

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON PARSHAS BO - 5757

B'S'D' retains his rights to the object.

Apparently the intent of Hashem was that the objects taken by Bnay Yisrael should be given to them without reservation (Matanah Gemurah, see Rashbam, Shemos 11:2). Why was it necessary for Bnay Yisrael to demand these things? Another obvious question is why did Hashem have to bring the 10 plagues on Egypt and Paroh when He could easily have forced Paroh to let Bnay Yisrael go much more readily and quickly?

The Rav explained that Hashem was manifesting the concept of "Kophin Oso Ad Sheyomar Rotzeh Ani", we apply force to someone until the individual in question comes to the self realization that what is demanded of him is correct and he expresses his desire to comply. Hashem wanted Paroh to recognize on his own the need to send the Jews out of Egypt and to comply with the demand of Hashem. As Paroh said "Arise and leave from among my people, also you and also all of Bnay Yisrael" (Shemos 12:31). However the question remains: why did Hashem prolong the stay of Bnay Yisrael? Could Paroh not have been made to realize this in a shorter interval?

The Rav further explained that Hashem wanted Paroh not only to allow Bnay Yisrael to leave Egypt, but to come to respect them as well. As long as they were slaves, Paroh thought of them as sub-human. Chazal say on the verse of "Who is Hashem that I shall listen to him" (Shemos 5:2) that Paroh searched through his chronicles and was not able to find the name of Hashem the Gd of Israel mentioned anywhere. What Chazal intended to indicate was that Paroh did not consider Bnay Yisrael a bona fide nation, therefore he saw fit to enslave them. The 10 plagues were intended to show Paroh that Bnay Yisrael were a great nation, more so than to punish him and Egypt. Paroh was made to realize that they were not a bunch of insignificant Hebrews, rather they were a great national entity. As the Torah says "And afterwards he shall send you out" (Shemos 11:1). It does not say I will take you out, rather Paroh will realize that you are a great nation and a significant entity and he will send you out.

Property ownership is an extremely important and fundamental right and principle according to the Torah. This is best illustrated by the law that one may defend his home and property from clandestine thieves (Ba B'machteres), and to struggle to protect them even to the extent of taking the life of the thief. Property, material possessions, gives a man self esteem and self value. It also commands respect from others. On the other hand, a slave has no property of his own, for whatever he acquires belongs to his master. Hashem told Moshe that "When you shall leave, you shall not leave empty handed" (Shemos 3:21). Had Bnay Yisrael left Egypt without material possessions and wealth, they would have still been looked on as slaves. Therefore Hashem asked them to demand from the Egyptians items of value as payment for their years of service. These items were to be taken from their neighbors and house mates, for they were the ones who had taken away their property and self dignity in the first place. (The Rav noted that when the Jews were liberated from the concentration camps after the Second World War, they went to the surrounding towns to retrieve their stolen property from the local populace who so eagerly took it from them.)

"And I will give the favor of this people" etc. (ibid) The Egyptians will come to see you as a nation, a people with dignity and no longer look upon you as slaves. Some might have thought that the Egyptians chased the Jews out of Egypt because they had become lepers. The Torah tells us just the opposite: that they left with tremendous self respect and dignity. One aspect of this self respect was their departing with great material wealth, Rechush Gadol. "V'nitzaltem Es Mitzrayim" (Shemos 3:22): Rashi explains V'nitzaltem as derived from the verb to save. That is to say that you shall save something for yourself when you leave: you shall save your dignity and earn great respect in the eyes of the Egyptians. As it says that Moshe gained great respect in the eyes of the Egyptians and the house of Paroh (Shemos 11:3).

The Rav explained the different terminology between neighbors and house mates in one verse and friends in the other. The Gemara teaches us that the term 'Ray'ayhu' applies exclusively to a Jew. Hashem wanted the Jews to share the wealth among themselves. A Jew living in a more affluent Egyptian neighborhood would take more wealth from his neighbors than the Jew who lived in a less affluent area. Hashem wanted the Jews to distribute the wealth

For e-mail of current or back issues contact crshulman@aol.com

Some Internet Dvar Torah Lists

VIRTUAL JERUSALEM: E-mail to: listproc@virtual.co.il In msg type: subscribe <listname> Your_Name" Some of lists: Aviner-Eng: Ateret Cohanim; Ask: Ask-the-Rabbi; Bircas: Parsha by Rabbi Dov Rabinowitz; DafYomi: Ohr Somayach; Parasha - Page: by Rabbi Kornfeld; Parasha-QA: Ohr Somayach; Torah-Talk: Parasha by Rabbi Steinberg; Weekly: Ohr Somayach on Parsha; Yhe - Halakha by Rabbi Friedman; Yhe-MB by Rabbi Rimon; Yhe-UndHalakha by Rabbi Bick and Zvi Shimon; Yhe-IntParsha by Zvi Shimon; Yhe-Pesachim; Yhe-Metho by Rabbi Taragin; Yhe-Sichot - of Rav Lichtenstein and Rav Amital; Yhe-Jewhpi - on Jewish philosophy; Yhe-Parsha: by YHE rabbis (& yhe-par.d); Yhe-Parsha.ml - by Rabbi Menachem Leibtag; YS-Parasha and YS-personalities - from Shaalvim; YITorah; Arutz-7; Shabbat-Zomet. Send command "lists" for lists.

SHAMASH: E-mail to listproc@shamash.org In message write " sub 'listname' <your name>" Bytetorah: Zev Itzkowitz; Enayim: YU parsha; Daf-hashavua: London; mj-RavTorah: Rav Soloveichik ZTL on Parsha. Send "lists" for list.

PROJECT GENESIS E-mail to majordomo@torah.org with "subscribe listname <your e-mail address>" in message. Lists include: Weekly-Halacha: by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt; DvarTorah: by Rabbi Green; Halacha-Yomi; Mahara; Rambam; Ramchal; RavFrاند; Tefila; Drasha by Rabbi Kamenetcky. Send "lists" for complete list.

HEMA YISRAEL: E-mail to: listproc@jen.co.il In msg type: subscribe <listname> Your_Name" Some of lists: Peninim - on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum; Outlooks on Parsha by Rabbi Zev Leff; Hear - insights from Rabbi Weber; Companion - Shalom Bayis by Rabbi Feinhandler; Yitorah; Daf-insights, Daf-background, Daf-review, etc. by Rabbi Kornfeld. Send "lists" for complete lists.

CHABAD E-mail to listserv@chabad.org. In subject write: subscribe me. In text write: "Subscribe <code> (e.g.: code = W-2)" Some of Codes: D-3) Rambam Daily; W-2) Likutei Sichos On Parsha; W-3) Week in Review on Parsha; W-4) Once Upon A Chasid; W-7) Wellsprings - Chasidic Insight into Torah Portion. Send "lists" for complete list.

ISRAEL NEWS To: Listserv@pankow.inter.net.il Subject: Subscribe Listname <your name> Type "Subscribe <listname> <your name>". Lists include "Israeline" and "Israel-mideast". Must confirm w/i 48 hours by sending to same address msg "OK xxxx" with xxxx the code receive in confirmation. Also Jer1 (listproc@virtual.co.il) has Arutz-7.

WWW - Shamash - <http://shamash.org> & <http://shamash.org/tanach/dvar.html>; Jerusalem 1 - <http://www.virtual.co.il>; Maven - <http://www.maven.co.il>; YU - <http://yu1.yu.edu>; YHE - <http://www.virtual.co.il/education/yhe>; OU - <http://www.ou.org>; Chabad - <http://www.chabad.org>; JCN <http://www.jcn18.com>; Project Genesis <http://www.torah.org> (see also <ftp://torah.org> for more archives); ShamaYisrael - <http://www.shamayisrael.co.il>; Children - <http://www.pirchei.co.il>; Aish Hatorah <http://www.thewall.org>; Rav Soloveichik archives - <http://gopher://shamash.org/70/11/judaica/tanach/commentary/mj-ravtorah> & <http://shamash.org/mail-jewish/rov.html>; Rabbi Leibtag Tanach archives - <http://www.virtual.co.il/torah/tanach>; YOSS Drasha <http://www.yoss.org/whindex.htm>; List - http://www.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Religion/Judaism; Israel - <http://www.ac.il>; Good link page - <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~akiva/HOJMI/links.html>; NCYI - <http://www.youngisrael.org>; My link page - <http://members.aol.com/CRShulman/torah.html>; Hebrew fonts - <http://www.virtual.co.il/education/yhe/hebfont.htm>; Congregation Bais Yitzchok - <http://members.aol.com/shtibel/jamaicaeates.html>; Holliswood Jewish Center - <http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/3648/>; Upcoming YIJE site - stay tuned!

jr@novell.com mj-ravtorah@shamash.org Date: Wed, 24 Jan 1996 01:45 EST

Shiur HaRav ZTL on Parshas Bo [From last year]

"And each woman shall ask from her neighbor and house mate silver vessels and gold vessels (V'sha'ala Isha M'shchenta Umigras Baysa)" (Shemos 3:22).

"Please speak to the people that each man should ask from his friend... (Vyishalu Ish Ma'ais Ray'ayhu)" (Shemos 11:2-3).

The Rav ZTL explained the different terminology used in these verses, in the first verse neighbors and house mates and in the other a person should request from his friends.

The term She'ayla throughout Tanach means to request or to demand something, not (in the simple definition) to borrow. When Hashem tells Moshe that a woman should request FROM her neighbors and a man should request FROM his friend, the connotation is to demand and take something away from them. When the Torah discusses the laws of a borrower (Sho'el, Parshas Mishpatim) the term Ma'im (from with) is used. This connotes borrowing with an obligation to repay or return the item as the original owner

more equitably. This was an extreme act of Chesed, charity, that bound the people and demonstrated their sense of a common destiny. Similarly, the Rambam writes (Matnos Aniyim 10:2) that "would not a brother take pity on his brother". If Jews do not look after their own brothers and take pity on them, who will? The different terminology reflects the desire that each Jew take possessions from their Egyptian neighbors and that they in turn should redistribute the wealth among themselves so that all Bnay Yisrael would enjoy equivalent wealth.

After the Jews left Egypt, Hashem asked them to give up a part of their wealth to build a Mishkan for Hashem (V'yikchu Li Trumah) (Shemos 25:2). A freed slave, who has had nothing of his own, finds it extremely difficult to willingly give up any part of his newfound possessions. To show that they were truly free men and women, Bnay Yisrael had to demonstrate their willingness to give up some of their own wealth for a higher cause. Bnay Yisrael answered this call, particularly the women, who were most eager to part with their finest jewelry for the sake of building the Mishkan of Hashem. As it says that the women came forward with greater zeal than the men, "Vayavou ha'anashim al h'nashim" (Shemos 35:22).

