All these curses will come upon you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you will not have hearkened to the voice of the L-rd, your G-d, to observe His commandments and decrees that He commanded you." (28:45)

I once asked my Rabbi why I, alone among my friends, had chosen to return to the faith of our fathers. My friends, almost without exception, had married non-Jews and were busy parenting non-Jewish children.

He replied to me with two words in Hebrew "Zechut avot." The merit of the fathers. "The Torah must have been very dear to someone in your family," he said. "Someone, your grandfather, your grandmother, davened very hard that they should have Jewish grandchildren."

Imagine you just bought a refrigerator. It turns up in a wooden crate. You take out the fridge and throw away the wood. Imagine you're on a sinking boat with the same refrigerator. You take the wood and throw away the refrigerator. When most of the Jewish World was reaching for a new fridge — someone in my past was hanging onto the wood for dear life.

"It is a tree of life to those who hold onto it, and its supporters are praiseworthy." We say these words from Mishle (The Book of Proverbs) every time we put the Torah back into the Holy Ark. Maybe we say them then as we are putting the Torah away and out of sight to remind us what the Torah really means to the Jewish People.

It is our plank of wood in a stormy sea. It's not so much that the Jewish People have kept the Torah — rather the Torah has kept us.

The month of Elul is a time when we rededicate ourselves to the Torah and its values. We must hold onto it for dear life. For it is our only unsinkable lifeboat.

Sources: Rabbi Moshe Newman

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Penim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Ki Savo

You shall take the first of every...fruit...that Hashem, your G-d gave you...and go to the place that Hashem, your G-d, will choose. (26:20)

Bikurim, the offering of the first fruits, is all about gratitude. After Eretz Yisrael had been conquered and divided among the tribes, the farmers were to bring their first fruits to the Mishkan/Bais HaMikdash and present them to the Kohen. The ritual included a stirring declaration of gratitude to Hashem for His eternal role in Jewish/world history. By bringing the first fruits to the Kohen in the Sanctuary, the Jew emphasizes his acknowledgement that everything he possesses originates from Hashem.

Gratitude for a Jew is more than a good character trait. It is not merely a virtue. It must be part of his DNA. When a Jew arises in the morning, the first sound that he emits is Modeh ani, "I give thanks." Why? Horav Boruch Rosenblum, Shlita, explains that it is a Jew's *raison d'etre*. This is why he was created: to praise and give thanks to the Almighty. He cites the Ramban in his commentary to Parshas Bo, who says: "We must pay gratitude to Him for creating us. All that Hashem desires from His creations is that man should acknowledge, appreciate and thank Hashem for creating him."

Adam HaRishon sinned shortly after he was created. It was the tenth hour of the sixth day of Creation. During the eleventh hour, he was judged; he was subsequently pardoned during the twelfth hour. His sin was eating of the Eitz Hadaas, Tree of Knowledge. In addition, when Hashem confronted and accused him of disobeying His command, Adam countered, "The woman whom You gave me brought this about." He did not simply blame his downfall on Chavah. He added, "which You gave me," placing the onus of guilt at Hashem's doorstep. He was the first one to be a *kafui tov*, ungrateful. He not only did not accept responsibility for his actions, he went so far as to blame Hashem for "setting him up."

This idea is reiterated in the Talmud Avodah Zarah 5. Klal Yisrael complained about the manna, "Our soul is disgusted with the insubstantial food" (Bamidbar 21:5). Moshe Rabbeinu responded, "Ingrates, sons of ingrates; sons of Adam HaRishon who eschewed Hashem's gift." Earlier, when the Jewish People had complained about water, their criticism was followed by an attack from Amalek. Why did Amalek attack them, rather than any of the other pagan nations who made their home in the immediate area? Once again, Chazal respond, "Let a nation of ingrates 'collect' from a nation that is ungrateful." This is why, explains the Daas Zekeinim, Parshas Bikurim follows immediately after the Torah's exhortation to blot out Amalek's name. The mitzvah of Bikurim is founded upon the premise of *hakoras ha'tov*. Thus, it serves as a source of merit to erase Amalek - whose essence is ingratitude.

The Sefas Emes observes that Parshas Bikurim is read shortly prior to Rosh Hashanah. He explains that Rosh Hashanah is the day on which we accept the yoke of the kingdom of Hashem. It is on this day that we coronate Him. As a prelude to this auspicious day, we read about the concept of Bikurim which is based upon *hakoras ha'tov*. For without gratitude to Hashem, there can be no coronation. The basis for accepting Hashem as our G-d is gratitude. One does not function without the other.

Rav Rosenblum offers a powerful analogy which is especially appropriate at this time of year. One Jew does his friend a favor by lending him his car. He later discovers that the car had been used to deliver goods to his competitor. We can imagine that the next time he requests a favor, the answer will be "no." After all, it takes great *chutzpah* to borrow someone's car and use it to hurt him financially.

Now that the rules for reciprocity have been defined, let us introspect and take a hard look at our actions as we stand before Hashem in prayer, especially at this time of year, the Yemei Ha'Din, Days of Judgment. We ask Hashem to grant us another year, a healthy and good year, a sweet year. Let Him fill our homes with abundance, our hands with blessing. Do

we ever think about how we have used His gifts in the past year? He has given us a healthy body, air to breathe, money to spend, and how have we used these gifts? We have used them against Him! We sinned with our bodies, we used our money inappropriately, and the list goes on. Yet, we have no qualms about asking for more! Is that chutzpah, or is that chutzpah? What merit do we possess that empowers us to ask for a shanah tova, good year?

We understand that Hashem is unlike His creations. He sees the big picture. Understanding the foibles of humanity, He grants us our wishes despite our iniquities. He does us favors, undeterred by our lack of gratitude for our previous good fortune. The Neviim were acutely aware of this phenomenon. Thus, Ezra HaSofer says, "My G-d, I am embarrassed and ashamed to lift my face to You, for our iniquities have multiplied over our head, and our sins extend up to the Heaven!" (Ezra 9:16) Hashem knows all of this. Yet, as Nechemiah HaNavi says, "But You, in Your great compassion, did not forsake them in the wilderness... You bestowed Your spirit to make them understand; You did not withhold Your manna from their mouths." Chazal teach that even when the Jews made the Golden Calf, adding insult to injury by attempting to feed manna to this molten travesty, Hashem did not reject them by withholding the manna: "In Your abundant compassion You did not annihilate any of them, and You did not abandon them." No, Hashem is quite unlike any creation. His compassion is boundless; His understanding is beyond human ken.

Rosh Hashanah is when the first sin occurred, reflecting a lack of hakoras hatov. Thus, it would be appropriate to rectify that spiritual incursion with acts of gratitude. Indeed, the entire period preceding the High Holy Days is an especially propitious time to cleanse ourselves of this harmful character trait.

