

BS"D

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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON TETZAVEH & PURIM - 5762

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From: torahweb@zeus.host4u.net Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2002

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2002/moadim/rsob_purim.html
RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY

THE DEEPER MEANING OF SEUDAS PURIM

The Purim seudah is a multifaceted mitzvah. Chazal instituted eating and drinking as the vehicles through which we celebrate the miracle of Purim. Although on the surface the seudah appears to be merely a physical form of celebration, there is a spiritual dimension that commemorates the religious revival that occurred at the time of Purim.

Megillas Esther opens with an elaborate description of a feast given by Achashverosh for the entire population of Shushan. This feast acts as a catalyst for the future events in the megillah on two levels. Vashti's refusal to attend the feast leads to her downfall, facilitating Esther's rise to the throne. In addition, Chazal saw this drunken celebration full of immorality and depravity, attended by Jews, as critical in its timing. Achashverosh had erroneously calculated that 70 years had passed since the Jews had been exiled, and because Yirmiyahu's prophecy of the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash had not been fulfilled, concluded that it would never be. Achashverosh was celebrating Hashem's apparent absence from the world by drinking wine from the sacred vessels of the first Beis Hamikdash. The Jews' participation in this infamous party, dedicated to the desecration of the Beis Hamikdash, was a sin that sealed the fate of the Jewish people, destining their annihilation at the hands of Haman.

The repentance brought about by Mordechai's leadership revoked the decree. To commemorate these events, Chazal instituted the mitzvah of seudas Purim. This seudah serves as the ultimate correction for the tragic mistake made by the Jewish people in attending Achashverosh's seudah, by eating and drinking while maintaining the highest standards of morality. The seudah would be dedicated to praising Hashem for His presence in the world, as became evident through the miracle of Purim.

There is yet an additional dimension to the Purim seudah. Chazal tell us that the receiving of the Torah was incomplete until Purim. The Torah was originally accepted under duress. Hashem appeared, accompanied by lightning and thunder, following all the revealed miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim, and the Jewish people were so overwhelmed that they were in a sense coerced into accepting the Torah. At the time of Purim, when Hashem's presence in the world could have been questioned, that the willful acceptance of the Torah was complete. Halacha requires a special seudah to be eaten on Shavuos to celebrate the first stage of the giving of the Torah. The seudas Purim is the culmination of the seudah of Shavuos.

The Rambam incorporates the mitzvah of mishloach manos as part of the mitzvah of seudas Purim. The Ksav Sofer suggests that the relationship between these two mitzvos stems from the aspect of celebrating kabolas haTorah. A person can eat and drink because of joy or sorrow. Excessive eating and drinking can be used as a way to forget one's agony. When one eats and drinks on Purim to celebrate kabolas haTorah it is unclear whether one is overjoyed by receiving this wonderful gift or is miserable because he is now overburdened by its restrictions. A person's mood can easily be discerned. Only when he

is eating with others out of joy does he want to share this joy with others. One who is miserable wants to be left alone. It is the mitzvah of mishloach manos that reveals the true nature of the seudah.

As we eat our Purim seudah let us remember to focus on its spiritual dimension, thereby uplifting our eating and drinking to a joyous service of Hashem.

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2001/moadim/rsch_purim.html
[TorahWeb from last year]
RABBI HERSCHEL SCHACHTER
THE SPIRIT OF PURIM

The Rabbis of the Talmud have recorded (Shabbos 88a) the tradition that although the Jewish people accepted the Torah at Mt. Sinai out of their own free will, there was, nevertheless, an aspect of coercion involved. After the miracle of Purim, the people accepted the Torah again, this time without any element of coercion. Today when we observe Purim, one of the themes being celebrated is this second accepting of the Torah. According to the Geonim, this is the reason that Purim alone was singled out from all the other holidays instituted by the Rabbis (and recorded in the Megillas Taanis) to have a mitzva of seuda (eating a festive meal). Just like on Shavuos the Talmud tells us (Pesachim 68b) that all agree that one must have an elaborate meal as part of the commemoration of our accepting the Torah, so to Purim must be celebrated with an elaborate meal for this same reason.

According to the Medrash, the element of coercion at the time of maaamad Har Sinai that necessitated the later second acceptance was regarding the Torah She'beal Peh. The Jews were fully prepared to accept G-d's written Torah, since it was clearly of divine origin. But the bulk of the Oral Law consists of laws classified as "divrei sofrim", laws developed by the rabbis over the generations, which have the status of dinim doraisa. The discretion and the judgement of the rabbis is assumed to have been divinely inspired, and therefore has been endowed with doraisa status. The verse in Tehilim (25,14) that G-d reveals his secrets to those who fear him is quoted several times in the Talmud to bring out this point.

This is in no way a contradiction to the principal developed by the rabbis that "lo bashamayim hi" (see Bava Metzia 59b) that after mattan torah G-d will no longer reveal any halachos to man in a supernatural fashion, i.e. through prophecy, and any bas kol proclaiming a halacha must be disregarded. Of course G-d expects us to work out the halacha. At the same time, He has promised to assist the rabbis from behind the scenes in their deliberations to see to it that they do not err. The binding force of any psak of any rabbi is based on the assumption that the individual posek was granted this supernatural divine assistance.

Bnei Yisroel at the time of mattan Torah apparently found it hard to accept this concept (see Meerot Neryah p. 16a). At the time of the nes Purim a group of rabbis known as the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah was setting all the forms of religious observance as they are still being observed today, two thousand years later (brachos, tefilos, categories of halacha). The Jews realized that the yad Hashem was involved in the story from behind the scenes. They came to understand well the concept of "sod Hashem leyereiov." It becomes understandable that halchos are developed by the rabbis with the yad Hashem guiding them. This is what the Torah Shebaal Peh was always about.

Now that the Jewish people had accepted that part of the Torah again without any coercion, this segment of halachos was able to flourish and to develop in a much greater fashion than ever before. Indeed, the greatest part of the development of the Torah Shebaal Peh took place, historically, after the days of Purim (see Be'Ikvei Hatzon p.138, 114).

