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from: jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com
Subject: Rabbi Reisman's Chumash Shiur
Rabbi Yisroel Reisman

Parshas Bo is a wonderful Parsha of Yetzias Mitzrayim and certainly a Shabbos that will be Mashpia Geulah for all of Klal Yisrael. Let us start off with an extraordinary Vort from Rav Schwab. Before I begin, there is a concept in Kabbalah of going to Galus for the purpose Kibbutz Nitzotzos Hakedusha, of gathering in the so to speak sparks of holiness from each nation. So Klal Yisrael goes to Galus and in each of the places that it stays, tries to absorb that Nekudah of Kedusha. Every people has something positive about it and we try to absorb it. When we take Nitzotzos Hakedusha from the nation we find that many nations, most nations, after they oppress Klal Yisrael disappear from the face of the earth and that is based on this idea that our job is to take the Nitzotzos Hakedusha from them.

Rav Schwab in this week's Parsha (on page # 148 going on 12:36) and in two other places in his Sefer on Chumash talks about the concept, but K' darco Bakodesh, in the style of Gedolei Yisroel which was to speak about these concepts without referring to them as Kabbalistic concepts in an effort to dissuade people from actually learning Kabbalah openly. Therefore, he says the following and we understand this to be an explanation of that lofty idea.

Rav Schwab says that we find in Parshas Bo a miracle which is not mentioned too often. We all know that Bnei Yisrael borrowed items from the Mitzrim when leaving Mitzrayim. But actually a miracle took place. The Egyptians didn't give it because they were oppressed, pressured, or it was hard for them to do it. No. We find miraculously as it says in 11:3 (וַיִּתֵּן יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת-תּוֹרַת הַעֲמֻם, בְּעֵינֵי מִצְרַיִם). That G-d promised that Klal Yisrael would be beloved by Mitzrayim, they would find Chein in the eyes of Mitzrayim, an incredible thing.

We find again at the end of Perek Yud Bais when Klal Yisrael actually does the borrowing 12:36 (וַיִּבְרַח יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִצְרַיִם--וַיִּשְׁאַלֵם). So Klal Yisrael borrowed and the Mitzrim gave very willingly. Rashi says on (וַיִּשְׁאַלֵם) that (אָף מִה שְׁלָא הָיוּ שׂוֹאֵלִים מֵהֶם הָיוּ נוֹתְנִים לָהֶם). The Egyptians said you want my nice coat I have a nicer coat. They gave them even things that they didn't request. Incredible! Miraculous! The Mitzrim actually felt Hakaras Hatov, a thankfulness to Klal Yisrael. They felt bad that they had oppressed Klal Yisrael and they gave B'leiv Shaleim, B'ayin Tov. It was a miracle. This was a Nitzutz of Kedusha.

We find says Rav Schwab, places where the nations in which we find ourselves in our exile, do things that are good, do things that are extraordinarily good, and subsequently, they turn around and they change their behavior. Just as they did here, within a week they turnaround and want to run after Klal Yisrael and pursue Klal Yisrael and destroy Klal Yisrael. But for a moment there is a purity of heart. For a moment there is a sense of holiness on the part of these people and they willingly gave to Klal Yisrael. Says Rav Schwab, our job is to absorb the good Middos, the positive things that are done.

In Parshas Vayishlach (page # 84 on Beraishis 33:4), Rav Schwab mentions this as well. There we find that Eisav actually forgave Yaakov B'leiv Shaleim. He actually Shenich'miru Rachamav. Chazal say that his mercy got a hold of him and he kissed Yaakov as Rashi says B'leiv Shaleim (with a full heart). He kissed Yaakov and forgave the fact that Yaakov had stolen the Berachos from Eisav which is extraordinary. He still was Mochel. This was extraordinary behavior on the part of Eisav.

Later, Eisav turns around and (וַיִּקְרָתוּ שְׂמֵרָה נִצְחָה) as the Navi says in Amos 1:11. Eisav's hatred is an eternal hatred. But when Bnei Yisrael come into contact with the Umos Haolam and they see good behavior, the behavior of the Mechila of Eisav to Yaakov, that is something that Klal Yisrael has to absorb.

Says Rav Schwab later (page # 119 on Beraishis 50:16) when we find that the Shevatim tell Yosef that Yaakov commanded that you forgive us he was referring to this Middah. Yaakov taught Klal Yisrael the Middah that Eisav had done when he was brotherly jealous which was even more than jealousy, it was hatred and he said, Eisav did something great and we have to take that great Middah. Later when Yosef was following the advice of his father Yaakov he forgave his brothers based on that. This is an important idea about being in Galus.

In the English version of the Rav Schwab on Chumash, we find that Rav Schwab said the same thing about Nazi Germany. Germany in the 18th and 19th century was very benevolent to the Jewish people and at that time there was a period of a spark of Kedusha and it turned around just like it did with Eisav and with the Mitzrim. Afterwards the hatred was even greater because that spark of Kedusha had been extinguished from them. But we need to take that Middah.

We are in America. The Middah Tovah of America is an amazing acceptance of people that are different. An absolutely amazing acceptance of people that are different in many different ways. Different cultures, people whose skin are a different color and inexcusably people have hatred based on that. In America there is an amazing amount of acceptance. Sometimes taken too far, of acceptance of people who behave improperly. But the Middah itself is a Middah of kindness and a Middah of acceptance to others. We who are in this Galus don't know when it will end. It will end. Klal Yisrael won't be in America forever. Before it ends, while we are in the period of enjoying the benevolence of the country that we are in, that is the Middah that this generation has to grab. The Middah that we see around us, the Middah of the Umos Haolam. The Middah Tovah that the nations around us have. Certainly we to each other, Klal Yisrael certainly has to behave in that type of a manner, with that type of Middah.

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>
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Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

The Necessity of Asking Questions

Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

It is no accident that parshat Bo, the section that deals with the culminating plagues and the exodus, should turn three times to the subject of children and the duty of parents to educate them. As Jews we believe that to defend a country you need an army, but to defend a civilisation you need education. Freedom is lost when it is taken for granted. Unless parents hand on their memories and ideals to the next generation – the story of how they won their freedom and the battles they had to fight along the way – the long journey falters and we lose our way.

What is fascinating, though, is the way the Torah emphasises the fact that children must ask questions. Two of the three passages in our parsha speak of this:

And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when He struck down the Egyptians.' (Ex. 12:26-27)

In days to come, when your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' say to him, 'With a mighty hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.' (Ex. 13:14)

There is another passage later in the Torah that also speaks of question asked by a child:

In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?" tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. (Deut. 6:20-21)

The other passage in today's parsha, the only one that does not mention a question, is:

On that day tell your son, 'I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.' (Ex. 13:8)

These four passages have become famous because of their appearance in the Haggadah on Pesach. They are the four children: one wise, one wicked or rebellious, one simple and "one who does not know how to ask." Reading them together the sages came to the conclusion that [1] children should ask questions, [2] the Pesach narrative must be constructed in response to, and begin with, questions asked by a child, [3] it is the duty of a parent to encourage his or her children to ask questions, and the child who does not yet know how to ask should be taught to ask.

There is nothing natural about this at all. To the contrary, it goes dramatically against the grain of history. Most traditional cultures see it as the task of a parent or teacher to instruct, guide or command. The task of the child is to obey. "Children should be seen, not heard," goes the old English proverb. "Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord," says a famous Christian text. Socrates, who spent his life teaching people to ask questions, was condemned by the citizens of Athens for corrupting the young. In Judaism the opposite is the case. It is a religious duty to teach our children to ask questions. That is how they grow. Judaism is the rarest of phenomena: a faith based on asking questions, sometimes deep and difficult ones that seem to shake the very foundations of faith itself. "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" asked Abraham. "Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people?" asked Moses. "Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?" asked Jeremiah. The book of Job is largely constructed out of questions, and God's answer consists of four chapters of yet deeper questions: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? ... Can you catch Leviathan with a hook? ... Will it make an agreement with you and let you take it as your slave for life?"

In yeshiva the highest accolade is to ask a good question: Du fregst a gutte kashe. Rabbi Abraham Twersky, a deeply religious psychiatrist, tells of how when he was young, his teacher would relish challenges to his arguments. In

his broken English, he would say, "You right! You 100 procent right! Now I show you where you wrong."

Isadore Rabi, winner of a Nobel Prize in physics, was once asked why he became a scientist. He replied, "My mother made me a scientist without ever knowing it. Every other child would come back from school and be asked, 'What did you learn today?' But my mother used to ask: 'Izzy, did you ask a good question today?' That made the difference. Asking good questions made me a scientist."

Judaism is not a religion of blind obedience. Indeed, astonishingly in a religion of 613 commandments, there is no Hebrew word that means "to obey". When Hebrew was revived as a living language in the nineteenth century, and there was need for a verb meaning "to obey," it had to be borrowed from the Aramaic: le-tsayet. Instead of a word meaning "to obey," the Torah uses the verb shema, untranslatable into English because it means [1] to listen, [2] to hear, [3] to understand, [4] to internalise, and [5] to respond. Written into the very structure of Hebraic consciousness is the idea that our highest duty is to seek to understand the will of God, not just to obey blindly. Tennyson's verse, "Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do or die," is as far from a Jewish mindset as it is possible to be.

Why? Because we believe that intelligence is God's greatest gift to humanity. Rashi understands the phrase that God made man "in His image, after His likeness," to mean that God gave us the ability "to understand and discern." The very first of our requests in the weekday Amidah is for "knowledge, understanding and discernment." One of the most breathtakingly bold of the rabbis' institutions was to coin a blessing to be said on seeing a great non-Jewish scholar. Not only did they see wisdom in cultures other than their own, they thanked God for it. How far this is from the narrow-mindedness than has so often demeaned and diminished religions, past and present.

The historian Paul Johnson once wrote that rabbinic Judaism was "an ancient and highly efficient social machine for the production of intellectuals."

Much of that had, and still has, to do with the absolute priority Jews have always placed on education, schools, the beit midrash, religious study as an act even higher than prayer, learning as a life-long engagement, and teaching as the highest vocation of the religious life.

But much too has to do with how one studies and how we teach our children. The Torah indicates this at the most powerful and poignant juncture in Jewish history – just as the Israelites are about to leave Egypt and begin their life as a free people under the sovereignty of God. Hand on the memory of this moment to your children, says Moses. But do not do so in an authoritarian way. Encourage your children to ask, question, probe, investigate, analyse, explore. Liberty means freedom of the mind, not just of the body. Those who are confident of their faith need fear no question. It is only those who lack confidence, who have secret and suppressed doubts, who are afraid.