It will be that if you hearken to the voice of Hashem, your G-d...that Hashem will make you supreme over all nations of the earth. All these blessings will come upon you...And do not turn away from any words that I command you...to follow gods of others. (28:1,2,14)

The sequence of the pesukim is enigmatic. The Torah begins with its preface: "If you will hearken" and continues with what appears to be a part of the preface: "Hashem will make you supreme over all the nations." One would think that "being supreme over the nations" is a blessing - not a prelude to blessing. What does achieving supremacy have to do with setting the stage for blessing? One who is supreme is "there"! Horav Zev Weinberger, Shlita, explains that the question bespeaks our own misunderstanding of the essence and ultimate appreciation of the meaning of blessing. First and foremost, we must transcend the hashkofas ha'goyim, gentile weltenshaung, the life's perspective of contemporary society. Once we have achieved this transition, once our minds have been imbued with the notion that Judaism and the Torah Jew totally distinguish themselves from everyone else, we can then begin to appreciate the connotation and significance of true blessing. We will have a more profound perception of the meaning of blessing, "Blessed shall you be in the city and blessed shall you be in the field" (ibid. 28:3). The benchmark of blessing which applies to the non-Jew is unlike that which applies to us. Being elevated above the accepted standards which apply in non-Jewish circles is not a blessing. It is a pre-requisite for blessing.

This is why the Torah concludes its blessing with the statement, "And do not turn away from My words that I command you...to follow gods of others." We have just addressed individuals who are worthy of receiving blessing, and now we make an about-face and admonish these individuals not to worship idols! How does one deviate from blessing to serving other gods? The Maharil Disken, zl, explains that the Torah admonishes us to have nothing whatsoever to do with idols- even if it means adopting their practices in order to learn positive living from their mistakes. We are to have nothing to do with them - in both a positive and negative sense. They are simply not in our league.

Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant. (28:47)

This pasuk has invoked much exegesis from the Torah's commentators. The Torah is essentially implying that the underlying catalyst of the punishment represented by the aforementioned ninety-eight curses is Klal Yisrael's lack of joy manifest in serving Hashem. It is not due to our lack of service; we serve! It is just that we are not motivated, excited and enthusiastic. It might be reason for a reprimand - perhaps even a stern denouement- but such terrible curses seem disproportionate and demanding. Perhaps we should understand what the lack of happiness in our lives represents.

Let us look at what might seem to be an isolated incident which occurred during the forty-year sojourn of Klal Yisrael in the wilderness. The rigors of travel took their toll on the people, and they responded in their usual way: they complained. It was not the first time that they had acted without justification. Yet, this time, they apparently went too far. They complained about being taken out of Egypt to perish in the wilderness without food and water. Their coup de grace was, "And our soul is disgusted with the insubstantial food" (Bamidbar 21:5). This was a reference to the Heavenly manna which was sufficient to fill their needs for nourishment. Hashem sent fiery serpents which bit the people, causing a large multitude of Jews to die. It seems a bit harsh of a punishment for complaining. Such a miserable and painful death appears inconsistent with this sin, clearly excessive.

The Nesivos Shalom, zl, explains that the clue to understanding the punishment is to be found by analyzing what Klal Yisrael were really saying in their complaint. They did not say that they were hungry or that they were thirsty. The manna provided them with nourishment and they had plenty of water, compliments of Miriam's well. Their problem was the general order of their lives. It was not exactly to their liking. They had priorities which did not necessarily coincide with those of Hashem. Basically, they were rejecting Hashem's choices for them, giving precedence to their personal preferences. It may not be respectful, but is such an attitude rebellious? If someone likes chocolate ice cream as opposed to vanilla, does that make him evil? Does he deserve a snake bite? Once again; is a lack of happiness a sufficient reason to merit punishment? In Pirkei Avos 4:1, Chazal teach us that a truly wealthy man is one who is sameach b'chelko, one who is satisfied with his lot in life. This does not mean that one achieves happiness by adopting a pragmatic, positive acceptance of one's life. That is the consequence. One develops this attitude by seeing Hashem's guiding hand in his life. We are happy with our lot when we realize, acknowledge and embrace the fact that it is part of Hashem's plan for us. What occurs in life is providential, custom designed by the Almighty especially for us.

One who is unhappy rejects all of this. He eschews Hashem's will, insisting instead on imposing his own will, making his own choices, attempting to override Hashem's decision for him. So, the fellow who is miserable is on a crash course with Providence. This seems to me serious reason for despair. The unhappy person is rejecting Hashem's choices for him. It is thus no wonder that the Jews were punished with snake bites. The snake is the one creature that personifies this form of behavior. Hashem cursed the snake for its role in bringing about the sin of the eating of the Eitz HaDaas, Tree of Knowledge. It was to slither on the ground and eat dust. Perhaps not the most comfortable means of locomotion, but it did avail the snake of ready sustenance whenever and wherever it needed it. Is this a curse? Yes, explain the commentators. It meant that the snake would never turn to Hashem for its needs: no prayer; no entreaty; no, please help; no, thank you; no contact whatsoever. Hashem was banishing the snake from His Presence: "Take what you need. I want nothing to do with you!" The Nesivos Shalom cites the dialogue presented in the Talmud Taanis 8a, between all of the animals and the snake.

They accuse the snake of unmitigated evil: "We have often behaved violently, but with 'good reason.' We have killed to gather prey, to sustain ourselves. You kill for no purpose. You are not threatened. You do not need food. You have no benefit whatsoever in inflicting pain on others."

The snake is a bitter, contemptuous creature. It lacks nothing, but lashes out nonetheless. This is the work of the yetzer hora, evil inclination, who convinces a person that Hashem is not properly guiding his life. Hashem is not conducting his life in a manner that will give him greater satisfaction. This dissonant attitude festers within the person, depriving him of any joy in life. Now we understand not a lack of joy in mitzvah observance is indicative of an egregious fault in one's relationship with Hashem.

According to the above, a lack of joy represents an attitude reflecting one's disagreement with the way in which Hashem guides His world. In a discourse on the middah, character trait, of chesed, loving kindness, Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl, posits that a lack of joy in mitzvah performance represents a lack of service - period! One who serves Hashem without joy does not serve Hashem. He serves himself. In order to understand this concept, it is necessary to explain the meaning of chesed.

The first postulate is that chesed is the foundation of the world. Hashem is inherently good, and the "good" do good. Hence, Hashem created the world as a venue for His creations to do good. The obvious question is: If Hashem created the world so that people could perform acts of kindness, does that not imply that, prior to creation, something was lacking? Hashem never lacks anything! Rav Dessler distinguishes between the nosein and mekabel, giver and taker. The life of the taker is a sequence of needs, wants and gratifications. His sole interest is in taking, satisfying his needs. The giver, however, is interested solely in giving, in providing chesed for everyone, and bestowing happiness on their lives.

Is not the "desire" to perform a chesed also a need? One who is driven to bestow happiness on others is driven no less. He is gratifying his needs in much the same manner as the taker gratifies his needs. Rav Dessler explains that the taker is a negative person who is mostly unhappy, since all he perceives are his own needs, which are never completely gratified. The quality of giving, however, is inherent only in one who is happy with his lot in life. Such a person is happy, not because of material abundance, but due to the spiritual pursuits that fill his life. His happiness overflows, much like a flooding river whose waters flow over its banks. His joy in receiving these spiritual gifts knows no bounds, and his life is a ceaseless flow of happiness. His fullness of joy and love overflow with giving to others. Thus, his urge to do good is not the result of a lack or a deficiency, but rather an overflow of ecstasy, an outpouring of devotion by which a man who is filled with joy is attached to Hashem.