The Shalah, in his essay on Purim, points to the posuk in the megillah (8:14) "vehados nitnah beshushan habirah", as an allusion to the concept that the Torah was being reaccepted. The traditional festive Purim meal is eaten to celebrate this reacceptance and should be eaten with such an attitude. Becoming drunk and rowdy simply does not fit in with the correct attitude which should pervade the Purim observance. Purim is not the Jewish Halloween. The custom of putting

on masks, and dressing up to conceal one's true identity was never intended to represent a Jewish Mardi-Gras; but rather to show that just as in the story of Purim, one had to look below the surface to see the hidden Mover behind the events, so too in Torah study, one must always look below the surface, and read in-between the lines to gain the insights of the Torah Shebaal Peh, which will actually place everything in the Torah in the proper perspective. The custom of masquerading is to teach us, "al tistakel bekankan elah bemah sheyesh bo!", (Never look at the outer appearance of the container. Always try to investigate what might possibly be hiding beneath the surface.) The fact that G-d's name never appears in the megillah is also assumed to be for the same reason. The hidden Torah Shebaal Peh interpretation always enlightens the Torah shebikta, and always puts things into clearer perspective.

From: National Council of Young Israel
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11 Adar 5762 February 23, 2002 Daf Yomi: Baba Metzia 93
Guest Rabbi: RABBI MARC PENNER YOUNG ISRAEL OF
HOLLISWOOD, NY

In memory of Miriam Penner, Miriam bat Moshe Tzvi ah
The Abarbanel points out that the beginning of this week's Parsha seems to be out of place. Ve'atah tetzave veyikchu eilecha shemen zayit zach Take olives and make oil for the Menorah. and set up the Menorah each evening for lighting. This command would seem to make more sense in Sefer Vayikra, where the Torah presents us with the commandments for the use of the Mishkan and its Keilim. Sefer Shemot generally lays out the instructions for the building of the Mishkan and its Keilim.

In reality, this command is more than just out of place. It truly doesn't make sense here in Parshat Tetzave, for the Menorah will not even be built until Parshat VaYakeil. The Kohanim are instructed to light something that doesn't even exist! Why give the instructions for its lighting at this point? Why not wait until the Menorah is constructed and standing before the Kohanim? Wouldn't it be easier for the Kohanim to appreciate this mitzvah once they could see the Menorah with their own eyes?

Perhaps the Torah wants to make a very important statement. Before the Menorah is built before the Mishkan is built - the Torah deals with a crucial issue: What kind of person will be fit to light this Menorah? Are there such people? Who is fit to serve in this Mishkan? The answer might just be: not just someone who can light a fire, but someone who can light a Menorah that does not yet exist. More importantly, someone who will believe in that Menorah who will envision it in all of its glory even though it hasn't yet been built.

It's this very spirit that must underlie not just the functioning of the Mishkan, but its construction as well. In Parshat VaYakeil, HaShem instructs Moshe to appoint Betzalel as the architect of the Mishkan. The Gemara (Berachot 55a), however, tells us that HaShem didn't present Betzalel's candidacy to Moshe as a fait accompli. Instead, HaShem asks Moshe if he thinks that Betzalel is a good choice. Moshe, astonished, asks G-d why He would need a human's approval! But HaShem persists - insisting that the Jewish people as a whole approve Betzalel's candidacy. Why did HaShem seem concerned about Betzalel's acceptance? Perhaps it was because Betzalel was just 13 years old (Sanhedrin 69b). A young teenager was chosen to be the architect of the Beit HaShem! Was it just that Betzalel was a child prodigy? Or perhaps, was something about that age, something about his outlook on life that was so important and necessary for the building of the Mishkan? Rabbi Berel Wein, in one of his essays, suggests that this spark of youth was an essential component of Betzalel's work.

It is fascinating to note that the Beit HaMikdash was also built by a child. Shlomo HaMelech becomes King at the young age of 12 years old, and just a few short years later he starts the construction of the Beit HaMikdash. Youthful idealism, the ability to dream, fresh, new ideas - all of these are necessary traits and skills of our current and future builders. A Bais HaShem is again and again built and served by

those with this very special spark.

It was this spark that HaShem may have been looking for in the Kohanim. They were asked to light a Menorah that couldn't yet be seen! Believe in something, they are told! I know it's not realistic yet. I know it's not here yet. But envision that future. That's what we ask of those who serve and guide our community into the future. And it is leaders like these who have gotten us to this point.

Who would have believed that Orthodoxy could survive and flourish in America? Who could have envisioned the explosion of Yeshivos and Shuls? Baruch HaShem, there were those who had that spark of Betzalel. May HaShem continue to provide us with such leaders to carry us into the future.

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<http://www.koltorah.org/ravj/purimdrinking.htm>

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Editor's Note: Due to the importance of the issue discussed in the following article, it has been printed in several issues.

PURIM AND PIKUACH NEFESH BY RABBI HOWARD JACHTER

Our observance of the famous Talmudic rule, Michayev Inish Libesumei Bepuraya Ad Delo Yada Bein Arur Haman Ubaruch Mordechai, that one should imbibe alcoholic beverages on Purim (Megila 7b), has not always led to optimal results. Hatzolah (a Jewish volunteer ambulance service) has run educational campaigns imploring us "not to get carried away on Purim," both figuratively and literally. We will explore the Gemara, Rishonim, and Acharonim with an aim to demonstrate that this Halacha need not be a cause of serious problems.

Introduction The Chafetz Chaim (Biur Halacha 695:2 s.v. Chayav and Ad) presents an appropriate introduction to this issue. How can Chazal obligate us to drink on Purim if we find incidents in Tanach (e.g. Noach, Lot, Nadav and Avihu) that demonstrate the great dangers inherent in imbibing alcoholic beverages. He answers (citing the Eliyahu Rabbah) that the miracle of Purim came about to a great extent due to parties where alcohol played a central role. Thus, we consume alcohol on Purim in order to remember the great miracle brought about by alcohol. Biur Halacha also cites an important comment of the Meiri on this issue. He writes: Nevertheless, we are not obligated to become inebriated and degrade ourselves due to our joy. We are not obligated to engage in a "Simcha" of frivolity and foolishness. Rather it should lead to a "Simcha of enjoyment," which should lead to love of G-d and thankfulness for the miracles He has performed for us.

Talmud The Gemara, as we mentioned, presents the rule that we should indulge in alcoholic beverages on Purim. The Gemara then proceeds to relate a famous incident. Rabbah and Rav Zeira made a Seudat Purim (Purim feast) together. As a result of their inebriation, Rabbah arose and "slaughtered" Rav Zeira. Subsequently, Rabbah prayed on behalf of Rav Zeira and the latter was revived. The following year, Rabbah invited Rav Zeira for the Seudat Purim, and Rav Zeira declined the offer saying, "Miracles do not occur all the time." A number of observations can be made regarding this passage.