The one essential, though, is to know and to teach this to our children, that not every question has an answer we can immediately understand. There are ideas we will only fully comprehend through age and experience, others that take great intellectual preparation, yet others that may be beyond our collective comprehension at this stage of the human quest. Darwin never knew what a gene was. Even the great Newton, founder of modern science, understood how little he understood, and put it beautifully: "I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

In teaching its children to ask and keep asking, Judaism honoured what Maimonides called the "active intellect" and saw it as the gift of God. No faith has honoured human intelligence more.

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Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog BO

As the story of the sojourn and enslavement of the Jewish people in Egypt comes to its final climax in this week's Torah reading, there are many questions that are left unanswered. What was the actual length of time that this Egyptian story encompassed? There seems to be contradictory dates that appear in the Torah. And why does it appear from Talmud and Midrash that the vast majority of the Jews who were in Egypt never left with Moshe to travel into the desert of Sinai and from there to the promised land of Israel? What could have been the reason for that? And why does Pharaoh now finally succumb, after having in his mind and actions successfully withstood the previous nine plagues which were so devastating to him and Egyptian society. These questions are not addressed directly in the Torah itself though they are discussed in the commentaries that, over the ages, have been written to explain and elucidate the written word of the Torah. After reviewing all of the ideas advanced to deal with the above questions – and other problematic biblical questions – all that can be said is that the ways of Heaven are truly mysterious and are meant to be so. Moshe is justifiably wary of gazing at the presence of God and when he finally demands to understand the policies of Heaven, he will be rebuffed and told that this understanding is beyond human comprehension and rational thinking. The entire story of the Jewish people descending into Egyptian slavery and then being extricated is essentially supernatural in detail. Nevertheless, it is the basic and most vital narrative in Jewish history throughout the millennia of Jewish existence. It is the paradigm for the irrational and mysterious story of Jewish survival itself. Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves in the United States of America by presidential proclamation, responding to the political pressures and national interests that beset him. Even though the hand of God, so to speak, guides all events in the world, the decision to free the slaves of the South was a completely understandable, rational and even predictable one. The main question raised by historians regarding Lincoln's action, is why was it not done sooner? The question regarding the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt, and their redemption from slavery was how these things had occurred in the first place and how were they so miraculously corrected later. The great lesson here is that the fate and future of the Jewish people cannot be known on a purely rational basis. Man proposes and God disposes. Yaakov and his family willingly, even enthusiastically, went to reside in Egypt. Just when it seems that the Jewish people has despaired of redemption and is attempting to integrate itself completely into Egyptian society, the redemption begins, led by an unlikely redeemer. Questions will always abound about the Jewish redemption from Egypt. The answers to those questions will be creative and flights of genius. But the basic issue will remain as being the inscrutability of God's behavior, so to speak, in redeeming the Jews and making them a unique and special people. Shabbat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

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Can We Offer Korban Pesach Without the Beis HaMikdash? By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

In the year 5017 (1257), several hundred Baalei Tosafos, led by Rav Yechiel of Paris, headed for Eretz Yisroel. A younger contemporary, Rav Ashtori HaParchi, the author of Kaftor VaFerech, records a fascinating story (Vol. 1, page 101 in the 5757 edition). The Kaftor VaFerech had gone to Yerushalayim to have his sefer reviewed by a talmid chacham named Rav Baruch. Rav Baruch told the Kaftor VaFerech that Rav Yechiel had planned to offer korbanos upon arriving in Yerushalayim. Kaftor VaFerech records that at the time he was preoccupied readying his sefer for publication and did not think about the halachic issues involved, but after the pressures of his publishing deadline

passed, he realized that there were practical halachic problems with Rav Yechiel's plan, as we will discuss shortly.

It seems that Rav Yechiel's plan to offer korbanos failed, presumably because Yerushalayim was under Crusader rule at the time. His community of Baalei Tosafos settled in Acco, as we know from a report of the Ramban about ten years later. (The Ramban reports that he spent Rosh HaShanah that year with the community of the Baalei Tosafos in Acco and delivered to them a drasha that was recorded for posterity. This is quoted in Kisvei HaRamban, Vol. 1 pg. 211.)

Let us fast forward to the early nineteenth century. Rav Tzvi Hersh Kalisher, the rav of Thorn, Germany, who had studied as a youth in the yeshivos headed by Rabbi Akiva Eiger and the Nesivos HaMishpat (Rav Yaakov of Lisa), published a sefer advocating bringing korbanos in the location where the Beis HaMikdash once stood in Yerushalayim. Rav Kalisher considered it not only permissible to offer korbanos before the Beis HaMikdash is rebuilt, but even obligatory.

As one can well imagine, his sefer created a huge furor. Rav Kalisher corresponded extensively with his own rabbonim, Rabbi Akiva Eiger and the Nesivos, and other well-known luminaries of his era including the Chasam Sofer and the Aruch LaNer. All of them opposed Rav Kalisher's opinion, although not necessarily for the same reasons.

We can categorize the opposition to Rav Kalisher's proposal under three headings:

1. There was almost universal disagreement with his opinion that there is a requirement to offer korbanos before the reconstruction of the Beis HaMikdash.
2. Some rabbonim, notably Rav Yaakov Ettlinger, the author of the Aruch LaNer, prohibited offering korbanos before the reconstruction of the Beis HaMikdash even if we could resolve all the other halachic issues involved (Shu"t Binyan Tzion #1). However, it should be noted that this question did not bother either Rav Yechiel of Paris or Rav Ashtori HaParchi. Furthermore, Rabbi Akiva Eiger asked his son-in-law, the Chasam Sofer, to request permission from the ruler of Yerushalayim to allow the offering of korbanos. Presumably, Rabbi Akiva Eiger felt that his son-in-law, who had a close connection to the Austro-Hungarian royal family, might be able to use their influence to gain access to the Ottoman Empire who ruled over Yerushalayim at the time. The Chasam Sofer responded with great respect to his father-in-law, but pointed out that the Beis HaMikdash area is unfortunately covered by a mosque that is sacred to its Moslem rulers who will not permit any non-Moslem to enter (Shu"t Chasam Sofer, Yoreh Deah #236). Thus, we see that both Rabbi Akiva Eiger and the Chasam Sofer agreed with Rav Kalisher that we are permitted to bring korbanos before the reconstruction of the Beis HaMikdash.
3. Numerous halachic hurdles need to be overcome in order to offer korbanos. The discussion of these issues constitutes the lion's share of the debate. Rav Kalisher responded to the correspondence, eventually producing a sefer "Derishas Tzion" (published many years after the demise of Rabbi Akiva Eiger, the Chasam Sofer, and the Nesivos) and subsequent essays where he presented and clarified his position. At least three full-length books and numerous essays and responsa were published opposing Rav Kalisher's thesis.

Before quoting this discussion, we need to clarify several points. First, can we indeed offer korbanos without the existence of the Beis HaMikdash?

MAY ONE BRING KORBANOS WITHOUT THE BEIS HAMIKDASH?

The Mishnah (Eduyos 8:6) quotes Rabbi Yehoshua as saying, "I heard that we can offer korbanos even though there is no Beis HaMikdash." The Gemara (Zevachim 62a) tells us a story that provides us with some background about this statement. "Three prophets returned with the Jews from Bavel (prior to the building of the second Beis HaMikdash), Chaggai, Zecharyah and Malachi, each bringing with him a halachic tradition that would be necessary for the implementation of korbanos. One of them testified about the maximum size of the mizbeiach, one testified about the location of the mizbeiach, and the third testified that we may offer korbanos even when there is no Beis HaMikdash." Based on these testimonies, the Jews returning to Eretz Yisroel began offering korbanos before the Beis HaMikdash was rebuilt.

Obviously, Rav Kalisher and Rav Ettlinger interpret this Gemara differently. According to Rav Kalisher and those who agreed with him, the prophet testified that we may offer korbanos at any time, even if there is no Beis HaMikdash. Rav Ettlinger, however, understands the Gemara to mean that one may offer korbanos once the construction of the Beis HaMikdash has begun, even though it is still incomplete. But in the view of Rav Ettlinger, after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash we may not offer korbanos until Eliyahu announces the building of the third Beis HaMikdash.

An earlier posek, Rav Yaakov Emden, clearly agreed with Rav Kalisher in this dispute. Rav Emden, often referred to as "The Yaavetz," contends that Jews offered korbanos, at least occasionally, even after the second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, which would be forbidden according to Rav Ettlinger's position (She'aylas Yaavetz #89). This is based on an anecdote cited by a mishnah (Pesachim 74a) that Rabban Gamliel instructed his slave, Tevi, to roast the Korban Pesach for him. There were two Tanna'im named Rabban Gamliel, a grandfather and a grandson. The earlier Rabban Gamliel,

referred to as “Rabban Gamliel the Elder,” lived at the time of the second Beis HaMikdash, whereas his grandson, “Rabban Gamliel of Yavneh,” was the head of the Yeshivah in Yavneh and was renowned after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. Thus, if we can determine which Rabban Gamliel is the protagonist of the mishnah’s story, we may be able to determine whether Jews offered korbanos after the Churban. This would verify Rav Kalisher’s opinion.

Rav Emden assumes that the Rabban Gamliel who owned a slave named Tevi was the later one. He thus concludes that Rabban Gamliel of Yavneh offered korbanos after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. Although the Yaavetz brings no proof that the Rabban Gamliel in the above-quoted mishnah is Rabban Gamliel of Yavneh, he may have based his assumption on a different Gemara (Bava Kamma 74b), which records a conversation between Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabban Gamliel concerning Tevi. Since Rabbi Yehoshua was a contemporary of Rabban Gamliel of Yavneh, this would imply that the later Rabban Gamliel indeed offered the Korban Pesach after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.

However, this does not solve the numerous halachic issues that need to be resolved in order to allow the offering of korbanos. Although Rav Kalisher responded to these issues, the other gedolim considered his replies insufficient.

KORBANOS ON THE MOUNTAIN

The Brisker Rav, Rav Velvel Soloveichik, raised a different objection to Rav Kalisher’s proposal. Basing himself on several pesukim and halachic sources, he contended that the Beis HaMikdash site only has kedusha when it is a high mountain. Since the Romans razed the present site and it is no longer the prominent height it once was, it is not kosher for offering korbanos until the mountain is raised again to its former glory (quoted in Moadim U’Zemanim Volume 5, pg. 222). Thus, according to this approach, one of Moshiach’s jobs will be to raise the mountain to its former height. Presumably, Rav Kalisher felt that although the mountain should and will be raised, korbanos may be offered before that time.

I will now present some of the other questions involved in ascertaining whether we may bring korbanos before the coming of Eliyahu and Moshiach.

MAY A TAMEI PERSON ENTER THE BEIS HAMIKDASH?

