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subject: **Rav Frand - Techiyas haMeisim Source / Az Yashir in Pesukei D'Zimra**

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: # 1062 Shalosh Seudos: Where and With What? Good Shabbos!

From Here We Learn the Idea of Resurrection

The pasuk in this week's parsha says, "Then Moshe and the Children of Israel sang this song to Hashem..." [Shemos 15:1] The words "Az Yashir," which begin this famous section of the Torah are very peculiar. Literally, they mean, "Then he will sing" (future tense). Technically, the Torah should have written, "Az shar Moshe..." — then Moshe sang (past tense). The Medrash comments "From here we see the idea of Resurrection (Techiyas haMeisim) in the Torah."

It seems strange that one of the fundamental beliefs of our religion — one of Maimonides' 13 Basic Principles of Faith — namely Techiyas haMeisim is not explicitly mentioned in the Torah. Instead, we learn it homiletically from several places, one of which is our pasuk, "Then Moshe and the Children of Israel will sing..." The question is — why is this the venue to teach us about Techiyas HaMeisim?

The Chidushei HaRim shares a very interesting thought. There is a concept called Emunah [Faith] — which is fundamental to our religion. These beliefs are listed in the "Ani Ma'amins" ("Ani Ma'amin" means I have Emunah — i.e., belief). We must believe in the Almighty; we believe that He is only One; etc., etc. We must have Emunah.

Bnei Yisroel experienced the Exodus from Mitzrayim [Egypt] and then the Splitting of the Yam Suf [Reed Sea], about which it is said that the most simple handmaiden at the Sea had prophetic visions greater than the great prophet Yechezkel. The first chapter of the Book of Yechezkel delineates the great vision Yechezkel saw, including Angels and the Heavenly Chariot, and the Master of the World Himself.

Chazal say that the simple handmaiden by the Yam Suf had greater understanding and a greater appreciation of spiritual matters than the prophet Yechezkel. However, when Klal Yisrael saw great truths with such clarity, paradoxically, that removed their ability to have Emunah. Contrary to the popular saying that 'Seeing is Believing', theologically, that is not the case because what someone sees in front of his face is not something to which we can apply the term 'Emunah.' Emunah is Faith — something I believe in despite the fact that I cannot see it and I cannot prove it. If you see me holding up five fingers, you do not need to believe that I am holding up five fingers, you know it! If Divine Truth was clear as day to everyone at the Sea, how is it possible to have any Emunah there?

Yet, the Torah says that at the Yam Suf, the Jewish people had Emunah — "Va'yaminu b'Hashem..." [Shemos 14:31]. That is why this is the source for the concept of Techiyas HaMeisim. Their Emunah did play a role. Their experience at the Yam Suf did not include witnessing the idea that there comes a time when everyone dies, but they will come back again. Consequently, at this point they still had an opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah of having Emunah regarding the concept of Resurrection. Belief in all the other essential fundamentals of faith was obvious to them at this point, to even the lowest members of society. Their Belief could only be in something that was not in front of their faces. That something was Techiyas HaMeisim, so it is appropriate for the Torah to allude to this concept right at the beginning of Shiras HaYam with the words 'Az Yashir Moshe' (then Moshe will sing.)

The Message of Shiras HaYam in Pesukei D'Zimra

I saw the following observation in the sefer Chikrei Lev by Rabbi Laibel Hyman, shlit"a.

Have you ever wondered why Az Yashir is included in Pesukei D'Zimra (the preliminary section of the morning prayers)? Pesukei D'Zimra is all about praise and thanksgiving for the greatness of Hashem. This is our preparation for Shachris. Before we can approach the Master of the Universe and ask him for our needs, we need to have an understanding of who the Ribono shel Olam is. The entire Pesukei D'Zimra is about His praises.

Az Yashir does not fit into that formula. It is a historical event, something that happened, for which Shira was recited. Why did they choose to put Az Yashir into this section of prayer?

Rabbi Hyman raises a second question: How many times do we mention Mitzrayim in Az Yashir? The answer is zero. Az Yashir only mentions Pharaoh. This is seemingly a poem about the destruction of the Egyptian nation and the Egyptian army, yet there is not any mention of Egypt.

Rabbi Hyman suggests that what happened at the Yam Suf was not really about Mitzrayim. It was a battle, so to speak, between the Hashem and Pharaoh. This was — if we can say such a thing — "personal," between the Almighty and Pharaoh. Why? It is because Pharaoh at this point still was of the belief that he was a god. He felt that he was more than just king. He felt, and he wanted everyone else to feel, that he was a Deity. "To me is the Nile and I am the Creator." [Yechezkel 29:3]. That is why Pharaoh had this problem about going to the bathroom, because gods do not go to the bathroom. Therefore, he had this charade of everyone believing that he did not need to relieve himself, which ostensibly proved that he was a god.

At Krias Yam Suf, when Pharaoh was still of this impression and still attempting to hoist it upon the Egyptian people, the Almighty's intention was "And Egypt shall know that I am Hashem." [Shemos 14:4] The purpose of Krias Yam Suf is to make known that there is only one G-d. Pharaoh, the

Egyptian people, and indeed the world had to be disabused of the notion that there was the possibility of another god in the universe.

Therefore, Mitzrayim is not even mentioned in this song, because it is, so to speak, between Hashem and Pharaoh alone. The bottom line of the Shira is Hashem Yimloch l'Olam Va'ed – Hashem will rule forever and ever; there is only One Ribono shel Olam.

Now we understand, he says, why the Shira is located in Pesukei D'Zimra. This is really not part of Pesukei D'Zimra in the classic sense. Rather, this is a prelude to Krias Shema and to the Blessings of Krias Shema. In Krias Shema (Listen O' Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One), we accept upon ourselves the exclusivity and the unity of G-d. The prelude to that is "See what happened in Mitzrayim; see what happened at the Yam Suf." By Krias Yam Suf, the Ribono shel Olam said, "I am going to show the world that there is no such thing as another god. There is only one Ribono shel Olam." Therefore, the words "Hashem Yimloch l'Olam Va'ed" contain the final message of the Shira. The reason the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah [Men of the Great Assembly] decided to put Shiras HaYam into Pesukei D'Zimra is not because this is just another way of praising the Almighty. We did that already with all the chapters of Tehillim [Psalms] that we read prior to Shiras HaYam. This is a different message – preparing us for Birkas Krias Shema and Krias Shema, by reinforcing the idea of Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad.

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Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org 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 B'Shalach is provided below: # 041 Israel's Wars: 1948-1973, A Halachic Perspective; # 084 The Mitzvah of Krias HaTorah; # 132 Standing for Krias Hatorah; # 179 Female Vocalists: The Problem of Kol Isha; # 225 Music in Halacha; # 269 Lechem Mishnah; # 315 The Prohibition of Living in Egypt; # 359 Making Ice on Shabbos; # 403 Three Slices of Pizza—Must You Bench?; # 447 Hidir Mitzvah; # 491 The Three Seudos of Shabbos; # 535 Using P'sukim for Nigunim?; # 579 Being Motzi Others in Lechem Mishan and Other Brachos; # 623 Kiddush or Netilas Yadayim – Which Comes First?; # 667 The Supernatural and the "Mun" dane; # 711 Shlishi or Shishi? and Other Aliyah Issues; # 755 Techum Shabbos: Wearing Your Hat to the Hospital; # 799 Kibud Av – Can A Father Be Mochel?; # 843 Shalosh Seudos in the Morning?; # 887 Rejoicing At The Death of Reshoim -Recommended or Not?; # 931 K'rias Hatorah – Must You Listen?; # 974 Bracha of Ga'al Yisroel Before Shemoneh Esrai—Silent or Out loud?; #1018 Bracha Achrona: How Soon Must You Say It?; #1062 Shalosh Seudos: Where and With What?; #1105 The Shabbos Seuda On A No-Carb Diet; #1148 Kol Isha – Listening To A Female Vocalist on the Radio; #1191 Was Devorah Really a Dayan? How Did She Learn That Much Torah?; #1235 Are women obligated in Lechem Mishneh?; #1279 Parshas Zachor for Women After Davening & Other Krias HaTorah 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. Rav Frand © 2018 by Torah.org. Do you have a question or comment? Feel free to contact us on our website.

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Home Weekly Parsha B'SHALACH Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

This week the Torah introduces us to the miraculous heavenly food – the manna that fell from heaven and sustained the Jewish people for 40-years during their sojourn in the desert of Sinai. This food had miraculous qualities it could acquire whatever taste the person eating it desired, it produced no waste material, but it had a very limited shelf life. It could not be stored for the next day and rotted away if not consumed daily.

This changed in preparation for the Sabbath, when the second portion collected on Friday in honor of the Sabbath remained fresh, to be eaten on the Sabbath day though the manna fell beforehand. This heavenly food however proved to be a source of constant controversy and tension within the camp of the Jewish people. Despite it being an obvious gift directly from heaven, or perhaps ironically, because it was such an obvious gift from heaven, the Jewish people tended to grumble about it.

We will see throughout the narrative of the Jewish people in the desert of Sinai that there were constant complaints about this heavenly gift. It became the focal point directed against Moshe and the God of Israel throughout the years of wandering in the Sinai desert. There is a streak within human nature that is present regarding unwanted and unasked for gifts. Such gifts always carry with them a sense of responsibility and even obligation to the donor.

In the words of God to original man that, 'you will eat your bread by the sweat of your brow,' there lies not only a curse but also an implicit blessing as well. By earning our bread by working we feel a sense of accomplishment and, more than that, of the right to eat bread that it is truly earned. When the Lord gives us free bread, so to speak, we resented it.

It is the nature of young children to attempt to do everything by themselves even when they are physically unable to do so, and to resent adult interference. Human beings are born with self-confidence and self-reliance. We believe from our youngest years to our old age that we can do it all by ourselves. So, when the Jewish people were presented with a gift of bread from heaven, they resented it for they realized that in this world there truly is no free lunch. That gift always comes with obligations and responsibilities, spoken or unspoken, to the one who granted the gift. They remembered the food of Egypt, even though they were slaves, because they felt that they had earned it and it was rightfully theirs. The manna that fell from heaven carried with it not only the sense of being a gift, but also the realization that it carried with it duties and obligations. They realized that it was not free but was always controversial in their minds and hearts.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

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Britain's Former Chief **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**
The Divided Sea: Natural or Supernatural? (Beshalach 5779)
Covenant & Conversation

The splitting of the Reed Sea is engraved in Jewish memory. We recite it daily during the morning service, at the transition from the Verses of Praise to the beginning of communal prayer. We speak of it again after the Shema, just before the Amidah. It was the supreme miracle of the exodus. But in what sense?