First, the Maharsha (ad. loc. s.v. Kam) comments that Rabbah did not literally slaughter Rav Zeira. Rather, he coaxed him into drinking so much alcohol that it brought Rav Zeira close to death. (Interestingly, the Maharsha seems to adopt the approach to Agaddita presented by the Rambam in his introduction to the last chapter of Sanhedrin. The Rambam asserts strongly that Agaddita should be taken very seriously, though not always literally.)

Moreover, this passage appears to link drinking on Purim with Seudat Purim. Apparently it is not an "independent obligation" but rather part of the Mitzva of Seudat Purim. It is possible to say that the drinking at the Purim feast serves to characterize the meal as a Purim feast. Indeed, the Rambam (Hilchot Megila 2:15), Tur, and Shulchan Aruch (695) all present the rule of drinking on Purim within the context of the laws of Seudat Purim. Accordingly, it would seem that there is no

Halachic accomplishment of drinking on Purim unless it is done in the context of Seudat Purim. Furthermore, our Gemara comments that if one has eaten his Seudat Purim at night, he has not fulfilled his obligation of Seudat Purim. Accordingly, argued Rav Aharon Lichtenstein (in a Shiur delivered at Yeshivat Har Etzion), little is accomplished from a Halachic perspective if one drinks alcoholic beverages on Purim night.

Rishonim: Three approaches to the Rabbah-Rav Zeira incident The most important ramification of the Rabbah-Rav Zeira incident is a possible rejection of or limitation to the Rabbinic decree regarding drinking on Purim. There are two extreme approaches to this issue. The Ba'al Hamaor and Rabbeinu Ephraim cited by the Rif both believe that the Gemara presents the Rabbah-Rav Zeira incident to demonstrate that this Halacha has been rescinded by the Gemara and that it is improper to drink on Purim. On the other hand, the Rif and the Rosh cite the rule of Michayev Inish Libesumei without any reservations whatsoever. Apparently, they believe that the Gemara presents the Rabbah-Rav Zeira incident merely as a cautionary note, but it does not impact on the Halacha itself.

The Rambam (Hilchot Megila 2:15) presents a middle approach. The Rambam codifies the rule that one should drink wine (see Rashi to Megila 7b who also seems to assert that one fulfills this rule only by drinking wine) until he is inebriated and sleeps as a result of the alcohol he consumed. The Aruch Hashulchan (695:3) explains that the Rambam believes that the Rabbah-Rav Zeira incident modifies this Halacha, as the Rambam does not say one should drink until he cannot distinguish between Arur Haman and Baruch Mordechai. Rather, one should drink only to the extent that it should cause him to sleep. Indeed, when a person is asleep he cannot distinguish between Arur Haman and Baruch Mordechai.

Shulchan Aruch and Commentaries The Tur and Shulchan Aruch follow the approach of the Rif and Rosh and simply present the Gemara's rule that one should drink on Purim until he cannot distinguish between Arur Haman and Baruch Mordechai. However, the Bach rules in accordance with the moderate view that the Rabbah-Rav Zeira incident modifies the Halacha to limit drinking only until one becomes drowsy. The Rama presents the Kol Bo's view (which is a version of the Rambam's) that one should merely drink a bit more than he is accustomed to drink and subsequently become drowsy and unable to distinguish between Arur Haman and Baruch Mordechai. The Rama concludes with the celebrated Talmudic teaching, Echad Hamarbeh Ve'echad Hamamit Uilvad Shekivan Libo Lishma, one can do more or less as long as his intentions are focused on serving G-d (see, for example, Berachot 17a and Menachot 110a).

Late Codifiers The Biur Halacha (692:2 s.v. Af) cites the Chayei Adam, who limits this Halacha in a modified version of Rabbeinu Ephraim and the Baal Hamaor: "If one believes that drinking on Purim will interfere with his performing any Mitzva, such as reciting Birkat Hamazon, Mincha, or Maariv, or if he will behave in a boorish manner, it is preferable that he not drink (or become inebriated) as long as his motives are proper." It is obvious that one who is driving after Seudat Purim must refrain from drinking. In addition, both the Mishna Berura (695:5) and Aruch Hashulchan (695:5) rule that it is proper to follow the moderate view that one should merely drink a bit more than he is accustomed to. If we follow this rule and avoid drinking and driving, incidents similar to the Rabbah-Rav Zeira story can be avoided.

Conclusion The Mishna Berura, Aruch Hashulchan, and Hatzolah ambulance service all teach us "Don't get carried away this Purim."

From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [SMTP:ryfrand@torah.org]
"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Tezaveh -

Every Step Has An Impact

Rav Mordechai Gifter (1916-2001) offers two interesting insights regarding the bells that the High Priests wore on the bottom of their robe (me-il), as described in this week's parsha. The Kohain Gadol could be heard whenever he walked. The pasuk [verse] requires [28:35] "...The sound [of the bells] shall be heard when he enters the

sanctuary before G-d and when he goes out, so that he not die."

Rav Gifter's first insight is the following: Each time the Kohain Gadol took a step, he knew about his step, and so did everyone else. This sends a very subtle psychological message - every step that I take has an impact. It makes a sound. This teaches that when one is the High Priest, every action - - every step, every motion -- must make a difference. This applies to every leader in the Jewish community. The greater he becomes, the more this is the case. In truth, we should all strive to maximize the effects of our every action.

Knock Before Entering

Rav Gifter's other observation is based on a Gemara in Tractate Pesachim [112a]. The Gemara there says that whenever the Tanna Rabbi Yehoshua would enter a house, he would knock on the door. The Rashbam (1080-1174) cites a Medrash Rabbah, which says that the basis of this practice is the verse in our Parsha regarding the Kohain Gadol always being heard (through the bells) when he walked into the Holy of Holies. Rabbi Yehoshua derived a law of Derech Eretz [proper manners] from the Kohain Gadol. It is improper to just barge in to someone's abode. Rabbi Yehoshua did not enter a stranger's home or even a friend's home without knocking first. He did not even enter his own home without knocking. Even today we see this practiced by distinguished individuals. They always knock on the door before coming in, so that their arrival is not totally unannounced.