Virtually all opinions agree that it is a Torah prohibition to offer korbanos anywhere in the world except for the designated place in the Beis HaMikdash called the mizbeiach. This creates a halachic problem, because it is a severe Torah prohibition to enter the Beis HaMikdash grounds while tamei, and virtually everyone today has become tamei meis through contact with a corpse. (Someone who was ever in the same room or under the same roof as a corpse also becomes tamei meis.) Although other forms of tumah can be removed by immersion in a mikveh at the appropriate time, tumas meis can be removed only by sprinkling ashes of the parah adumah (the red heifer). Since the ashes of the previously prepared paros adumos are lost, we cannot purify ourselves from tumas meis. Thus, we would be prohibited from bringing most korbanos because every kohen is presumed to be tamei meis.

Gedolim have discussed whether a new parah adumah can be prepared before the arrival of the Moshiach, but I am refraining from citing this discussion because of space considerations.

However, although we have no available tahor cohanim, this would not preclude our offering Korban Pesach or certain other public korbanos (korbanos tzibur).

WHY IS KORBAN PESACH DIFFERENT FROM MOST OTHER KORBANOS?

Most korbanos cannot be brought when either the owner of the korban or the kohen offering the korban is tamei. However, the Torah decrees that korbanos that are offered on a specific day must be brought even when every kohen is tamei. Thus, the Korban Pesach, the daily korban tamid, and the special mussaf korbanos that are brought on Shabbos, Yom Tov and Rosh Chodesh may be offered by a kohen who is tamei meis if necessary.

Other korbanos, however, may not be offered by a tamei kohen even if this results in them not being brought at all. Thus, since there is no tahor kohen available today, we must assume that Rav Yeichiel only planned to offer one of the above korbanos (Shu”t Chasam Sofer, Yoreh Deah #236).

LOCATION OF THE MIZBEIACH

As mentioned above, the debate over Rav Kalisher’s proposal concerned other halachic issues that must be resolved before we may offer korbanos. The Kaftor VaFerech raised two of these issues over five hundred years before Rav Kalisher. How could Rav Yeichiel offer korbanos when we do not know the exact location of the mizbeiach? As the Rambam writes, “The location of the mizbeiach is extremely exact and it may never be moved from its location. . . . We have an established tradition that the place where David and Shlomoh built the mizbeiach is the same place where Avraham built the mizbeiach and bound Yitzchak. This is the same place where Noach built a mizbeiach when he left the Ark and where Kayin and Hevel built their mizbeiach. It is the same place where Adam offered the first korban, and it is the place where he (Adam) was created.

“The dimensions and shape of the mizbeiach are very exact. The mizbeiach constructed when the Jews returned from the first exile was built according to the dimensions of the mizbeiach that will be built in the future. One may not add or detract from its size,” (Hilchos Beis HaBechirah 2:1-3).

As noted above, prior to building the second Beis HaMikdash, the prophets Chaggai, Zecharyah and Malachi testified regarding three halachos about the mizbeiach that were necessary to reinstitute the korbanos, one of which was the exact location of the mizbeiach and. If so, how can we offer korbanos without knowing the location of the mizbeiach?

Rav Kalisher offered an answer to this question, contending that the prophets’ testimonies were necessary only after the destruction of the first Beis HaMikdash, because the Babylonians razed it to its very foundations. However, Rav Kalisher contended that sufficient remnants exist of the second Beis HaMikdash to determine the mizbeiach’s precise location, thus eliminating the need for prophecy or testimony to establish its location.

Rav Kalisher’s correspondents were dissatisfied with this response, maintaining that the calculations based on the Beis HaMikdash remnants could not be sufficiently precise to determine the mizbeiach’s exact location. Thus, they felt that we must await the arrival of Eliyahu HaNavi to ascertain the mizbeiach’s correct place.

YICHUS OF COHANIM

Do we have “real” cohanim today? Only a kohen who can prove the purity of his lineage may serve in the Beis HaMikdash (see Rambam, Hilchos Issurei Biah 20:2). The Gemara calls such cohanim “cohanim meyuchasim.” Cohanim who cannot prove their lineage, but who have such a family tradition, are called “cohanai chazakah,” cohanim because of traditional practice. Although they may observe other mitzvos of cohanim, they may not serve in the Beis HaMikdash.

An early source for the distinction between cohanim who can prove their lineage and those who cannot is the story found in Tanach about the sons of Barzilai the Kohen. When these cohanim came to bring korbanos in the second Beis HaMikdash, Nechemiah rebuffed them because of concerns about their ancestry (Ezra 2:61-63; Nechemiah 7:63-65). The Gemara states that although Nechemiah permitted them to eat terumah and to duchen, he prohibited them from eating korbanos or serving in the Beis HaMikdash (Kesubos 24b). Similarly, today’s cohanim who cannot prove their kehunah status should be unable to serve in the Beis HaMikdash. This would eliminate the possibility of offering korbanos today.

However, Rav Kalisher permits cohanai chazakah to offer korbanos. He contends that only in the generation of Ezra and Nechemiah, when there was a serious problem of intermarriage (see Ezra, Chapter 9), did they restrict service in the Beis HaMikdash to cohanim meyuchasim. However, in subsequent generations, any kohen with a mesorah may serve in the Beis HaMikdash.

Chasam Sofer (Shu”t Yoreh Deah #236) also permits cohanai chazakah to offer korbanos, but for a different reason, contending that although using a kohen meyuchas is preferred, a non-meyuchas kohen may serve in the Beis HaMikdash when no kohen meyuchas is available.

Other poskim dispute this, maintaining that a kohen who is not meyuchas may not serve in the Beis HaMikdash (Kaftor VaFerech).

The question then becomes - If only a kohen who can prove his kehunah may offer korbanos, and there are no surviving cohanim who can prove their kehunah, how will we ever again be able to bring korbanos?

The answer is that Moshiach will use his Ruach HaKodesh to determine who is indeed a kosher kohen that may serve in the Beis HaMikdash (Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 12:3). This approach preempts Rav Kalisher’s proposal completely.

VESTMENTS OF THE KOHEN

Before korbanos are reintroduced, gedolei poskim will have to decide several other matters, including the definitive determination of several materials necessary for the kohen’s vestments.

The Torah describes the garments worn to serve in the Beis HaMikdash as follows: “Aharon and his sons shall put on their belt and their hat, and they (the garments) shall be for them as kehunah as a statute forever,” (Shmos 29:9). The Gemara deduces, “When their clothes are on them, their kehunah is on them. When their clothes are not on them, their kehunah is not on them,” (Zevachim 17b). This means that korbanos are valid only if the kohen offering them wears the appropriate garments.

One of the vestments worn by the cohanim is the avneit, the belt. Although the Torah never describes the avneit worn by the regular kohen, the halachic conclusion is that his avneit includes threads made of techeiles, argaman, and tola’as shani (Gemara Yoma 6a). There is uncertainty about the identification of each of these items. For example, the Rambam and the Ravad dispute the color of argaman (Hilchos Klei HaMikdash 8:13). The identity of techeiles is also unknown. Most poskim conclude that Hashem hid the source of techeiles, a fish known as chilazon, and that it will only be revealed at the time of Moshiach. Thus, even if we rule that our cohanim are kosher for performing the service, they cannot serve without valid garments! (It should be noted that several

great poskim, including the Radziner Rebbe, the Maharsham, Rav Herzog and Rav Yechiel Michel Tukochinski, contended that we could research the correct identity of the techeiles. I have written a different article on the subject of identifying the techeiles.)

Rav Kalisher himself contended that the garments of the kohen do not require chilazon as the dye source, only the color of techeiles. In his opinion, chilazon dye is only necessary for tzitzis. (He based this approach on the wording of the Rambam in Hilchos Tzitzis 2:1-2.) Therefore, in Rabbi Kalisher's opinion, one may dye the threads of the avneit the correct color and perform the service. However, other poskim did not accept this interpretation but require the specific dye source of chilazon blood to dye the vestments (Likutei Halachos, Zevachim Chapter 13 pg. 67a).

Rav Kalisher did not discuss the dispute between the Rambam and the Ravad about the color of the argaman. Apparently, he felt that we could determine the answer and dye the avneit threads appropriately.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES The poskim raised several other issues concerning Rav Kalisher's proposal. One problem raised is that Klal Yisroel must purchase all public korbanos from the funds of the machatzis hashekel, which would require arranging the collection of these funds before the publically owned korbanos could be offered.

However, this question would not preclude offering Korban Pesach, which is a privately owned korban.

Rav Kalisher's disputants raised several other questions, more than can be presented here. As we know, the gedolei haposkim rejected Rav Kalisher's plan to reintroduce korbanos before the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash.

However, we have much to learn from Rav Kalisher's intense desire to offer korbanos. Do we live with a burning desire to see the Beis HaMikdash rebuilt speedily in our days? Even if, chas veshalom, we are still not able to offer Korban Pesach this year, we should still devote Erev Pesach to studying the halachos of that korban. And may we soon merit seeing the cohanim offering all the korbanos in the Beis HaMikdash in purity and sanctity, Amen.

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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

Rav Shlomo Aviner Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample: Tzadik the Son of a Wicked Person

Q: Rashi says that Yitzchak's prayer was accepted over Rivka's because he was a Tzadik the son of a Tzadik while she was a Tzadik the daughter of a wicked person. But isn't someone who does Teshuvah and comes close to Hashem at a higher level? A: The Mussar Rabbis explain that the way of a child is to rebel against his parents and to be different from them. Therefore, being a Tzadik the son of a Tzadik requires great sacrifice. Too Much Salary

Q: I accidentally received too much salary for a long period of time and didn't realize. My employer is now asking me to return the money, but I already spent it. What is the Halachah in this case? A: You have to return it, but can do so in increments, according to your ability. Shidduch for an Elite Combat Soldier in Tzahal

Q: I am a soldier in an elite combat unit, which goes on dangerous missions, and we were required to sign a confidentiality agreement. If I go on a Shidduch, it is permissible for me to tell the young woman what I do? A: It is forbidden. You should tell her that you are in a combat unit that sees a lot of action. One must relate one's severe defects on Shidduchim. Yevamot 45a. Kehilot Yaakov of the Steipler ibid. #44. This is not considered a severe defect, but rather a minor "defect", as well as a great merit (This is also the ruling of Ha-Rav Major Shraga Natan Dahan, head of the Halachah Department of Tzahal, given in a class on the subject). How Do We Know the Calculations of Hashem

Q: I have experienced many disasters and don't understand why. What transgressions did I do? A: We do not know the calculations of Hashem. Do not search for transgressions to explain your misfortunes. We also do not know the calculations of Hashem for all of the goodness He performs for us, even if we did not merit them (So too, whenever a tragedy occurred, Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein would always say that it was a decree from Hashem and never ascribe it to a particular transgression, since we cannot fathom the

ways of Hashem. In the book "Meged Givot Olam" with additions Volume 2, pp. 87-88). Organ Donation by a Cohain

Q: Regarding a Cohain who signs an Organ Donor card: doesn't this create a problem for his close relatives who are Cohanim, as they will become impure by coming to the funeral and cemetery, since he is missing an organ? A: It is permissible since it is an inner organ and not recognizable. Shut Igrot Moshe (Yoreh Deah 1:251. 2:165). Shut Tzitz Eliezer (9:48). Yalkut Yosef (7:30 #3). Segulah Against Danger

Q: I have to go to a place where there are many Arabs and I am scared. Is there a Segulah against danger? A: There is a Segulah of the Admor of Radzin, the Ba'al Techelet: To carry a pistol, or to be escorted by guards (When the Admor of Radzin was searching for the Techelet for Tzitzit, he visited many different areas in Italy, including the basements of non-Jews, in order to try to find a remnant of the Bigdei Kehuna. People asked him: You aren't scared to go into such places? He said: I have a Segulah from my grandfather. He did not however want to say what it was. His Shamash later revealed it: He carried a small pistol in his pocket...).