(c) Dr. Israel Rivkin and Josh Rapps, Edison N.J. Permission to reprint and distribute, with this notice, is hereby granted. These summaries are based on notes taken by Dr. Rivkin at the weekly Moriah Shiur given by HaGaon HaRav Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveichik ZTL over many years.

at exactly midnight, Jerusalem time. But because Egypt is west of Jerusalem, midnight there occurs later. When Moshe said the plague would be at 'approximately midnight,' he was referring to local, Egyptian time. Kehillas Yitzchak; thanks to Rabbi Sholem Fishbane

ffffffffffffffffffffffff

Recommended Reading List

Ramban 10:14 Locusts and Crocodiles 10:23 A Different Darkness 12:2 Jewish Months 12:3 Symbolism of the Korban Pesach 12:31,51 Timetable of the Exodus 13:5 Five and Two -- Seven Canaanite Nations

Sefer Hachinuch 7, 16 Eating Like Kings 18 Recognizing Hashem's Gifts 21 The Significance of the Exodus

ffffffffffffffffffffffff

Answers to this Week's Questions All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 10:10 - Bloodshed. 2. 10:11 - Since children don't bring sacrifices there was no need for them to go. 3. 10:14 - The plague brought by Moshe was composed of one species of locust, whereas the plague in the days of Yoel was composed of many species. 4. 10:19 - It applied even to dead ones salted and pickled for food. 5. 10:22 - During the first three days the Egyptians were unable to see. During the second three days they were unable to move as well. 6. 10:25 - Moshe said that not only would the Jews take their own livestock, but that the Egyptians would even give of their own livestock to the Jewish people. 7. 11:4 - In front of Pharaoh. 8. 11:4 - Moshe thought Pharaoh's astrologers might miscalculate. If he said the plague would begin exactly at midnight, they might make a mistake and accuse Moshe of being a fake. 9. 11:5 - They too subjugated the Jewish People and rejoiced in their suffering. 10. 11:5 - Because the Egyptians worshipped them as gods, and when Hashem punishes a nation He also punishes its gods. 11. 12:1 - As a reward for toiling together with Moshe in bringing about the plagues. 12. 12:2 - He heard the prophecy with the sunset and saw the moon as it got dark. 13. 12:5 - One year. 14. 12:6 - Circumcision and Korban Pesach. 15. 12:19 - Sourdough (se'or). 16. 12:29 - Pharaoh. 17. 12:34 - Because the commandment of matza was dear to them. 18. 12:41 - The angels came to promise that Sarah would have a son, Yitzchak was born, and the exile of the "covenant between parts" was decreed. 19. 13:5 - The milk is from goats and the honey is from dates and figs. 20. 13:13 - They assisted the Jewish People during the exile.

Bonus ANSWER: Moshe's prophecy exceeds that of all future prophets. Future prophets received visions and dreams, whereas Hashem spoke to Moshe 'face to Face' (see Bamidbar 12:6,7). If Moshe had merely seen the moon, his prophecy regarding it would be no better than that of future prophets. By 'pointing with the finger,' Hashem elevated this prophesy to the the same level of clarity as Moshe's other prophecies. Heard from Rabbi Betzalel Rudinsky, quoting the Netziv
Written and Compiled by Rabbi Reuven Subar General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman Production Design: Lev Seltzer (C) 1997 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

"ohr@jer1.co.il" "weekly@jer1.co.il"

* TORAH WEEKLY * Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion
Check out our web site: <http://www.ohr.org.il> ffffffffffffffffffffffff
Insights

Return Of The Pagans "And you shall tell you son on that day, saying Because of this, Hashem acted on my behalf." (13:8) A true story. Los Angeles. An orthodox Jew was having a business meeting in a restaurant. His companions were intrigued as to why he would not drink their wine. They pressed him for an answer. After demurring for a while, he finally explained that the Sages had decreed that a Jew must drink only Kosher wine because wine libations had been used by pagans to worship their gods. His business colleagues were both bemused and amused by this. They found it hard to believe that in 1997, so many years after idol worship had ceased, there should still be such a decree. As they were raising their glasses to their

"ohr@jer1.co.il" "parasha-qa@jer1.co.il"

* PARSHA Q&A * In-Depth Questions on the Parsha and Rashi's commentary. Parshas Bo

Check out our web site: <http://www.ohr.org.il>

Parsha Questions

1. There is a star called 'Ra.' What does it symbolize? 2. What was Pharaoh's excuse for refusing to allow the Jewish children to go into the desert? 3. How did the locusts in the time of Moshe differ from those in the days of Yoel? 4. To what extent was it that "Not one locust remained in the entire Egyptian border?" 5. How did the first three days of darkness differ from the last three days? 6. Pharaoh told Moshe that he would let all the people go, but that the Jewish livestock must remain in Egypt. What was Moshe's response to this? 7. Where was Moshe when he received the prophecy regarding the plague of the first born? 8. The plague of the first born took place exactly at midnight. Why did Moshe tell Pharaoh that it would take place "about midnight?" 9. Why did the first born of the slaves die? 10. Why did the first born of the animals die? 11. Why did Hashem give the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh to Aaron, and not only to Moshe? 12. How is it possible that Hashem spoke to Moshe and showed him the new moon, since Moshe received prophecy only during the day? 13. Up to what age is an animal fit to be a Pesach offering? 14. Prior to the Exodus from Egypt, what two mitzvos involving blood did Hashem give to the Jewish People? 15. What inedible substance is expressly forbidden to be eaten during Pesach? 16. Who among the first born of Egypt survived the plague of the first born? 17. Why did the Jewish People carry their matzah on their shoulders rather than have their animals carry it? 18. What three historical events occurred on the 15th of Nissan, prior to the event of the Exodus from Egypt? 19. What is the source of the "milk and honey" found in Eretz Yisrael? 20. The only non kosher animal whose first born is redeemed is the donkey. Why were the donkeys favored?

Bonus QUESTION: "Moshe had difficulty grasping the prophecy of the new moon [until] Hashem showed him, pointing with a finger." (Rashi 12:2)

Why did Hashem have to 'point with a finger,' so to speak? Wouldn't it have been enough to show Moshe, without 'pointing'?

I Did Not Know That! Moshe warned Pharaoh: "At approximately midnight I go out amidst Egypt, and every first born will die..." (11:14) Hashem's 'clock' is set to Jerusalem. The plague of the first-born took place

lips and about to wish each other "Cheers!" the wine waiter piped up: "I couldn't help overhearing your conversation. You know, I'm a neo-pagan, and before I serve the wine, I always pour out a little wine in the kitchen to my gods..." The drinkers froze with their glasses in mid-air. In the Pesach Hagadah, the wicked son says to his father "What is this avodah (service) to you?" meaning: "I grant you that when there was idol worship in the world, it was relevant to bring a lamb, the symbol of Egyptian idol worship, as a sacrifice. But nowadays, who worships idols? What is this service to you?" The answer is "Because of this." History is not a cause, it is an effect. Events happen so we may do the mitzvos, not the reverse. Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world. The mitzvos pre-date the world. They come before the world both chronologically and in importance. The reason that we have a mitzvah to honor our parents is not because we have parents and so we have to be nice to them. Mankind could have been a single-cell self-replicating organism. The reason we have parents is so that we can fulfill the mitzvah of honoring them. Similarly the reason for the Pesach sacrifice is not to remember a historical event. Rather, the historical event is the method by which we are able to fulfill the mitzvah. (Based on the Beis Halevi)

Written and Compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher
 Sinclair General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman Production Design: Lev Seltzer (C) 1997 Ohr Somayach International - All rights reserved.

This is what Pharaoh wanted to take away from us. And this is why Moshe Rabbeinu responded, "No. We must also take our youngsters and our elders."

A Letter From The Alter of Kelm to Baron Rothschild

At the end of the Parsha we have a Mitzvah to "Sanctify for Me (G-d) all the first born..." [13:2] The first born of human beings and animals are holy to G-d. Why? Because G-d passed over Egypt on the night of Pesach and killed the first born of the Egyptians while sparing the first born of Israel. Is that a reason for the first born to be invested with a holiness which lasts until today?

There is an interesting letter, about which I do not know the historical context, but this letter is from Rav Simcha Zissel of Kelm to Baron Rothschild.

Baron Rothschild, as we all know, was a fantastically wealthy person who put his money to good use. He helped thousands and thousands of Jews.

The Alter from Kelm writes the following to Baron Rothschild:

I want to express my gratitude to you for all the generous and kind acts, which you have done for the entire Jewish people. Do not suspect, Heaven forbid, that I am coming with my own request for funds. However, in my humble opinion, I have to express my sense of gratitude for all that you have done to help the Jewish people. You are a person who stands before Kings and nevertheless you do not forget from where you came, and therefore maintain your support for Jewish needs. This is a great Sanctification of G-d's Name and your reward is very great. Based on legal obligation (al pi din), I feel I have to express my thanks, honor, and appreciation to such an individual and to such a Sanctification of G-d's name.

Then the Alter from Kelm continues...

Think for a minute. The Halacha was to have been that the First Born were to have done the Service in the Temple. Had it not been for the sin of the Golden Calf, the Bechorim [first born] would have served G-d in the Beis HaMikdash, instead of the Kohanim. Why? Because they were passed over on that night of Pesach. As a result, until this very day there is a sanctity of the first born. Not only does this sanctity apply to the first born of a human, but even to the first born of an animal.

Rav Simcha Zissel asks, "Why? What did the Bechorim do, that made them holy?" They were merely passive. They were born first and therefore were saved by G-d, when He killed the first born. So what? What did the first born do that would have made them holier than a regular person, and fit for the Temple Service until this very day?

Rav Simcha Zissel answers, that they participated -- albeit passively -- in a Sanctification of G-d's Name. When G-d, in his Own Glory came into Egypt and killed the Egyptian first born while sparing the Jewish first born, that was a tremendous Kiddush HaShem. That may have been the greatest manifestation of G-d's power, up to that point in history.

The first born, passively aided and abetted this great Kiddush HaShem. A person who even passively helps to create a Sanctification of G-d's name, has a very great reward... to the extent that even today a first born is holy. Why? Because thousands of years ago the Bechorim 'helped' make a Kiddush HaShem.

If this is the reward for a person who passively helps in a Kiddush Hashem, how can we begin to contemplate, says the Alter from Kelm, what the reward is of a person that actively goes and makes a Kiddush Hashem?