If we listen carefully to the narratives, we can distinguish two perspectives. This is the first:

The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left...The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. (Exodus 14:22, 28-29)

The same note is struck in the Song at the Sea:

By the blast of Your nostrils the waters piled up.

The surging waters stood firm like a wall;

The deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea. (Ex. 15:8)

The emphasis here is on the supernatural dimension of what happened. Water, which normally flows, stood upright. The sea parted to expose dry land. The laws of nature were suspended. Something happened for which there can be no scientific explanation.

However, if we listen carefully, we can also hear a different note:

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. (Ex. 14:21)

Here there is not a sudden change in the behaviour of water, with no apparent cause. God brings a wind that, in the course of several hours, drives the waters back. Or consider this passage:

During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. The Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt." (Ex. 14:24-25).

The emphasis here is less on miracle than on irony. The great military assets of the Egyptians—making them almost invulnerable in their day—were their horses and chariots. These were Egypt's specialty. They still were, in the time of Solomon, five centuries later:

Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem...They imported a chariot from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty. (I Kings 10:26-29)

Viewed from this perspective, the events that took place could be described as follows: The Israelites had arrived at the Reed Sea at a point at which it was shallow. Possibly there was a ridge in the sea bed, normally covered by water, but occasionally—when, for example, a fierce east wind blows—exposed. This is how the Cambridge University physicist Colin Humphreys puts it in his *The Miracles of Exodus*:

Wind tides are well known to oceanographers. For example, a strong wind blowing along Lake Erie, one of the Great Lakes, has produced water elevation differences of as much as sixteen feet between Toledo, Ohio, on the west, and Buffalo, New York, on the east...There are reports that Napoleon was almost killed by a "sudden high tide" while he was crossing shallow water near the head of the Gulf of Suez.[1]

In the case of the wind that exposed the ridge in the bed of the sea, the consequences were dramatic. Suddenly the Israelites, traveling on foot, had an immense advantage over the Egyptian chariots that were pursuing them. Their wheels became stuck in the mud. The charioteers made ferocious efforts to free them, only to find that they quickly became mired again. The Egyptian army could neither advance nor retreat. So intent were they on the trapped wheels, and so reluctant were they to abandon their prized war machines, the chariots, that they failed to notice that the wind had dropped and the water was returning. By the time they realised what was happening, they were trapped. The ridge was now covered with sea water in either direction, and the island of dry land in the middle was shrinking by the minute. The mightiest army of the ancient world was defeated, and its warriors drowned, not by a superior army, not by human opposition at all, but by their own folly in being so focused on capturing the Israelites that they ignored the fact that they were driving into mud where their chariots could not go.

We have here two ways of seeing the same events: one natural, the other supernatural. The supernatural explanation—that the waters stood upright—is immensely powerful, and so it entered Jewish memory. But the natural explanation is no less compelling. The Egyptian strength proved to be their weakness. The weakness of the Israelites became their strength. On this reading, what was significant was less the supernatural, than the moral dimension of what happened. God visits the sins on the sinners. He mocks those who mock Him. He showed the Egyptian army, which revelled in its might, that the weak were stronger than they—just as He later did with the pagan prophet Bilaam, who prided himself in his prophetic powers and was then shown that his donkey (who could see the angel Bilaam could not see) was a better prophet than he was.

To put it another way: a miracle is not necessarily something that suspends natural law. It is, rather, an event for which there may be a natural explanation, but which—happening when, where and how it did—evokes wonder, such that even the most hardened sceptic senses that God has intervened in history. The weak are saved; those in danger, delivered. More significant still is the moral message such an event conveys: that hubris is

punished by nemesis; that the proud are humbled and the humble given pride; that there is justice in history, often hidden but sometimes gloriously revealed.

This idea can be taken further. Emil Fackenheim has spoken of "epoch-making events" that transform the course of history.[2] More obscurely, but along similar lines, the French philosopher Alain Badiou has proposed the concept of an "event" as a "rupture in ontology" through which individuals are brought face to face with a truth that changes them and their world.[3] It is as if all normal perception fades away and we know that we are in the presence of something momentous, to which we sense we must remain faithful for the rest of our lives. "The appropriation of Presence is mediated by an event." [4] It is through transformative events that we feel ourselves addressed, summoned, by something beyond history, breaking through into history. In this sense, the division of the Reed Sea was something other and deeper than a suspension of the laws of nature. It was the transformative moment at which the people "believed in the Lord and in Moses His servant" (Ex. 14:31) and called themselves "the people You acquired" (Ex. 15:16).

Not all Jewish thinkers focused on the supernatural dimension of God's involvement in human history. Maimonides insisted that "Israel did not believe in Moses our teacher because of the signs he performed." [5] What made Moses the greatest of the prophets, for Maimonides, is not that he performed supernatural deeds but that, at Mount Sinai, he brought the people the word of God.

In general, the sages tended to downplay the dimension of the miraculous, even in the case of the greatest miracle of all, the division of the sea. That is the meaning of the following Midrash, commenting on the verse, "Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its full flow [le-eitano]" (Ex. 14:27):

Rabbi Jonathan said: The Holy One, blessed be He, made a condition with the sea [at the beginning of creation], that it should split asunder for the Israelites. That is the meaning of "the sea went back to its full flow" – [read not le-eitano but] letenao, "the condition" that God had earlier stipulated.[6] The implication is that the division of the sea was, as it were, programmed into creation from the outset.[7] It was less a suspension of nature than an event written into nature from the beginning, to be triggered at the appropriate moment in the unfolding of history.

We even find an extraordinary debate among the sages as to whether miracles are a sign of merit or the opposite. The Talmud [8] tells the story of a man whose wife died, leaving a nursing child. The father was too poor to be able to afford a wet-nurse, so a miracle occurred and he himself gave milk until the child was weaned. On this, the Talmud records the following difference of opinion:

Rav Joseph said: Come and see how great was this man that such a miracle was wrought for him. Abaye said to him: On the contrary, how inferior was this man, that the natural order was changed for him.

According to Abaye, greater are those to whom good things happen without the need for miracles. The genius of the biblical narrative of the crossing of the Reed Sea is that it does not resolve the issue one way or another. It gives us both perspectives. To some the miracle was the suspension of the laws of nature. To others, the fact that there was a naturalistic explanation did not make the event any less miraculous. That the Israelites should arrive at the sea precisely where the waters were unexpectedly shallow, that a strong east wind should blow when and how it did, and that the Egyptians' greatest military asset should have proved their undoing—all these things were wonders, and we have never forgotten them.

Shabbat shalom

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Beshalach: The Inner Song of the Soul

Rav Kook Torah

The Talmud portrays Shirat HaYam, the Israelites' song of thanksgiving at their miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea, as a song of young children and babies:

"When the Israelites exited the sea, they wanted to sing. How did they sing? A young child was sitting on his mother's lap, and a baby was nursing at his mother's breast. When they witnessed the Shechinah, the young child lifted his neck and the baby stopped nursing, and they sang out, "This is my God and I will honor Him" (Ex. 15:2)." (Sotah 30b)

Why did the Sages describe Shirat HaYam as a song breaking forth spontaneously from the mouths of babes?

Knowledge and Honor

Kri'at Yam Suf, when the Red Sea split so that the Hebrew slaves could pass through to freedom, was the culmination of the Exodus from Egypt. A careful examination of the text, however, indicates that the Exodus and the Splitting of the Sea had different objectives. The Ten Plagues and the Exodus were meant to ensure that "Egypt will know that I am God" (Ex. 7:5). The goal was knowledge of God. Through these wonders and miracles, the world would learn to acknowledge God's existence and recognize His control over the universe.

As the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, however, God announced, "I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his armies" (Ex. 14:17). The miracle at the sea aimed for a higher goal: not just yedi'at Hashem, knowing God, but kevod Hashem - honoring God.

From the Throat

The obligation to honor God is learned from Proverbs: "Honor God from your wealth" (3:9). The Midrash Tanchuma explains that in addition to honoring God with one's monetary wealth, one can also honor him with other gifts and talents, including song. For example, an individual blessed with a melodic voice should lead the communal prayers. Rashi explains that the word 'mei-honecha' ("from your wealth"), may be read as 'mei-gronecha' - "from your throat."

This leads us to a deeper understanding of what it means to honor God. Knowledge of God is a function of our intellectual faculties; but kavod comes from a deeper, more visceral part of our existence. Like the throat, it is connected to our essential life force - "If one's neck is removed, one cannot live" (Midrash Shir HaShirim 4:6).

For this reason, the Midrash describes Shirat HaYam as a song that burst forth from the mouths of infants. The song at the Red Sea was a natural expression of the Israelites' innate feeling of kevod Hashem. It emanated from their yearnings for God, even before they had proper knowledge of God, when they were like young children.

Beyond Set Measures

The Talmud teaches that one reciting the Shema prayer should mention both the Exodus and the Splitting of the Sea (Jer. Talmud Berakhot 1:6). The commentaries explain that we mention both events, since the redemption from Egypt began with the plagues and was completed with the miracle at the sea. And yet the Sages taught a surprising rule: one who forgot to mention the Exodus must go back and recite the Shema again, but one who forgot to mention the Splitting of the Sea does not need to recite the Shema again (Shemot Rabbah 23). If the Splitting of the Sea was the consummation of the Exodus, why is it not a mandatory part of the prayers?

We may better understand the difference between knowing God and honoring Him by contrasting basic mitzvah performance with hiddur mitzvah, the elaboration and beautification of a mitzvah. Every mitzvah has parameters and minimum requirements in order to properly fulfill it. Hiddur mitzvah means going beyond those basic requirements. Hiddur mitzvah is a reflection of our inner aesthetic side and an expression of unrestricted kevod Hashem. The Sages derived the concept of hiddur mitzvah from the poetic

Song at the Sea, "This is my God and I will honor [or: beautify] Him" (Ex. 15:2).

This enables us to understand why one who failed to mention the Splitting of the Sea does not repeat his prayers. Honoring God, unlike knowledge and wisdom, is not defined within a fixed framework. Precisely because of its loftiness, kevod Hashem cannot be bound by set limits. It reflects a deeper and more innate aspect of our essence - a stirring of the inner song of the soul.