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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Bo For the week ending 4 February 2017 / 8 Shevat 5777 by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com Insights The Greatest Darkness "No man could see his brother, nor could anyone rise from his place..." (10:23)

The greatest darkness is when we think we see other people — but we don't really see them; they are just floating figures in the background of the landscape of our lives — mere bit-players from "Central Casting".

The result of "no man could see his brother" is that no one "could rise from his place" — the power of feeling sympathy becomes atrophied, dark and stunted.

We can give others the lip-service of sympathy but our hearts can still be blind.

In Hebrew the word for sympathy translates literally "to be a partner in grief".

Being a partner is not a spectator sport.

It requires a "seeing" that is pro-active, that reaches out into the darkness of another's life and joins that life to ease its pain. *Source: based on the Chiddushei HaRim © 2017 Ohr Somayach International*

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Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

OU Torah Let's Talk It Over Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

I have long believed that all conflicts between people could be settled if the parties to the dispute would agree to simply sit down together and talk. There are, of course, times when I have come to question this belief. I often wonder whether it is not merely a vain fantasy of mine, or perhaps just wishful thinking. I have been forced to admit that some interpersonal disputes are intractable and that no amount of discussion could resolve them. But, by and large, I still adhere to this long-held belief and try, in both my personal life and various professional roles, to put that belief into practice. I attempt to get even the most stubborn opponents to sit down face-to-face and discuss their differences. I had the good fortune during my training in the practice of marital therapy to experience the tutelage of a master marriage counselor. Her name was Ruth G. Newman, and she passed away long ago. I have forgotten much of what she taught me, but I clearly remember her insistence that the role of the marriage counselor was not to counsel. Rather, it was to get the husband and wife to talk to each other and to truly listen to each

other. I witnessed her work many times, and was amazed at how even her most stubborn clients were able to overcome their stubbornness, engage in true dialogue, and achieve understanding of the other person's point of view. In this week's Torah portion, Parashat Bo (Exodus 10:1-13:16), we encounter an individual who arguably was the most stubborn person in the history of mankind. I speak, of course, of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, who refused to release the Jewish people from their cruel and arduous enslavement, even after being subjected to an array of miraculous plagues. His obstinacy was partly the product of his own character but was immeasurably reinforced by the Almighty's commitment to "harden his heart." Already in last week's Torah portion, Va'era, Moses was put on notice, at the very beginning of his mission, to "speak to Pharaoh to let the Israelites depart from his land," but not to expect great success. Moses was forewarned: "But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that I may multiply My signs and marvels in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 7:2-3) By the time we read this week's parasha, Pharaoh and his people have already undergone no less than seven mighty plagues, with an impending eighth plague in the offing. But the very first verse of our parasha tells us not to expect Pharaoh's obstinacy to soften: "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his courtiers..." Surely, if there was ever one person for whom conversation and the counsel of others were simply out of the question, Pharaoh was that man. Nevertheless, Moses persists in his mission. He and Aaron go to Pharaoh and confront him in the name of the Lord: "How long will you refuse to humble yourself... Let My people go... For if you refuse... I will bring locusts on your territory... They shall devour the surviving remnant that was left to you after the hail... They shall eat away all your trees... They shall fill your palaces... Something that neither your fathers nor fathers' fathers have seen from the day they appeared on earth to this day." Having delivered this dire threat, Moses then does something which is unprecedented and which catches us off guard. We are told: "With that he turned and left Pharaoh's presence." He does not wait for Pharaoh's response. He simply leaves the scene. What are we to make of this sudden departure? Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, the great exegete known as Nachmanides, or Ramban, suggests an answer which both gives us an insight into Moses' thought processes and teaches us a lesson about the power of dialogue to overcome obduracy. He writes: "Moses knew that the recent plague of hail frightened Pharaoh and his people very much. He reasoned that the fear of a deadly famine, which would inevitably result from the plague of locusts, might bring even Pharaoh to soften his heart. And so, without so much as asking Pharaoh for permission to leave, he summarily departed before Pharaoh could say yes or no. He did this to allow Pharaoh and his courtiers to discuss the matter and take counsel from one another. Indeed, this is exactly what happened. The courtiers said to Pharaoh, 'Are you not yet aware that Egypt is lost?' In the words of our rabbis of the Midrash, 'Moses observed that they were turning to each other, taking this threat seriously. So he left abruptly, so that they would indeed advise each other to repent.'" Ramban readily admits that he was preceded by the rabbis of the Midrash in his insightful interpretation. Despite the fact that Moses had already become quite familiar with Pharaoh's extreme stubbornness, refusing to comply with Moses' demand even after seven devastating plagues, and despite the fact that the Almighty himself had told Moses that Pharaoh's heart would remain hardened, Moses still held out hope that Pharaoh would take the counsel of others, would "talk things over" and might relent. In Moses' judgment, repentance is always a possibility, and what makes it possible is conversation and dialogue. Rabbi Simcha Z. Brodie, a great 20th century yeshiva dean whom I was privileged to meet in person, uses this passage in the writings of Ramban as the cornerstone of his theory about the importance of dialogue and of its power to change people. He goes so far as to argue that true spiritual greatness cannot be achieved without such dialogue. To illustrate this point, he relates a story he heard from one of the disciples of the famed 19th-century moralist, Rabbi Israel Salanter. Rabbi Salanter was once told about a uniquely spiritual individual, one who had attained rare levels of piety. Rabbi Salanter

refused to believe that an individual, acting alone, could achieve such an unusual stature. "If you would have told me this about one of the three saintly men from the town of Reisen (three famed early 19th century Pietists), I would believe you. Each of them had the others to help him ascend the ladder of holiness. But the man you just described to me lives in utter solitude. No one can achieve sublime spirituality alone." Ramban and Rabbi Brodie are teaching us two useful and important lessons, lessons which Moses knew well. First, dialogue and the readiness to talk things over can soften even the hardest of hearts. Secondly, solitude may have its occasional value, but only a life of dialogue with others can foster moral and psychological growth. © 2017 Orthodox Union | All Rights Reserved

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Rabbi Daniel Stein

Take the Silver and the Gold - Please?

In preparation for the impending exodus from Egypt, Hashem instructed Moshe, "Speak, please, into the ears of the people, and let them borrow, each man from his friend and each woman from her friend, silver and gold vessels" (Shemos 11:12). The Gemara (Berachos 9a) infers from the language of the passuk "speak please into the ears of the people", that Moshe was told to graciously and tactfully request of Bnei Yisrael that they borrow silver and gold vessels from the Egyptians, in order to fulfill Hashem's prophetic pledge to Avraham "and afterwards they shall emerge with great wealth" (Breishis 15, 14). The meforshim wonder, since most people are eager to receive money and wealth, why did Hashem feel it was necessary to cajole the Jewish people into taking the gold and the silver?

The Vilna Gaon explains that Hashem had initially intended to shower Bnei Yisrael with great wealth only at the conclusion of the process of the exodus, after the splitting of the Red Sea. The possessions of the drowned Egyptians would surface to the top of the water where they could be easily claimed by the Jewish people. However, Hashem was concerned lest Avraham and his descendants prematurely presume that the wealth was supposed to arrive at the beginning of the exodus, immediately upon leaving Mitzrayim. In order to avoid a possible mistaken impression and erroneous accusation, Hashem asked Moshe to encourage Bnei Yisrael to take the possessions of the Egyptians with them at the beginning of their journey. Therefore, it was necessary to say "please" because Hashem wasn't offering the Jewish people any additional wealth at this point, since they would have been able to effortlessly claim those very same items after the splitting of the Red Sea. Rather, Hashem asked the Jewish people to schlep the loot to the Red Sea themselves, in an attempt to prevent any confusion and misunderstanding.

Alternatively, perhaps Hashem chose to use the language of "please" in this context, in order to transform the message to take the vessels of silver and gold from a command to a request. That is because in general people have a visceral aversion to doing that which they are told, even when they are being instructed to take silver and gold. Therefore, Hashem had to graciously ask the Jewish people to take the silver and gold instead of commanding them to do so, in order to avoid provoking resistance from the Jewish people and potentially defaulting on His pact with Avraham Avinu.

This natural reflex to defy specific commands seems to have been the underlying motivation behind the costly mistake made by some Egyptians during the plague of hail. Prior to the plague of hail Moshe advised the Egyptians, "And now, send, gather in your livestock and all that you have in the field, for any man or beast that is found in the field and not brought into the house the hail shall fall on them, and they will die" (Shemos 9, 19). The Torah continues that while there were some Egyptians who brought their animals inside because they "feared the word of Hashem" and heeded the advice of Moshe, there were others who "did not pay attention to the word of

Hashem" and left their animals and servants in the fields only to be killed by the hail. How could there have been Egyptians who were so reckless and shortsighted as to discount the specific instructions and warnings of Moshe? After all, Moshe had accurately predicted the previous six plagues which had devastated the Egyptian people, how then could anyone carelessly continue to ignore him?

This issue is compounded when we consider Rashi's deductive assertion (Shemos 9:10), that during the previous plague of pestilence which had already targeted and eliminated all of the animals in the fields, those very same Egyptians must have acted to protect their animals by bringing them indoors. If they sheltered their animals during the previous plague of pestilence because Moshe informed them that only the animals in the fields would be affected (Shemos 9, 3), why wouldn't they take similar precautions and measures before the plague of hail? Rav Moshe Wolfson (Emunas Itecha) explains that prior to the plague of pestilence Moshe simply informed the Egyptians of the potential fallout of the plague (Shemos 9:3) but did not order them directly to bring their animals indoors. However, prior to the plague of hail Moshe specifically instructed the Egyptians "gather in your livestock and all that you have in the field." Moshe's explicit command to bring the animals inside aroused within the Egyptians an instinctive adverse reaction to do exactly the opposite of that which Moshe advised them to do. This prompted the same Egyptians who previously safeguarded their animals during the plague of pestilence to now leave their animals outside despite the obvious looming peril of the hail.