"Therefore, you, Baron Rothschild, considering who you are and what you have done, have actively and publicly Sanctified G-d's Name. Therefore, the greatest honor, respect and sense of Hakarat HaTov is due to you, merely by virtue of this fact."

This is the lesson of the parsha of Bechor. Even passively helping create a Kiddush HaShem is a tremendous zechus [merit]. How much more of a Kiddush HaShem are we creating, when, in our daily lives, the way we act, the way we talk, the way we negotiate, the way we deal in business and the way we act among people -- Jew and non-Jew alike -- Sanctifies G-d's Name?

"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Bo

Pharaoh Was Wicked and Cynical, but Astute

The pasuk [verse] says that Moshe Rabbeinu told Pharaoh "With our youngsters and with our elders we will go..." [Shmos 10:9]. In others words, "We want to go out with everyone -- no exceptions!" Pharaoh responds [10:11] "Not so, let the men go...". In other words, "that's not the way it's going to be, I only want to let the men go out."

The Baal HaTurim suggests that when Pharaoh says "men" in this pasuk, his intention is males between the ages of 20 and 60. Pharaoh refused to allow those under 20 or over 60 to leave. On the other hand, this is precisely what Moshe Rabbeinu had asked for -- permission for the youth and the elders to leave as well!

If one thinks about it, Pharaoh was being very astute. It was cynical and wicked, but it was astute, nevertheless. Pharaoh understood something about the Jewish people. In order for there to be a Jewish people, there has to be a past and there has to be a future.

Klal Yisroel must have a past. We are a religion with a concept of "Mesorah," a concept of "Tradition" that we get from our fathers and from our fathers' fathers. This concept is vital to what Judaism is all about. But we are also a religion that believes that unless we have someone to give over this heritage to, we have no future.

When Pharaoh said, "Let the men go" he was, in effect, saying, "I don't want the young to go and I don't want the elderly to go. I'm taking away your past and your future."

Moshe Rabbeinu responds that this is obviously unacceptable. The only way in which we can go forward as a Nation, is with our youth and with our elders.

The Yalkut says "Four individuals minted coins..." The first person to mint a coin was our Patriarch Avraham. What was on Avraham's coin? Our Sages tell us that on one side of the coin was an elderly man and woman (zaken u'zekana) and on the other side of the coin was a young man and young woman (bachur u'besulah). Avraham Avinu was the founder of the Jewish Nation. He "minted the coin" of Klal Yisroel. He understood that in order for there to be a Jewish People there has to be an old man and old woman on one side -- representing the generation that provides us with guidance, and that transmits to us instruction of what we should and should not do. But, there also has to be the young man and young woman on the other side -- representing the future.

If we use opportunities to go out of our way to make that Kiddush HaShem; if we say that extra "Good Morning," if we are assiduously honest; if we go the extra mile to make that Kiddush Hashem so that they can say about us "You are my Servant, Israel, through whom I will be Glorified" [Yeshaya 49:3]; that they can say upon us "How pleasant are his ways" [Talmud Yoma 86a]; how beautiful are the ways of a religious Jew; then, as the Alter from Kelm writes, our reward will be very great.

Personalities & Sources: -----

Ba'al HaTurim -- Torah commentary by R. Yaakov ben Asher (1268-1340), author of the Tur. First published in 1514 in Constantinople.

Yalkut (Shimoni) -- early collection of Midrashic material compiled by Rav Shimon Ashkenazi HaDarshan of Frankfort (circa 1260). First published in Salonika 1521-27.

Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv of Kelm -- (1824-1898), known as the "Alter (old one) from Kelm. One of the early "Ba'ale Mussar" (Masters of Ethics). Baron Edmond James De Rothschild -- (1845-1934) philanthropist, patron of Jewish causes and Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel. Known as the "Father of the Yishuv" and "the well-known benefactor" (haNadiv haYadua).

RavFrاند, Copyright (c) 1997 by Rabbi Y. Frand and Project Genesis, Inc. This list is part of Project Genesis, the Jewish Learning Network. Project Genesis, the Jewish Learning Network learn@torah.org 3600 Crondall Lane, Ste. 106 http://www.torah.org/ Owings Mills, MD 21117 (410) 654-1799 FAX: 356-9931

WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5757 COPYRIGHT 1996-7 SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS BO

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

NO WORK MAY BE DONE ON THEM.(Exo. 12:16) EVEN BY OTHERS.(Rashi)

Non-Jew working for a Jew on Shabbos What is Permitted? What is Prohibited?

Ramban interprets Rashi's comment quoted above, "even by others" as referring to the prohibition of a non-Jew performing 'work', melachah, for a Jew on Shabbos. Accordingly, although the prohibition of amirah l'akum telling a non-Jew to do a melachah for a Jew on Shabbos is a rabbinical ordinance, it has a Biblical source(1) and is, therefore, considered a severe rabbinic prohibition. We will attempt to establish the parameters of this multi-faceted halachah: General Rules In order to employ a non-Jew to do a melachah on Shabbos, there are two separate restrictions (often confused) that must be borne in mind. Only when neither of the restrictions applies is it permitted for a non-Jew to do work for a Jew on Shabbos. The two restrictions are: To command a non-Jew to do any work that would be prohibited for a Jew to do on Shabbos. The command may not be made either on Shabbos or before Shabbos(2); To benefit directly from work done by a non-Jew for a Jew on Shabbos, even if the non-Jew has not been commanded to do the work(3). Our Sages enacted this prohibition so that a person will not be tempted to transgress the prohibition of amira l'akum and ask a non-Jew to do a melachah for him(4).

Accordingly, if a) a non-Jew was not commanded to do the melachah and b) the Jew will not directly benefit from his work, it would be permitted for a Jew to use a non-Jew to work on Shabbos, for in this way, neither prohibition is being transgressed.

How does one avoid the first restriction - commanding the non-Jew?

This prohibition can be avoided if the non-Jew understands what he has to do without being explicitly commanded. The Jew may hint to a non-Jew what he wants done, but the hint may not be in the form of a command. For example, it is permissible to tell a non-Jew: "My bedroom lights are on and I will not be able to sleep"; "It is a pity that so much electricity is being wasted; "The food on the stove is burning", etc.(5).

It is forbidden, however, to add: "Will you please help me out?" etc., since then the hint is accompanied by a form of a command(6). Even if the non-Jew asks: "Should I turn the light off for you?", it is forbidden to answer: "Yes." Hints in the form of a command are prohibited even if no words are exchanged and one merely gestures or nods, etc.(7).

How does one avoid the second restriction - benefiting directly from a non-Jew?

As we mentioned before, our Sages prohibited only direct benefit, such as turning on a light or cooking food, etc. Moreover, they prohibited new benefit only, not indirect, or additional benefit. Let us explain those terms: "Indirect Benefit" is when the benefit is not a result of the melachah, but a by-product of it; when the melacha removes an obstacle which then enables one to benefit from something. For example: Putting out a light in a bedroom does not directly enable a person to sleep; it merely removes the light which until now made it difficult for one to fall asleep(8). "Additional Benefit" is when a benefit was previously available to some extent, but the melacha performed by the non-Jew makes it easier to do that which was possible to do even without the melachah that the non-Jew did, e.g., when additional lights are turned on by a non-Jew in a room which is already lit(9). Note: Although the restriction of benefiting from a non-Jew's melachah is lifted when the action is indirect or additional, it is still forbidden to command him to do the indirect or additional melachah, since the first prohibition still applies. Some Practical Applications: A non-Jew, without being told, turns on a light in a dark room for the benefit of a Jew. It is forbidden to read in that room or to derive any other use from the light, since the benefit is new and direct. (There are exceptions to this rule when the situation involves a public mitzvah, an ill person - even if not dangerously ill - and other specific situations. A Rav must be consulted). A non-Jew turns off the light in a bedroom. One is permitted to sleep there since he is benefiting indirectly. It is not permitted, however, to instruct the non-Jew to turn the light off(10). A non-Jew, without being told, turns on a light in a dimly lit room so that the Jew can see better. The Jew may continue using the room for whatever use he was making of it before the non-Jew turned on the light, even though it is now much easier for the Jew to work in the room(11). A room is lit by faint, natural daylight. If a non-Jew turns on an electrical light, the Jew may continue using the room as long as there is some degree of daylight. Once it turns dark, however, the non-Jew's melachah is producing new, not additional, benefit. It is, therefore, prohibited to derive any benefit from the light that was turned on. It is prohibited to hint to a non-Jew that it is hot in the hope that he will turn on an air conditioner, since the benefit that the Jew will have from the air conditioner, cool air circulating in the room, is direct and new(12). Note: The examples above are merely samples of the general principles governing amirah l'akum. There are many more details, exceptions and conditions that are involved in the practical halacha, both l'chumrah and l'kulah, which cannot be included here. A Rav should be consulted. ***

FOOTNOTES:

1 Mishnah Berurah 243:7 and Shaar Hatzion 7. See also Mor Uktzia OC 243. 2 OC 307:2 and Biur Halacha; Avnei Nezer OC 43:6; Aruch Hashulchan 307:12. 3 OC 276:1. 4 Mishnah Berurah 276:2; 325:28. 5 Mishnah Berurah 307:76; Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasah 30:7. According to Harav S.Z. Auerbach, however, this is only permitted outside the home of the Jew, see written responsa published in Meor Hashabbos pg. 515 and pg. 518. 6 When the command to do work on Shabbos is given before Shabbos, or when a command to do work is given on Shabbos for work to be done after Shabbos, it may be given as a hint in the form of a command - Rama 307:22; Mishnah Berurah 307:10. 7 Chayei Adam 62:2. 8 See Kalkeles Shabbos (Amira L'akum 5); Mishnah Berurah 307:11; Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasah 30:5; 30:36; The Sanctity of Shabbos pg. 11. 9 Mishnah Berurah 306:76. 10 According to some poskim, turning a light off is only an issur derabonon. Accordingly, in certain situations one may even instruct a non-Jew to turn the lights off - see The Sanctity of Shabbos pg. 26. See, however, Meor Hashabbos pg. 513 a written responsum from Harav S.Z. Auerbach who is hesitant to allow this. 11 OC 276:4. 12 Igros Moshe YD 3:47-2.