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From: Yonoson Rosenblum

Remaining a ben Torah requires remaining a bar daas

Wednesday, January 09, 2019

Life after Kollel by Jonathan Rosenblum

Mishpacha Magazine

One of the main topics at both the recent national convention of Agudath Israel of America and the subsequent Agudah Midwest convention was the transition from full-time learning: How does one retain the stamp of a ben Torah upon entering the working world?

The subject has never been more relevant, for never has such a high percentage of young men remained in full-time learning for so long. In Europe, yeshiva students were known by the name of their hometowns because at most, one or two young men from each town went on to one of the great yeshivos. The vast majority of young men were pushed by economic necessity into the workplace around bar mitzvah age or shortly thereafter.

One consequence of our unparalleled affluence is the ability to provide yeshiva training for most young men in the Torah community until at least the early twenties, and for a large percentage, far beyond that.

Yet the ubiquity of long-term learning makes the transition that much more jarring when it comes. Leaving the beis medrash is often accompanied by a welter of emotions, including a sense of failure and even of having betrayed the olam hayeshivos. And those negative feelings can lead, in some cases, to resentment of the yeshiva world for not having prepared those leaving for what awaits them — and for looking down (or more precisely, being perceived as looking down) on those no longer involved in full-time learning.

Orchos Chayim: Ben Torah for Life by Rav Aaron Lopiansky, rosh yeshiva of Yeshiva of Greater Washington, addresses the issues raised by that transition. At the late-night question-and-answer session with Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva Rav Elya Brudny and Rav Yosef Elefant — which has become for many the highlight of Agudah's national convention — both gedolim noted that it is a book that should be in every Torah home. (Rav Brudny referred to it as an "absolutely important" work by an "adam gadol meod," and Rav Elefant termed it a "masterpiece.")

Ben Torah for Life is at once a nuanced work of Torah hashkafah, with Torah sources quoted, often at length, on almost every page, and an eminently practical work. The paradox is only apparent — for the most immediate need for someone completing his period of life as a member of Shevet Levi is to understand the role of the other tribes in Klal Yisrael.

In his years in yeshiva and kollel, the average ben Torah will have learned Rav Chaim of Volozhin's classic work Nefesh HaChaim, in which Rav Chaim explicates the profound impact of every word of Torah learning on the entire cosmos many times. But he'll be less likely to have heard shmuessen on the final paragraphs of Mesilas Yesharim, in which the Ramchal writes that the highest level of Divine service is as accessible to "the one who plies a humble trade" as to "the one from whose mouth learning never departs."

Each of us has a unique mission. We only awaken in the morning because Hashem believes in us and our ability to contribute to bringing kevod Shamayim to the world. That mission need not be world-changing.

Exercising our bechirah properly in the face of our specific challenges or even our triumphs is sufficient.

IT'S A TERRIBLE MISTAKE to think that the hours spent earning a living are a waste, totally lacking in spiritual significance. When we review the halachos incumbent upon us at every moment, as the Kedushas Levi famously notes, we are engaged in talmud Torah. When we do not transgress a negative mitzvah, we are not just treading water to keep ourselves from drowning. Every time we resist the powerful urge to look where we should not, overcome the temptation to fit in to our environment, whether it be in dress or speech, we have not just stood still, we have uplifted ourselves and brought pleasure to our Creator.

Hashem's vision for the world encompasses a world in which everything — farming, waging war, caring for the poor — is to be conducted in accord with halachah. And when we act accordingly, we are bringing Hashem's vision to fruition.

Sustaining and advancing the physical world, yishuvo shel olam, is itself a mitzvah. A mitzvah of such importance that in certain circumstances it requires freeing a non-Jewish slave, and thereby transgressing a positive mitzvah. Other aspects of yishuvo shel olam — taking a wife, planting a vineyard, building a house — take precedence over joining in battle against our enemies.

These are just a few of the examples of how Rav Lopiansky reframes the normal aspects of derech erez and the yegias kapecha — with which most people are engaged for much of their lives — as far from degraded or meaningless. The Avos faced many trials and tribulations — they are compared to horses rushing through a swamp — precisely because the manner in which they confronted those challenges was so dear to HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

Ben Torah for Life is not a comprehensive guide for those entering the workplace. For the myriad halachic queries that arise in the working world, Rav Lopiansky refers the reader to Rabbi Ari Wasserman's Making It Work.

Nor does the author seek to answer every quandary that may confront the ben Torah as he emerges from the beis medrash. Each person is different and his circumstances are different. It is therefore crucial that each person find a rav to offer guidance. And in that quest, the most important rule is: Better a personal rebbi than a distant gadol. There is a crucial distinction between whom one goes to for a brachah and from whom one seeks an eitzah.

WHILE THE YEARS SPENT as a member of Shevet Levi form the vision for a lifetime and are to be cherished, not regretted, the expression of that vision changes dramatically in one's new stage in life. If one was struggling financially in kollel, he had the compensating pride in being moser nefesh for Torah. That is no longer the case.

If an avreich returns from kollel enthusiastic about the chaburah he delivered that day, his wife feels she is a partner in his success by virtue of her mesirus nefesh in supporting the family. But if a working man comes home and talks about his work, his wife may feel that his work is intruding upon their bond.

Furthermore, the manner in which one connects to Hashem changes with the transition from the beis medrash. Learning to savor the chavivus of mitzvos to some extent replaces the connection that once was provided by Gemara learning. And that requires a reorientation.

Even the form of one's learning changes. Tachlis, the sense of constantly building upon a base of accumulated Torah knowledge becomes more central. Many aspects of halachah that were not previously of practical application now are, and being thoroughly grounded in the issues is an immediate necessity.

Rav Lopiansky recommends written summaries of one's learning and advocates participation in one of the many testing frameworks in order to provide a sense of continued Torah growth. (My own suspicion is that even many yeshivah bochorim would have more satisfaction in learning if they were more confident of their command of what they had learned in the preceding zman.)

Above all, remaining a ben Torah requires remaining a bar daas, a person whose life is run according to a thought-out plan. At minimum, that requires regular times to assess goals and evaluate the progress in reaching them. The distraction of constant connectivity is the great enemy of daas.

(One of the few topics Rav Lopiansky — famed for his ability to consider all sides of an issue — speaks about in absolutes is the inherent deficiency in learning or davening with one's phone turned on. Another is his statement that a man may never engage in a deep discussion with a member of the opposite gender other than his wife, even if motivated purely by compassion, for the risk of an emotional bond developing is too great.)

Rav Elefant described Ben Torah for Life as "the first sefer in the modern era that addresses topics critical to our existence as the Am HaTorah with such depth, clarity, honesty, and respect." What more can I add?

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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Beshalach

For the week ending 19 January 2019 / 13 Shevat 5779

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Insights

A Bribe of Kindness

“Stand fast and see” (14:13)

There was a friend of mine who suffered a terrible tragedy.

His sister was involved in a horrific car accident which left her brain seriously starved of oxygen for critical minutes. The doctors said she would probably never regain consciousness.

This terrible shock hit the teenage children worst. Who is more important in your teenage years than your mother? The hospital moved quickly to bring in psychological support for the family.

The psychologist recommended to the father that he should go out and buy them expensive presents. The eldest, who had passed her driving test but as yet had no car, received a super-compact mini that could be parked nose first. I forget what presents the other children received, but they were equally lavish.

At the time I felt that trying to compensate a child for the potential loss of their mother with some bauble — however extravagant — bordered on the obscene.

Interestingly though, I saw that it succeeded in mitigating the immediate shock to some extent.

The mishna in Pirkei Avot teaches that one should “Weigh the loss of a mitzvah against its reward on one side; and on the other, the ‘reward’ of a sin against its loss.”

Mitzvahs can incur losses: losses of time in praying and learning, expenditures on kosher food, kosher education, kosher phones and more. Almost everything that is kosher is more expensive than its non-kosher equivalent. However, the reward of a mitzvah is priceless beyond pearls and lasts forever.

A sin also has a ‘reward’: a cheap thrill that turns out to be very expensive, but you can’t say there’s no ‘reward’ — otherwise, who would want to do a sin?

What’s interesting is that we need a mishna to tell us to make this calculation, which implies that left to ourselves we would conclude that the bribery of the cheap and the fleeting outweighs the eternally valuable.

It is this same quirk of human frailty that can be used to create a temporary forgetfulness with a bribe of kindness.

“Stand fast and see.” (14:13)

It’s difficult to understand why the Jewish People were in need of the towering miracle of the sundering of the sea. They numbered more than two million people, vastly outnumbering Pharaoh’s storm-troopers.

The mind can make us big and the mind can make us small.
A century of subservience had planted in the minds of the Jewish People a vassal mentality incapable of standing up to their former masters. Only a Divine miracle could break that mindset. Only a miraculous bribe of kindness.

· Source: based on Ibn Ezra

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Horse and Rider

Pharaoh was just the first.

One way of looking at Jewish history is as a series of encounters with evil rulers. Pharaoh, whom we have been reading about these past several weeks, was just the first tyrant who persecuted us. Over the millennia, he was followed by Nebuchadnezzar, Haman, Antiochus, Titus, Hitler, Stalin, and others too numerous to mention.

Each of those men, without exception, did not act alone. Rather, they represented an entire culture, a comprehensive ideology, which opposed the Jewish people and its religion. They enlisted the assistance of huge constituencies who believed in their teachings, and who followed their example. Without the support of the masses they led, they could not have wrought the havoc they did.

An excellent illustration of this is the book Hitler's Willing Executioners by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen. In this book, the author demonstrates clearly that only because Hitler had the cooperation of so many of his followers, all of whom believed as he did in the need to exterminate our people, was he able to be so tragically successful.

Pharaoh, at the beginning of our history, and Hitler, in our more recent past, were each able to create a culture, a belief system, which pervaded their societies and which enabled them to execute their heinous schemes.

Throughout our history, the enemy was not just one individual, king, or dictator. Rather, it was an entire culture that opposed each of us and everything we stood for.

One lesson of our history is that just as these individual leaders were vanquished, so too did their ideologies fall into oblivion. This is the meaning of the statement of our Sages, "The holy one, blessed be He, does not bring about the downfall of the enemy until He first defeats its gods."