The Yerushalmi in Yoma says that the fact that the Kohen Gadol wears the bells that announce his coming into the Temple, atones for the sin of unintentional murder. Rav Gifter explained that the idea of not coming in unannounced is all about Derech Eretz -- of having the sense and sensitivity not to barge in on someone, catching them off guard. Ultimately, the root of murder stems from the lack of recognition of what a human being is. Someone who comes to kill another person does not view that person as being 'in the Image of G-d'. The foundation of Derech Eretz -- of treating someone with respect -- is that this person is a human being, who was created in the Image of G-d. One can come to kill another human being obviously lacks a grasp of the essence of a human being.

The Kohen Gadol's ringing 'announcement' of his arrival into the Temple was a meticulous demonstration of the attribute of Derech Eretz. Therefore, this sound atoned for acts that are ultimately caused by callousness in Derech Eretz.

Increased Bloodshed Stems From Decreased Civility

If one looks at our society, we see two phenomena, which at first glance are not related. First of all, there is a terrible amount of bloodshed. In the year 1940, there were a total of 43 murders in all 5 boroughs of the City of New York. Today that is not the case. There is a tremendous increase in the amount of bloodshed.

There is a second phenomenon. People have lost their civility. They do not talk and act with each other like they used to. They are not polite. Look at how people drive and how they act when they drive!

There is no civility any more in our society - even in OUR society. There is a lack of Derech Eretz even in our circles. Our society lacks politeness, manners, and civility.

The tremendous murder rates are not unrelated to the lack of civility in our society. When the whole society does not treat each other with dignity -- even amongst the cream of society -- then in the lower levels of society people are already killing each other over a pair of sneakers.

If we do not have awe and reverence for the "Image of G-d" [Bereshis 9:6], then the bitter fruit of that behavior is "the voice of the blood of your brother cries out to me from the field" [Bereshis 4:10]. Conversely, when one is meticulous to even knock on a door when not necessary, to open a door for another person, or to let another person go ahead in line -- that restores society's concept of "Tzelem Elokim," the Image of G-d, and society becomes a much better place for that effort.

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INSIGHTS INTO THE DAILY DAF [RELATING TO DAF & PURIM]
brought to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf of Yerushalayim daf@dafyomi.co.il,
<http://www.dafyomi.co.il>

Bava Metzia 85
AGADAH: REBBI ZEIRA'S FASTS QUESTION: The Gemara relates that when Rabbi Zeira came up to Eretz Yisrael from Bavel, he fasted for 100 (or 40, according to the Maharshah and other Girsas'os) days in order to forget the Talmud ha'Bavli that he had learned so that he would be able to learn the Yerushalmi. He fasted an equal set of fasts in order that Rabbi Elazar not die and the communal responsibilities be passed to him. He fasted a third set of such fasts in order to be saved from the fire of Gehinom.

This conduct of Rabbi Zeira helps us to understand a cryptic Gemara in Megilah (7b). The Gemara there relates that Rabah invited Rabbi Zeira to join him in his Purim Se'udah. During the Se'udah, "Rabah arose and slaughtered Rabbi Zeira." The next day, Rabah Davened and brought Rabbi Zeira back to life.

The Acharonim point out that the Gemara in Shabbos (156a) says that Rabah was born in the Mazal of Ma'adim, and that Mazal gives a person a violent nature. As long as Rabah was learning Torah, his violent nature was channeled for holy purposes. On Purim, though, while he was not learning, his violent nature came out.

Nevertheless, how are we to understand how the great and righteous Amora, Rabah, could kill another Amora, Rabbi Zeira? (See Insights to Megilah 7:3.)

ANSWER: The MAHARSHA (in Megilah) says that the Gemara does not mean that Rabah actually slaughtered Rabbi Zeira with a knife. Rather, Rabah gave him so much food and drink that he became so sick that he was close to death. Rabah wanted him to experience Simchah and so he encouraged him to drink more and more wine, until Rabbi Zeira's life was actually endangered. The next day Rabah Davened for Rabbi Zeira and he recovered.

We may add that the CHAVAS YAIR (#152, cited at the end of Sefer Chafetz Chayim) suggests that different Amora'im had different paths in Avodas Hashem. He cites the Gemara in Berachos (30a) which relates an incident wherein Rabbi Yirmeyah looked too happy, and Rabbi Zeira tried to somber him by mentioning the virtues of melancholy. What looks like a simple incident actually reflects different general approaches to life. Rabbi Zeira and Rabbi Yirmeyah each had a very different path in Avodas Hashem.

Rabbi Zeira understood that fasting and self-affliction is the correct way to serve Hashem and to reach Kedushah, as we find in the Gemara here in Bava Metzia, where the Gemara relates that Rabbi Zeira fasted for long periods at a time. The Gemara also relates that he would test himself with self-afflictions to test his total devotion to Hashem. Rabbi Yirmeyah, on the other hand, was generally jolly. He ruled that it is forbidden for a person to afflict himself beyond the call of the Torah, and it was he who stated that a Nazir is considered a "sinner" (Nedarim 9b) for refraining from wine. The Gemara in Nidah (23a) tells how Rabbi Yirmeyah, in accordance with his path in Avodas Hashem, would try and break Rabbi Zeira's somberness and get him to laugh -- since he thought that Rabbi Zeira's way was not the proper path in Avodas Hashem. Conversely, the Gemara in Berachos (30a) tells how Rabbi Zeira tried -- unsuccessfully -- to cool Rabbi Yirmeyah's joyousness, in accordance with his own path in Avodas Hashem.

Similarly, Rabah's path in Avodas Hashem was that of serving Hashem with Simchah, "Milsa d'Bedichasa" (Shabbos 30b). Rabbi Zeira, on the other hand, maintained that the proper path in Avodas Hashem was that of serving Hashem with solemnity. At the Purim Se'udah, Rabah saw that Rabbi Zeira was too solemn and was not getting immersed in the Simchah of Purim enough, and so he insisted that Rabbi Zeira eat more. Since the Gemara (Pesachim 86b) says that "whatever the host says to you, you must do (except for 'leave!)," Rabbi Zeira could not refuse and thus he continued eating. However, he was accustomed to fasting, as our Gemara says, and for him it was unhealthy to eat so much, and as a result he became deathly ill. Hence Rabah had to Daven for Rabbi Zeira's recovery. (M. Kornfeld)

From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Tetzaveh
WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5762
By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt Rav of Young Israel of Cleveland

Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav.
WOMEN'S OBLIGATION TO HEAR PARASHAS ZACHOR

QUESTION: Are women obligated to go to shul to hear the Torah reading of Parashas Zachor?