BACK ISSUE UPDATE:

<http://torah.org/torah/advanced/weekly-halacha/5757/>

Weekly-Halacha, Copyright (c) 1997 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Project Genesis, Inc. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The

Weekly-Halacha Series is distributed L'zchus Hayeled Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available - please mail to jgross@torah.org. The series is distributed by the Harbotzas Torah Division of Congregation Shomre Shabbos, 1801 South Taylor Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118 HaRav Yisroel Grumer, Marah D'Asra Project Genesis, the Jewish Learning Network learn@torah.org 3600 Crondall Lane, Ste. 106 Owings Mills, MD 21117 (410) 654-1799 FAX: 356-9931

listserv@lubavitch.chabad.org (W-2 LIST) B"H The Chassidic Dimension Adaptation of Likutei Sichos by Rabbi Sholom Ber Wineberg

Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion Bo ...

Passover Offerings -- Home and Away

One of the differences between the Paschal offerings brought in Egypt and subsequent Paschal offerings is, that those brought in Egypt were sacrificed by each family within their homes, while the later Paschal offerings had to be sacrificed in the Mishkan or Beis HaMikdash. That the offerings in

Egypt were brought by each family in its own home was not only permissible, but obligatory; each domicile had to have its own offering. Only when the number of individuals within one dwelling was not enough to consume the entire offering in one night was it permitted to join another family that lived nearby. Why did the Egyptian Paschal offering differ from all

subsequent Paschal offerings? The prophet Yechezkiel speaks of the Exodus from Egypt as the time of the Jewish nation's birth. It follows that the offering brought in association with this exodus is related to the birth of the Jewish people and their subsequent function. The Midrash informs us that "G-d earnestly desired a dwelling in the nethermost level," i.e., in this physical world. This was primarily accomplished, according to the Midrash, when the Mishkan was built, as the verse states: "And you shall make for Me a Sanctuary and I shall reside among them." Our Sages comment: "It does not state ['I shall reside] in it,' rather, 'in them,' that is to say, within each and every Jew." Since all verses are first and foremost to be understood in their simple sense, it follows that our Sages are telling us that in addition to the primary Mishkan and Beis HaMikdash, each Jew should seek to make his own personal Mishkan and Beis HaMikdash, so that G-d will reside within him. Since the verse states "in them" and not "in it," it follows that the personal Mishkan and Beis HaMikdash is of great importance.

The reason is as follows: Although the degree of holiness that resided in the Mishkan and Beis HaMikdash far surpassed the holiness that could be contained by any individual Jew as a result of his service, the physical Mishkan and Beis HaMikdash alone could not fulfill G-d's desire for "a dwelling in the nethermost level." For the Mishkan and Beis HaMikdash were confined to specific sites, with most of creation existing outside these areas. It was thus necessary for the G-dliness within the Mishkan and Beis HaMikdash to reach beyond their boundaries and emanate to the outside world. It is by drawing down the sanctity of the Mishkan and Beis HaMikdash within his own home, thus causing his own dwelling to become a domicile of holiness, that a Jew fulfills G-d's intent -- the transformation of the entire world into a dwelling fit for Him. This is why the Jews were to bring offerings within their own homes in Egypt, for since those offerings took place at the time of the nation's birth, the purpose of that nationhood had to be stressed -- that, through their personal spiritual service, they would have G-d dwelling within each one of them, transforming their individual homes into a dwelling place for G-d. Once the Mishkan and Beis HaMikdash were built, however, the Paschal offering had to be

brought there, for it was there that the highest degree of holiness resided.

Thus, the order of things changed: G-d dwelled in those edifices, and as a result of that indwelling, He came to reside -- through the Jews' service "in them" -- within each and every Jew, and within the world as a whole.

Based on Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XXVI, pp. 77-84

"zomet@jer1.co.il" "shabbat-zomet@jer1.co.il"
Parshat Bo SHABBAT-ZOMET is an extract from
SHABBAT-B'SHABBATO

THE HEART OF A KING IN THE HANDS OF G-D

by Rabbi Yehudah Shaviv

"G-d said to Moshe: Go to Pharaoh, as I have hardened his heart" [Shemot 10:1]. This influence on the king has long been of interest to philosophers, since it would seem to contradict the free will which G-d has granted to human beings. According to the Rambam (Teshuvah 6:3), free choice is sometimes withheld from one who has sinned, so that he will not have an opportunity to repent and will receive the proper punishment. Here is what the Midrash had to say about this: "Rabbi Yochanan said, this provides an excuse for the apostates, who can claim that Pharaoh was denied the opportunity to repent. Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish replied to him, let the apostates keep their silence ... The Almighty gives warnings once, twice, and a third time. If the sinner does not repent, G-d denies him the possibility so that He can mete out the proper punishment. The same is true of Pharaoh, the evil one. After G-d had sent him five separate warnings which he did not heed, He said to him: you have been stubborn and not responded, and for this I will add to your degree of impurity." [Shemot Rabba 13:3].

Another point to note is that free will of a king or ruler is different from that of anyone else. As is written, "The heart of a king is as a stream of water in the hands of G-d; He directs it any way that He sees fit." [Mishlei 21:1]. According to the commentary of Rabbi Yonah, this is "because so many people depend on the king, who has been given powers of life and death, of doing good or evil. Therefore, G-d maintains control of his heart." Giving a ruler absolute free will might mean taking away the free choice of his subjects and putting them at the ruler's mercy. Thus, it is in the name of free choice for the many that the king's will is curtailed.

In which direction will the king be led? This is explained by Rabbi Yishmael in the Midrash: "When one is appointed king, he is under control of the Almighty. If the world is to be rewarded, G-d causes him to rule benignly. However, if the world is to be punished, G-d leads the king to enact harsh decrees." Clearly this does not mean that the ruler has all vestiges of free will taken away, as this would mean that he is no longer accountable for his own actions. From the fact that Pharaoh was punished so severely, it is clear that he was held responsible for what he did, and he could have changed his mind, at least during the initial stages of the process.

There is a lesson to be learned from this. Often large efforts are expended in order to convince a leader to act in a specific way. The only reasonable basis for these efforts is an assumption that the leader himself is the one who chooses his own way. However, if we remember that the path is not always freely chosen by the leader but is the result of Divine will, it may be reasonable to make other efforts as well. Whether the world is worthy of reward or punishment is a result of the activities of the simple people, and they do have free will to choose the best path.

Subj: Switzerland & Justice - a sermon Date:97-01-15
From: 100016.1167@compuserve.com [Rabbi Zalman Kossowsky, Zurich]

It is clear that the situation here in Switzerland in regard to the controversy surrounding Switzerland and its behavior during and after the Shoah has reached a serious, perhaps even dangerous, crossroads. I believe that it is the responsibility of us Jews who live here in Switzerland to help in calming down the strident tones and to assist in establishing a climate in which meaningful discussion can take place.

I have chosen to speak on this subject not because I am a Galut Jew

suffering from a Galut-mentality, though I do concede that living in harmony with my non-Jewish neighbors is of great importance to me. Rather I choose to say these words because I believe that it is the responsibility of those of us who are concerned with morality, justice and truth, to speak out. It is in this sense that I understand the instruction in the Torah which commands us: - zedek zedek tirdof [Deut. 16:20] which is usually translated as :- "Justice, justice shall you follow". It seems to me that the Torah is telling us something special when it repeats the Hebrew term "zedek" twice. I hear the Torah telling the Judge that in reality there can be TWO "zedek"s - one belonging to the plaintiff and one belonging to the respondent. The judge is obligated to consider both as he strives to reach a just decision.

In the current debate / controversy there are also various elements and considerations, some of which upset and anger me, but some which must be viewed in a positive light as well. As I see it there are actually four separate issues that unfortunately tend to be mixed together, and this mixture truly becomes a "Devil's Brew". As a first step, therefore, it is important to identify and separate the issues.

Issue 1. The status of the moneys deposited in Switzerland prior and even at the start of WW II by Jews who were murdered by the Nazis and their helpers and therefore remain unclaimed in the Swiss banks.

Issue 2. The issue of the moneys extracted by the then Swiss Government from local and American Jewry to cover the supposed costs of sustaining the refugee Jews who somehow did manage to remain in Switzerland.

Issue 3. The issue of the gold amassed by the Nazis during the War - much of it from Jewish sources - and "processed" by the Swiss National Bank.

Issue 4 relates to the previous point but is far broader, namely, the policies of the Swiss Federal and Cantonal authorities vis-a-vie the Third Reich in general and the Jews in particular.

At the outset, before I look at the 4 issues I believe that it is important to note 2 things. Firstly we need to remind ourselves again that it is totally unfair and even unjust to speak in sweeping generalizations and "lump" all the Swiss into one group. While there undoubtedly exists a certain measure of overt animosity toward Jews and an even larger amount of latent dislike - each and every one of us here personally knows many non-Jews who are honorable and upright human beings who truly mean our People no harm or evil. I offer you in addition in this context, as just one example, the young security guard, Christopher Mieli and his wife, who put not only their livelihood at risk in order to "blow the whistle" on the shredding of old documents by the Union Bank of Switzerland. There are many others like them.

I was not here during and after the War, but I have been told that the same reality existed at that time as well. It is only fair and proper that we acknowledge them and are mindful of their feelings and their honor.

Secondly, we need to help our Swiss neighbors understand the climate in the USA. For many years now people there have come to demand of public officials and institutions a very high level of integrity and political correctness. As an example of this we can suggest that they listen to what is being demanded from President Clinton and from the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The media and Americans in general are demanding the same here.

Let us now look at the issues themselves.

Issue #1. The unclaimed assets.

It is true that this question was first raised by American and Jewish groups as early as 1946. It is also true that there are cases on record, some of which we have read in the media, where survivors were not only refused access to deposits that were known to exist, but in addition they were dealt with by the Banks and by other officials in what they felt was a heartless and degrading manner. It is also very probable that some of the larger Banks were, at the very least, not honest in their reporting of the amounts that are involved. This is the least that we can assume from the latest disclosure of the disgusting behavior of the Union Bank in shredding documents relating to confiscated properties in Germany during the Thirties. Some of the records

have entries all the way up to 1971 !

Without in any way belittling the pain and anguish of the affected people or justifying the obscene behaviors of some of the Banks, it might be helpful to remember that the inviolate and secret nature of Swiss bank accounts was and still remains the most "sacred cow" in this country. A very large percent of the wealth of this country, from which we all benefit, derives from this fact. One could almost say that many of the original depositors chose Switzerland precisely because they trusted that no one, not even the Nazi invader, would be able to identify the owners or access the funds without the presence of the owners.

It is true that the Holocaust created another reality for the survivors and sadly neither the Banks nor the authorities were flexible enough, or perhaps cared enough to modify their responses. The legitimate needs and rights of the survivors must be addressed and if need be even innovative and creative solutions must be found.

Issue #2. The moneys extracted by the then Swiss government.