The gods of a nation, and in some versions, the ministering angels of that nation, represent what we would call today a nation's culture, its weltanschauung.

Where is this idea expressed in this week's Torah portion, Beshalach? Long ago, I heard a lecture from the late Rabbi Aharon Soloveitchik on Beshalach. He based it on the phrase near the very beginning of the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:1):

"I will sing unto the Lord, for He is highly exalted;
the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea."

What is the significance of the horse being thrown into the sea? Why do the Israelites, led by Moses, open their song of praise to the Lord, the theme of Shabbat Shira which we celebrate this week, by singing of the horse's downfall?

Rabbi Soloveitchik answered that the horse was the symbol of the culture of Egypt. When the Israelites sang of the downfall of both horse and rider, they were expressing their appreciation of the fact that not only were Pharaoh and his slave masters being removed from the scene, but so too was the culture of Egypt coming to an end.

Throughout the Bible, we find the culture of Egypt identified with the horse; the horse is a symbol of militarism, of the ideology that might makes right. The horse is also a symbol of arrogance and pride, fitting companions for militarism.

When God brought down Pharaoh and his cohorts, He was also in effect removing from the world stage a belief system which justified crushing and enslaving other human beings.

The removal, not only of the dictator but of his doctrine, and not only of the tyrant but of his theology, is part of the pattern of history from a Jewish perspective. On Purim, we do not just celebrate Haman's hanging, but rather the triumph over a culture that had arbitrarily planned to commit genocide. On Hanukkah, we honor a victory over Hellenism and the Greek way of life, not just a victory over an alien occupier of our land.

In more modern times, the triumph over Nazism was not just the defeat of hordes of brutal and sadistic men and women. It was a triumph over a racist and bigoted worldview, and for a short while, many believed that that triumph was permanent.

An excellent example of the horse and the rider both being thrown into the sea is the fate of the ideology of Communism. True, the communist foe was personified in Joseph Stalin and his henchmen, and his several successors. But what eventually came about was the sudden and unexpected total abandonment of the communist approach to economics, to the organization of society, and to the religious and spiritual aspects of humankind.

It is so instructive to read the writings of men who were once avowed communists but later abandoned that philosophy when they realized how corrupt it really was. There is a book edited by Arthur Koestler, who had Jewish roots, entitled The God That Failed. He and the other famous thinkers who contributed essays to that book all saw Communism as a kind of god. Long before their god met his final defeat, they foresaw that defeat was not far away.

When our Sages say that the holy one, blessed be He, first brings about the downfall of the gods of our enemies, they are already using a term for a failed ideology that Arthur Koestler and others used centuries later.

Our Sages spoke of the downfall of the enemy and of its gods, and in this week's Torah portion, the Bible speaks of the downfall of the rider and of the horse. Different metaphors, but the same idea.

Today, we confront not only "evil kings" and "evil kingdoms" but evil ideologies. Systems of belief, masquerading as sacred religion, which call for murder and mayhem, torture and genocide. We pray to be able to witness both the horse and the rider being cast into the depths of the sea.

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Drasha Parshas Beshalach

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Yield Right of Way

In this week's portion, the Egyptians did not walk they ran right into trouble. Despite ten plagues which proved that Hashem had absolute control over the forces of nature, and the flawless exodus from Egypt of 2 million Jewish men, women, and children, the Egyptians irrationally thought they had a chance to save face.

In a Divine stratagem Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: "Speak to the Children of Israel and let them turn back and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal-Zephon; you shall encamp opposite it, by the sea." (Exodus 14:2)

Understanding Pharaoh's arrogance, Hashem knew that there would be no chance that Pharaoh would see this as a ploy, rather he would immediately

say of the Children of Israel, 'They are locked in the land, the Wilderness has locked them in.' (Exodus 14:3)

So once again, pride and emotion overrode common sense, and denying Hashem's unmistakable hand in the fugitive nation's meandering, Pharaoh pursues them and runs into disaster.

But that is not the only time that Pharaoh runs into collapse. The Torah tells us that after the Sea of Reeds split and the Jews passed through walls of water in miraculous triumph, the Egyptians followed in pursuit. They must have felt for some reason, that the same miraculous treatment would be meted to them.

But the walls of water began to cave in trapping the helpless Egyptian army. Any rational person's first reaction would be to flee away from the falling waters, but the Torah tells us that, the water went back to its power as the Egyptians were fleeing toward it" (Exodus 14:27)

Why would they flee toward the waters? Wouldn't logic dictate that they run away from the waters?

Frank had a frustrating day at the office. His work was not up to par and his boss came down hard on him for a variety of misdemeanors. Making up for incomplete work, Frank left the office at 7:00 PM. Late as he was, he figured a trip to the corner pub wouldn't hurt his spirits.

From his cell phone he called his wife to tell her he just left the office, and would be home within the hour.

After a few drinks he got into his car and headed for the parkway. His judgement impaired by a mean combination of frustration and alcohol, he headed home in the southbound lane. Unfortunately, his car was pointed north! In his rush to get home he began dodging the oncoming cars.

Suddenly his cell phone rang. "Frank," his wife shouted to him in a panic. "Please be careful! The radio just reported that there is a madman on the parkway driving a car in the wrong direction!"

"One madman with a car going in the wrong direction?" asked Frank incredulously. "There are hundreds of them!"

When one establishes arrogant infallibility, he sees no failure in his actions and will not allow himself to turn back and rethink his corrupt tracks. Instead he forges ahead, plowing himself into more pain and misery, all the while denying his blunder. He feels that he is travelling in the right path. Everyone else is headed in the wrong direction.

The Egyptians felt it was the Jews who were lost in the desert. They could not fathom that it was their direction and their judgement that was skewed.

Their arrogance in chasing the Jews into the Red Sea was compounded when the walls of water began to fall before them in a tumultuous torrent of tragedy. But instead of fleeing and back-peddling on the malady of their ways they ran toward the water. And their arrogance together with their idolatrous aplomb was simply washed away.

When travelling on the high speed lane of life. It is important to view oncoming traffic with retrospect. If the waters are too deep; if traffic is heading in the opposite direction, perhaps it is time to make sure that you are in the right lane?

Good Shabbos ©2000 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Dedicated in Loving memory of Irving Tanzer Reb Yisroel Mshulom Zisha ben Reb Zvi Mordechai of blessed memory

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Beshalach

פרשת בשלח תשע"ט

יבאו בני ישראל בתוך הים ביבשה

Bnei Yisrael came within the sea on dry land. (14:22)

Did all of the people immediately enter the Red Sea? Nachshon ben Aminadov made the first move. Everybody followed his lead. *Chazal (Sotah 36b)* quote a debate that takes place between Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yehudah. Rabbi Meir teaches that when the Jewish People stood at the banks of the Red Sea the tribes began to contend with one another, each one declaring, "I am going in first!" Rabbi Yehudah disagrees. He claims it was the opposite, with each tribe giving the "honor" of entering the water first to the other tribe. In the end, it was Nachshon ben Aminadov who took the plunge and walked in until the water reached his mouth. He then cried out to Hashem: "Save me, G-d, for the waters have reached until my soul" (*Tehillim 69:2*).

In his *Dudaei Reuven, Horav Reuven Katz, zl*, explains that Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Meir are really not in disagreement. In fact, this apparent disagreement actually represents the foibles of human nature. Anyone who has ever been party to a meeting convened to discuss a pressing issue, and to devise a plan for addressing the problem, has been privy to such debate. The assembled people come to a unanimous decision that they must establish an institution/organization that will officially deal with the issue at hand. Once they all heard the problem and were inspired by the passionate speeches, the decision was unanimous. Now, however, when it comes to actually volunteering to support the institution – everyone volunteers his neighbor. They are willing to be "on call" whenever necessary, as long as it is not during the day or night, weekend, etc. In other words, as long as the institutions are in the theoretical stage, everyone wants to participate. Once action must be taken, they casually move to the back of the line.

It was no different when our ancestors stood at the banks of the Red Sea. Moshe *Rabbeinu* declared, "Let us move forward into the water!" Everyone excitedly cried out, "I am first!" This is Rabbi Meir's opinion. Rabbi Yehudah interjects, "Perhaps that was their original reaction, but, when they came to the water, they each encouraged the 'other one' to enter. How fortunate are we that Nachshon ben Aminadov took the initiative. Otherwise, who knows?"

Let me follow this up with an anecdotal vignette that underscores Nachshon's eternal contribution and what we should derive from his action. It was *Chol Hamoed Pesach*; a young *kollel* fellow entered a *shul* between *Minchah* and *Maariv*. The congregants who were assembled took notice. Since he appeared to be a scholar, they asked him to deliver a short *dvar Torah*. He demurred, claiming that he was not a speaker. The congregants were relentless, asking him again and again, until he acceded to their request. "Rabbosai!" he began. "In two days, we will be celebrating *Shvii shel Pesach*, when we will read a description of the Splitting of the Red Sea from the Torah. Everyone knows (or at least can imagine) what went through the people's minds at that moment. Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children were all standing between the waters of the Red Sea and the approaching Egyptian army. The fear and trepidation that enveloped them must have been overwhelming. After over two centuries of misery, pain, persecution and murder, they were finally liberated, only to meet their deaths either by drowning or at the hands of their oppressors. What should they do?"

"During those moments of fear and hesitation, one man – by the name of Gershon ben Aminadov – moved forward." Suddenly the congregants, realizing that the speaker had erred, "quietly" corrected him: "Nachshon," not Gershon. The speaker ignored their correction and continued speaking: "Gershon hesitated. On the one hand, he felt it was the correct and proper action to take, but, on the other hand, he thought, 'What about my wife and children who would be left alone (if the water does not split and I die)?"

During this time the congregants were getting upset. How could he, a learned scholar, continue to make the same mistake over and over again? It was Nachshon, not Gershon!

"Therefore," continued the speaker, "seeing that unless someone made a move and jumped into the water, nothing would happen (clearly an act of

mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, was critical at this point), Gershon ben Aminadov finally decided that he was going to take the plunge. Suddenly, out of nowhere, Nachshon ben Aminadov ran forward and jumped in! He beat his brother by a few seconds. Indeed, had Nachshon not run forward, history would have recorded Gershon as the one who had catalyzed the miracle. The entire miracle is identified with Nachshon ben Aminadov. Why? Was not Gershon the one who was about to jump in? But he did not. It was Nachshon. Thus, he receives the credit.”