We find a similar phenomenon in Parshas Shelach. The Jewish people initially declined to enter Eretz Yisrael without first sending miraglim-scouts to survey the land, despite the assurances and tacit disapproval of Moshe and Hashem. However, at the conclusion of the episode of the miraglim Bnei Yisrael seem to do a complete about-face. Now the people insist on entering Eretz Yisrael forthwith, as the passuk states, "We are ready to go up to the place...for we have sinned" (Bamidbar 14:40). They completely ignore the admonition of Moshe and Hashem "Do not go up for Hashem is not among you" (Bamidbar 14:42), culminating in a spectacular defeat at the hands of the people of Amalak and Canaan (Bamidbar 14:44-46). The agenda of Bnei Yisrael is confusing; at the beginning of the parsha they are hesitant to enter Eretz Yisrael and at the end of the parsha they are willing to sacrifice themselves fighting for it. The Alter of Kelm explains that Bnei Yisrael were primarily and consistently motivated by a desire to defy the orders of Moshe and Hashem. Therefore, they initially rebuffed Moshe's suggestion to enter Eretz Yisrael straight away while they subsequently disregarded his order to stand down.

For this reason, the Gemara (Kiddushin 31a) tells us that, ironically, one who performs a voluntary mitzvah receives less reward than one who performs an obligatory mitzvah. Rav Yaakov Emden contends that this is because even though one who volunteers to perform a mitzvah has gone beyond his basic obligations, the one who is commanded to perform a mitzvah has to overcome an additional yezter hara, namely the evil temptation and inclination to resist obeying orders. Therefore, one who performs an obligatory mitzvah receives reward not only for the basic mitzvah but also for displaying the resolve to adhere to Hashem's commands. The life of a Jew is replete with divine commands, instructions, and directives, and we should learn from the damaging and tragic mistakes of the Egyptians and the Mirgalim to embrace this predicament rather than recoiling from it. In our own lives, we should aspire to answer the charge of Hashem, not to seize Egyptian silver and gold, but the treasures of the Torah and the mitzvos which are infinitely more valuable, as the passuk tells us, "The instruction of Your mouth is better for me than thousands of gold and silver" (Tehillim 119:72). Copyright © 2017 by TorahWeb.org

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Rav Yissocher Frand Emunah on Seder Night / The Moon and Rejuvenation

Who Knows Why We Sing "Who Knows One?" There are a series of "songs" at the end of the Pesach Seder. (I hate to refer to them as merely "songs" because they each contain great depth and profound allusions. The Vilna Gaon wrote an entire commentary on "Chad Gadya," so they are certainly more than just "songs.") One of the last ones is the popular composition known as "Echad mi yodeah?" [Who knows "One?"] There is a very basic Ramban at the end of Parshas Bo. I do not consider myself an expert in Ramban, but I suggest that this Ramban is, if not the most important Ramban in Sefer Shmos, at least among the "Top Three." In a lengthy comment, the Ramban there explains why there are so many mitzvos designated as being "zecher l'yitziyas mitzrayim" [in commemoration of the exodus from Egypt]. The Ramban beautifully explains that the whole purpose of miracles is to dispel the myth that there is no G-d (Heaven forbid) or that there is a G-d but He does not know what is going on in this world or there is a G-d who may know what goes on in this world but He does not care about what goes on in this world. This was the philosophy of the Egyptians. They either denied the existence of G-d or they denied Divine Providence. Therefore, G-d made open miracles which over-ruled the "laws of nature" to establish once and for all that He is the Master of all and that He knows what people are doing and that He cares what people are doing and that He punishes people who disobey Him and rewards those who listen to Him. The Ramban explains that by revealing open miracles to humanity, Hashem is demonstrating to us that our entire lives are miraculous. "From the open miracles one can come to recognize the hidden miracles of life. Life itself is a miracle." The Ramban says a person who denies that G-d performs hidden miracles for us (nissim nistarim) on a daily basis "has no portion in the Torah of Moshe." For this reason, the Ramban explains, there are such severe punishments for violating the laws of the Holiday of Pesach. A person who eats chametz on Pesach is chayav kares [the punishment of being "cut off" from his people]; likewise, a person who does not bring the Korban Pesach is chayav kares. This holiday involves the fundamentals of our faith. That is what the exodus from Egypt was all about. The ultimate purpose of reading the Haggadah every year on the Seder night is to leave the Seder bigger ma'aminim [believers]. The four questions and all the various interpretations of the four sons, and everything else we say are all very nice, but the bottom line of the entire Seder experience is that we are supposed to have more Emunah [faith in G-d] at the end of the night. We are all familiar with the concept of word association. If I say "day" what word comes to mind? "Night." If I say "black", you say "white". I say "fork", you say "knife". These word associations automatically come to mind. The Seder is supposed to implant certain automatic word associations into our minds. When we hear the word "Echad" [One], our automatic reaction should be "Echad Elokeinu she'ba'shamayim u'ba'aretz" [One is our G-d in the Heaven and the earth]. When we hear the word, "two" we think "the Two Tablets of Stone." "Three?" The Three Patriarchs. "Four?" The Four Matriarchs. "Five?" The Five Books of the Torah. This means that on the night of the Seder, we become so attuned to Emunah in the Ribono shel Olam that our word associations become hard-wired such that everything we hear brings to mind the basic components of Judaism. This is why at the end of the Seder, we recite this popular composition "Who knows One?" It reinforces to us after a whole night of Seder, matzah and wine that we are to become bigger believers. Maybe the number seven means other things to us on other nights of the year, but on the night of the Seder the number seven means "Seven days of the Sabbath cycle" and the number eight means "Eight days of circumcision". This is the natural word association of a true believe and this is what the Seder experience is supposed to accomplish. ***This New Moon Is For You — HaChodesh Hazeh Lachem*** The first mitzvah in Parshas Bo is the mitzvah of "This month for you shall be the first of the months." This is the commandment to the Jewish court to establish the new

month and to implement the lunar calendar system, which is the basic mechanism of tracking the Jewish holidays. Our Sages say that the Greek-Syrians (Yevanim) tried to uproot three basic Jewish commandments: Shabbos, Milah [Circumcision], and Kiddush haChodesh [Sanctifying the New Month]. If we were to take a survey as to what are the “Top Ten Mitzvos” in the Torah, many of us would say Shabbos and many of us would say Milah, but I don’t think any of us would say that Kiddush haChodesh ranks up there in the top hierarchy of Torah commandments. And yet, the Yevanim did focus precisely on this mitzvah (along with Shabbos and Milah) in their attempts to eradicate the fundamental practices of Judaism from their empire. Why was the mitzvah of Kiddush haChodesh so fundamental that it was so important to abolish it? I saw a very interesting interpretation by the Arugas haBosem. The Arugas haBosem asks: Is it not peculiar that the Ribono shel Olam, who is the essence of that which is eternal and is the essence of Emes [Truth], should create a celestial body like the moon, which waxes and wanes. The moon is here, it gets smaller, then it disappears and then it comes back again. This is sort of “out of character” for a Divine creation. The sun is always present, the forces of nature are always present, and gravity is always present. What is it about the moon that it is present, it grows, it diminishes, it disappears, and then it reappears? Why would He make something like that? The Arugas haBosem answers that there is something about the moon that is fundamental to the Jewish people and fundamental to every single Jewish person. The moon is a symbol to us that people go through life with periods of growth and decline. They go through periods in which they are ascendant and then they go through periods in which they are descendant. However, just like the moon waxes and wanes — it becomes big and diminishes and almost disappears, it always reappears — “HaChodesh hazeh lachem”: This rejuvenation cycle of the moon is crucial to what being a Jew is all about both collectively and on an individual level. During our history, we experienced so many times when the Jewish people were ascendant, like in the times of Shlomo or like in the period of the “Golden Age of Spain.” And yet we also experienced periods when we have been the most down trodden and beaten up people on the face of the earth. When people are in that type of situation, it is so easy for them to give up hope. That which is true on a national level is true on an individual level as well. There are periods in life when things go very well. A person feels his future is bright and big. Then people suffer reversals and go through periods of decline. However, “HaChodesh hazeh lachem” — Chazal say that the Jewish people resemble the moon. This is why the Master of the World made such a celestial phenomenon. He wanted it to provide His people with an ethical lesson — a model for their destiny. This is how the Arugas haBosem explains the text of the blessing of the New Moon: “Poel Emes she’peuloso Emes”. G-d who creates Truth and his actions are Truthful (and Truth is always forever), nevertheless “v’la’levanah amar she’tischadesh ateres tiferes l’amusai baten” — to the moon He commanded that it should go through these cyclical patterns as an ethical lesson (mussar haskel) to the Jewish people “she’hem asidim l’hischadesh k’mosa”, for they are destined to renew themselves as it does. Even though it is “out of character” for the Almighty to create something that is not static and is not stable, He did so because the lesson is so vital to the Jewish people, for they are destined to emulate the pattern of the moon and rejuvenate themselves as well. This is the reason why the nature of the moon is such and this is the reason why the Yevanim wanted to nullify not only Shabbos and Milah but also Kiddush haChodesh. Even if they were successful in uprooting Shabbos and stripping it away from the Jews and even if they were successful in eradicating circumcision, if the Jews still had the concept of Kiddush haChodesh, they could look at the cycles of the moon and they would not give up hope. The Syrian-Greeks were not only attempting to strip the Jews of these mitzvos. They were also attempting to take away the possibility that the Jews would rejuvenate. The Yevanim wanted them to lose hope. Therefore, Kiddush haChodesh was so crucial to the Yevanim. It was not because of the mitzvah itself, but because of what it represented. Rav