Chesed from a nosein, giver, is an overflow of his happiness. It is the result of fulfillment - not deficiency. Hashem is the ultimate Giver, whose chesed flows from an infinite wellspring of joy. While these are terms that apply to a human - and not to Hashem - we use them as metaphors to describe Hashem's chesed in creating the world and its inhabitants. If a man whose life is filled with joy overflows and shares his abundance, how much more so is this the case concerning Hashem.

This idea can be extended to mitzvah observance. Hashem created us b'tzelem Elokim, in His image, thereby imbuing within us the potential to achieve a joy in being, a joy of fulfillment. The elevated human being who has developed his emotional psyche to become a true giver resembles his Creator. Thus, this individual's giving flows from an inner sense of joy, akin in some sense to the joy of the Almighty.

One who performs a mitzvah may feel joy about his actions for a variety of reasons. First, he feels good about "chalking up" another mitzvah to his spiritual account. His spiritual spreadsheet is credited positively. Second, he feels joy in simply performing the mitzvah. In learning Torah, one may enjoy the actual learning, but not the knowledge he has achieved. He has an inner sense of joy in studying Hashem's Torah. This inner feeling is the intrinsic joy that a spiritually elevated Jew senses when he performs a mitzvah.

We may now appreciate the profound meaning of the original pasuk which intimates that a lack of joy in mitzvah performance is an egregious sin which catalyzes the terrible curses detailed by the Torah. Service without joy - without passion, without heart - is no service whatsoever. It indicates

that the person is serving himself, not Hashem. His dispassionate service is self-serving. Such an individual has not yet begun to traverse the road that leads to true service of Hashem. This is the root of all sin. One who serves himself does not serve the Almighty.

Rav Dessler concludes with a litmus test for determining one's true spiritual plateau. He should examine the extent and quality of joy he experiences upon fulfilling a mitzvah - in contrast to the joy he feels after he gratifies his physical desires. I may add that the duration of joy should also be factored in. Any thinking person knows that physical gratification is temporary, while spiritual joy is enduring.

And it will be that just as Hashem rejoiced over you to benefit you and multiply you, so Hashem will cause them to rejoice over you to make you perish and to destroy you. (28:63)

What presents itself as a most devastating curse is actually a blessing in disguise. First, as Rashi notes, when the pasuk speaks of the good Hashem does for Klal Yisrael, it says that He, Hashem, rejoices. When it turns to the suffering that Hashem brings about through the medium of our enemies, it says that He causes the enemy to triumph and rejoice. Hashem, however, does not rejoice with them. When Klal Yisrael suffers, He is with us in our pain. The second observation is noted by Horav Yaakov Moshe Charlop, zl, who sees Klal Yisrael's ultimate salvation concealed within the abstruseness of this curse.

Rav Charlop posits that there is no revelation of Din, the attribute of Strict Justice, without the attribute of Chesed, Kindness, wrapped in it. A similar concept is expressed by the Piaseczner Rebbe, zl, who opines that Din, when traced back to its source, is actually Rachamim, the Divine attribute of Compassion. This notion figures prominently in his sefer, Eish Kodesh. In any event, we believe that the unity between Klal Yisrael and Hashem and their deveikus, clinging to Him, is so wondrous that it cannot possibly be breached. Klal Yisrael and the Almighty are one. Thus, as any entity cannot exist in the world without Hashem, likewise, there cannot exist anything without the metzius, existence, of Klal Yisrael. As it is impossible to impugn upon Hashem's power, it is also not feasible to assail the existence of the Jewish People. Yes, we can be smitten, but never wiped out. We are unified with Hashem. Regardless of our iniquities, we remain forever His children. This is a bond which is indestructible.

Hashem carries His People on the wings of eagles. Metaphorically, this expresses His love for us and His constant protection. "Let the arrows of the hunters strike Me, but they will not harm My children." We understand that just as it is impossible for the arrows to strike Hashem, they are equally incapable of harming the Jewish People. The nations of the world can hunt us; they can cause us indescribable pain, but they will never succeed in destroying our entire nation. We are well-connected to the Source of all existence. One does not go without the other. This is what is meant by the pasuk. As Hashem rejoices over us when He brings about benefit, so, too, will He allow our enemies to rejoice when they do us harm. The mere fact that He enlists our enemies to cause us harm is a source of blessing for us. They cannot destroy us, because they cannot touch Hashem. Just as He cannot be harmed, neither will we.

In his homily, the Piaseczner Rebbe points to an anomaly that has perplexed historians of the Holocaust: the zeal and almost insane idealism of the perpetrators. The venom that the Nazis directed against the Jews was not only baseless, it was self-deprecating. It was counter-productive to their own national war effort. Often the destruction of the Jews took precedence over their war strategy. Their search for every last Jew in Europe with an obsessive, radical determination, was indicative of a dysfunctional, compulsive hatred that defied any form of sanity. Yet, this very realization, the image of an enemy whose implacable hatred catalyzed a destruction which provided no benefit, allows the Rebbe to express hope that, in the world of redemption, the enemy's inane idealism will be turned to good, in a miraculous manner which equally defies the natural order of rational comprehension.

The Rebbe explains that when Hashem sends a punishment of Din that is cloaked in the natural order - such as a carnivorous, devouring beast - then our hope for salvation is through the natural order, which is bleak. We do not hope for a miracle, because, obviously, the purpose of the punishment is to inflict pain. It is an act of retribution. When the punishment is Din in its bare, unblemished state, not in any way clothed in the natural order, it conveys an altogether different message. When Hashem punishes us in a manner that does not bestow any benefit to the torturer, if he tortures just to torment us, this is a revelation of Din which is unambiguous, not concealed in the natural order. In such an instance, Hashem wants us to repent, to turn to Him in prayer, and then He will save us by transcending the natural order. Under such circumstances we can hope for a miracle. The purpose is not retribution, as much as catalyzing a response of penitence.

Indeed, this explains our ability to strengthen ourselves in the face of such overwhelming troubles. For, just as our adversity is unnatural, so, too, will our salvation be supernatural. At such a time when Din is laid bare, we have the ability through sincere teshuvah, repentance, to transform it to Rachamim. We are no longer within the realm of natural. There are no longer any "rules" to govern reality.

The Rebbe was a brilliant, strong-minded leader. He led with love and empathy for every Jew. As he was speaking, he let out a cry, employing the words of Moshe Rabbeinu: *Lamah hareiosa l'am hazeh?* "Why have You dealt ill with this people?" (Shemos 5:22). He rephrased Moshe's words, "Ribono Shel Olam, I know that everything is for the good, I see it, I sense it - but the people can no longer bear such troubles, so they do not see the good in them." The rod of Divine punishment was too much for the people to bear. They could not see the good. They could not understand the bad, so their Rebbe cried out for mercy.

V'charos imo haBris. And You established the Covenant with him.

In his commentary to Sefer Bereishis, the Bais HaLevi observes the compelling distinction of this statement. Hashem initiated a Covenant with Avraham Avinu - for him and his future descendants - all because of Avraham's emunah, faith, in Him. This is a mind-boggling statement! A human being - that is what Avraham was. True, he was an unusual human being who achieved a spiritual plateau unlike any other human being, but he was a human being nonetheless. Yet, Hashem recognized his greatness and rewarded his conviction with an eternal covenant. It gives us something to think about.