A similar idea applies to so many *mitzvos*. Let us take *minyan*, for example. It takes ten Jews to complete a *minyan*. Everyone else *davens* with a *minyan*. The first ten, however, comprise the *minyan*. They receive the bonus reward for providing a *minyan* for the others. It is all about who arrives first. That is the way concerning all *mitzvos*.

והמים להם חמה מימינם ומשמאלם

The water was a wall for them, on their right and on their left. (14:29)

Actually, the Red Sea was divided into twelve parts, allowing each tribe to walk though separately. The *Sfas Emes* explains that Hashem did this to teach them that each individual tribe has its own singular mission and, thus, deserves the miracle of the Splitting of the Red Sea for its own sake. In *Sefer Tehillim* 136:13, David *Hamelech* records the miracle, *L'Gozeir Yam Suf ligzarim*, “Who splits/divides the Red Sea into parts.” Surprisingly, the *pasuk* is written in the present tense, as if Hashem continually splits the Red Sea. (Veritably, the commentators translate it in the past tense, but *l'gozeir* is present tense). This begs elucidation, since obviously, the sea reverted back to its original position.

In an earlier *pasuk* (136:7), David *Hamelech* writes, *L'Osei orim gedolim*, “Who makes great lights.” In his *Nefesh HaChaim*, *Horav Chaim Volozhiner*, זל, explains that Hashem constantly renews the act of creating the world. He did not create the world and then leave it on auto pilot. Every second, He recreates the world. This might explain the luminaries, but this explanation will not provide a solution for the present tense concerning the splitting of the Red Sea.

Horav Yisrael Eliyahu Weintraub, זל (quoted by *Horav Shlomo Levenstein* in the name of *Horav Avraham Brode*), explains this based upon an incident that occurred with *Horav Mordechai Pogremansky*, זל.

Rav Pogremansky was a singular *gadol* who had earned the esteem of the greatest Torah giants of the previous generation. His brilliance and unparalleled erudition were only matched by his total devotion and commitment to Torah and *mitzvos*. He passed away in Switzerland one year after he married. His body was brought to *Eretz Yisrael* where he is buried in the cemetery in Bnei Brak. Following his funeral, which was attended by many *gedolim*, the *Chazon Ish* stood over his freshly sealed grave and wept bitterly until the ground became wet with his tears.

During his illness, which began shortly after his marriage, he lay in a hospital in France wracked with pain. Constantly at his side was his close student *Rav Yosef Roth*. One time, when *Rav Mottel*, as he was endearingly called, thought no one was with him in the room, *Rav Roth* heard him plead, “*Ribono Shel Olam*, without mercy! Without mercy! Give me what I deserve! I want to achieve a pinnacle of purity. I beg no mercy!”

Now, for the *dvar Torah*. *Rav Weintraub* related that when he was together with *Rav Mottel* in the Kovno Ghetto (during World War II), *Rav Mottel* once approached two *bachurim*, *yeshivah* students, and asked, “What do you think Hashem wants of us?” “Is that the question now?” one of them responded. “Now, we are starving to death. The question is where will we obtain food? Who is thinking about what Hashem wants of us?”

Rav Mottel was acutely aware of the source of their response. They were all starving. He had an important message, however, to convey to them via his question. (This is how he lived. He was a deep thinker, and, as a result, his mind was in a different realm of activity than those around him.) “Let me explain my question to you,” he began. “How valuable is the blood of a Jew?” he asked. Their immediate response was, “Absolutely nothing.”

Jewish blood during the war in the Kovno ghetto, where they were exterminating Jews right and left, had no significance and, hence, no value.

“What would happen if someone came along now and murdered a Jew? Would he be found guilty and sentenced as a murderer?” he asked. “No,” was their response. “Let me ask you,” and he pointed to a group of Nazis who were standing a few hundred feet away. “Those Nazis, do you think they want to kill Jews – or not?” Their reply was to be expected. “Certainly. They know that there are no consequences. Jewish blood is worthless. Sure, they want to kill us.”

“Now, listen to what you are saying,” *Rav Mottel* said (this time with emotion). “They have no qualms about murdering us. In fact, they probably want to. No one will arrest them, because no one cares. Jewish blood is cheap. In fact, if they would commit murder, no one would either question them or care. It would be absolutely nothing. So, let me ask you: Why do they not kill us? There can be only one reason: Hashem does not permit them to do so. I have no idea what will occur in sixty seconds, but right now I know that Hashem wants us to live. The greatest proof of this verity is that we are still alive! Why does Hashem want us alive? Obviously, He expects something of us. That is my original question to you: ‘What does Hashem want of us?’”

Rav Weintraub continued: “At times, the normal situation/climate in the world is to live. There are times (such as during war, famine, etc.) that the normal circumstance is death. People are dying all over. Yet, despite the climate of death all over, some people are not dying. Why? It is because Hashem wants them to live. He expects something of them. The question that confronts the ‘survivors’ is: ‘What does Hashem want of us?’ Why is He changing what seems to be the normal climate of death and allowing us to live?”

“What is the natural/normal *matzav*, situation, in this world? Apparently, one would posit that it is life. That is what we might assume.” *Rav Weintraub* explained, “*Chazal*, however, do not agree. The *Midrash (Tanna Dvei Eliyahu Zuta 5)* relates that everyday *Malachei Chabalah*, angels whose mission it is to harm, come before Hashem prepared to cause great harm to the world. If it would not be for the *shuls* and *batei midrashos* where Torah scholars are immersed in prayer and Torah study, they would destroy the world. In other words, the normal situation in the world is not life, but death. At any given time the world could be destroyed. Why is it not? Because Hashem refrains from doing so as a reward to those who devote themselves to Torah study.

At the Red Sea, Hashem wrought a singular miracle that went against the natural order of the world. Naturally, when a person plunges into the sea, he drowns. The Jewish People entered and miraculously lived. In our everyday world, Hashem is constantly saving us from what normally would occur if the *Malachei Chabalah* had their way. Thus, our very existence, our everyday ‘normal’ life, is actually not so normal. As a result, the *pasuk* is written in present tense. Every moment of our existence Hashem continually acts against the forces of ‘normalcy,’ just as He did when He split the Red Sea. As He went against nature, transforming it to serve His people, allowing them to pass safely through, so, too, does He constantly fend off those who would do us harm. All in the *z’chus*, merit, of the Torah that is studied. We must always ask ourselves, ‘What does Hashem want of me now?’”

ידי משה כבדים ויקחו אבן וישבו עליה

The hands of Moshe were heavy, and they took a stone, placed it beneath him, and he sat upon it. (17:12)

We can distinguish between those *mitzvos* that are incumbent upon man in his relationship with Hashem – *bein adam laMakom*; and those *mitzvos* that involve interpersonal relationships – *bein adam lachaveiro*. The basis for *mitzvos bein adam laMakom* is Hashem. He desires our service. The root of *mitzvos bein adam la'chaveiro* is *V'halachta bidrachav*, “You shall emulate His ways” (*Devarim* 11:22). Hashem interacts with our world by sharing our pain. With regard to interpersonal relationships, this trait is called *nosei b'ol im chaveiro*, sharing/carrying the burden with one’s fellow.

During the Revelation that accompanied the Giving of the Torah on *Har Sinai*, *Klal Yisrael* was privy to an awesome spectacle. "They gazed upon the G-d of *Yisrael*, and beneath His feet was the form of a sapphire brick and the essence of the Heavens in purity" (*Shemos* 24:10). This was no ordinary brick. *Rashi* explains that the brick lay before Hashem throughout the many years that the Jewish People had been slaves to the wicked Pharaoh. This brick served as a constant reminder of the pain felt by the Jews who, as slaves to Pharaoh, were forced to work with bricks. This vision (which is beyond our grasp) revealed one primary attribute of Hashem. He is *nosei b'ol im chaveiro*. He shares in our burden. Since we are enjoined to emulate His ways, it makes sense that we, too, must make the concept of sharing in our fellow's burden the focus and motif of our interpersonal relationships.

This, explains *Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl*, is the reason that *nosei b'ol* is considered the root of all *mitzvos bein adam la'chaveiro*. It is considered one of the most difficult *mitzvos* to properly carry out, because it demands that one *mamash*, actually, feel his fellow's pain. Our world contains many *baalei chesed*, and even more "do gooders," but how many really feel, sense the pain of their fellow? In order to understand this, we must become acutely aware of what transpires in the mind of one who has just sustained a tragedy, received bad news, been devastated by a grave diagnosis that affects him, his spouse or a member of his family. These are merely some of the general difficulties people experience – each in accordance with his/her personal ability to tolerate and overcome adversity. (Hashem gives us only what we can handle.)

When someone is confronted with adversity, he is unable to (truly) deal with it alone. He feels a sense of overwhelming and debilitating loneliness. The *Mashgiach* posits that, quite possibly, these pangs of loneliness cause him even greater pain than the actual suffering that he is presently experiencing. Previously, he was on par with his circle of friends, but now he is different, alone, isolated by his challenge. When he loses his equal footing with others, he becomes overwhelmed with crushing solitude. As I mentioned earlier, each person's concept of adversity is endemic to his individual personality. For some, it is the feeling that he is not achieving materially, or spiritually on par with everyone else. For others, it is much more, but no less painful.

We learn from Moshe *Rabbeinu* the importance of incorporating this *middah*, character trait, into our lives. When Amalek attacked our ancestors shortly after they left Egypt, Moshe commanded Yehoshua to take charge of leading the physical battle against this new enemy. Moshe would address the spiritual front, because one type of battle cannot be successful without the other. Without prayer, all the soldiers and the iron domes are meaningless. The Torah relates, "The hands of Moshe were heavy, and he took a stone, placed it beneath himself, and sat upon it." *Chazal* observe that Moshe could have sat on something more comfortable than a stone. Surely, he could have been provided with a pillow. He chose a stone, in order to demonstrate empathy with *Klal Yisrael* in their time of distress.