Matsiyahu Solomon once mentioned a thought he heard from Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zt”l, which the latter always said when he recited Kiddush LeVanah. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz once met a holocaust survivor and asked him “How did you hold out? How was it you were able to not give up?” The Jew told Rav Chaim that in the camps, they could not fulfill mitzvos. Not Lulav, not Succah, not Chanukah, nothing. However, there was one mitzvah they performed regularly. Even on the pain of death, they left the barracks at night to fulfill this mitzvah. This was the mitzvah of Kiddush LeVanah. There was always a moon. “We looked up at the moon and we took to heart the lesson of ‘they are destined to be renewed like the moon.’” This is what gave this Jew hope. That is why Kiddush LeVanah and Kiddush haChodesh is so crucial. It is the story of the Jewish people and it is the story of individual human beings, waxing and waning, growing and declining. There is an amazing Gemara [Shabbos 147b] that I always had trouble understanding and I still don’t fully understand. Rav Chelbo stated that the wine of Purgeesa and the water of Deyumsis corrupted the Ten Tribes. There is a place where the wine is terrific, extremely intoxicating and extremely alluring. There is another place that the hot springs are other worldly. The Gemara says that the Tanna Rav Elazar ben Arach went to these places with the superb wines and the superb baths and was drawn after them. He started really enjoying them to the extent that he forgot his learning. When he returned, he misread the pasuk “HaChodesh haZeh Lachem” [Shmos 12:2]. He read the words as “Hachresh hayah libam” [their hearts were deaf]. Simply, the great Tanna got so into the physicality of the wine and the hot springs that he forgot how to read Hebrew! The Gemara concludes that the Rabbis prayed for mercy on his behalf and his learning was returned to him. The Arugas HaBosem comments on the symbolism of the story. Out of all the pasukim in the Torah, why did he misread “HaChodesh haZeh Lachem” as “Hachresh hayah libam?” The answer is that Chazal are trying to tell us that the words “Hachresh hayah libam” also contain “HaChodesh hazeh lachem.” The capacity to get so low that one cannot even read the words right does not mean that all is lost. With only the slightest modification to “Hachresh hayah libam,” the words turn into “HaChodesh hazeh lachem.” Therefore, as low as Rav Elazar ben Arach sunk, he was able to return. The power of “This New Moon is for you” is the power of the celestial sphere that is emulated by the Jewish people. They are destined to renew like it. The capacity of rebirth, the capacity of rejuvenation, and the capacity of renaissance, define the Jewish people. We all have that capacity. *Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org Copyright © 2017 Project Genesis - Torah.org.*

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subject: [Rav Kook Torah]

ravkooktorah.org Rav Kook Torah Bo: The Special Pesach Offering

The offering brought for the Passover holiday, the korban pesach, has special laws how it is to be cooked and eaten: “They will eat the meat on that night ... Do not eat it raw, or cooked in water, but only roasted over fire.” (Ex. 12:8-9) Why may the korban pesach only be eaten at the nighttime? And why must it be roasted? National Holiness in Each Individual All Temple offerings fall into two categories. Some are korbanot yachid, personal offerings brought by an individual; while others are korbanot tzibur, communal offerings brought in the name of the entire nation. An individual brings a korban yachid for private reasons — to atone for a particular sin or express gratitude for a personal deliverance. The Jewish nation as a whole, on the other hand, is represented by communal offerings which commemorate national events and holidays. Of all the Temple offerings, the korban Pesach is unique, since it combines characteristics of both types of offerings. It commemorates a national historic event; and yet the obligation to bring this offering is not on the nation but on the individual. Why is it not like other communal offerings? This unusual

offering teaches us an important lesson about the Jewish people. The korban pesach reveals the quality of national holiness that resides in the soul of every Jew. Our ties to Knesset Yisrael are so deep that each individual's pesach offering is like a korban tzibur representing the entire nation. And this special connection of each individual to the nation is reflected in the laws regulating how the korban pesach is to be eaten. The Unity of Israel Our daytime activities are characterized by extensive social interaction, while at night we retire to our homes and private lives. By stipulating that the Passover offering be eaten at night, the Torah is emphasizing that our connection to the Jewish people is not based on some form of social contract, a utilitarian agreement to band together due to common interests. Rather, our ties to the Jewish people reflect a unique shared commonality that binds together all of Israel. These national ties persist even at night, a time when each individual retreats to the privacy of his home. The manner in which the offering is cooked is similarly instructive. Were it boiled in water or cooked together with other foods, the taste of the korban would spread outside of the meat. Roasting, on the other hand, prevents the flavor from dispersing to other foods. This ensures that the offering's qualities of holiness remain concentrated inside the korban pesach. Why should this experience be so intense? The mitzvah of eating the roasted offering has the power to uplift each individual with an intensity of pure holiness, a powerful quality rooted in the national soul of Israel. This concentrated holiness deepens our awareness of the singular unity of Israel, a result of the communal holiness that resides within each and every individual, in all of his being. (*Silver from the Land of Israel*, pp. 163-164. Adapted from *Olat Re'iyah vol. I*, pp. 178-179.) Copyright © 2010 by Chanan Morrison

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**Insights - Parshas Bo Shevat 5777 Yeshiva Beis Moshe
Chaim/Talmudic University Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva
HaRav Yochanan Zweig**

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Yitzchak Ben Moshe. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!" Seeing is Believing
And Bnei Yisroel went and did as Hashem had commanded Moshe and Aharon, so they did (12:28).

Rashi (ad loc) is bothered by the seemingly repetitious conclusion of the passuk. In other words, the beginning of the verse clearly states that Bnei Yisroel did as Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon; so why did the Torah find it necessary to conclude with the words "so they did"? Rashi explains that the words "so they did" is referring to Moshe and Aharon: they too, did the mitzvah of Korban Pesach.

Maharal in the Gur Aryeh (Shemos 12:28) wonders; why is it assumed that Moshe and Aharon would not have had to bring a Korban Pesach that the Torah had to tell us otherwise?

Additionally, if the Torah meant to tell us that "so they did" is referring to Moshe and Aharon, why doesn't the Torah state it expressly and leave no room for confusion?

Very often, when telling our children to do something that we feel will improve their lives greatly (e.g. they should commit to studying Torah an hour a night), they silently wonder (and sometimes not so silently) why we ourselves are not modeling that very same behavior?

Of course they don't realize all the obligations that we are under (work, business meetings, school board meetings, home repairs etc.), so how can they possibly understand why we aren't able to make that very same commitment to Torah study?

But in fact, our kids are actually right. Certainly, there are myriads of excuses we can make as to why we ourselves don't do what we are asking our kids to do, but that's exactly what they are - excuses. When one has many responsibilities there are conflicts which cannot be avoided. But our kids aren't fooled, they know when we are serious about an ideal and when we are

merely paying lip service to an ideal. Our kids also know that we have unavoidable conflicts, but they will absolutely judge what we consider to be important in our lives, by how we choose to spend our free time.

Leadership follows some of the same rules. Obviously, a leader has many responsibilities and obligations, after all, that is what leadership is all about - taking responsibility to get things done. Yet some leaders see themselves as above following certain laws that everyone else must adhere to. They forget that they too have a responsibility to follow the rules.

The Torah is teaching us a remarkable lesson about what kind of leaders Moshe and Aharon were. On the night that Bnei Yisroel left Egypt, undoubtedly, there was a multitude of things to do and Moshe and Aharon could easily be forgiven for not fulfilling the mitzvah of Korban Pesach. But that's not the type of leaders they were; they led by example and did exactly what everyone else was supposed to do. That's what the Torah is telling us by not mentioning their names: They fulfilled the Korban Pesach like everyone else - as ordinary members of Bnei Yisroel about to leave Egypt. Contend or Pretend?

And you shall guard the matzos... (12:17)

Rashi (ad loc) explains that guarding the matzos entails being very meticulous in their preparation in order to prevent them from becoming chometz (leavened). Rashi goes on to quote the Mechilta (Bo, parsha 9), "R' Yoshia says - Do not read the word 'matzos' rather read it 'mitzvos' (although vowelized differently, the word matzos is spelled exactly the same as mitzvos) - just as people do not allow the matzos to become chometz (by delaying the process to completion), so to they shouldn't allow mitzvos to become "leavened." Rather, if an opportunity to do a mitzvah presents itself, do it immediately."

In other words, just as we have to be meticulous in our process preparing dough to become matzo (eliminating all unnecessary delay), so too we must have the same attitude of immediacy toward fulfilling mitzvos.

Yet the analogy seems flawed; if one delays doing a mitzvah, he can do it a little later or, at the very worst, he lost an opportunity. But if one fails to prepare the dough for matzos properly, he has created a far worse situation: he now has chometz on his hands, which on Pesach is a serious transgression. How are these two ideas analogous?

Generally, people delay or push off doing things they wish to avoid doing. Procrastination is usually not a problem of time management or of planning. People simply delay doing things they don't want to do. If we ask our children to clean up their room, even if they finally acquiesce, getting them to actually do it is often a battle. Imagine if after finally getting them to pick up their room we now ask them to set the table, and then clear and wash the dishes. Pretty soon they will begin to resent doing things we make them do and begin to object.

Unfortunately, doing mitzvos can fall into the same rut. If one doesn't perceive mitzvos as opportunities, but rather as onerous obligations, one will soon begin to resent doing them. Pretty soon one will delay and push off fulfilling them. Eventually, those delays will become noncompliance, which leads to nonobservance. When we force our children to get up, wash their hands, daven, make brachos, and the like, we are actually well on our way of getting them to resent doing mitzvos. In other words we are on the derech of getting them "off the derech."

We must slowly educate our children that mitzvos are really opportunities. Chazal tell us exactly how to do this; give them incentives every step of the way. Show them that learning Torah and doing mitzvos can be rewarding. When it comes to do doing things like studying Torah and mitzvos the Gemara (Pesachim 50b) teaches, "Metoch shelo lishma ba lishma - if one begins by doing things for a selfish reason he will eventually come to do it for the proper reason."

After a while a person begins to realize how meaningful it is to begin the day off with a conversation with Hashem, or how intellectually stimulating and enjoyable studying Torah can be. There are very few mitzvos that aren't accessible to the emotions or intellect.

This is what Chazal mean we should not delay fulfilling mitzvos. We should perceive every mitzvah as an opportunity for ourselves; not merely as something we have to do. **Did You Know...**

In this week's parsha the final plague is performed: Makos Bechoros. Unlike the others, this one is performed by Hashem Himself, without a messenger. The Torah teaches that the plague caused the deaths of all the Egyptian firstborns, but that the Jews who put the blood on their doorways survived. However, here are some details from Chazal that you might not have known:

Hashem killed all the firstborns of Egypt, including visiting foreigners, non Jewish slaves, and animals. The Egyptian firstborns were killed no matter where in the world they were hiding (Me'am lo'ez Shemos 2, chapter 7).

Hashem killed the firstborn animals, to show that there was no difference between the Egyptians and their animals. The firstborn captives were also killed because, when asked about freedom, they would say that they preferred staying as slaves rather than being with the Jews who were freed (Shemos Rabbah 18:10).

Interestingly, if a Jew was supposed to die that night, Hashem extended his life. But if an Egyptian was supposed to die he died anyway, even if he wasn't a firstborn. Hashem wasn't concerned that people would say that even non-firstborns died, because Hashem only performs miracles (extending one's life) for Bnei Yisroel (Me'am lo'ez ibid).

Although all the previous plagues were performed with various messengers, Hashem had to do this one alone because not even angels could tell who was a first born. Even in the case of twins, Hashem would kill the one conceived first (Me'am lo'ez ibid).