The covenant here refers to the Bris Milah. However, the first consequence of this Bris was Hashem giving Eretz Yisrael to Avraham and his descendants Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, suggests that the word imo, with him, is to be taken literally. He cites the Midrash Rabbah, Bereishis 49:2, which relates the dialogue between Hashem and Avraham at the time of His command to Avraham concerning his circumcision. Avraham asked, "Who will perform the Milah on me?" Hashem replied, "You will do it on yourself." Since Avraham was aged, Hashem helped him do the Milah. Hence, "You established the covenant with him" is to be taken literally: Hashem "helped" Avraham perform the act of circumcision.

Sponsored l'zechar nishmas R' Yehudah Leib ben Chaim Mordechai z"l Drellich niftar 24 Ellul 5762 by Dr. & Mrs. Daniel Norowitz

Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas Ki Savo

"Do you learn?" "Whenever I have time"

This week's parsha contains the terrible Tochacha - the 98 curses delineated in graphic detail, through which the Almighty warns us of what we will be subject to if we do not keep His Torah. Before the Tochacha begins, the Torah provides some "good news". Namely, "If you will keep all my commandments then you will have abundant blessing..." [Devarim 28:1-14]

Immediately following the "good news", the Torah launches into a description of what will happen "If we do not listen to the commandments of the L-rd our G-d..." The curses contain the mirror image of the blessings. Rather than being "blessed in the city and blessed in the country, blessed in our coming in and blessed in our going out" we will be "cursed in the city and cursed in the country, cursed in our going in and cursed in our going out".

The Targum Yonasan Ben Uziel translates the pasuk "Cursed will you be when you come in and cursed will you be when you go out" [28:19] as follows: "You will be cursed when you come in" means "you will be cursed when you come into the theaters and when you come into the circuses - because you wasted your time on frivolous entertainment rather than spending it learning Torah." "You will be cursed when you go out" as "you will be cursed when you go out to make a living".

Rav Pam asks, what is wrong with making a living? A Jew needs to support his family and earn a living. This is implicit in the pasuk "and you shall gather in your produce" [Devarim 11:14]. We can understand the curse associated with lewd or inappropriate forms of entertainment, but what is the meaning of the curse associated with one's trying to earn a living?

The Gemara in Gittin [34a] discusses the concept of "Ones B'Gittin". A person has granted a conditional divorce (I hereby divorce you with this 'get' document on the condition that I do not return within 30 days) and then is prevented by circumstances beyond his control from returning. The Hafla-a h in Masseches Kesubos writes that the whole discussion in Tractate Gittin is only about a case where a person wanted to return but was prevented from doing so by external circumstances (e.g. - an airline strike). However, in a case where the person would not have come back anyway, then the external circumstance that also prevented him from returning is not a valid claim to nullify the divorce.

Rav Pam said that there is nothing wrong with earning a living and that earning a living is not in and of itself 'bitul Torah', because one is obligated to support a family. However, people do not work 16 hours a day. What does he do with his leisure time? If he spends his free time learning, spending time with his family, and helping around the house, that demonstrates that he only spent time working because he was forced to do so (ones). However, if learning or attending a shiur is on the bottom of the totem pole, it proves that the time at work was also not just because he had to, but was because he would rather be doing anything other than learning. He will find any excuse not to learn. It is about such a person that we say "Cursed are you when you come in (to the theaters and circuses) and cursed are you when you go out (even to earn your living)". A person must earn a living. However, he must have the attitude that whenever I have the opportunity to do so, I want to use my time wisely from a spiritual perspective.

Rav Henkin, zt"l, once met the Chazon Ish when they were both yet in Europe. At the time, he did not even know the Chazon Ish and he certainly did not realize his greatness. They were both coincidentally in the parlor of a certain Rabbi, waiting to see the Rav and began talking with one another. Rav Henkin asked the Chazon Ish "What's your name?" and he replied "My name is Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz." "What do you do?" inquired Rav Henkin. "I own a store", replied Rav Karelitz. (This was true because the Chazon Ish's wife ran a store and that is how he earned a living." Rav Henkin then asked, "Do you set aside fixed times for learning Torah daily?" The Chazon Ish responded, "When I have time I learn."

Later, when Rav Henkin got in to see the Rav who he was waiting to talk to, the Rabbi told him that he was about to leave his position for several months and travel to Russia. He was planning on leaving his community in the interim with the gentleman in the parlor named Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, who was proficient in all areas of Talmud." What the Chazon Ish told Rav Henkin was absolutely true. Whenever he had time, he learned! That is why he became the Chazon Ish.

The Hidden Blessing of Being Unchanged -- By Blessings or By Curses

The Torah writes, "All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you (v'heeseegucha)" [28:2]. There are many interpretations given to this strange use of the word v'heeseegucha. Part of the challenge in interpreting the word is that the exact same word is used in the later verse "And all these curses will come upon you and overtake you (v'heeseegucha)" [28:15].

The Shemen haTov gives a homiletic interpretation, which even if not an accurate translation of the word in context, it does provide insight into a concept that is fundamentally true. The Shemen haTov says that the pasuk means, "The blessings should come to you and remain with you as YOU." So many times in life, we see that when a person is showered with blessings, they change him. He is not the same person anymore. Success in business, wealth, or prestige all tend to change a person. The thrust of the pasuk then is that the blessings you receive should not go to your head. They should remain with you and you should be the same person who you always were.

This is also the silver lining to the "curse" "And all these curses shall befall you v'heeseegucha." Sometimes a person has so many bad things happen to him that those negative experiences change him as well. He cannot handle all his misfortune and he is changed by it. The pasuk is hinting at the fact that even curses should not have the corrosive effect on a person that sometimes comes with misfortune.

We need to pray that this be the case with our brethren in Israel when tragedies befall them (the terrible terrorist incident, which killed Dr. David Applebaum and his daughter, Nava, Hashem Yinkom Damam, occurred in Israel the week this shiur was given.) We hear of tragedies happening there all too often and unfortunately, one almost gets immune to the shock of it. However, the tragedy of a father and a daughter killed in a terrorist incident the night before her wedding is one which makes even the most shell-shocked amongst us break down and cry. What can we say about the fate of a young girl who has a levaya the day of her chasuna! Can we begin to imagine the pain of the mother and the wife? Rather than taking her daughter down to the Chuppah with her husband, she has to attend the levaya of both of them the same day. The head cannot imagine such a tragedy. We ask – how can people go on after such a tragedy?

The Almighty has His calculations and we have to accept them, the Rock His Actions are Pure (haTzur Tamim Pealo), but even if we will understand it as 'good' in the next world, in this world it is clearly 'bad'. The hope always is however, that people will be able to overcome tragedy and misfortune. It should not change them. It should not corrode or warp their personalities. We pray that people should have the strength to go on and live their lives in a semblance of the way they lived it before. G-d is a Healer of broken hearts. There are so many broken hearts amongst us. It is horrible.