No dearth of stories exists depicting the sensitivity our *gedolim* manifest toward the feelings of others. The parameter of space does not allow for more than one. The following vignette demonstrates how a *gadol* thinks. This underscores my earlier comment concerning employing cognition in performing *chesed*. The *Chazon Ish* lived in Bnei Brak during World War II. A group of survivors, girls alone in the world, bereft of their families, arrived in Bnei Brak. They were placed in a home. They were lost in a world that had gone mad. They had no idea whether their families had survived, or, like so many others, had perished in the Holocaust. They were broken-hearted girls who had to attempt to jumpstart their lives with no familial footing. One of the girls became engaged. This was an incredible *simchah*, joyous occasion, and all of the girls broke out in song. They were so happy for their friend. A man happened to enter the home while they were dancing and singing. He went to report this to the *Chazon Ish*, thinking that it was inappropriate for the girls to sing like that. The *Chazon Ish's* reaction was classic: "What! They are singing? *Baruch Hashem*, they are able to sing!" He felt their pain and shared their joy.

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נפטר א"ג שבט תשס"ו איידל בת ר' יעקב שמעון ז"ל קנעלער

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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim
From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva
Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a

Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample:
Additional Citizenship

Q: Is it worthwhile to apply for an additional citizenship, beside Israeli citizenship, since in the past having citizenship in another country saved Jews' lives?

A: No. Israel is the safest place in the world for Jews. Baruch Hashem, we have Tzahal, the dedicated messenger of Hashem. In the year 5773, an Avreich send a letter to Ha-Rav Chaim Kaniensky asking if he should apply for British passports for his family (his parents were British citizens), out of a fear for what the Iranians would do to Israel. Rav Kanievsky responded with the words of the Pesach Hagadah: "This [promise] is what has stood by our forefathers and by us! For not one alone has risen against us to destroy us but in every generation they rise against us to destroy us, and The Holy One, Blessed Be He, saves us from their hand!"

Walking Under Ladder

Q: Is it forbidden to walk under a ladder?

A: It is a Christian superstition, since the form of the ladder creates a triangle, and a trinity is holy to them. It is therefore forbidden for them to impinge upon it. One should certainly be careful when one walks under a ladder so that it, or an object resting it, does not fall on him (Ner Be-Ishon Laila p. 234).

Medical Experiment

Q: Is it permissible for me to participate in a medical experiment for money, in which they extract some of my blood and then put it back without the white blood cells, or is it forbidden on account of the prohibition of wounding oneself?

A: It is permissible. 1. It is a small hole and not a wound, and it will heal. 2. It is a medical need.

Swiping the Letters of a Sefer Torah

Q: I received an Aliyah to the Torah and the Baal Keriyah told me not to swipe my Talit on the letters of the Torah but rather on the white part of the parchment. Is he correct?

A: Yes. There is fear of erasing the letters and invalidating the Sefer Torah, erasing Hashem's Name which is a violation of "Do not do so to Hashem your God" (Devarim 12:4) and, on Shabbat, of desecrating Shabbat by erasing (Shut Tzvi Tiferet of the Darchei Teshuvah #99 in the name of the Ha-Admor Sar Shalom of Belz. Shut Hitorerut Teshuvah #365. And so too in Nimukei Orach Chaim #139 that there is no halachah or act of piety involving kissing the letters themselves. And in Shaarei Chaim [Shaar 4 #20] it is brought that the Shineva Rebbe, son of the Divrei Chaim, was careful to kiss the parchment where there was no writing. Shaarim Metzuyanim Be-Halachah #23 of 2. The Admor of Erlau was also very particular regarding this. Halichot Ve-Hanhagot Imrei Sofer Volume 1, p. 79 and footnote #18. And Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach said that there is no need to even kiss the Sefer Torah. He would bend down and kiss the Torah mantle. Ve-Alehu Lo Yibol Volume 1, pp. 99-100. Ha-Rav Moshe

Feinstein, however, would swipe his Talit on the text itself. Masoret Moshe Volume 3, p. 122).

Adding Name

Q: How does one add a name for an ill person?

A: 1. The prayer printed at the end of some editions of Tehilim. 2. Mi She-Beirach during an Aliyah, and mention the additional name.

Tachanun on the Day of Making Aliyah

Q: Should one recite Tachanun on the day he makes Aliyah,?

A: No. And some say that the entire Minyan should not recite it. The Rambam established a holiday on the day he made Aliyah (Ha-Rav Menashe Klein - the Ungavare Rav - also responded this way to the Admor of Slonim, since one who dwells in Eretz Israel does so without sin [Ketubot 111], and it is like a groom whose transgressions are forgiven, and therefore the Minyan does not recite Tachanun. Shut Mishneh Halachot 11:111. This is unlike the opinion of Ha-Rav Chaim Kaniesky who holds that one should recite Tachanun on the day of making Aliyah. Le-Binyamin Amar p. 19).

Bald Woman

Q: Is a bald woman required to cover her head?

A: Yes.

Traveling Outside of Israel

Q: Religious people are so strict about every facet of Kashrut but freely violate the prohibition of traveling outside of Israel. How is this? Why don't Rabbis raise their voices about this? There are even advertisements for vacations outside of Israel in the weekly Parashah sheets distributed in Shuls!

A: Rabbis do raise their voices about it, but the Parashah sheets do not publish their admonishments (There was once a letter from a reader in one of the Parashah sheets which said: I don't understand – there was an article from Ha-Rav Mordechai Eliyahu stating that it is forbidden to leave Israel for a vacation and below it there was an advertisement for trips outside of Israel. A contradiction on the same page! They answered him: There is no contradiction. The article comes from the Halachaha department and the ad comes from the advertisement department...).

Beit Ha-Mikdash and Righteousness

Q: Will everyone be a Tzadik in the time of the Beit Ha-Mikdash?

A: Yes.

Q: Will we be Tzadikim in merit of the Beit Ha-Mikdash, or will the Beit Ha-Mikdash be built in merit of us being Tzadikim?

A: The Beit Ha-Mikdash was destroyed because of our transgressions and will be built because of our merits.

Placing Objects on Sefarim

Q: I see G-d-fearing people place various objects such as pencils, glasses, etc. on Sefarim. What is the rationale for doing so?

A: There is no rationale. It is forbidden.

Avodat Hashem Versus Honoring Parents

Q: I have become close to Chasidut. I grew long Peyot, do not shave, wear a long jacket, etc. My parents are opposed because it is not our family's tradition. What should I do?

A: 1. There is no obligation of honoring parents when it comes to Avodat Hashem. Shulchan Aruch and Rama, Yoreh Deah 240:25. Pitchei Teshuvah #22. 2. You should obviously not force anything on your parents. 3. You should pacify them (A Mitnaged father once came to complain about his son to Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach. His son had become Chasidic and wanted to marry into a Chasidic family. He wanted Rav Shlomo Zalman to tell his son that he was violating Kibud Av Ve-Em. Rav Shlomo Zalman said: I have an In-law whose name is Rav Nachum Yitzchak Frank [Posek for the Edah Ha-Charedit and a respected Breslover Chasid in Jerusalem], go and ask him what the Chazon Ish Paskened for him regarding this question. The father stubbornly asked a second time: But what does Ha-Rav Pasken? Rav Shlomo Zalman said: I already answered you. Ask my in-law R' Nachum Yitzchak! It was hard for the father to digest the answer and thought that perhaps Rav Shlomo Zalman did not want to give a strict ruling

in front of his son, so he decided to call Rav Shlomo Zalman when he was alone. When he began to ask his question, Rav Shlomo Zalman recognized his voice, and grudgingly said: I already Paskened for you! And this was the end of the conversation. The reason for this was that Rav Nachum Yitzchak's father was upset when his son became Chasidic, and he went to the Chazon Ish to ask about it. The Chazon Ish said in brief: There is no Kibud Av in matters of Avodat Hashem. In the book 'Ha-Chasidut Al Ha-Elyona' Volume 1, p. 44-45, 202).

Thank You for Text Message Answer

Q: When I receive an answer from Ha-Rav to a text message question, should I send a thank you, or on the contrary does it just add more text messages and is a burden?

A: Indeed, there is no need.

Umbilical Cord

Q: When the piece of the umbilical cord falls out of a baby, it is permissible to throw it out or does it need to be buried?

A: Throw it out.

Shema at Time of Death

Q: What is the source for what the Poskim say that one should recite Shema at the time of his soul departing?

A: It is brought in the Gesher Ha-Chaim (2:3) but I am unaware of an ancient source for it, since although Rabbi Akiva recited it while dying, he did on since it was the time to recite Keriat Shema (Berachot 61b).

Shehechyanu on New Train Station

Q: There is a new train station near of house. Is it permissible to recite Shehechyanu?

A: Yes. It is good news (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 222:1).

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<https://torah.org/torah-portion/weekly-halacha-5772-beshalach/>

**Weekly Halacha :: Parshas Beshalach
Opening Cans, Bottles And Boxes On Shabbos
Rabbi Doniel Neustadt**

The complicated question of opening cans and bottles on Shabbos has been debated at great length among contemporary poskim, and in the final analysis, there is no consensus as to the practical halachah. This Discussion, however, is to explain the halachic principles involved and to familiarize the reader with the main schools of thought regarding this complex subject.

There are six possible Biblical or Rabbinic prohibitions one may violate when opening bottles, cans or boxes on Shabbos. They are: 1) Korea—Tearing; 2) Makeh b'patish—Completing the formation of a utensil; 3) Fashioning an opening, also a violation of Makeh b'patish; 4) Mocheh—Erasing; 5) Mechatech—cutting or tearing to a specific size; 6) Soser—Destroying a utensil. In order to avoid violating any of these strict Shabbos prohibitions, it is highly advisable and strongly recommended that one open all bottles, containers and wrappings before Shabbos. Most people have a mental “checklist” of “things to do” on erev Shabbos, and opening boxes, bottles and bags of food and drinks should be on the list. Our Discussion, therefore, is aimed at those who forgot or failed to prepare properly for Shabbos.

Background and Basic Principles

Tosefta[1] cites the following halachic decision which is quoted by all of the poskim[2]: “It is permitted on Shabbos to rip the skin (in olden times, skins were used to seal barrels) off the top of a barrel (as long as there is no intention of creating a spout).” There is a great deal of controversy among the poskim as to why this is permitted, since it is prohibited to tear on Shabbos. Several explanations are given, but let us focus on the two basic approaches:

The Chazon Ish[3] explains that it is permitted because the ripping is done in a destructive manner. The person who opens the barrel has no interest in preserving the cover for later use. A Shabbos Labor done in a destructive

manner is not considered a melachah and is permissible even mid'Rabbanan. The Chazon Ish permits ripping off a salami wrapper, for example, since the wrapping is destroyed while it is being ripped. Thus, according to this approach, it is permitted to rip something on Shabbos only if the packaging will be destroyed as it is being opened.