Here the possibility exists that the cry of "extortion" can again be raised. This time however, not AGAINST the Jewish organizations, but BY the Jewish organizations. We need to be careful however how we approach this topic since even enlightened friendly governments of today confiscate the land and possessions of residents and even citizens.

Issues 3 and 4.

I do not have much positive to say about the events and behaviors under discussion. I am however, reminded of the wisdom of the sage Hillel, in the second chapter of Pirke Avot [Ethics of the Fathers] who advised us clearly: - al ta'din et chavercha ad she'tagi'a limkomo that we should not judge our fellow until we have stood in his place.

We must all be fully cognizant of the very real danger that existed at that time of the invasion of Switzerland by the Germans. In fact, when Hitler had the German Railroad build a new terminal in Basle in 1936, he had them build only the northern wing. The southern wing was to be built when Basle became part of the Fatherland. No one knows exactly why Hitler did not occupy the three European countries whose German names start with an "S". The Swiss at the time were totally convinced that he would come in unless somehow he could be appeased. The Nazi occupation of Vichy France and of Italy only heightened the fear of what Hitler would do to those whom he considered as recalcitrant. Keeping the Devil on the north side of the Rhine was of the highest priority and colored all their decisions. I have even heard the argument that it was precisely these acts which saved the Jews in Switzerland from joining their brethren in extermination in Auschwitz.

My friends, there are no simple solutions to be found here. However, if we are not ready to acknowledge the truths that do exist in the arguments of the other side, then there is little chance that we will be able to find some sort of acceptable way out of this morass. Almost half the citizens of this country see their "truths" far more clearly than they see ours. Shrill threats will only harden their position.

I believe that the needs and rights of the survivors should be the paramount issue. Post-mortems of history do not belong in the same rubric.

May God help us find the language that can be heard so that human justice will be seen to be done - "zedek zedek" -- justice for both the Jews and as far as possible, for Switzerland. Switzerland, Survivors and the Shoah Rabbi Dr. Zalman Kossowsky [Zurich]

"yhe-sichot@jer1.co.il" YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL
KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM) STUDENT
SUMMARIES OF SICHOT DELIVERED BY THE ROSHEI YESHIVA
PARASHAT BO SICHU OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT" A

Removing the Sparks from Egypt

Summarized by Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon

"And God said to Moshe, One more plague shall I bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt - thereafter he shall banish you from here; when he lets you go he will banish you completely from here. Speak then, please, in

the ears of the people, and let each person ask of his neighbor, and each woman of her neighbor, vessels of silver and vessels of gold. And God will give favor of the nation in the eyes of Egypt..." (Shemot 11:1-3)

Rashi, quoting the gemara (Berakhot 9a), comments: "The word 'na' (literally 'please') always implies a request. [God is saying here] Please give them this message, so that the righteous Avraham will not have grounds to claim that I kept My promise of 'And they will enslave them and they will torture them' but did not keep My promise of 'and thereafter they will leave with great treasure.'"

At first this seems to present a problematic scenario: Does God really need the nation to request silver and gold vessels from the Egyptians? Does God lack the power to obtain these vessels on His own, as it were, in order not to have to break his promise to Avraham?

We must obviously pay attention to the literal meaning of the words, but at the same time another aspect of this request may carry its own message. Of course, the significance here is more far-reaching than simply the financial level. (As the well-known joke goes: Why, on the Seder night, are we so careful to recreate and remember the 'maror,' but make no such tangible memorial to the wealth which we took out of Egypt? Because the 'maror' has remained in our memory, but nothing at all has remained of the wealth...)

Bnei Yisrael had reached the 49th level of impurity. The holy ARI (Rabbi Isaac Luria) z"l explains, "They could not wait. Had they waited any longer, they would have reached the 50th (and lowest) level - and would not have been redeemable, God forbid." The issue of the physical, material wealth which Bnei Yisrael were to take out did not present any problem. The problem was trying to get them out with some measure of spiritual wealth.

The Gemara in Megillah 6a teaches:

Rabbi Yossi ben Hanina said, "Why is it written: 'And I shall remove his blood from his mouth and his abominations from between his teeth, and he too shall remain unto our God' (Zekharia 9)? [The explanation is as follows:] 'And I shall remove his blood from his mouth' - this refers to their house of worship of Karia (an Edomite idol); 'and his abominations from between his teeth' - this refers to their house of worship of Bamia (another Edomite idol). 'And he too shall remain unto our God' - these are the synagogues and study halls of Edom, in which the princes of Yehuda are destined to study Torah publicly."

A simple understanding of the Gemara would indicate that the princes of Yehuda are destined to study Torah in places which formerly served as temples for idol-worship. But this is not the only message which Chazal are trying to convey. They are teaching us in addition that even amidst the culture of the non-Jews there are positive elements which may be extracted. Even from the non-Jews it is possible to remove the abominations and to be left with the positive - "and he too shall remain unto God."

Each nation has something positive to offer (except Amalek). These positive aspects are called "sparks" (nitzotzot). Rav Kook expounded at length on our obligation to extract these sparks from among the nations.

On the verse which reads, "You too shall give us sacrifices and offerings and we shall make them for the Lord our God ... for from Him we shall take", the Ari comments: We shall take the Pesach sacrifice from that which is good in Egypt.

Today, too, with respect to western culture, there are those who take everything - the good along with the bad - while others carefully refrain from taking anything. The correct balance is to select carefully and take only the good.

These sparks, God tells Israel, must be taken with you from Egypt. God wants Israel to take the good of Egypt with them. But the nation shrinks from anything that is Egyptian, from the entire culture, and therefore God phrases His wish as a request to Moshe to be conveyed to them: "Speak now, please...".

This request comes after (or during) the plague of darkness. During this plague the evildoers among the nation of Israel died. As Chazal explain on the verse, "And Bnei Yisrael went armed (chamushim) out of the land of Egypt' - the word 'chamushim' alludes to the idea that only a small number

of the nation - "ehad le-hamisha", one in five - actually left Egypt." We could understand this on a simple level, i.e., that eighty percent of them died while twenty percent left the country, but it would seem that this is not the point that is being emphasized, as evidenced by the fact that Chazal also quote an opinion that only one in five hundred went out. (From here we could possibly deduce that one in five hundred 'went out' while the rest were simply dragged along with them.) In any event, it is clear that the spiritual situation of the nation was disastrous, and therefore they needed to take the sparks that they could with them from Egypt.

There was a danger involved in taking too many sparks, for it could easily have degenerated into an assumption of the entire Egyptian culture. When the Egyptians died during the splitting of the Red Sea, there was an opportunity for all the rest of the sparks to be taken from them. And so Chazal comment on the verse, "We shall make you strings of gold with silver studs" (Shir HaShirim 1): The booty acquired at the sea was greater than that acquired in Egypt. Because when the Egyptians died in the sea, Bnei Yisrael were able to extract all the sparks that had remained in Egypt.

(Originally delivered at Seuda Shelishit, Parashat Bo 5750. Translated by Kaeren Fish.)

VISIT YHE'S WEB SITE:

[HTTP://WWW.VIRTUAL.CO.IL/EDUCATION/YHE](http://WWW.VIRTUAL.CO.IL/EDUCATION/YHE)

"yhe-halak@jer1.co YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY
VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

HALAKHA: A WEEKLY SHIUR IN HALAKHIC TOPICS

Please pray for a Refua Sheleima for Liba bat Chaya Baila.

Educational Programming which Can Lead to Shabbat Desecration

based on a shiur by Rav Aharon Lichtenstein

Translated and adapted by Rav Eliezer Kwass

Informal Jewish educational work often demands dealing with situations that are complex halakhically, spiritually and socially. A common problem arises when arranging Shabbat educational programs for participants who are not Shabbat observant. Arranging programming on Shabbat itself is of prime educational importance for obvious reasons, but can easily bring about Shabbat desecration when participants drive or are driven to activities. A similar dilemma arises in social situations; when invited for a Shabbat meal, friends or relatives who are not Shabbat-observant may very likely arrive by car during Shabbat. Although the problem is multi-faceted, we will focus mainly on the halakhic issues involved.

LIFNEI IVEIR

Rav Moshe Feinstein relates to our issue in Igrot Moshe OC vol.I, responsa #98 and #99 (pp. 159-160). Rav Moshe writes [in response to a question (#98) posed by Rav Aryeh Kaplan] that one who invites people who drive on Shabbat to participate in a minyan, transgresses the prohibition "Lifnei iveir lo titein mikhsol" (Do not place a stumbling block in front of the blind) because of his involvement in their Shabbat desecration. He goes a step further in responsum #99 and claims that besides transgressing lifnei iveir, one who invites another to do something that inevitably involves desecration of Shabbat is defined as a "meisit" (one who incites another to sin - see below for a discussion).

The Torah prohibits facilitating a transgression by one who is obligated to keep the Torah's laws but does not realize this, or who is temporarily "blinded" by the inclination not to follow the Torah's laws. The main talmudic source on this transgression is a passage in Avoda Zara 6b:

"How do we know that one should not pass a cup of wine to

"Lifnei iveir", according to the gemara, does not apply when the

nazirite does not need any assistance to commit his transgression (= the nazirite and the cup of wine are on the same side of the river). Only facilitating another's transgression by exposing him to a new, previously non-existent possibility is considered "lifnei iveir."

There are, though, two limitations to the "same side of the river" clause:

1. The Mishneh La-melekh in Hilkhot Malveh Ve-loveh claims that it is only permissible if the transgressor could have accomplished his goals without any assistance at all. If, however, the nazirite cannot commit a sin without assistance, but there are two Jews available to give him his cup of wine from the other side of the river, it is prohibited for both of them to hand it to him. Lifnei iveir still applies when the sinner needs help and the only question is WHO will provide it; it is forbidden to be the person who provides the help. Some Acharonim claim that the Bach argues with the Mishneh La-melekh's principle.

2. The "same side of the river" clause might only be applicable when the transgressor has a LIVE OPTION to achieve his goals without assistance, not when he just has the POTENTIAL to transgress by himself.

However, it is clear that in our situation the biblical prohibition of lifnei iveir does NOT apply, because the non-observant Jew does not need any assistance in order to drive on Shabbat and his ability to do so is a live option. Inviting him to come to a minyan may prompt him to drive and this would be a problem of meisit according to Rav Moshe. However, lifnei iveir is not a problem, since the invitation does not open him up to any new options of Shabbat desecration that were not open to him beforehand.