Even though all these curses befall us – and we do not understand why they happen – we hope that the victims and the witnesses to the tragedy should not be changed by these misfortunes and they should have the strength to carry on despite the curses that have befallen us. May Hashem help us achieve this.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD
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Creating the Mood for Rosh Hashana

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky (The TorahWeb Foundation)

Chazal instituted the reading of Parshas Ki Savo before Rosh Hashana. Much of the parsha deals with the terrible consequences for not observing the Torah. We read this prior to Rosh Hashana symbolizing that the year and all its curses should come to an end. In reality, we do not read Parshas Ki Savo immediately before Rosh Hashana, but rather there is always a

Shabbos after Ki Savo before the year ends. If we want to indicate that the year and its curses are ending, wouldn't it be more appropriate to read this parsha on the last Shabbos of the year? Why did Chazal leave a week between Parshas Ki Savo and Rosh Hashana?

We are taught (Berachos 5a) various methods to overcome one's yetzer hara. If one senses a temptation to sin one should first focus on words of Torah. If this doesn't help, one should recite the Shema. If even this fails to assist in overcoming one's yetzer hara, as a last resort one should focus on death. If thinking about death is the most effective way to prevent one from sinning, why didn't Chazal suggest this as the first response to temptation? Why do we first attempt the less effective deterrents such as Torah study and krias Shema?

When a person is ill there are often different potential treatments. Sometimes a more effective one will not be used at first because of its negative side effects. If the less effective cure is not sufficient and the condition necessitates, the illness must be cured notwithstanding the damaging side effects. Thinking of death is the most effective way of averting sin. However, using this as a constant deterrent can have negative repercussions. A person constantly focused on death will not be able to serve Hashem with joy. His morose mood will prevent him from interacting with others in a cheerful and pleasant way. Thinking of death as a first response to every temptation may be effective in preventing a particular sin, yet it may carry negative consequences that outweigh its benefits. Only if the gentler methods of Torah study and krias Shema fail should one resort to the more drastic approach of focusing on death.

As we approach Rosh Hashana and try to perfect our avodas Hashem, we have many methods that we use. We increase our Torah study and focus on kabbalos Malchus Shomayim - accepting Hashem's kingship over us through our tefillos. There is a last method that we use and that is reflecting upon deaths. Perhaps the most powerful application of this is the tefillah of Unesane Tokef. Yet, the majority of our tefillos on Rosh Hashana focus on Hashem being our King, rather than our own mortality. The mood on Rosh Hashana is both serious and joyful. Constant focus on death would perhaps prevent sin but would also prevent us from celebrating Rosh Hashana appropriately.

During the weeks before Rosh Hashana we prepare our different strategies for overcoming sin. We deliberately do not enter Rosh Hashana on a depressing note having just read the curses of Parshas Ki Savo. Death and suffering are not the methods we want to invoke as we attempt to improve our avodas Hashem. We have these methods available to us in case of need. We read about them two weeks before Rosh Hashana to familiarize ourselves with them, but then have a break of a week so that they do not preoccupy our minds. We approach Rosh Hashana using the methods of Torah study and krias Shema - accepting Hashem as King - as ways of combating sin. If and when we must resort to contemplating death as a way to assist us we are equipped to do so. Parshas Ki Savo can be invoked if necessary but we hope that Torah study and krias Shema can assist us as we strive to perfect our avodas Hashem.

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Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion

Ki Tavo: First Fruits, Led by an Ox and a Flute

The Mishnah in Bikurim (3:2-3) describes the impressive procession of Jewish farmers, as they brought their first-fruits to Jerusalem:

How were the first-fruits brought up to Jerusalem? Farmers from surrounding towns would gather in the district capital, and camp out in the main square. In the morning, the officer would call out, "Let us rise and ascend to Zion, to the House of God!" ... An ox walked in front of the procession, its horns covered with gold and a crown of olive-twigs on its

head. A flute would be played before them, until they drew near to Jerusalem.

What was the significance of the ox? Why the golden horns and olive-twig crown? And why was the flute chosen for musical accompaniment?

Labor, Prosperity, and Wisdom

Most nations understand the value of labor and productivity. They strive to create a social framework for honest, productive living. Progressive nations aspire to two additional goals: national wealth and wisdom. Through their prosperity, they are able to enlighten the world with their wisdom and knowledge.

The ox, the classic beast of burden, represents the value that society places on productive labor. The ox walked proudly in front of the farmers who brought their first-fruits - an impressive symbol of their solid, respectable way of life.

The ox's horns were plated with gold, a sign that, while riches may be acquired in many ways, the most honorable route is through honest, productive labor.

Why was the ox crowned with olive-twigs? Olives and olive-oil symbolize enlightenment and wisdom. The only oil used in the Temple Menorah, a symbol of light and wisdom, was refined olive-oil. Thus the ox's olive-twig crown indicates that our aspirations should not be limited to labor and wealth. The crowning goal of our efforts should be wisdom.

Why the flute?

Long ago, the flute was played not only at weddings and other happy occasions, but also at funerals. Its mournful notes helped evoke emotions of loss and grief.

The ox, with its gold horns and olive-twig crown, was a metaphor for productive labor, prosperity, and wisdom. Yet, these three measures of success may be used for both good and evil. Hard labor can oppress and darken the human spirit. Wealth can lead to overindulgence in physical pleasures, desensitizing the spiritual faculties of the heart. Knowledge too may be misused for destructive and evil purposes. The flute, a symbol of both joy and sorrow, signified the moral ambiguity inherent in these aspirations.

Yet, if the procession is leading towards Jerusalem - "God's word will come from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3) - we are confident that these three assets will be used for elevated goals. Then the flute, which may also accompany unhappy occasions, will ring out in joy before them, "until they draw near to Jerusalem."

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 334-335. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. II, p. 413)
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Weekly Halachah

Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com)

Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

Covering the Challos

Question: Must the challos which will be used for lechem mishneh on Friday night be placed on the table before Kiddush is recited, or may they be brought to the table after Kiddush?

Discussion: According to the basic halachah, there is no need for the challos to be on the table during Kiddush. As a matter of fact, it may be preferable that they not be there during Kiddush at all. This is based on the Talmud's statement¹ that one should cover the food on the table before reciting Kiddush on Friday night. Why? The basic explanation given by the Rishonim² is Yikra deShabata, the "glory of Shabbos." It is considered a far greater honor to Shabbos if Kiddush is recited first, and only afterward the Shabbos food is brought to the table in honor of Shabbos —

which has just been sanctified by reciting Kiddush. However, by covering the challos during Kiddush and uncovering them once Kiddush is over, we act as if the challos were not really there during Kiddush and were actually "brought to the table" after Kiddush was recited.

Question: Why, then, do most people bring the challos to the table before Kiddush?

Discussion: Based on the previous Discussion, it would seem that instead of placing the challos on the table and then "hiding" them, it would be best not to bring them at all to the table until after Kiddush is recited. Indeed, that is the opinion of some poskim,³ and some families observe that custom.⁴

But most homes follow the traditional custom of placing the challos on the table before Kiddush and keeping them covered [at least] until after Kiddush is recited. While the exact source for this custom is not clear,⁵ there are a number of possible explanations as to its origin:

* To honor the Shabbos by having challos on the table throughout the entire Shabbos, even when it is not mealtime.⁶

* To allow the table to be moved after the Shabbos candles have burnt out.⁷ By placing challos on the table before Shabbos begins, the table becomes a basis (a base) for the challos as well as for the candles and it is therefore permitted to be moved.⁸

* To properly fulfill Shulchan Aruch's ruling of "setting the Shabbos table" in anticipation of Shabbos.⁹ Since challos are a main part of the meal, the table is not considered "set" unless the challos are on it.¹⁰

* According to Kabbalistic teachings, placing the challos on the table enhances the table's holiness.¹¹

Question: Based on the aforementioned, should other Shabbos foods be brought to the table before or after Kiddush?