DISCUSSION: There is a Biblical mitzvah to read Parashas Zachor from a Sefer Torah once a year. Although the Rabbis have instituted that Zachor be read in public on the Shabbos before Purim, the mitzvah can be fulfilled by performing it at any time during the year. Most poskim, therefore, consider the reading of Parashas Zachor to be a mitzvah which is not time-bound, thus making it obligatory upon women(1).

There is, however, a view in the Rishonim that holds that women are not obligated to hear Parashas Zachor(2). Making mention of the evil perpetrated on us by Amalek is a mitzvah that is limited to those who can and will fight against Amalek. Since women do not go out to war, they are exempt from the mitzvah of mentioning the treachery of Amalek.

There are conflicting views among the poskim as to what is the practical halachah. Some rule that women are obligated in Parashas Zachor(3) while other poskim note that it is commonly accepted that women do not go to shul to hear Parashas Zachor(4). Since there is no clear-cut ruling(5), it is commendable for women to make the effort to go to shul to hear the public reading of the Parashah(6). Indeed, in many congregations it is the accepted practice for women to do so.

Men or women who are unable to go to shul should read Parashas Zachor aloud for themselves from a Chumash since, according to some poskim, one can fulfill the mitzvah in this fashion(7).

It is questionable if a Sefer Torah may be taken out of the Aron ha-Kodesh specifically to read Parashas Zachor for women. Harav M. Feinstein is quoted(8) as strictly prohibiting this practice(9).

SELECTED PURIM HALACHOS

1. One should not refer to the tzedakah coins which are given before Purim as "machatzi ha-shekel," since then they may be considered hekdesh and may not be used. They should rather be referred to as "zeicher l'machatzi ha-shekel(10)." 2. One can fulfill the mitzvah of matanos la-eyyonim with the money given for zeicher l'machatzi ha-shekel, provided that the money is given to bona fide aniym (poor people) on Purim day(11). 3. Matanos la-eyyonim may not be given from ma'aser money(12). Some poskim rule that zeicher l'machatzi ha-shekel may not be given from ma'aser money either(13). 4. Even one who is not fasting may not eat anything from half an hour before nightfall until after the reading of the megillah(14). On Purim morning, too, one may not eat breakfast before he or she hears the reading of the megillah(15). 4. One who is not feeling well because of the fast or any other reason, may eat or drink before the megillah an amount no greater than the volume of 2 fl. oz(16). A frail or sickly person, for whom this small amount is not sufficient, may eat more, provided that he appoints someone to remind him to hear the megillah(17). 5. If a word of the megillah was misread so that its meaning was distorted, the word should be reread. If it was not reread, some poskim maintain that the reading is valid regardless and no rereading is required(18). Other poskim rule that if the misread word was not corrected on the spot, the megillah should be reread [without a blessing] from the point where the mistake was made(19).

FOOTNOTES: 1 Minchas Chinuch 603. 2 Sefer ha-Chinuch 603. 3 Binyan Tziyon (8) quoting R' Nosson Adler; Yeshuos Malko (3); Mahri"l Diskin (5:101); Minchas Elazar (2:1-5). 4 Toras Chesed (37). See Avnei Nezer O.C. 509 and Marcheshes 1:22 who maintain that this is a time-bound mitzvah. Harav C. Kanievsky (Ta'ama d'Kra) quotes the Chazon Ish as having exempted women. 5 Many major poskim - Chayei Adam, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, Mishnah Berurah and Aruch ha-Shulchan - do not address this issue. 6 See Yechaveh Da'as 1:84; oral ruling of Harav M. Feinstein (Halichos Bas Yisrael, pg. 297). 7 See Nitei Gavriel 4:9-10. 8 Mo'adei Yeshurun (Purim, pg. 47). 9 See also Mikra'ei Kodesh (Purim, 5) who prohibits reading from the Sefer Torah expressly for women. Harav S.Y. Elyashiv is quoted (Halichos Bas Yisrael, pg. 296) as ruling that a minimum of ten men must be present for such a reading to take place. See Minchas Yitzchak 9:68. 10 Harav Y.M. Tikotinsky in Luach Eretz Yisrael. A similar halachah concerning Pesach meat is recorded in O.C. 469. 11 Beir Halachah 694. 12 Mishnah Berurah 694:3. 13 Be'er Heitev 694:2 quoting the Shelah. 14 Mishnah Berurah 692:14. 15 Ibid. 692:15. 16 Ibid. 692:14. The shiur is based on the measurements of Harav M. Feinstein. One who usually follows the measurements of the Chazon Ish may eat up to 3.5 fl. oz. 17 Mishnah Berurah 692:16. 18 Aruch ha-Shulchan 690:20. This is similar to the view of the Eliyahu Rabbah and Derech ha-Chayim quoted and rejected by the Beir Halachah 142:1. 19 Beir Halachah 290:14. Weekly-Halacha, Copyright 1 2002 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also

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From: Kerem B'Yavneh Online[SMTP:orlian@netvision.net.il]
Parshat Zachor Haftorah: "Have no Pity on Him"
Hamashgiach RAV AVRAHAM RIVLIN shlita

The command to wipe out Amalek is absolute. Not only must Amalek be destroyed, but also the memory of Amalek. This is found both at the conclusion of the first battle: "I will surely erase the memory of Amalek" (Shemot 17:14), as well as in the mitzvah, "You shall wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven -- you shall not forget!" (Devarim 25:19) In the Haftorah, this generalized commandment receives a practical application: "Kill man and woman alike, infant and suckling alike, ox and sheep alike, camel and donkey alike." (Shmuel I 15:3) Even though Shmuel's words do not add to what is written in the Torah, the fact that the Torah talks in general terms, whereas Shmuel deals with the details, forms the impression in the Haftorah of a seemingly "cruel" mitzvah, which does not exist when reading the verses in the Torah.