RABBINIC PROHIBITION

There are those who question whether it is PERMISSIBLE to aid another in going against the Torah's laws, even though the transgressor can readily sin without any assistance. The Tosafot (Shabbat 3a) say:

"Nevertheless, [even on one side of the river] there is still a RABBINIC PROHIBITION [to hand him the cup of wine,] for we must distance others from transgressing."

This prohibition can be explained in three different ways:

A. There is no biblical prohibition of lifnei iveir "on one side of the river," but Chazal extended the prohibition on a rabbinical level.

B. Lifnei iveir is totally inapplicable, but there is a rabbinic prohibition related to tokhacha, the mitzva of REBUKE.

C. There is no prohibition of lifnei iveir, but a rabbinic prohibition of "mesaye'i'a biydei ovrei aveira," HELPING ANOTHER SIN. "Lifnei iveir" and "mesaye'i'a" differ in nature. Lifnei iveir prohibits setting up a situation where a sin will be easily committed. Mesaye'i'a means participating in another's sin. A group of Acharonim, based on Rashi in Gittin 61a, maintain that mesaye'i'a only applies at the time of the sin, whereas lifnei iveir applies even beforehand - its whole essence is "placing a stumbling block" before the blind man trips.

Our situation, where arranging programming or inviting guests will probably result in Shabbat transgression, now becomes particularly problematic. Even though I do not hand the participant or guest his car keys, might there not still be a rabbinic prohibition involved in inviting him?

Whether our case is prohibited might depend on which of these three possibilities we accept. A rabbinic level of LIFNEI IVEIR (A) should still apply to our case; so would a rabbinic mitzva of REBUKE (B). However, if participation in the sin, "mesaye'i'a" (C), only applies at the time of the sin, our case would not be included in the prohibition since no sin is committed at the time of the invitation. Two out of three approaches would view organizing programming that involves participants' Shabbat desecration as rabbinically prohibited.

HALAKHIC RULING

Do later halakhic sources cite Tosafot's idea of a rabbinic prohibition applying even to "on one side of the river?" The Rema (YD 151:3) records a dispute among the poskim about whether it is permissible to sell Gentiles items that will likely serve as part of idolatrous religious services. He rules leniently, but writes that one who is pious, a "ba'al nefesh," should act stringently. The Rema's leniency can be understood in several ways:

I. The Shakh (YD 151:3, note 7) quotes the Rema's own Darkei Moshe (notes on the Tur) who explains that when modern day Gentiles refer to God, they are referring to the real God. Based on this, the prohibition against

doing business with a Gentile because he might, in the heat of an argument, swear in the name of his god does not apply nowadays. [A Jew causing him to do this transgresses the verse "The names of other gods should not be heard on (here, because of) your mouth."] If this is the source of the Rema's leniency, it does not have universal application, but is rather limited to idolatry prohibitions, leaving other cases still rabbinically prohibited.

II. The Shakh adds that if the prohibition mentioned by the Tosafot is based on the mitzva of rebuke it is not applicable to non-Jews. Lifnei iveir is applicable to everyone; the classic case quoted by the gemara is handing a limb taken from a live animal (prohibited by the seven Noachide laws) to a non-Jew. Rebuke, based on "hokheiach tokhiach et amitekha (your compatriot)," does not apply to a Gentile or an apostate Jew, according to the Shakh. However, it would be difficult to consider people participating today in "kiruv" programs as apostates, thereby making it permissible to bring about their desecration of the Shabbat.

III. Many Acharonim, though, claim that according to the Rema's ruling, lifnei iveir never applies in a "one side of the river" case. Only facilitating a transgression that was previously not a live option is prohibited.

RAV S.Z. AUERBACH'S APPROACH

A new perspective on situations like ours emerges from Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach's Minchat Shlomo, responsum #35. Does lifnei iveir apply, he asks, to presenting someone with a lesser opportunity to sin in order to prevent him from another inevitable graver sin? Is it permissible to serve food to a non-observant (but sympathetic to Torah) guest because he will inevitably not make a blessing over it? True, this brings about his eating without making a blessing. On the other hand, refusing to treat him like a normal guest might very likely result in angering him to the degree that he will develop an antagonistic attitude to Torah.

Rav Shlomo Zalman answers that one should serve such a guest (although at the very end of the responsum he declines coming to a final decision). He says, furthermore, that if one sees another Jew drinking a cup of wine made from orla, a serious biblical transgression, it is permissible to switch it for a cup of stam yeinam (wine made by non-Jews), a rabbinic prohibition, if that is the only way to stop him from committing the graver sin. (Ed. - It is permissible to place a stumbling block in front of a blind man if that is the only way to prevent him from falling into a more dangerous pit.)

Rav Shlomo Zalman's understanding of lifnei iveir is revolutionary. He points out that, although normally one may not himself transgress in order to save his fellow from a sin, a case of lifnei iveir is qualitatively different. When dealing with a lifnei iveir situation, one has to take into account what is the best strategy for contributing to the other's overall good. "Do not place a stumbling block before the blind" only refers to causing a fall that is, on the whole, destructive to the person. This approach relies on the assessment that a much more destructive situation might develop if one does not facilitate the lighter transgression. Therefore, in total perspective, an act which immediately decreases the severity of the impending aveira is NOT by definition lifnei iveir.

We can further see from Rav Shlomo Zalman that a person's present assessment, albeit somewhat speculative, is what determines whether lifnei iveir applies, even if eventually it turns out to have been mistaken. Applied to our case, it would be permissible to set up a situation where a person would desecrate Shabbat because the educational gains of his experience will help bring him to fuller observance of the Torah. If your assessment is that this programming will very likely bring this person closer to observing the Torah, especially since he is presently desecrating Shabbat in any event, it would not be defined as lifnei iveir.

LIMITING RAV SHLOMO ZALMAN'S HETER

Perhaps Rav Shlomo Zalman's approach should be limited.

1. Lifnei iveir applies both to facilitating a person's committing a halakhic transgression as well as to giving misleading advice (e.g. on a monetary matter). The Acharonim make a distinction between the two. The prohibition against giving bad advice to one's fellow is predicated on his fellow's not desiring the negative results of the advice. If, theoretically, he would want to lose money, it would not be prohibited to advise him

improperly. Causing another to sin, though, is prohibited whether the other wants to sin or not; it is forbidden to give a nazirite a cup of wine even if he wants to drink it. This distinction arises from the following problem in Tosafot.

The Tosafot claim that if one person gives another chicken and milk to eat (a rabbinic prohibition), he only transgresses lifnei iver on a rabbinic level. At first glance, this opinion is very difficult to maintain; wouldn't this be classified in the least as bad advice - and thus lifnei iver on the Torah level? The Acharonim are forced to say Tosafot are dealing with a situation in which the sinner wants to transgress, and so lifnei iver is limited by the nature of the halakhic transgression; in this case, lifnei iver is on the rabbinic level, since it refers to a prohibition that is itself rabbinic.

Encouraging another to do a rabbinic transgression could fall under the biblical lifnei iver only if the other does not want to sin; it then would be of the nature of 'misleading advice.'

It is easier to apply Rav Shlomo Zalman's ruling to a case of misleading advice, where the prohibition stems from the perspective of the individual (i.e. he subjectively does not desire the outcome). However, in the case of causing a sin, it is more difficult to enter the individual's "big picture" into the equation, since, in the end, Halakha is being transgressed.

2. Whether to adopt Rav Shlomo Zalman's approach might also be dependent on which side one takes in a dispute between the Ba'al Ha-ma'or and the Ramban. They take opposing positions about how independent lifnei iver is from the sin that is eventually committed. They ask: is lifnei iver a transgression in itself, or is it a lesser form of the sin one is causing the other to commit? Rav Shlomo Zalman's question, whether one can substitute bringing about a minor sin for bringing about a major one, might be a practical ramification of their dispute. If lifnei iver is an independent prohibition, it is possible that we should take into account the long-term spiritual outlook for the person. If, however, lifnei iver is a facet of the sin being committed, then the nature of lifnei iver is focused more on the specific transgression and less on the person. Rav Shlomo Zalman's approach is then less plausible.

THE CHAZON ISH VS. RAV SHLOMO ZALMAN

In the footnotes to the Minchat Shlomo, the Chazon Ish is quoted as only permitting bringing about another's DOUBTFUL sin in order to avoid a DEFINITE sin. The mishna in masekhet Shevi'it records that it is prohibited to sell utensils whose only use is prohibited work to those who do not follow the laws of the Shemitta year. However, it is permissible to sell them utensils which have BOTH permitted and prohibited uses. The Chazon Ish explains the distinction; it is doubtful whether one transgresses lifnei iver through selling such a utensil and therefore, in order to prevent the am ha-aretz from coming to hate the shemitta-observant storekeeper (thereby definitely transgressing "You should not hate your brother in your heart"), it is permitted to sell it. Being stringent in order to avoid a situation where he MIGHT sin would bring about another DEFINITE sin.

The footnote in the Minchat Shlomo claims that the Chazon Ish argues with Rav Shlomo Zalman's ruling in a case where one definite prohibition is substituted for another definite one. It should be pointed out that there might be a relevant distinction between the different cases that the Chazon Ish and the Minchat Shlomo are speaking about. Rav Shlomo Zalman rules that one can harm a person spiritually in order to help him spiritually (i.e. you can cause him to eat without a berakha in order to prevent him from severing his connections to Torah). Both the harm to the person and the good caused him are on the same plane. The Chazon Ish, on the other hand, rules that it is permitted to sell an "am ha-aretz" a doubtful shemitta-work utensil if not selling it will bring a state of hate and general ill-will. For social reasons, the mishna rules that it is permissible to possibly (but not definitely) harm another spiritually. Rav Shlomo Zalman, though, says that we must look at whether in the overall view we are harming or helping another spiritually. He might agree that it is not permitted to cause another to commit a definite sin in order to avoid a negative social mood, and the Chazon Ish might agree that in defining a "stumbling block" for the law of lifnei iver, one must take into account the total picture - whether you

are essentially helping or harming the person.

MEISIT: INCITING ANOTHER TO SIN

Rav Moshe Feinstein (OC vol.I, #99) not only argues on Rav Shlomo Zalman's lenient ruling, but claims that one who invites another to do something that involves sinning is in the category of a meisit, one who incites another to sin. He claims that meisit applies not only to idolatry but to all sins. [His proof for this from the snake in the Garden of Eden (who incited Chava to eat of the tree, which was not idolatry) might raise objection since that was the only sin existent at the time. However, the Rambam in Moreh Nevukhim supports Rav Moshe's contention about meisit.]