Other poskim[4], however, explain the Tosefta differently. The reason it is permitted to rip the skin off the barrel (or the wrapper off a package, etc.) is that the wrapper is totally "subordinate" to its contents. Removing the wrapper is like removing a nutshell from a nut or unwrapping the binding which surrounds dates from the fruit—both of which are clearly permissible according to the Shulchan Aruch[5]. As long as one is tearing for the sake of removing contents from a package, it is permissible to tear. According to this approach, it makes no difference if the package is destroyed in the process or not; even if the wrapper remains partially intact and is able to retain its contents, tearing is permitted. Still, even according to this view, it is forbidden to tear the packaging with the intent of reusing at a later date, since in that case one is completing the formation of a utensil on Shabbos—Makeh b'patish.

This debate has ramifications for opening cans on Shabbos as well. According to Chazon Ish when one opens a can one "completes the formation of a utensil." Before the can was opened it was a "closed shell," unusable as a utensil. After it is opened it becomes a container which can serve as a utensil. Since it was not destroyed in the process of being opened, it is forbidden to be opened on Shabbos. [In the view of yet other poskim[6], opening a can is not "completing the formation of a utensil" but rather "breaking an existing utensil" which is also prohibited on Shabbos.]

But the other poskim mentioned earlier do not consider opening a can as "completing the formation of a utensil" [nor do they consider opening a can as "breaking an existing utensil"]. In their view, since cans are generally discarded after their contents are removed, no usable utensil is created. Opening a can is merely like the peeling off of a "shell," which is a permissible activity. Indeed, if the can is made from durable material which is meant to last and be reused in the future, then it is prohibited according to all poskim to open it on Shabbos, since none of the leniencies mentioned above apply.

Question: Most bottle caps in use nowadays[7][7] either leave a ring around the bottle neck or perforate along the edge when the bottle is opened. Is it permitted to open them on Shabbos or Yom Tov?

Discussion: This question is widely disputed among contemporary poskim. The debate centers around two basic issues. 1) Unscrewing a cap renders it a functional utensil, since before unscrewing it serves as a seal and it now becomes a cap which may be used as a cover[8][8] Thus, the first time the cap is unscrewed, it completes the formation of a utensil—the bottle cap—which may be a violation of Makeh b'patish[9][9] 2) Unscrewing the cap at the perforated edge may be a violation of Mechatech, since the cap is being cut down to a specific size. There are conflicting views among the poskim in regard to the practical halachah[1][10]

1. Some poskim prohibit opening all bottle caps that leave a ring or perforate along the edge. Some consider it Mechatech[1][11] while others consider it Makeh b'patish[1][12]

2. Some poskim permit opening plastic bottle caps but forbid opening the ones made from metal[1][13] This is because plastic caps are functional even before they are screwed onto a bottle (as opposed to metal ones which—due to differences in technology—become operational only after being unscrewed from the bottle the first time).

3. Some poskim permit opening all bottle caps, since in their opinion neither makeh b'patish nor mechatech is being violated[1][14]

Contemporary poskim agree that it is forbidden to open bottle caps which are stamped with the date of production, etc., and the letter formation will be broken or erased when unscrewing the bottle cap.

Question: Is it permitted to open a soda or tuna-fish can on Shabbos?

Discussion: In the opinion of Rav S.Z. Auerbach[1][15] it is permitted to open both a soda can or a tuna fish can on Shabbos. He explains that Makeh b'patish does not apply to any utensil which will be discarded after its contents are removed, even if the contents are not removed immediately but will remain in the can for some time. In addition, he holds that Mechatech does not apply when lifting off a tab from a can of soda or beer, since one is not aiming to make a tab of a certain size, but rather to lift the tab off in the easiest way possible, which is where the manufacturer perforated it.

There are other poskim who forbid the opening of all cans on Shabbos for various halachic reasons—either because of Mechatech, Makeh b'patish or Soser[1][16] Those whose custom is to follow the more stringent opinion should continue to do so.

Question: Is it permitted to rip off the packaging of wine bottles, coffee jars, candy bars, paper goods, sugar packets or other items necessary for Shabbos?

Discussion: It is permitted to rip off or tear a wrapper which surrounds wine or grape juice bottle caps, candy bars, freeze pops or any items necessary for Shabbos. It is permitted to rip off a seal that covers the contents of a container, such as the inside seal of a coffee jar or an aluminum foil seal on a yogurt container, etc. When tearing any packaging, one must be sure that no letters or pictures are torn. It is permitted to cut or tear between the letters of a word or between words[1][17] It is permitted to poke a hole and insert a straw into bags or boxes which contain beverages[1][18]

Question: Is it permitted to rip open a corrugated box which contains packages of cookies or paper goods, etc.?

Discussion: It is permitted to rip off the tape which seals this type of box. But it is forbidden to open such a box if the flaps are glued together tightly and must be separated to open. Corrugated boxes are often reused after their contents are removed, and one is particular to open them in a manner which is not destructive, so that it can be reused. This may be a violation of Tearing[1][19]

But it is permitted to open a cookie or cereal box or bag, even if one does not immediately empty out its contents and even if the box or bag is not destroyed in the process. It makes no difference if the box is made out of cardboard, plastic or paper, nor does it make a difference if the box contains food or something else such as medicine, clothing or toys. It is only prohibited to open a container which is made of strong, long-lasting material such as a barrel or a corrugated box which might be reused in the future[2][20]

Question: Leben or yogurt cups sometimes come attached to each other and must be separated along a perforated line before they can be eaten individually. Is that permitted to be done on Shabbos?

Discussion: Contemporary poskim debate whether or not it is permitted to separate attached yogurt or leben cups from each other. Some consider it a violation of Mechatech and Makeh b'patish[2][21] while others hold it is permitted altogether[2][22]

General note: Even if one mistakenly opened a can or a bottle in a manner which is clearly prohibited, it is not forbidden to eat the food or beverage[2][23]

1. Beitzah 3:9. 2. Beis Yosef, Magen Avraham and Mishnah Berurah 314:25. See also Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav 12 and Chayei Adam 29:4. 3. O.C. 51:13; 61:2. See Binyan Shabbos, vol. 1, pgs. 210-216 and 226-230 for a comprehensive review of this opinion.

4. Shevisas ha-Shabbos, pg. 12b; Chazon Yechezkel (hashmatos to Tosefta Shabbos); Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 9, note 12 and Shulchan Shelomo 314:7-4). See also Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:122 who agrees, in principle, with this approach. 5. O.C. 314:8. 6. Tehillah l'David 314:12. 7. Bottle caps which lift off with a bottle opener may be removed; Mishnah Berurah 314:17; Chazon Ish 51:11. 8. Even if the cap was partially unscrewed before Shabbos, but it remained attached to the ring, it is prohibited to unscrew it further on Shabbos; Binyan Shabbos, vol. 1, pg. 158; Melech Shabbos, pg. 343. 9. See explanation of entire issue in Shulchan Shelomo 314:9-4, 5. 10. The same debate applies to plastic containers which are sealed with a plastic lid which is secured to the bottle by means of a plastic strip which is pulled off in order to open the container; see Binyan Shabbos, vol. 1, pg 108 and 246. See also Orchos Shabbos 12:20. 11. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Orchos Shabbos 12:18.

note 31, *Me'or ha-Shabbos*, vol. 2, pg. 551). 12. Rav Y.Y. Weiss (*Kol ha-Torah*, vol. 42, pg. 14); Rav N. Karelitz (*Chut Shani, Shabbos*, vol. 2, pg. 274). One may, however, puncture a hole in the cap and then unscrew it; *Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah* 9:18, or better yet, puncture a wide hole in the cap and then pour the beverage through the punctured hole; *Melech Shabbos*, pg. 344; *Orchos Shabbos* 12, note 30. 13. *Shulchan Shelomo* 314:9-9. 14. Rav Y.Y. Fischer in *Even Yisrael* 2:14; *Tzitz Eliezer* 14:45; *Lehoros Nasan* 7:21; *Kinyan Torah* 4:34; *Yechaveh Da'as* 2:42; Rav Y. Roth (*Ohr ha-Shabbos*, vol. 11, pg. 17). 15. *Shulchan Shelomo* 314:7-4. Many other poskim agree as well; see *Minchas Yitzchak* 4:82; *Chelkas Yaakov* 3:8. 16. See *Orchos Shabbos* 12:5 and note 6 and 10 and *Chut Shani, Shabbos*, vol. 2, pgs. 273-274. 17. Entire paragraph based on rulings of Rav S.Z. Auerbach (*Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah* and *Tikunim u'Miluim* 9:12-13; *Me'or ha-Shabbos*, vol. 1, pg. 496). Simple designs such as a square or a frame are not considered pictures; see *Orchos Shabbos* 15, note 28. 18. *Orchos Shabbos* 12:8; *Binyan Shabbos*, vol. 1, pg. 145, quoting Rav S.Z. Auerbach. 19. See *Orchos Shabbos* 12:10. 20. Rav S.Z. Auerbach in *Tikunim u'Miluim* 9:11 and *Shulchan Shelomo* 314:7-5, 6. See *Binyan Shabbos*, vol. 2, pgs. 145-149, for a comprehensive review of the entire subject. There are dissenting opinions who are stringent and forbid opening all boxes or bags; see *Knei Bosem* 1:22. 21. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (*Orchos Shabbos* 12:12, *Me'or ha-Shabbos*, vol. 2, pg. 551). 22. Rav S.Z. Auerbach (*Orchos Shabbos* 12:18, note 31, *Shulchan Shelomo* 314:13-3). 23. *Shulchan Shelomo* 314:9-6; *Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah* 9:24.

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 subject: the controversies about eruv in big cities

**Carrying in Public and the Use of an Eruv
 By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

Question #1:

“Is it a mitzvah to build an eruv?”

Question #2: Public or private ownership?

“Can I own a reshus harabim?”

Question #3:

“How does a little bit of wire enclose an area? Isn't this a legal fiction?”

It has been many years since I included any request for funds in these articles....

My son, Rav Shlomo shlit"u, an extensive talmid chacham, who is a ram in Mir Yeshiva (Yerushalayim) has been responsible for many years for the marei mekomos (references) for hundreds of avreichim in the “daf” program at the Mir, which was one of Rav Nossan Zvi Finkel zt”l’s dream projects of making a large group of true talmidei chachamim and gedolei Yisroel.