Here, in the Haftorah, it suddenly becomes clear that the abstract "memory" of the Torah is, in essence, man and woman, even a small baby, and even unfortunate animals. (What did these sheep do?!) Shmuel is aware of the danger of a misplaced awakening of "mercy," and therefore precedes his command to Shaul with the phrase, "Have no pity on him!" The Radak writes: "Since they were going to have pity in the end ... he warned him, 'Have no pity' -- so that he would have no excuse." What would be Shaul's excuse? Chazal comment on this (Yoma 22b):

"He fought in the valley" -- R. Mani said: About the issues of the valley. When G-d said to Shaul, "Now go and strike down Amalek," he said: If for a single soul the Torah says, "Bring an eglah arufah (cf. Devarim 21:1-9), for all these souls -- all the more so! If man sinned, did the animals sin? If the adults sinned, did the children sin? A heavenly voice rang out and said to him, "Do not be overly righteous." (Kohelet 7:16)

The Tanach itself mocks Shaul's mercy in our chapter (v. 8-9):

He captured Agag, king of Amalek, alive, and the entire people he destroyed by the edge of the sword. Shaul, as well as the people, took pity on Agag, on the best of the sheep, the cattle, the fattened bulls, the fattened sheep and on all that was good; and they were not willing to destroy them; but the inferior and the wretched livestock, that they did destroy.

How is mercy measured and divided up? The king -- yes; the people -- no! A hundred pounds of a fat animal -- yes; the fifty pounds of a scrawny, wretched sheep -- no! These are worthy of mercy and these of death?! The path that begins with this kind of mercy ends with Nov, the city of the priests, and with their cruel murder. Chazal in Yoma continue to comment about this final station:

When Shaul said to Do'eg, "Surround and kill the priests," a heavenly voice rang out and said to him, "Do not be overly wicked." (Kohelet 7:17)

Shaul's "mercy" proves that one cannot question or challenge G-d's ways. The verses, "One who spares his rod hates his child" (Mishlei 13:24), and, "Hashem admonishes the one He loves" (Mishlei 3:12) -- will never be understood by one who sees only the moment of admonition. This moment is, indeed, difficult. However, it cannot be judged without looking at what preceded it and what comes in its footsteps. Only with a broad perspective -- which sees the wild behavior before the moment of punishment and the improvement after the moment of punishment -- does the difficult moment of punishment receive proper meaning.

The same is true in the course of history. We must understand the meaning of Amalek's war against Israel, "that he happened upon you," with all of its explanations, and the meaning of a world in which Amalek's memory is eradicated, in which G-d's Name and His throne is

complete only there, in order to understand and to accept even this "cruel" order, "Kill man and woman alike ..." so that Amalek's name will no longer be remembered. It is because this is the only way to achieve a world of complete mercy. Mercy on Amalek in this case is cruelty to the entire world in the long run, and "cruelty" in this case is mercy itself -- because destroying the wicked is kindness!

Perhaps in order to prove to us the absence of cruelty in the decree to destroy Amalek, the directive also contains a great call for kindness and pity, the message to the Kenites to distance themselves from amongst Amalek: "Shaul said to the Kenites: 'Go, withdraw, descend from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them; for you acted kindly to all Bnei Yisrael when they went up from Egypt.'" (Shmuel I 15:6) The very same fighters who are commanded to destroy Amalek are called upon here to endanger their lives by foregoing the element of surprise in the war against Amalek, in order to pay gratitude to a kindness that was done hundreds of years beforehand. Moreover, that kindness was not the saving of a nation or some similar great act. It was a seemingly trivial kindness: "Moshe and Aharon and all the elders of Israel partook of his [Yitro's] feast" (Rashi); "They benefited from Yitro who would show them where to encamp" (Mahari Kara); "The advice that Yitro gave Moshe" (Radak).

A nation that remembers such acts of kindness, and repays them after so many generations, proves that its killing of man and woman, infant and suckling, is also a killing of justice and Divine morality, and is the expression of G-d's pity on all of His creatures. This, and only this, is the way for G-d's Throne to be complete and His Name to be complete!

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THE PRACTICAL TORAH

BY RABBI MICHAEL TAUBES

Parshas Tetzaveh: MATANOS LAEYONIM ON PURIM

No definitive Halacha LeMa'aseh conclusions should be applied to practical situations based on any of these Shiurim.

One of the special garments to be worn by the Kohanim, as described in this Parsha, was the Kesoness, a coat or a tunic made of linen which was to be worn by the Kohein Gadol as well as by the ordinary Kohanim (Shemos 28:4, 39-40). In describing the Mitzvah to make this garment for Aharon's sons, who were the first ordinary Kohanim, the Torah states simply that Kutanos, tunics, were to be fashioned for them (Ibid. Pasuk 40). The Yerushalmi in Yoma (Perek 3 Halachah 6, 16b) records a discussion concerning the Torah's use of the word Kutanos, tunics, in the plural form, in this Posuk. One authority holds that the plural form is used regarding each son of Aharon; Kutanos, tunics, in the plural, were thus made for every single Kohein. Each individual Kohein, then, received two Kutanos. According to this view, therefore, the word Kutanos is used by the Torah not as referring to the group collectively, but to each individual specifically. The other authority though, posits that the plural form is used because there are several Kohanim who will need this garment, and thus several Kutanos had to be made for them, as a group. Each individual Kohein, however, received only one. In discussing the Halachos of the Kesoness and the other Bigdei Kehunah, the Rambam (Hilchos Kilai HaMikdash Perek 8) makes no mention of a requirement for a regular Kohein to have more than one, seemingly accepting the second opinion.

The Gemara in Megillah (7a) presents an interpretation similar to the second opinion above regarding the Mitzvah to distribute Matanos LaEvyonim, gifts to poor people, on Purim. Since the Posuk in Megillas Esther (9:22) from which this Mitzvah is derived states that Matanos, gifts, in the plural form, must be given to Evyonim, poor people, in the plural form, one might conclude that the Mitzvah is to give at least two gifts to at least two poor people. The Gemara therefore says, as explained by Rashi (Ibid. s.v. Shitai Matanos), that although one must indeed give to at least two poor people, as the word Evyonim implies, only one gift must be given to each. The word Matanos, gifts, thus refers to what must be given to the group of (at least two) poor people collectively, but not to what must be given to each individual poor

person specifically.

The Turei Evven (in Avnei Shoham to Megillah Ibid. s.v. Matanos) notes that this Gemara is clearly following the view of the second authority in the above Yerushalmi (Ibid.), and that the first authority there would indeed require one to give at least two gifts to each poor person to fulfill the Mitzvah of Matanos LaEvyonim. The Pri Chodosh (Orach Chaim 694:1) explains that we do not in fact require this on Purim, despite this opinion in the Yerushalmi (Ibid.) because of the grammatical construction of the phrase 'U'Matanos LaEvyonim' in the aforementioned Posuk in Megillas Esther (Ibid.). The Ran in Megillah (3b in the Rif s.v. U'Mishloach) writes that whereas the Mitzvah of Mishloach Manos is to give away at least two food items (to at least one person), the Mitzvah of Matanos LaEvyonim is to give only one gift (to at least two people) because for poor person, even one gift is considered of great value.