The blood on the doors obviously wasn't a sign for Hashem, but for the people to publicly do what Hashem said and repent. In other words, putting blood on the doors was a way of expressing one's desire to be with the Jewish people. This commitment also protected the Jewish firstborn who were in Egyptian houses (Me'am lo'ez ibid). Hashem also destroyed all of their idols. Silver and gold melted, stone shattered, clay was pulverized, and wood was decayed. He destroyed them all, except the one called Baal-Zephon, to make the Egyptians think that He wasn't powerful enough (Shemos Rabbah 15:15). This mistake is what caused them to pursue the Jews and ultimately be destroyed (Eitz Yosef).

Additionally, that night Hashem burned all of their sacred sheep, and the smell of the objects of their worship burning caused the Egyptians as much pain as all the plagues (Me'am lo'ez ibid). *\Talmudic College of Florida, Rohr Talmudic University Campus, Miami Beach, FL 33140*

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Ohr Somayach :: Insights into Halacha The Coca-Cola Kashrus Controversy Rabbi Yehuda Spitz For the week ending 28 January 2017 / 1 Shevat 5777

Ice-Cold Sunshine

Aah! The cool refreshing taste of "The Real Thing"! Is there anything (besides maybe baseball and apple pie) that is considered more American? Everyone also knows that around the world (pretty much) there is almost nothing more kosher than good, old-fashioned Coke. Why, you can even ask Grandma, that back in the day, before mp3s, microwaves, dishwashers, and even World War II, it was "Always Coca-Cola". "The great national temperance beverage" was THE drink of choice for all, even the strict kosher consumer.

But, it wasn't always that way. We all have a certain person to thank for that, Rabbi Tuvia (Tobias) Geffen, Chief Rabbi of Atlanta, Georgia for many decades. He was one of the select few who actually knew the closely guarded secret ingredient in Coke. Back in the 1920s and 30s, Coke was looking to (and I'm sure still is) expand their market share when it came to their attention that if they received a hashgacha, then many more Jews (and others who look specifically for kosher products) would drink freely of the "pause that refreshes".

So, the directors approached the most likely candidate to grant Rabbinic supervision, Rabbi Geffen. Coke was, after all, invented and headquartered in Atlanta. He was more than willing to check it out, as many of his congregants were asking him about the kashrus status of Coke. Kosher Coke?

His findings were mixed for, although technically the drink was kosher and was permitted to be drunk, it was questionable if he was allowed to give it his seal of approval to allow observant Jews to purchase it. The reason was that although they

claimed it to be "as pure as sunlight", it turned out that there was a non-kosher ingredient, later revealed to be animal-based glycerin, in the makeup of Coke, but it was only present in minute quantities. Therefore, it would be permitted to drink, for the non-kosher ingredient was *battel b'shishim*, [1] and therefore considered nullified.

However, for him to grant Coke hashgacha posed a potential problem in a different category, that of "Ain Mevattelin Issur Lechatchila". [2] This means that although if a non-kosher substance would accidentally fall into kosher food (as long as there was the prerequisite 60 times the amount of non-kosher that fell in) it would be permitted to drink, nonetheless, if one would add it on purpose with the express intention of nullifying it, the entire mixture becomes forbidden for the person who transgressed and for whomever he intended to benefit.

The issue at stake here was that the Coca-Cola Company was obviously putting this non-kosher ingredient in the batch purposefully, as it was part and parcel of the Coke everyone knew and loved.

On the other hand, it was not just a simple open-and-shut question, for the Coca-Cola Company was not owned or run by Jews, and quite obviously was not marketing Coke exclusively for Jews.

Therefore, Rabbi Geffen was in a bit of a dilemma: Did this situation fall under the category of "Ain Mevattelin Issur Lechatchila" and therefore Coke would be unacceptable for purchase by the kosher consumer? And, even if it did not, and was acceptable for purchase, was he allowed to give his hashgacha on a product that contained a non-kosher ingredient?

Before we get to the punch line, let us "go through the inyan". Non-Jewish Nullification

Already in the 1500s, the Radbaz, [3] distinguishes between a scenario where a non-Jew nullifies non-kosher, where he is of the opinion that a Jew is allowed to eat of the mixture, as opposed to where a non-Jew is selling non-kosher, where he holds that it is forbidden for a Jew to purchase. He maintains that when a Jew is purchasing the item, it is as if he himself nullified it, and it therefore becomes assur, forbidden, for him to eat. Many halachic decisors concurred with his reasoning and likewise forbade a Jew from purchasing items that had non-kosher nullified inside of it. [4]

However, the majority of Poskim disagreed with this rationale, concluding that it is improbable to make such a distinction, [5] as the Rambam himself held that it is acceptable to procure such items as long as it was done by a non-Jew, and is therefore suitable for purchase. [6]

Still, to further complicate our case, the Tashbatz [7] made a further qualification to this permissible ruling, following the precedent of the Rashba and Raavad. They aver that although one may rely upon a non-Jew's nullification for purchase in infrequent circumstances, conversely, if the non-Jew is doing it for his job, or on a frequent basis, then certainly it is considered as if the Jew himself nullified it. Several Poskim agreed with this decision as well. [8] Following this ruling would seem to imply that Coke would have to be prohibited to the kosher consumer, as it is definitely mass produced. How About a Coke?

So, now our being the wiser, having a rudimentary understanding of the issues involved, what did Rabbi Geffen decide to do? Feeling uncomfortable by having to make such a decision (sort of like between a rock and a hard place), where Gedolim through the ages have taken stands on both sides of the matter, he did the only thing he felt he could do – try to make shalom! He went to Coca-Cola and asked them to change their formula! Surprisingly, out of respect for him, the executives listened and the company removed the problematic ingredients, and replaced them with kosher alternatives (vegetable-based glycerin), making the soft drink kosher lechatchila for everyone, proving the adage that "things", including kashrus, "go better with Coca-Cola".

Rabbi Geffen later published the whole account, as well as the halachic reasoning behind his actions, in his responsum. [9] Later halachic authorities as well ruled similarly to Rabbi Geffen's sound logic and reasoning, averring that although there is what to rely upon regarding purchasing, nevertheless, when it comes to granting hashgacha, a Rabbinic authority should not give a seal of approval to an item that contains nullified issur. [10] In fact, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l classified doing so, if nullification is the only justification they are relying upon to proclaim the product kosher, as "mechuar hadavar", utterly disgraceful or disgusting.

So the next time you partake in a nice, cool, refreshing glass of Coke, you should think of Rabbi Geffen, as well as all the behind the scenes kashrus issues that went into making sure that even the kosher consumer can enjoy "the cold, crisp taste of Coke". [11] *Passover Passport to Refreshment*

There is actually more to the story. It turns out that another ingredient inside Coke was chametz, and as the laws of bittul do not apply to chametz on Pesach, Coke was therefore technically not kosher for Passover. At Rabbi Geffen's behest, this ingredient was also replaced by a kosher l'pesach alternative. In fact, Coca-Cola was considered kosher for Pesach until the "New Coke" debacle in the 1980s. When the company reinstated the "Original Coca-Cola Classic", there was one minor change in the formula.

Cane sugar was replaced with a cheaper alternative, high-fructose corn syrup. The one kosher concern with this is that it is kitniyos, which Ashkenazim do not consume on Pesach.[12] That is why Coca-Cola, and other soft drinks, require specific Passover supervision. There are numerous die-hard Original Coke aficionados who drive many miles during the Passover shopping season to major metropolitan areas with a large Jewish concentration, just to purchase “the Coke with the yellow bottle cap”. For these fans, if it’s not the Passover Coke, it’s just not the “Real Thing”. Postscript: Coca-Cola: The First Hashgacha

Interestingly, it is known that, historically, Rabbi Geffen was not actually the first to grant hashgacha on Coca-Cola. In certain regional markets, several Rabbonim had given hashgacha in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and the Vaadei HaKashrus of Buffalo, Chicago and Rochester likewise followed. In fact, there were ads for kosher Coke published in the famed HaPardes Torah Journal. These ads contained a small letter from Rav Shmuel Aharon Halevi Pardes, the journal’s editor, that he visited the Coca-Cola factory in Atlanta, and that they ‘revealed to him all of their secrets, including their secret formula’, and he found ‘hamashkeh Coca-Cola kosher lishtoso al pi hadin’.

These Rabbanim included Rav Yaakov ‘JB’ Bienenfeld of New York, Rav Avraham Meir Franklin of Buffalo, and Rav Shmuel Aharon Pardes of Chicago himself, who, aside for being well known talmidei chachamim, were not exclusively relying on the lenient precedent of many Poskim [including the Noda B’Yehuda, Pischei Teshuvah and Gilyon Maharsha, who followed the Ri Migash and Rambam’s permissive positions over that of the Rashba, Raavad, Tashbatz, and Shulchan Aruch HaRav et al.] regarding the nullification of issur performed by non-Jews, even on a steady basis. They also maintained that since in this case the potential non-kosher ingredients, which, since added in such a minuscule amount were not being used for actual taste, originated from a laboratory that put them through a chemical change, they were no longer considered food and therefore permitted. Not only is this shittah supported by several Rishonim,[13] but Rav Pardes wrote extensively on this topic, including a letter to the Gadol HaDor, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky zt”l, who agreed that it is indeed muttar.[14]

Certainly, combining these factors, there is and was ample support for these renowned Rabbonim to grant hashgacha to Coke. As an aside and quite interestingly, according to historian Roger Horowitz’s recent book ‘Kosher USA: How Coke Became Kosher and Other Tales of Modern Food’, Rabbi Geffen and Rabbi Pardes actually exchanged halachic responsa on whether or not to rely on such, preceding and somewhat paralleling the later halachic debate regarding the permissibility of animal-based gelatin.[15]

Still, Rav Tuvia Geffen’s actions, unheard of for the time, persuading the Coca-Cola Company to actually change their formula, a monumental contribution in upgrading the ingredients and ensuring that Coke had zero potential kosher concerns, and was permitted unequivocally, set a public precedent for later Vaadei Kashrus to follow as well: Even if an item is deemed halachically kosher, to try to go above and beyond the letter of the law, making certain that there is no sheilah on the product in question. This encapsulated Rabbi Geffen’s greatness and is perhaps the reason that he is the one most commonly and closely associated with ensuring that “Coke is it” for the kosher consumer.