Rav Moshe distinguishes between meisit and lifnei iver. If a non-observant Jew lives within walking distance of a synagogue, encouraging him to come to services even though it is likely he will drive does not fall under the category of meisit, but it is still lifnei iver. Offering prizes to children in order to encourage participation in an informal educational program also is not meisit, but could possibly involve lifnei iver. Rav Moshe therefore says that the organizers should make it clear that prizes are only available to children who will not arrive by car. Meisit applies when the only way to achieve the suggested activity is through a transgression, whereas lifnei iver applies even if there is a permissible way of accomplishing it.

Practically, especially in our modern context, Rav Moshe's responsum is very difficult to apply. Putting it into effect would have far-reaching and deleterious effects on many synagogues in the diaspora.

Even if one is not willing to accept Rav Shlomo Zalman's leniency with regard to lifnei iver, it is much more plausible to apply it to meisit. The meisit is guilty of trying to force another to stray from the proper path in life. It is difficult to call one who is basically interested in someone else's spiritual betterment a meisit. Here, it is sensible to take into account the larger picture when assessing whether incitement to sin has taken place.

LIFNEI IVEIR DE-RABBANAN

Even though Rav Shlomo Zalman's ruling is quite innovative and radical with regard to biblical-level lifnei iver, there is more room to be lenient when, because of the "one side of the river" clause, it is only a rabbinic prohibition. We must examine this in light of the three possibilities quoted earlier: 1. If there is a rabbinic-level lifnei iver, our question remains - can Rav Shlomo Zalman's ruling be applied on a rabbinic level? 2. A rabbinic-level prohibition against participating in another's sin ("mesayei'a") only applies at the time the sin is committed. 3. If the commandment to rebuke entails preventing another from sinning, the overall picture should definitely be taken into account. Even though with regard to lifnei iver one might say, against Rav Shlomo Zalman, that it is never permissible to facilitate any sin, calculating whether a particular act contributes to another's overall spiritual life or not should be acceptable with regard to rebuke. The Torah says, "Surely rebuke your friend and do not bear sin on his account." As the Sages say, it is just as much of a mitzva not to say an unheeded word of rebuke as it is to say a heeded one. The results of rebuke are crucial to determining whether the mitzva applies. Rav Shlomo Zalman's leniency is certainly applicable here.

[The Ritva's comments in Avoda Zara may also contribute to formulating a lenient ruling in our case. According to the Ritva, lifnei iver does not apply to someone who in any case transgresses repeatedly. Facilitating one more sin for a person who does it time and again is not considered lifnei iver. Even though the poskim do not quote this Ritva, it can be added to the weight of one side of the argument.]

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS

When another would not be able to sin without help (the nazirite is on one side of the river and the wine and facilitator are on the other - biblical level lifnei iver), it is difficult to apply Rav Shlomo Zalman's ruling.

When another could sin without outside help (the nazirite is on the same side of the river as the wine), there is much more room to be lenient. Many hold that lifnei iver does not apply at all according to the Rema. Even if there is a rabbinic prohibition, there is room to permit EDUCATIONAL programming that will help bring the participants closer to

God (even if it is clear that they will not become fully observant halakhic Jews). Non-educational activities that would involve others' Shabbat desecration would certainly be prohibited.

There are, of course, additional elements of this problem besides the formal and legal questions of lifnei iver involved. This question raises, for example, the communal issue of participation in activities that are against the halakha. Scheduling programming which will involve Shabbat desecration might be construed as a stamp of approval. Other issues must clearly be taken into account besides lifnei iver.

Rav Shlomo Zalman rules that an individual is permitted to invite non-Shabbat-observant guests for a Shabbat meal, provided that he explicitly offers sleeping arrangements in the neighborhood that will enable them to avoid desecrating Shabbat. This is permissible even if the guest eventually refuses that aspect of the invitation. One should be careful to apply this only when there are educational objectives in mind. This relates to a private situation that arises.

In the public sphere, the problem is very serious because of two conflicting goals: on the one hand, the educational frameworks are very important; on the other hand, it is problematic for an institution like a synagogue to appear to lend a hand to Shabbat desecration. To take a specific example: I was asked about this issue with regard to Jewish communities in Russia. Taking into account the desperate educational needs of these communities, I ruled that it is desirable to retain these very valuable educational programs. However, every effort should be made to arrange sleeping arrangements for all participants within walking distance of the synagogue. It is crucial that a situation does not come about within which Shabbat desecration is implied to be something that one is at peace with. It should be made clear that Shabbat desecration is not approved of and that ideally participants should arrive by foot.

(Originally appeared in Daf Keshet #325, Adar 5752, vol. 4, pp. 42-44.)

For direct questions or comments to Rav Mordechai Friedman, the list coordinator, please send email to MF@ETZION.ORG.IL . Copyright (c) 1997 Yeshivat Har Etzion. All rights reserved.

<http://www.jpost.com> Friday, January 17, 1997 9 Shevat 5757

SHABBAT SHALOM: Man & Moon By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

(January 16) "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months.. It shall be the first month of the year to you." (Ex. 12:2)

ONCE every four weeks, usually between the seventh and eleventh day of the Hebrew month, congregants do not rush home immediately after the Saturday night services to recite Havdalah, but first gather under the open sky. Once they have made sure the moon is not obscured by clouds, they recite special prayers sanctifying the moon, and generally conclude their chanting with a dance.

To some, the custom may sound strange, but it is quite important. In the old days, before a new month could be declared, witnesses first had to testify before the Sanhedrin as to exactly what they saw of the moon; they were even expected to violate the Sabbath in order to get to Jerusalem as quickly as possible and give their testimony. After all, only on the basis of the witnesses' report did we know whether the previous month had 29 or 30 days, and hence on which day to celebrate the festivals this month.

Why does this commandment receive the honor of being first, and merit the public involvement of the most respected religio-legal institution in Israel? In fact, when Rashi asks why the Torah begins with the account of creation, when it should have begun with the first commandment given to Israel.

The passage he suggests as a substitute for "In the beginning" is "This month shall be to you..."

Ancient man worshipped the moon. Appearing and disappearing in the skies, it was inevitable that it became the symbol of mystery and magic. Man's deepest secrets, fears and madnesses were ascribed to this force in the sky.

With the advent of the Egyptian plagues, the world was turned on its head. Every Egyptian's worst nightmare came true, from the nature-deity Nile River turning to blood to the moon totally disappearing, leaving Egypt in pitch darkness.

But these aberrations weren't haphazard expressions of the nature-god gone awry. They came as a legitimate punishment from the God of ethical monotheism for immoral slavery and oppression. The message of the exodus is the freedom of Israel to establish a world of commitment and compassion, a society of love and justice, working toward peace and redemption.

The first commandment begins: "This month shall be to you..." You are not to be the moon's; the moon is to be yours! Just as the Israelites have become physically freed from Egyptian slavery, we must become spiritually freed from a superstitious dependency on the moon. The Torah tells us we can control and subdue nature, our own erratic natures as well as the mysteries of nature all about us, through the logic and rationality of ethical living as directed by the Torah and explicated by the religio-legal experts. You are in control of your life, your time and your society - this moon is yours - if only you take proper advantage of God's teaching, Moses' written law and the Sanhedrin's oral law.

The monthly sanctification of the moon includes the following petition: "May it be by your will O Lord ... to readjust the deficiency of the moon, so that it may no longer be reduced in size; may the light of the moon again be like the light of the sun, as it was during the first seven days of creation."

Do we really expect that one day the moon will be the same size as the sun? Wouldn't that spell disaster for our planet? In fact, the reference to a deficiency in size sends us to the verse in Genesis where we find that on the fourth day, God created "two great lights, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night" (Gen. 1:16). Quoting a midrash, Rashi explains that the moon and sun were initially equal in size.

The moon then appeared before God complaining that "two kings cannot rule with one crown." Since the moon, smitten with jealousy, wanted all the light for itself, God reduced its light, while the sun's remained the same.

Jealousy is probably the most destructive force in the world, the real root of all evil. Cain's jealousy of Abel brought about the first murder; Joseph's brothers' enmity is the prototype for the causeless hatred (jealousy) responsible for the destruction of both Temples.

We sanctify the moon as it moves towards growth, expressing our faith that jealousy can be overcome, human nature can be perfected, the world can be redeemed! The primordial sin can be overcome and fixed. The two lights can once again become equal!

By combining these two ideas - the moon as a symbol of redemption and the moon as a symbol of our determination of time - we conclude that the Jewish dream of redemption depends on us. Just as we have a share in determining how it affects our immediate lives - we supply the witnesses, we are the court, we hear the testimony, we declare the new month, we determine the calendar, we control our time - so, too, redemption should not be perceived as a natural phenomenon. Just as the rabbinic leaders sanctify the moon and declare the times for the festivals ("These are the festivals of God which you shall declare at their appointed time" - B.T. Rosh HaShana 25a), so must we assume our role as active partners in the march toward redemption.

The last mishna in Tractate Sotah [49a] describes what the world will be like just before the messiah comes. Our sages present a description of a society gone awry, with impudence abounding and youth reviling their elders. The description ends with the words: "We have no one to rely on but our Father in heaven."

I once heard a wise Jew suggest that this final comment is not the cure, but rather a part of the illness, for if we only depend on God, without acting ourselves, nothing will change. "Only he who attempts to purify himself - by taking charge of his time and his personality - is eventually helped from on high."

Shabbat Shalom

PARSHA -15: Parashat Bo
YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT
MIDRASH (VBM) PARASHAT HASHAVUA

Please pray for a refua sheleima for Liba bat Chaya Baila.

PARASHAT BO

by Rav Moshe Aberman

This shiur is dedicated by Meira, Ari and Nediva Ferziger in honor of the birth of their new daughter and sister, Ayelet Rivka.

Pesach Mitzrayim - A Commitment to God

In several places in parashat Bo, the Torah teaches us the laws of the korban Pesach. Some of these laws pertain to the korban which is brought and eaten every year on the fourteenth of Nissan known as Pesach dorot. Yet, much of what is mentioned in parashat Bo pertains to the first korban Pesach which was sacrificed in Egypt on the eve of the Jewish exodus from Egypt. This first korban Pesach is called Pesach Mitzrayim.

One can easily understand the logic of the Pesach dorot. It can be viewed as part of the educational experience of Pesach night. On this night we try to relive what our forefathers on that same night many years ago in Egypt experienced. But, we may wonder what was the purpose of the Pesach Mitzrayim? Why was a sacrifice called for preceding the exodus from Egypt?