Discussion: Since we have established that for the sake of yikra deShabata we cover the challos to make it appear as if they are not on the table, it follows that all other Shabbos foods should only be brought to the table after Kiddush is recited.¹² Indeed, there are people who are careful to do so.¹³

But this concept applies only on Friday night; on Shabbos morning, yikra deShabata does not apply.¹⁴ It therefore makes no difference when the Shabbos food is placed on the table on Shabbos morning.

Question: If yikra deShabata does not apply to Shabbos morning, why, then, do we cover the challos during Shabbos morning Kiddush?

Discussion: Although yikra deShabata does not apply on Shabbos morning, there are other explanations given by the Rishonim (for the Talmudic statement mentioned earlier that food on the table must be covered during Kiddush on Friday night) which apply to Shabbos morning as well as to Friday night:

* So as to "hide the shame" of the challos. Normally, ha-motzi is the first blessing to be recited and bread is the first food eaten at a meal. When Kiddush is recited, the wine "usurps" the place of the bread.¹⁵

* So as to remember the miracle of the Manna, which fell from Heaven covered in layers of dew.¹⁶

Question: When cakes or pastries are being served at a Shabbos morning Kiddush, do they need to be covered as well?

Discussion: Two of the three reasons mentioned earlier do not apply in this case. Yikra deShabata does not apply on Shabbos morning at all, and remembrance of the Manna applies only to lechem mishneh, not to mezonos items. But the other reason, the one regarding the "shame" of the challos, applies to mezonos as well, since ordinarily the blessing of borei minei mezonos is recited before the blessing of borei peri ha-gafen. Indeed, some poskim rule that cakes and pastries should be covered during the recital of the morning Kiddush.¹⁷

But not all poskim agree. Some¹⁸ hold that mezonos items do not need to be covered during Kiddush because only challos — which can be used for Kiddush and are being bypassed in favor of wine — are being “shamed.” Mezonos items, however, are generally not eligible to have Kiddush recited over them, so they cannot be “shamed” by the wine taking precedence over them.¹⁹

Question: May the challos be uncovered right after Kiddush, or must they remain covered until after the ha-motzi blessing is recited?

Discussion: Here, too, the answer depends on the exact reasoning behind the halachah. If the main purpose of covering the challos is yikra deShabata, then once Kiddush is recited, there is no longer any reason to keep them covered; on the contrary, the challos should be immediately uncovered. Similarly, if the primary reason for the halachah is to “hide the shame” of the challos, then there is no longer any reason to keep them covered once borei peri ha-gafen has been said. But if the reason to cover the challos is to commemorate the miracle of the Manna, then it is appropriate to leave the challos covered until after ha-motzi is recited, since that is when the mitzvah of lechem mishneh is fulfilled.²⁰

In practice, everyone should follow his family’s custom, as there are conflicting views²¹ and customs and all have valid sources. One who has no family custom should adopt the following procedure: On Friday night, he should leave the challos covered until after ha-motzi.²² On Shabbos morning, the challos should be completely covered during Kiddush and partly uncovered for ha-motzi.²³ For seudah shelishis, the challos should not be covered at all.²⁴

Question: May the challah cover be made from a see-through material? May the cover be perforated or made from a mesh-like material (which will make the challos visible)?

Discussion: L’chatchilah, no, since the challos can be seen. If no other cover is available, such covers may be used.²⁵

- 1 Pesachim 100a.
- 2 Rashbam and Tosafos, Pesachim 100b, quoting She’iltos. This explanation is quoted by the Tur, O.C. 271:9; Magen Avraham 271:7 and Mishnah Berurah 271:15 as the primary reason for covering the challos during Kiddush Friday night. See also Sha’ar ha-Tziyun 271:48.
- 3 The Gaon of Vilna, quoted in Ma’asei Rav 118. This was also the custom during Talmudic times, when each participant at a meal was served at his own individual table. Food was laid on the tables in advance, but the tables were not brought into the dining area until after Kiddush.
- 4 As attested to by Aruch ha-Shulchan 271:22 (who objects to this custom). See also Nefesh ha-Rav, pg. 158.
- 5 See Tosafos, Pesachim 100b, s.v. she’ein, who write that already in their day it had become customary for the challos to be brought to the table and then covered.
- 6 See Taz, Y.D. 178:7, who writes that it is customary to honor the Shabbos in this way. See Be’er Heitev, O.C. 180:2.
- 7 Keser Rosh 92.
- 8 See Mishnah Berurah 277:18.
- 9 O.C. 262:1.
- 10 Minchas Yitzchak 3:13-10.
- 11 Ben Ish Chai, Vayeira 17, quoted in Kaf ha-Chayim 262:21.
- 12 See Toras Shabbos 271:8 and Peri Megadim (Eishel 271:7 and Mishbetzos 12) which say that for yikra deShabata to be fulfilled properly, all of the foods on the table should be covered.
- 13 See Misgeres ha-Shulchan 77:1. See also Mi-Peninei ha-Rav, pg. 69.
- 14 Sha’ar ha-Tziyun 271:49; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos k’Hilchasah 47, note 125).
- 15 Tur, O.C. 271, quoting Yerushalmi.
- 16 Tosafos, Pesachim 100b. Based on this reason, one should cover the challos underneath as well to symbolize the bottom layer of dew. Many people use a challah board or tray for this purpose.
- 17 Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 55:5; Teshuvos Levushei Mordechai, O.C. kamma, 46.
- 18 Eishel Avraham, O.C. 182.
- 19 Ta’amei ha-Minhagim 365, Kuntress Acharon; Az Nidberu 2:8.

- 20 Mishnah Berurah 271:41, quoting Chayei Adam. Peri Megadim (quoted by Sha’ar ha-Tziyun 48), however, maintains that even according to this reason it is sufficient to cover the challos until after Kiddush.
 - 21 Note that some poskim are of the opinion that the challos should not be covered during ha-motzi, since a blessing should be made on an item which is visible, not hidden from sight; see Peri Megadim 271:12.
 - 22 Aruch ha-Shulchan 271:22.
 - 23 Nimukei Orchos Chayim, O.C. 271.
 - 24 Aruch ha-Shulchan 291:10 and 299:14; Shulchan Shelomo, addendum to vol. 1, pg. 27.
 - 25 See Minchas Shabbos (Sheyarei ha-Minchah 77:8), Tikunim u’Miluim 47, note 116 and Bris Olam, Kiddush 34.
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The Whys, Hows, and Whats of Eruv Tavshillin By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Although it is still a week and a half before our "three-day" Yom Tov, I thought it was a good time to understand some common and interesting Eruv Tavshillin shaylos.

Question #1:

Avrumie, who studies in a local yeshiva, asks me: “I will be eating my Yom Tov meals as a guest in different homes. Do I need to make my own eruv tavshillin?”

Question #2:

Michal and Muttie are spending Rosh Hashanah near his Yeshiva and are invited out for all the meals. They have found an available apartment for Yom Tov, but do not intend to use the kitchen there at all. Someone told Muttie that, although he should make an eruv tavshillin, he should not recite a bracha when doing so. Is this the correct procedure?