This article was written in honor of my brother-in-law, Ezra Carter, who, as a native Atlantean, was the impetus for my interest and research in this inyan, and zechus for Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v’chol yotzei chalatzeha for a yeshua teikif umiyad. For any questions, comments or for the full Mareh Mekomas / sources, please email the author: yspitz@ohr.edu. Rabbi Yehuda Spitz, author of Mi Shulchan Yehuda on Inyanei Yoreh Deah, serves as the Sho’el U’Meishiv and Rosh Chabura of the Ohr Lagolah Halacha Kollel at Yeshivas Ohr Somayach in Yerushalayim. He also currently writes a contemporary halacha column for the Ohr Somayach website titled “Insights Into Halacha”: http://ohr.edu/this_week/insights_into_halacha/.

[1] Although there are exceptions, this is the standard rule of nullification in halacha; if there is present 60 times the amount of non-kosher, then the non-kosher substance is considered nullified, and the mixture permitted ex post facto. See Tur, Shulchan Aruch, and main commentaries (Yorah De’ah 98). [2] See Shulchan Aruch (Yorah De’ah 99, 5). [3] Shu”t Radbaz (vol. 3: 978; old print 547). [4] See Chida (Shiyurei Bracha Y”D 99:5), Levushei Srad (Chiddushei Dinim, Hilchos Nosein Taam Lifgam 58: 153), Zechor L’Avraham (vol. 3: Y”D s.v. ‘Bitul’), Beis Avraham (Y”D vol. 2: 108, 13), Beis Yehuda (Shu”t Minhagei Ar’ij [Algiers] pg. 115, 3rd column, 68), Shu”t HaMaharshdam (53), and Shu”t HaRashbash (560). The Bach (Shu”t 123) implies this way as well, that purchasing from a non-Jew is considered ‘lechatchila’, and is therefore prohibited as bitul issur is only permitted b’dieved. The Minchas Yitzchok (Shu”t vol. 2: 28, 20) seems to be choshesh for this opinion as well. [5] Shu”t Maharam Lublin (104), Minchas Yaakov (35: 2), Shu”t Noda B’Yehuda (Tinyana Y”D 56 and 57), Shu”t Beis Yitzchok (Y”D vol. 1: 142, 8 and Kuntress Acharon 31), Shu”t Chasam Sofer (Y”D 82), Shu”t Ksav Sofer (O.C. 87), Pischei Teshuva (Y”D 134: end 8), Shu”t Imrei Binah (Dinei Bassar Bechalav V’Taaruvos 14; although he concludes that it is preferential to be machmir in both instances), Erech Hashulchan (Y”D 99: 8), Zivchei Tzedek (ad loc. 36), and Shu”t Beis Shlomo (O.C. 97), that whatever was produced by a non-Jew is already considered ‘b’dieved’ and therefore permissible for purchase. Many contemporary authorities concur with this assessment, including Rav Eliyahu Gutmacher (Shu”t Mahar”a Gutmacher Y”D 32), Rav Henoch Padva (Shu”t Cheishev HaEifod vol. 2: end 104, s.v. v’ata), Rav Moshe Feinstein (Shu”t Igros Moshe Y”D vol. 1: 62 s.v. u’mdin, and 63; Y”D vol. 2: 32 and 41), Rav Betzelel

Stern (Shu”t Betzeil HaChochma vol. 4: 89, 13 and 14; and 104, 18), his brother, the Debreciner Rav (Shu”t Ba’er Moshe vol. 3: 109, 21), and Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Shu”t Yabea Omer vol. 7, Y”D 7). [6] Rambam (Hilchos Maachalos Assuros Ch. 3: 13). This is also the ruling of his rebbi, the Ri Migash (cited by the Ran in Avodah Zarah, 13b in the Rif’s pagination, s.v. v’hsiu’u ledavar achar). [7] Shu”t Tashbatz (vol. 3: 10), Shu”t HaRashba (vol. 3: 214; cited by the Beis Yosef, Y”D end 134 s.v. chometz, and by the Magen Avraham O.C. 442: end 1), Raavad (cited by the Ran and Beis Yosef ibid). A case can be made for positing that this is also the Ran’s opinion, as he concludes his passage with the words of the Raavad. [8] Shulchan Aruch HaRav (O.C. 442: 6, and Kuntress Acharon 5; who adds that ‘...b’Yoreh Deah hiskeemu hakol l’divre HaRashba’), Chida (Birkei Yosef, Shiyurei Bracha Y”D 134: 4, Din 14 s.v. kol hamashkim), Shu”t Divrei Chaim (vol. 2: Y”D 53), Shu”t Maharam Shick (Orach Chaim 9), Shu”t Imrei Aish (vol. 1, Y”D 42), Shu”t Avnei Tzedek (Orach Chaim 51), Sdei Chemed (vol. 1, Klalim, Maareches Ha’Alef, 360, and in Pe’as HaSadeh 10), Arugas HaBosem (Kuntress HaTeshuvos 15), Shu”t Atzei Halevanon (Y”D 43 s.v. ach da), and Shu”t Tiferes Shmuel (17). Conversely, the Pischei Teshuva (Y”D 134: end 8) and Gilyon Maharsha (ad loc. s.v. kol; however and quite interestingly, in the beginning of Hilchos Taaruvos, Y”D 98 s.v. issur he implies that one needs to be machmir for a non-Jew mixing in issur frequently) conclude that the ikar follows the Noda B’Yehuda (ibid. s.v. v’ammam) who rules leniently based on the Rambam and Ri Migash over the Rashba and Raavad. The Noda B’Yehuda adds that the Shulchan Aruch himself implied this way [however, the Minchas Yitzchok (Shu”t vol. 2: 28, 9 - 18) questions this assessment, citing that the Shulchan Aruch in Y”D 134: 13 expressly rules like the Rashba; see how he deals with this difficulty at length, concluding that the Noda B’Yehuda was drawing a distinction between taam that was niregash or not]. A similar assessment is given by the Seridei Aish (new print; vol. 2: 69 s.v. ulam). On the other hand, although there is undeniably what to rely upon, other contemporary authorities nonetheless advise caution, and especially lechatchilla. In fact, the Melamed L’Hoyeel (Shu”t vol. 2, Y”D 29) only allows one to rely on this b’shaas hadchak. Others, including the Mahar”i Assad (Shu”t Yehuda Yaaleh vol. 2: 122), maintain that one who can be machmir ‘tavo alav bracha’. Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin (Eidus L’Yisrael pg. 177; and in his recent posthumously published Shu”t Gevuros Eliyahu vol. 2 - Y”D end 16 s.v. u’bvaday and 25) advised to be choshesh for this as well. See also Rav Shmuel Chaim Yaakov Gruber’s article in Kovetz Ohr Yisroel (vol. 30, pg. 123; who quite interestingly cites the lomdus of Rav Geffen’s teshuva, with no mention of the practical outcome) and Rav Yisroel HaLevi Belsky’s Shu”t Shulchan HaLevi (Ch. 22: 2 and 25:1). [9] Shu”t Karnei HaHod (vol. 2, last responsum in the sefer, titled ‘B’dvar Hamashkeh Ha-Coca-Cola’. This teshuva, perhaps the most famous in the annals of American history, has also been translated to English and can be found on the HebrewBooks website –

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=2379&st=&pgnum=122&hlite=>. [10] See Rav Moshe Feinstein’s Shu”t Igros Moshe (Y”D vol. 2: 41 s.v. v’im), Rav Moshe Sternbuch’s Shu”t Teshuvos V’hanhagos (vol. 1: 440), and Rav Menashe Klein’s Shu”t Mishnah Halachos (vol. 7: 113, 2). [11] However, this was not the last time Coke’s kosher status was challenged. In 1957, Cincinnati based Proctor and Gamble (P&G), the source of Coke’s vegetable-based glycerin, changed their glycerin production lines from the batch processing method to a continuous flow system, making the kosher glycerin processed on the same lines as the non-kosher animal equivalent, and thus, due to the issue of bleyeos, absorption, rendering its technically kosher vegetable glycerin non-kosher. Rav Eliezer Silver zt”l, Rav of Cincinnati and Rosh Agudas HaRabbonim of the United States and Canada, intervened, and at his behest, P&G constructed a parallel production line exclusive to vegetable based glycerin, and thus ensuring Coke’s kosher. According to historian Roger Horowitz, in his recent book ‘Kosher USA: How Coke Became Kosher and Other Tales of Modern Food’, this modification came at a cost of \$30,000, quite a large sum for the time. More recently, in January 2014, an anonymous writer in the controversial HaPeles newspaper in Jerusalem made an astonishing and entirely unsubstantiated claim that all Coca-Cola in the world nowadays, including that under strict hashgacha, is actually non-kosher. His misleading ‘findings’ were based on ‘an anonymous kosher expert’ and the first half of Rav Geffen’s teshuva from 1935, with absolutely no mention of the responsa’s conclusion - how Rav Geffen persuaded Coke to change their formula and that it was subsequently rendered kosher ledivrei hakol! In response, this author submitted the full text of Rav Geffen’s teshuva, as well as a sharply written rejoinder ‘lehaamid davar al boryo’, which was consequently published to correct misconceptions. [12] This was discussed at length in an article titled ‘The Halachic Adventures of the Potato’. [13] Including Rabbeinu Yonah (cited by the Rosh in Brachos (Ch. 6: 38), as well as the Ran to Avodah Zarah 39a (17b s.v. misrach in the Rif’s pagination) regarding honey manufactured by non-Jews; see also Mogen Avraham (O.C. 216: 3 regarding musk); as well as the Machatzis Hashekel (Orach Chaim 427: end 45) who posits that the shittas hamachmirim is only applicable when the nullified product is explicitly added for taste or ma’amid purposes, which is seemingly not the case with Coca-Cola, as the glycerin was chemically altered and added in such minute quantities (0.09%). [14] See, for example, Shu”t Tzemach Tzedek (Lubavitch; Yoreh Deah 67), Yeshuos Yaakov (end Yoreh Deah 105), Shu”t Maharsham (vol. 3: 234), Shu”t Acheizer (vol. 2 - Y”D 11: 5), Shu”t Avnei Shmuel (20), Shu”t Chavalim B’Ne’imim (vol. 5: 17), Shu”t Tzitz Eliezer (vol. 6: 16, 9 - 11), and Sha’arim Metzuyanim B’Halacha (47: 5). There is also a novel approach raised by Rav Chaim Halperin in his maamar (from 5742) printed in sefer Zecher Shlomo (Sefer Zikaron for Rav Shlomo Zalman Goldshtoff, ppg. 547 - 557), that perhaps the Rashba and Raavad were only referring to the issurim of non-Jews mass-nullifying their wine and vinegar, and not necessarily other items. However, it must be noted that the vast majority of Acharonim throughout the centuries did not understand their opinions this way and this havanna remains a tremendous chiddush. [15] This debate was addressed at length in an article titled ‘Halachic Insights Into Genetically Engineered Meat’.

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority. L’huyl Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R’ Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R’ Boruch Yehuda, and l’zchus for Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam and her children for a yeshua teikef u’miyad!