The Rambam (Hilchos Megillah 2:16) rules in accordance with the above Gemara (Ibid.) that one must give a gift, which may be an actual present, or money, or food, to at least two poor people. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim Ibid. Sif 1) writes this as well, although less explicitly; the Chayei Adam (Klal 155 Sif 28) spells it out clearly. The Mishnah Berurah (Ibid. Sif Katan 2) raises question from the Pri Megadim (Ibid. in Mishbitzos HaZahav Sif Katan 1) as to the minimum value of each gift to the poor, but then cites the Chidushei HaRitva in Megillah (7a s.v. Tnai) who says that one fulfills the Mitzvah by giving at least two Perutos (which equals a few cents), no less than one Perutah to each poor person, because anything worth a Perutah may be considered a gift. He then adds that the Pri Megadim himself (Ibid.) believes that one must give each poor person something from which he can benefit on Purim itself, either food which he can eat on Purim, or money which he can spend on Purim.

The Sha'arei Teshuvah (Ibid. Sif Katan 1) quotes one opinion which according to the Matanos given to each of the two Evyonim must equal in value the minimum worth of the two food items one must give for the Mitzvah of Mishloach Manos; since the minimum amount given (to at least one person) for Mishloach Manos is an amount which suffices for a (small) meal, one must give each poor person either food or money enough for such a meal. The Sha'arei Teshuvah (Ibid.) quotes the exact amount and says that if this is correct, one does not fulfill the Mitzvah by giving each poor person a Perutah's worth; he himself, though, does not appear to accept this opinion. The Kaf HaChaim (Ibid. Os 7), however, quotes others who hold this way as well, and rules that one should be stringent and try to fulfill the Mitzvah according to all views by giving this larger amount; this must be done, though, for only the minimally required two poor people, and if one wants to give to others as well, he may give them whatever he wants. The Rambam (Hilchos Megillah Ibid. Halachah 17) notes that one should preferably spend more money on Matanos LaEvyonim than he does on his Seudah and on Mishloach Manos.

The Sha'arei Teshuvah (Ibid.) also quotes a view that if one gives the value of two gifts to one poor person, one fulfills his obligation, although it is improper to do so; he himself, however, rejects this view, saying that most Poskim rule that one must give to at least two poor people. The Kaf HaChaim (Ibid. Sif Katan 10) quotes that a poor man and his wife (assuming she's also poor) can be counted as two separate people for this Mitzvah; if one has in mind when giving money to this couple that he wishes to fulfill his Mitzvah (and he gives the value of the minimum amount for each), it's considered as though he gave to each one separately, and he indeed fulfills the Mitzvah. The Aruch HaShulchan (Ibid. Sif 2), however, believes that one does not fulfill his Mitzvah by giving to a couple or to different family members who live together, because they are viewed as one individual. The Bach, commenting on the Tur (Orach Chaim Siman 695 s.v. V'Tzarich) writes that if one has a lot of money to distribute, he should give a little bit to many poor people rather than all the money to one or two people, because by so doing, he is helping save many more lives and is thus entitled to a greater reward.

The Ramo (Orach Chaim Ibid. Sif 4) rules that women are obligated to give Matanos LaEvyonim and Mishloach Manos just as men are; the Sha'arei Teshuvah (Ibid. Sif Katan 9) quotes that this is because Af

Hain Hayu B'Oso HaNes, women too benefitted from the miracle of Purim, and were among those who subsequently accepted all the laws of Purim. The Magen Avraham (Sif Katan 14) says, though, that a married woman may rely on that which is given by her husband if he gives to more than the minimally required number of people, although he considers it proper for a woman to be stringent and give on her own. The Chayei Adam (Klal 155 Sif 33) and the Mishnah Berurah (Ibid. Sif Katan 25) concur. The Aruch HaShulchan (Ibid. 694:2) says that a woman can indeed fulfill her obligation via the gifts given by her husband, because they are like one, but other members of the household who are obligated to give must give on their own. It is worth noting that the Matanos LaEvyonim must be distributed on Purim day, not at night, as the Magen Avraham (Ibid. 695:13) rules, and not before Purim as he quotes (Ibid. Siman 694:1) from earlier sources. The Kaf HaChaim (Ibid. Os 15) notes, though, that if the gifts are distributed on Purim day, even if the giver sent them from afar well before Purim, he fulfills the Mitzvah.

From: Kollel Iyun Hadaf[SMTP:kornfeld@netvision.net.il] Subject: Insights to the Daf: Bava Metzia 86-87
INSIGHTS INTO THE DAILY DAF
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Bava Metzia 86

THE DEATH OF RABAH BAR NACHMENI QUESTIONS: The Gemara relates that while Rabah bar Nachmeni was fleeing for his life from the Persian authorities, there was an argument going on in the Yeshivah in Shamayim. The argument involved the Halachah of the appearance of a white hair that precedes the appearance of a Baheres spot on the skin. Ha'Kadosh Baruch Hu, as it were, ruled that it is Tahor, while all of the members of the heavenly Yeshivah ruled that it is Tamei. They asked who will decide the matter conclusively, and they answered that Rabah bar Nachmeni can decide the matter since he is the greatest expert on Nega'im and Ohalos. They sent a Shali'ach to bring Rabah to them, but the Mal'ach ha'Maves could not take him from this world because he did not stop learning Torah. At that moment, a wind blew and made the reeds move and make noise. Rabah heard the noise and thought that it was the Persian legions coming to kill him. He prayed that he die then rather than be taken by the authorities. At the moment that he died, he declared, "Tahor! Tahor!"

(a) How could the students in the Yeshivah of Shamayim argue with the ruling of Ha'Kadosh Baruch Hu?

(b) If they did argue with Him, then why did Rabah not rule in accordance with the majority opinion (in accordance with Shemos 23:2)?

(c) Why was it necessary for Rabah to be taken from this world in order to resolve the argument? Why could they not have asked him for his ruling while he was alive?

(d) The RAMBAM (Hilchos Tum'as Tzara'as 2:9) rules that in the case of a white hair that precedes the Baheres, the Nega is "Tamei". How could the Rambam rule in opposition of the opinion of Hashem, and against the conclusion of Rabah?