Answer:

In order to reply accurately to the above inquiries we need to investigate several aspects of this mitzvah that the Sages implemented – particularly, the whys, hows, and whats of eruv tavshillin.

WHY DO WE MAKE AN ERUV TAVSHILLIN?

Although one may cook on Yom Tov, one may only prepare food for consumption on that Yom Tov. There is, however, one exceptional situation -- one may cook on a Friday Yom Tov for Shabbos, but only if one makes an eruv tavshillin the day before Yom Tov.

WHAT IS THE RECIPE FOR PRODUCING AN ERUV TAVSHILLIN?

It is fairly easy to make an eruv tavshillin:

1. INGREDIENTS

On Erev Yom Tov, set aside two prepared foods, one cooked and one baked, that one is not planning to eat on Yom Tov. Many people use a hard-boiled egg for the cooked item, but it is actually preferable to use something more significant (Mishnah Berurah 527:8).

(2. Someone who includes people outside his family in his eruv, such as the rav of a community, adds an additional step at this point: He has someone who does not usually eat with him, whom we will call the zo’che, lift the food used for the eruv tavshillin four inches or more. By lifting the food, the zo’che acquires ownership in the eruv for those who will forget to make an eruv tavshillin. The zo’che then returns the food to the rav [Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 527:10- 12 and commentaries]. I will soon explain what the zo’che’s involvement accomplishes.)

3. PROCEDURE

One then holds the eruv tavshillin, recites a bracha, Baruch Atta Hashem Elokeinu Melech haolam asher ki’deshanu bemitzvosav vetzivanu al mitzvas eruv, and declares:

This eruv permits us to bake, cook, wrap food to keep it hot, to kindle lights, and make all other food preparations on Yom Tov for Shabbos (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 527:12).

(4. Those who include other people in their eruv, add the following clause to this declaration: For ourselves and for all others who dwell in this city.)

5. INSTRUCTIONS

The foods that have now become the eruv tavshillin should not be consumed until one has completed all the Shabbos preparations.

6. YIELD

The eruv tavshillin allows the members of this household to prepare food for Shabbos. The rav's eruv tavshillin will allow others who forgot to prepare food, subject to the details we will soon learn.

WHAT DO I DO WITH THE ERUV?

After one has completed preparing everything for Shabbos, there is no requirement to do anything with the eruv, although it is preferable to use the challah as the second loaf for the first two meals of Shabbos and to eat the entire eruv tavshillin as part of the third meal of Shabbos (seudah shelishis) in order to use the mitzvah item (that is, the eruv tavshillin) for other mitzvos, in this case the three Shabbos meals (see Mishnah Berurah 527:48). (For the same reason, many set aside the lulav and hoshanas after Sukkos to use as fuel for baking matzos or burning the chometz.)

If someone mistakenly ate the eruv tavshillin before Shabbos, one may continue the Shabbos preparations as long as at least an olive-sized piece of the cooked item remains, even if the entire baked item was consumed. However, if less than an olive-sized piece of the cooked item remains, one may no longer continue cooking especially for Shabbos, and should ask a shaylah how to proceed (Shulchan Aruch 527:15).

FORGOT TO MAKE AN ERUV

Someone who fails to make an eruv tavshillin may not cook or bake on Yom Tov for Shabbos, and needs to ask a shaylah how to prepare his Shabbos meals (see Shulchan Aruch 527:20- 22). The Rishonim dispute whether he may kindle lights on Yom Tov for Shabbos when he has no eruv tavshillin (Shulchan Aruch 527:19). This dispute will soon become significant to our discussion.

WHY DOES THE RAV INCLUDE OTHER PEOPLE IN HIS ERUV?

As mentioned above, someone who did not make an eruv tavshillin may not cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos. The Gemara narrates the following story:

Shmuel saw that someone was very sad on Yom Tov and asked him why. The man responded, "Because I neglected to make an eruv tavshillin, and therefore I will be unable to cook for Shabbos." Shmuel explained that the man could rely on Shmuel's eruv tavshillin.

The next year Yom Tov once more fell on Friday. Shmuel again noticed that the man was sad, and again the man mentioned that he had forgotten to make an eruv tavshillin. However, this time Shmuel advised him that since he had repeated the negligence, he may not rely upon Shmuel's eruv (Beitzah 16b).

We see that the rav should include everyone in his city in his eruv tavshillin, lest someone forget to make an eruv, although everyone is required to create his/her own (Shulchan Aruch 527:7).

WHY DOES THE RAV HAND HIS ERUV TO SOMEONE ELSE?

A person must own or be a partner in the eruv tavshillin with which he fulfills this mitzvah. An eruv tavshillin automatically includes all regular members of this household, but how does it include other people? Having someone pick up the eruv tavshillin on their behalf makes them partial owners in this eruv tavshillin.

MUST I MAKE AN ERUV?

At this point, we can begin to analyze the two questions I mentioned at the beginning of the article. Let us begin by rephrasing Avrumie's question: "I will be eating my Yom Tov meals as a guest. Do I make an eruv tavshillin?"

Avrumie, Michal, and Muttie will not be cooking on Yom Tov; does that exempt them from eruv tavshillin, or must they make one anyway? Is eruv tavshillin merely a license to cook for Shabbos on Yom Tov and therefore someone not preparing food has no need for one, or is there a rabbinic requirement to make an eruv tavshillin even when one will not be cooking? Avrumie will not be preparing food for Shabbos, whereas Michal will only be kindling the Shabbos lights. I will discuss soon whether this distinction affects our question. In the interim, I will discuss Avrumie's situation by presenting two differing ways of understanding the function of eruv tavshillin, that I will describe as (A) matir, license or (B) chovah, obligation.

A. Matir

According to this approach, eruv tavshillin functions solely to permit one to cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos, so that one who is not planning to cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos has no requirement to make an eruv tavshillin. This opinion compares eruv tavshillin to the mitzvah of shechitah. One is not required to shecht an animal; however, someone interested in converting a bird or animal into food must perform shechitah to make it kosher. Thus, shechitah is a matir; it permits one to eat the meat, but one is not required to shecht an animal if one does not want to eat it. Similarly, eruv tavshillin permits one to cook for Shabbos, but one who does not intend to cook does not need to make an eruv.

Those following this approach will note that the other types of eruv (eruvei chatzeiros and eruvei techumim) are both types of matir that permit either carrying or traveling that is otherwise prohibited, and may question why eruv tavshillin should be any different.

According to this approach, Avrumie has no need for an eruv tavshillin since he has no intention to cook for Shabbos. We will discuss shortly whether Michal's kindling requires her to make an eruv tavshillin.

B. Chovah

On the other hand, one could argue that eruv tavshillin is different from the other two types of eruv, and is an obligatory act. This approach understands that Chazal created a rabbinic mitzvah requiring each individual or family to make an eruv tavshillin even if there is no intention to cook or bake on Yom Tov for Shabbos.

Why should eruv tavshillin be different from the other types of eruv? To answer this question we need to explain the reason for the rabbinic mitzvah called eruv tavshillin.

WHAT IS THE REASON FOR ERUV TAVSHILLIN?