A result of this work is that he has produced paperback books on the mesechos that comprise the regular cycle studied at Mir Yeshiva -- these are Yevamos, Kesubos, Gittin, Kiddushin, Sukkah, Makos, Pesachim and the three Bavos. These are the standard mesechtos studied at most yeshivos.

The seforim, called Shalemi Kohen have been highly acclaimed for their thoroughness, organization, and clarity.

They are now being reproduced in a much more thorough and reader friendly format in hard cover, which involves having the work typeset professionally, and, of course, there are printing and distribution costs. You could see the covers of these works through the following link:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ZVi3a38_DA73nGqj_6-M4HJKNgd8fjAj

Thus far Shalmei Kohen hardcover editions on Gittin and on Nedorim are in print. At this point, we are offering a unique opportunity to dedicate either the volumes on Yevamos, which goes to the printer shortly, or Kesubos, which will be published shortly after Pesach.

And now we return to our weekly halachic article-

Answer:

In this week’s parsha, the Torah recounts the story of the mann, including the unbecoming episode where some people attempted to gather it on Shabbos. In the words of the Torah:

And Moshe said, “Eat it [the mann that remained from Friday] today, for today is Shabbos to Hashem. Today you will not find it [the mann] in the field. Six days you shall gather it, and the Seventh Day is Shabbos – There will be none.”

And it was on the Seventh Day. Some of the people went out to gather, and they did not find any.

And Hashem said to Moshe: “For how long will you refuse to observe My commandments and My teachings? See, Hashem gave you the Shabbos. For this reason, He provides you with two-day supply of bread on the sixth day. On the Seventh Day, each person should remain where he is and not leave his place” (Shemos 16:25- 29).

Although the Torah’s words “each person should remain where he is and not leave his place” might be understood to mean that even leaving one’s home is forbidden, the context implies that one may not leave one’s home while carrying the tools needed to gather the mann (Tosafos, Eruvin 17b). The main prohibition taught here is to refrain from carrying an object from one’s house or any other enclosed area (halachically called reshus hayachid) to an area available to the general public, a reshus harabim. Chazal further explain that moving an item in any way from a reshus hayachid to a reshus harabim violates the Torah law, whether one throws it, places it, hands it to someone else, or transports it in any other way (Shabbos 2a, 96). Furthermore, we derive from other sources that one may also not transport an item from a reshus harabim to a reshus hayachid, nor may one transport it four amos (about seven feet) or more within a reshus harabim (Shabbos 96b; Tosafos, Shabbos 2a s.v. pashat). Thus, carrying into, out of, or within a reshus harabim violates a severe Torah prohibition. For the sake of convenience, I will refer to the transport of an item from one reshus to another or within a reshus harabim as “carrying,” regardless of the method of conveyance.

One should note that with reference to the melacha of carrying on Shabbos, the terms reshus hayachid and reshus harabim do not relate to the ownership of the respective areas, but are determined by the extent that the areas are enclosed and how they are used. A reshus hayachid could certainly be public property, and there are ways whereby an individual could own a reshus harabim.

Notwithstanding the Torah’s clear prohibition against carrying into, from or within a reshus harabim, we are all familiar with the concept of an eruv that permits carrying in areas that are otherwise prohibited. You might ask, how can poles and wires permit that which is otherwise prohibited min haTorah? As we will soon see, it cannot – and the basis for permitting the use of an eruv is far more complicated.

We are also aware of controversies in which one respected authority certifies a particular eruv, while others contend that it is invalid. This is by no means a recent development. We find extensive disputes among early authorities regarding whether one may construct an eruv in certain areas. Some consider it a mitzvah to construct an eruv there, whereas others contend that the very same “eruv” is causing people to sin.

An Old Machlokes

Here is one instance. In the thirteenth century, Rav Yaakov ben Rav Moshe of Alinsiya wrote a letter to the Rosh explaining why he forbade constructing an eruv in his town. In his response, the Rosh contended that Rav Yaakov’s concerns were groundless, and that he should immediately construct an eruv. Subsequent correspondence reveals that Rav Yaakov did not change his mind and still refused to erect an eruv in his town.

The Rosh severely rebuked Rav Yaakov for this recalcitrance, insisting that if Rav Yaakov persisted, he, the Rosh, would place Rav Yaakov in cherem! The Rosh further contended that Rav Yaakov had the status of a zakein mamrei, a Torah scholar who rules against the decision of the Sanhedrin, which in the time of the Beis HaMikdash constitutes a capital offense (Shu”t HaRosh 21:8). This episode demonstrates that heated disputes over eruv are by no means recent phenomena.

Is It a Mitzvah?

Before I present the arguments for and against eruv manufacture in the modern world, we should note that all accept that it is a mitzvah to erect a kosher eruv when this is halachically and practically possible, as the following anecdote indicates.

Rabbah the son of Rav Chanan asked Abayei: “How can it be that an area in which reside two such great scholars [Abayei and Abayei’s Rebbe] is without an eruv?” Abayei answered: “What should we do? It is not respectful for my Master to be involved, I am too busy with my studies, and the rest of the people are not concerned” (Eruvin 68a).

The commentaries note that Abayei accepted the position presented by Rabbah that one should build an eruv. Abayei merely deflected the inquiry by pointing out that no one was readily available to attend to the eruv, and that its construction did not preempt other activities: Abayei’s commitment to Torah study and the kovod haTorah of his Rebbe. Indeed, halachic authorities derive from this Talmudic passage that it is a mitzvah to erect an eruv whenever it is halachically permitted (Tashbeitz 2:37, quoted verbatim by the Birkei Yosef, Orach Chayim 363:2). These rulings are echoed by such luminaries as the Chasam Sofer (Shu”t Orach Chayim #99), the Avnei Neizer (Shu”t Avnei Neizer, Orach Chayim #266:4), the Levush Mordechai (Shu”t Levush Mordechai, Orach Chayim #4) and Rav Moshe Feinstein (Shu”t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 1:139:5 s.v. Velichora).

I mentioned before that the construction of an eruv of poles and wire cannot permit carrying that is prohibited min haTorah. If this is true, upon what basis do we permit the construction of an eruv? To answer this question, we need to understand that not every open area is a reshus harabim – quite the contrary, a reshus harabim must meet very specific and complex requirements, including:

(A) It must be unroofed (Shabbos 5a).

(B) It must be meant for public use or thoroughfare (Shabbos 6a).

(C) It must be at least sixteen amos (about twenty-eight feet) wide (Shabbos 99a).

(D) According to most authorities, it cannot be inside an enclosed area (cf., however, Be’er Heiteiv 345:7, quoting Rashba; and Baal HaMaor, Eruvin 22a, quoting Rabbeinu Efrayim). The exact definition of an “enclosed area” is the subject of a major dispute that I will discuss.

(E) According to many authorities, it must be used by at least 600,000 people daily (Rashi, Eruvin 59a, but see Rashi ad loc. 6a where he requires only that the city have this many residents). This is derived from the Torah’s description of carrying into the encampment in the Desert, which we know was populated by 600,000 people.

(F) Many authorities require that it be a through street, or a gathering area that connects to a through street (Rashi, Eruvin 6a).

Some authorities add additional requirements.

Any area that does not meet the Torah’s definition of a reshus harabim yet is not enclosed is called a karmelis. One may not carry into, from or within a karmelis, following the same basic rules that prohibit carrying into a reshus harabim. However, since the prohibition not to carry in a karmelis is only rabbinic in origin, Chazal allowed a more lenient method of “enclosing” it.

Can One “Enclose” a Reshus Harabim?

As I mentioned earlier, carrying within a true reshus harabim is prohibited min haTorah – for this reason, a standard eruv does not permit carrying in such an area (Eruvin 6b). Nevertheless, large doors that restrict public traffic transform the reshus harabim into an area that one can enclose with an eruv. According to some authorities, the existence of these doors and occasionally closing them is sufficient for the area to lose its reshus harabim status. (Rashi, Eruvin 6b; however, cf. Rabbeinu Efrayim, quoted by Baal HaMaor, Eruvin 22a).

Please Close the Door!

There are some frum neighborhoods in Eretz Yisroel where a thoroughfare to a neighborhood or town is closed on Shabbos with doors, in order to allow an eruv to be constructed around the area. However, this approach is not practical in most places where people desire to construct an eruv.

So what does one do if one cannot close the area with doors?

This depends on the following issue: Does the area that one wants to enclose meet the requirements of a reshus harabim min haTorah, or is it only a karmelis? If the area is a reshus harabim min haTorah and one cannot occasionally close the area with doors, then there is no way to permit carrying in this area. One should abandon the idea of constructing an eruv around this city or neighborhood (see Eruvin 6a; Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 364:2). Depending on the circumstances, one may still be able to enclose smaller areas within the city.

Tzuras Hapesach

However, if the area one wants to enclose does not qualify as a reshus harabim, then most authorities rule that one may enclose the area by using a tzuras hapesach (plural, tzuros hapesach) – literally, “the form of a doorway.” (However, note that Shu”t Mishkenos Yaakov #120 s.v. Amnom and Shu”t Mishnas Rav Aharon #6 s.v. Kuntrus Be’Inyanei Eruvin paragraph #2 both forbid using a tzuras hapesach in many places that other poskim permit.)

A tzuras hapesach consists of two vertical side posts and a horizontal “lintel” that passes directly over them, thus vaguely resembling a doorway. According to halacha, a tzuras hapesach successfully encloses a karmelis area, but it cannot permit carrying in a true reshus harabim (Eruvin 6a). Using tzuros hapesach is the least expensive and most discreet way to construct an eruv. In a future article, I hope to explain some common problems that can occur while constructing tzuros hapesach and how to avoid them, and some important disputes relating to their construction.

Let us review. Carrying can be permitted in a karmelis, but not a reshus harabim, by enclosing the area with tzuros hapesach. Therefore, a decisive factor as to whether one can construct an eruv is whether the area is halachically a karmelis or a reshus harabim. If the area qualifies as a karmelis, then an eruv consisting of tzuros hapesach permits one to carry; if it is a reshus harabim, then tzuros hapesach do not. The issues concerning the definition of a reshus harabim form the basis of most controversies as to whether a specific eruv is kosher or not.

I will continue this article next week, bli neder.