Furthermore, if we read the pesukim in chapter 12, we see that the command is first given to Moshe, who then passes it on to Bnei Yisrael. Chazal teach us that Moshe both received the command and passes it on to Bnei Yisrael on the first of the month of Nisan. The command called for choosing the lamb to be used for the korban Pesach on the tenth of Nissan, and then holding it captive for four days. Only on the fourteenth of that month would it be slaughtered, but before it could be eaten, and the blood from the slaughtered animal must be smeared on the door posts. Why did the Pesach Mitzrayim require all these preparatory stages? It should be noted that this lengthy preparation process was unique to the Pesach Mitzrayim and is not practiced in Pesach dorot; why was this so?

A partial answer can be found in the Mekhilta on pasuk 6 of chapter 12.

Asks the Mekhilta: Why did the taking of the Pesach proceed its slaughtering by four days? The answer presented by R. Matya ben Charash states: The time to fulfill the vow God gave to Avraham to redeem his sons had come; yet, they had no merits of mitzvot to justify such a redemption. As it is said "shadayim nachonu u-sa'arekh tzime'ach ve-at erom ve-arya" - erom mi-kol mitzvot (The nation of Israel had matured and was ready to become independent but they were lacking of any garments - the garments of mitzvot.) Therefore God gave them two mitzvot to perform, the blood of mila and the blood of Pesach, as it is said "va-e'evor alayikh va-erekh mitboseset be-damayikh" [And I passed over you and saw that you were wallowing in your bloods]. That is why the taking of lamb for the Pesach preceded its slaughter by four days, since there is no merits for mitzvot without actions.

The Mekhilta teaches us that a separation was needed between the taking of the animal and its slaughter to allow each to be considered a separate act of mitzva. If both actions were to be done at the same time, it would be considered one lengthy act of mitzva. Since Bnei Yisrael were lacking in mitzvot, God gave them the mitzva of Pesach in such a way that they would be credited for several acts of mitzva. Similarly, we may explain that the command was given several days before the time of taking to give them merit for learning the details of the mitzva before performing it.

This Mekhilta helps us understand another seemingly strange point in the pesukim. In pasuk 7, the Torah commands that after slaughtering the lamb, "they shall take from the blood of the animal and smear it on the door posts on the homes where they shall eat it." Later in pasuk 13, an explanation for the smearing of the blood is given: "And the blood shall be a sign on the houses in which you are, and I shall see the blood and pass over

you and there shall be no plague when I punish the land of Egypt." What has the blood on the door posts have to do with the saving of the Jewish people from the plague of the first born? Would God not know where the Jew without blood on their doorposts?

The answer, teaches us the Mekhilta, is that the blood was not meant as an identification of a Jewish home. The blood is a sign of a home where the mitzvot of mila and Pesach were fulfilled. Since the mitzva of Pesach can not be fulfilled by an "arel" - one who has not gone through a proper mila, the blood of the korban Pesach is an indication of mila as well. That is what we find in the pasuk "Va-e'evor alayikh va-erekh mitboseset be-damayikh" - I went over the land of Egypt and I saw you -Am Yisrael - with blood. God saw the blood of the korban Pesach, which was indicative of the blood from the mitzvot of mila and Pesach.

Yet, even the Mekhilta does not give us a full answer to our questions. If all that was meant to be achieved was a separation between two separate acts of mitzva, then much less time would have sufficed. For the purpose of separation the Torah could have commanded the taking of the lamb in the morning and its slaughter in the afternoon. If a clearer separation of different days was desired, it could still be achieved by taking the animal on the thirteenth and slaughtering on the fourteenth. Why then did the Torah require a four day waiting period from the time of taking the lamb to the time of its slaughter?

A similar midrash in the Midrash Lekach Tov might help shed light on this question.

The Midrash Lekach Tov teaches that the Bnei Yisrael neglected the mitzva of mila to find favor in the eyes of the Egyptians. Came God and commanded them to take the lamb and tie it up. This, in turn, brought hatred from the Egyptians. Then, Bnei Yisrael slaughtered the animals; at this point the Egyptians were infuriated but due to fear instilled by God could do nothing to harm the Jews. At this point Moshe came and commanded them that no one may eat from the Pesach if they have not had a mila. This, in turn, forced Bnei Yisrael to perform the mitzva of mila, since they understood that if they would not do mila they would lose God's protection and the Egyptians would kill them. Consequently, all men were circumcised, and the blood of Pesach and mila were mixed, fulfilling what is said "Va-e'evor alayikh va-erekh mitboseset be-damayikh va-omar lakh be-damayikh chayi."

The Midrash Lekach Tov teaches us that it was not only to gain merit that Bnei Yisrael were commanded with these mitzvot. Rather, Bnei Yisrael had lost touch with God, they no longer performed even the most basic mitzvot. Mila, which was a tradition from the time of Avraham, the most basic distinction between Bnei Yisrael and other nations, the symbol of Jewish identity, was no longer observed.

The Mekhilta (12:6) further stresses this point.

"Bnei Yisrael were absorbed in idolatry and idolatry is equal to all other mitzvot, said (God) to them: Remove your hands from idolatry and adhere to mitzvot."

In a similar Mekhilta on pasuk 21 we read:

"On the words 'Mishkhu u-kekhu lakhem' (remove and take for yourselves) stated R. Yossi: Remove your hands from idolatry and take for yourselves mitzvot."

The Jewish people had lost contact with God and went as far as idolatry. They were attempting to assimilate into Egyptian culture hoping that assimilation would bring about a change of attitude on the part of Egypt. If, as we read in parashat Shemot, the reason for their enslavement was a fear of some sort of uprising, then, reasoned the Jews, assimilation would resolve such fears. By so doing, Bnei Yisrael lost all personal merit for redemption. But God had given a promise to Avraham and the time had come to fulfill this promise.

To resolve this problem God gives Bnei Yisrael a mitzva to fulfill. As with any mitzva, accepting and fulfilling it states a belief in, and recognition of, the one who has commanded its performance. But in this case the demand goes beyond the usual commitment expected with any mitzva. The mitzva given leaves no room for any duplicity, no place for

dual identity. No one can come and say: I am an Egyptian who fulfills certain Jewish rites. The mitzva given to Bnei Yisrael requires them to make a statement of belief in one and only one God. It is a mitzva that calls for "mesirut nefesh," an absolute trust in Ha-kadosh Barukh Hu.

The korban Pesach constitutes an act of provocation to Egyptian culture and religious values. If Bnei Yisrael were attempting to find favor in the eyes of Egypt, if they hoped to assimilate into Egyptian culture, they are called to take steps that will undo any such efforts. They are asked to make a clear and public choice, Egypt and its values or the God of Avraham. The korban Pesach calls for taking that which is sacred to the Egyptians and sacrificing it to the God of the Jewish people. "Mishkhu u-kekhu:" mishkhu - remove your hands from idolatry, the Egyptian way; ukekhu - take mitzvot on yourselves, worship God.

We can, therefore, conclude that the purpose of Pesach Mitzrayim was to make a statement of identification with Elokei Yisrael. To make this statement properly, Bnei Yisrael needed to break all ties with Egypt and Egyptian values. For this purpose the Torah called for taking a lamb, the symbol of Egyptian Gods, four days before the time of slaughter. The purpose was to make the act public and confrontational with the Egyptians. This idea, and the tensions caused by it are described very well in some of the Midrashim.

In Pesikta de-Rav Kahana we read:

"They (Bnei Yisrael) would tie (the lambs) to their bed posts and the Egyptians would enter and see this and their spirits would be lost."

Or as stated in a midrash brought in the Torah Sheleima:

"They took the lamb in midst of Egypt and placed it at their doorstep for four days. It being alive would cry out and they (the Egyptians) would see their gods caught but were unable to save it or hurt the Jews."

The purpose of holding the animal in captivity for four days was to make it impossible for any one to hope and hide their participation. This could also be the reason the command is given to Moshe such a long time before its fulfillment. Some commentaries claim that Moshe did not give the command directly to each individual, but rather, Moshe taught the elders and they taught others. Such a chain of teaching could not remain a secret and would put the Egyptian people on guard to see who will be willing to take such provocative steps.

Korban Pesach as a way of disassociation with the ways of Egypt and a statement of identification with God is further projected in a Tannaic dispute as to where the blood of the animal was smeared. The Mekhilta teaches us that R. Yishmael and R. Natan are of the opinion that the blood was put on the inside of the doorpost. R. Yitzchak rejects this opinion and states that the blood was put on the outer side of the doorpost. R. Yishmael and R. Natan derive their opinion from the words "ve-haya lakhem le-ot," the blood shall be a SIGN TO YOU. R. Yitzchak states that the blood was on the outside so the Egyptians would see it. In R. Yitzchak's opinion the blood-smearing was meant as another act of provocation to the Egyptians. R. Yishmael and R. Natan see the smearing of the blood as a means of reinforcing the commitment to God. Every time the Jew would raise his eyes and see the blood he would be reminded of the great act of commitment he had performed.

If we are to understand the korban Pesach of Mitzrayim as an act of choosing identity and a statement of identification with the God of our forefathers, we can also understand one other requirement mentioned in reference to Pesach Mitzrayim. In pasuk 22 it is stated "va-atem lo teitz'u ish mi-petach beito ad boker," you shall not leave your homes until morning. Why was it forbidden to leave the home where the korban Pesach was eaten? Why could one not leave the house with the blood on the doorposts?

It may be suggested that sitting all night in the company of those with whom one has performed this mitzva, an act of Jewish identity, is a further reinforcement of one's identity. One is asked to make the choice, the outside world and all it represents, or this group of people who have just stated: The God of Avraham Yitzchak and Yaakov is our God. By remaining indoors one is making a statement of choice and identification

with the people of God.

Further points and questions:

1. The mitzva of korban Pesach Mitzrayim is preceded by "ha-chodesh ha-zeh lakhem" (12:1), the basis of the Jewish calendar. Why is this here? Why is it the first mitzva given to the Jews?

2. Korban Pesach has a requirement that there be enough eaters to finish the lamb (this is true of Pesach dorot as well). A consequence explicitly stated in verse 4, is that you would join with a neighbor in sharing the meal. Why is this important?

3. 12:1: "... you shall eat it in haste (be-chipazon)." How does this requirement of Pesach Mitzrayim, to eat while already dressed for travel, fit in with the theme of the shiur?

4. The end of the parasha has a command of Pesach, embedded in the commands concerning bekhor (man and beast). This is especially striking since it all takes place before matan Torah. Obviously, bekhor (at least human bekhor) is connected to makat bekorot, but does this mitzva also have a place in the scheme outlined in the shiur? The parasha ends with one more mitzva - tefillin. Is there a connection here as well?

Copyright (c) 1997 Yeshivat Har Etzion. All rights reserved.