Why did Chazal establish this mitzvah? The Gemara records a dispute why Chazal introduced eruv tavshillin: Was it for the sake of honoring Shabbos, or for the sake of honoring Yom Tov (Beitzah 15b)?

A. For Shabbos

According to the first opinion, that of Rava, Chazal instituted eruv tavshillin to guarantee that one not become so involved in the Yom Tov feasting that one forgets to prepare proper meals for Shabbos. The eruv tavshillin therefore serves as a red "flag": "Don't forget to also produce delicious repasts for Shabbos!"

B. For Yom Tov

The other approach, that of Rav Ashi, contends that eruv tavshillin reinforces the sanctity of Yom Tov by emphasizing that without the eruv tavshillin one may not cook on Yom Tov, even for Shabbos. A person thereby realizes: if cooking for Shabbos (on Yom Tov) is forbidden without an eruv tavshillin, certainly one may not prepare food on Yom Tov for a subsequent weekday!

How does this dispute affect Avrumie, Michal and Muttie?

The basis for treating eruv tavshillin as a chovah, an obligation, and not merely a matir, is Rava's opinion that eruv tavshillin's purpose is to

guarantee that one celebrates Shabbos properly. In other words, eruv tavshillin is to remind us to cook for Shabbos. Clearly, this is not a matir, but a chovah. In Rava's opinion, eruv tavshillin is similar to the rabbinic requirement of kindling lights before Shabbos to ensure that one does not sit in the dark. Even someone who enjoys sitting in the dark is required to kindle lights before Shabbos since this is not a matir but a chovah. Thus, according to Rava, Avrumie must make an eruv tavshillin (or be included in someone else's), even though he has no intention to cook, because eruv tavshillin is a requirement that Chazal placed on every individual to remind him to prepare appropriate meals for Shabbos.

DO WE FOLLOW RAVA'S APPROACH?

However, the halacha does not follow Rava's opinion, but Rav Ashi's position that the purpose of eruv tavshillin is for Yom Tov's honor. As noted above, Rav Ashi contended that the reason for eruv tavshillin is to guarantee that people realize that Yom Tov is so holy that one may not cook on it for afterwards. According to this approach, one could argue that eruv tavshillin is simply a matir but that one who does not intend to cook for Shabbos need not make an eruv tavshillin, since if one is not cooking for Shabbos, it is unlikely that he will cook for the weekdays after Shabbos.

On the other hand, the usual halachic assumption is that when the Gemara quotes two disputing opinions, the disagreement only concerns the one point mentioned and no other issues. Thus, once we have demonstrated that Rava contends that eruv tavshillin is mandatory, we should conclude either one of the following two points:

1. That the issue of whether eruv tavshillin is a matir or a chovah is itself the focal point of the dispute between Rav Ashi and Rava.
2. That Rav Ashi and Rava agree that eruv tavshillin is mandatory and not merely a matir.

The difficulty with the first approach is that we see no evidence that Rav Ashi considers eruv tavshillin to be only a matir. On the contrary, the Gemara maintains that the dispute between Rav Ashi and Rava is whether eruv tavshillin is for the honor of Yom Tov or of Shabbos. Since Rava must maintain that eruv tavshillin is a chovah, and the dispute between them concerns only whether eruv tavshillin is for the honor of Yom Tov or of Shabbos, we should infer that Rav Ashi agrees that eruv tavshillin is a chovah. This analysis would conclude that Avrumie, Michal and Muttie are all required to make an eruv tavshillin. However, notwithstanding this analysis, I have found no early source who states that eruv tavshillin is obligatory for someone who has no need to cook for Shabbos.

LITERATURE

Having discussed whether eruv tavshillin is a matir or a chovah we can now research whether the halachic literature produces any evidence supporting either side of this question. Analysis of the position of one recognized halachic authority demonstrates that he felt that eruv tavshillin is a matir, not a chovah.

A respected commentary on the Shulchan Aruch, the Maamar Mordechai (527:18), discusses the exact issue that I posed as Michal's shaylah:

Someone will not be cooking or baking on Yom Tov for Shabbos, but will need to kindle lights immediately before the entry of Shabbos. Does this person recite a bracha prior to making his/her eruv tavshillin?

The background to his question is the dispute of the Rishonim whether a person may kindle lights for Shabbos even if he did not make an eruv tavshillin. In other words, some Rishonim hold that an eruv tavshillin is not only necessary to permit cooking on Yom Tov, but it is also necessary to permit any preparations for Shabbos.

The Maamar Mordechai rules that since many authorities contend that kindling lights for Shabbos does not require an eruv tavshillin, someone not intending to cook for Shabbos should make an eruv tavshillin without reciting a bracha.

Implicit in the Maamar Mordechai's conclusion is that the purpose of eruv tavshillin is exclusively to permit cooking and baking on Yom Tov, and there is no independent requirement to make an eruv tavshillin. If the Maamar Mordechai felt that eruv tavshillin is a chovah and not merely a matir, the dispute whether one can kindle lights without an eruv tavshillin is irrelevant to whether one recites a bracha or not. Whether one needs the eruv tavshillin or not, one would recite a bracha for performing the mitzvah that Chazal instituted! Thus, the Maamar Mordechai clearly holds that eruv tavshillin is only a matir, and that one recites the bracha only if the matir is required.

However, the Maamar Mordechai's ruling is not obvious, even assuming that eruv tavshillin is only a matir and not a chovah. It is possible that one should recite a bracha on making the eruv tavshillin even if he has no intention to cook on Yom Tov, since the eruv permits him to cook should he choose to. Thus, the eruv tavshillin fulfilled its role as a matir in permitting him to cook, and for that alone he should be able to recite a bracha even if he has no intention to cook. Yet the Maamar Mordechai values the eruv tavshillin only if one intends to use it, whereas if one does not intend to use it, it is considered purposeless and warrants no bracha. Thus, according to the Maamar Mordechai, Michal and Muttie should make an eruv tavshillin without a bracha.

I was asked this exact shaylah once when the first day of Pesach occurred on Thursday. Those of us who live in Eretz Yisrael had no mitzvah of eruv tavshillin since, for us, Friday was not Yom Tov. However, we (my family) had several guests for Yom Tov who live in chutz la'aretz and observe two days of Yom Tov even while visiting Eretz Yisroel. For them, it was prohibited to cook on Yom Tov without an eruv tavshillin. I suggested that they make an eruv tavshillin with a bracha, but out of deference to the opinion of the Maamar Mordechai, instructed that those reciting a bracha should participate in the cooking for Shabbos that will transpire on Yom Tov at least in a small way. Of course, I suggest that those of you faced with the same shaylah as Avrumie, Michal or Muttie ask your own rav for direction. I would be curious to know whether he agreed with me and, if not, for what reason?

THE HASHKAFAH OF PREPARING FOOD ON YOM TOV

The Torah refers to the Yomim Tovim as Moed. Just as the word ohel moed refers to the tent in the desert which served as a meeting place between Hashem and the Jewish people, so too, a moed is a meeting time between Hashem and the Jewish people (Hirsch, Vayikra 23:3 and Horeb). Unlike Shabbos, when we refrain from all melacha activity, on Yom Tov the Torah permitted melacha activity that enhances the celebration of the Yom Tov as a Moed. Permitting the preparations of delicious, freshly prepared meals allows an even greater celebration of this unique meeting time with Hashem.