ANSWERS: (a) RABEINU CHANANEL (as cited by the Shitah Mekubetzes) writes that the argument that occurred in the Yeshivah of Shamayim was shown to Rabah in a dream. There were actually two groups of Tzadikim arguing about the Halachah. The group that was closer to the radiance of the Shechinah ruled that the Nega is Tahor, and the group of Tzadikim that was farther away from the Shechinah ruled that it is Tamei. This was shown to Rabah in a dream so that he would leave the world with a calm, settled spirit.

The BEN YEHOYADA gives a similar explanation, but he says that in the dream that was shown to Rabah, it indeed was Hashem who ruled that the Nega is Tahor, and not the group of Tzadikim closest to the Shechinah. He adds that the reason why this was shown to Rabah in a dream was in order to show to him the infinite pleasure that a Tzadik experiences in the World to Come, so that he would yearn to go there and agree to leave this world. The Ben Yehoyada says that the reason an argument was shown to Rabah (and not just the pleasure experienced by the Tzadikim in the World to Come) was so that Rabah would respond to the inquire, "Tahor" and thus his soul would leave this world while teaching a Halachah, and while uttering the word, "Tahor." This symbolized that his soul would cling to its holy Source above which is all pure, all "Tahor."

RAV YAKOV EMDEN answers differently and explains that the students of the Yeshivah of Shamayim did not actually argue with Hashem, because it was they who stated their opinion first, and only afterwards Hashem stated His opinion. The Gemara here changes the order merely out of deference.

(b) The MAHARSHA (in MAHADURA BASRA) answers that the rule that the majority opinion must be followed applies only in this world. Therefore, Rabah did not follow the opinion of the majority in the Yeshivah of Shamayim.

(c) The MAHARSHA explains likewise that the reason why Rabah had to be taken from this world in order to issue his ruling on the matter is because he could not have decided the matter in this world. Since, in this world, the majority opinion must be followed, his ruling would not have been accepted because he would have been contradicting the majority opinion. Therefore, he had to be taken to the Yeshivah of Shamayim.

(d) The BEN YEHOYADA explains that the reason why the Rambam rules that such a Nega is Tamei, in contradiction to the ruling of Hashem Himself, is because the Rambam understood this incident to be a dream that Rabah saw. Hence, there is no indication that in reality Hashem's opinion was that it is Tahor.

The KESEF MISHNAH writes that even if this argument in Shamayim actually occurred, we do not follow opinions that expressed in Shamayim, as the verse says, "Lo ba'Shamayim Hi" (Devarim 30:12).

This, however, explains only how the Rambam could rule differently than the ruling of Hashem. How, though, could he rule differently than the ruling of Rabah?

The Kesef Mishnah answers that Rabah stated his ruling at the moment that his Neshamah left him, and thus the rule of "Lo ba'Shamayim Hi" applies to his ruling. (I. Alsheich)

Bava Metzia 87

HALACHAH: ASKING ABOUT THE WELFARE OF ANOTHER MAN'S WIFE I.

QUESTION: Rabbi Yosi teaches that the reason why there are dots over the letters Alef, Yud, and Vav in the word "Elav" (Bereishis 18:9) is because the Torah wants to teach us proper manners. The Torah is teaching that a man should inquire about the welfare of his host's wife. The Gemara asks that Shmuel rules that one may not inquire about the welfare of another man's wife at all. The Gemara answers that it is permitted when one asks her "husband" about her welfare, but not when one asks anyone else.

The Rishonim ask that in the Gemara in Kidushin (70b), Shmuel explicitly states that it is prohibited to inquire about the welfare of a woman even by sending the inquiry to the woman via her husband!

ANSWERS: (a) TOSFOS here answers that the Gemara here does not mean that it is permitted to ask about her welfare. Rather, the Gemara permits merely asking where she is (as the Mal'achim asked Avraham, "Where is Sarah your wife?" in order to make her more beloved to her husband, by emphasizing how Tzenu'ah she was, or because of the requirement to act with Derech Eretz and ask a man about his wife). It is prohibited, though, to ask about her welfare.

(b) TOSFOS in Kidushin answers that the Gemara here permits asking a husband about his wife's welfare. The Gemara in Kidushin prohibits sending the woman a greeting of Shalom, even via her husband. This is also the view of RASHI here (DH Al Yedei Ba'alah).

It seems that Tosfos in Kidushin and Tosfos in Bava Metzia are arguing whether it is permitted to inquire about the welfare of a woman from her husband. According to Tosfos in Kidushin, it is permitted, while according to Tosfos here, it is prohibited.

II. OPINIONS: What is the reason behind this prohibition, and in what circumstances might it be permissible to inquire about the welfare of a woman?

(a) RASHI in Kidushin (70b, DH Ein Sho'alim b'Shalom lshah Klal) says that asking a woman about her welfare is prohibited because one thereby "makes her heart and mind familiar with him," creating a feeling of affection within the woman which could, Chas v'Shalom, lead to sin.

According to this reasoning, it would be permitted for a man to inquire about a woman's welfare from her husband, as Rashi here says, since the woman herself is not aware of it and thus she will not feel affection towards the other man.

(According to the BACH (EH 21, DH v'Ein), for this reason it is permitted to ask any other person, and not only her husband, how the woman is doing. The CHELKAS MECHOKEK (EH 21:7) argues and says that it is only permitted to ask her husband, as the Gemara in Bava Metzia implies, for her husband specifically avoids relating the man's inquiry to his wife, while any other person will not be so particular.)

(b) The RITVA in Kidushin, however, implies that the reason a man may not inquire about the welfare of another man's wife is because the "man" will feel close to the woman and might, Chas v'Shalom, have sinful thoughts. (This also seems to be the view of the ME'IRI.) The Ritva writes that if a man knows himself well and he knows that he has subjugated his Yetzer ha'Ra and he is in complete control of his thoughts such that he never allows sinful thoughts into his mind, it is permitted for him to ask a married woman about her welfare. The PISCHEI TESHUVAH (EH 21:4) quotes the YAD EFRAIM who explains that this is why Elisha was permitted to send a greeting of Shalom to the lshah ha'Shunamis (Melachim II 4:26).

According to the Ritva, the Isur is because of the man's tendency to have sinful thoughts, and is not because the woman will feel affection towards the man. Consequently, it is permitted for a man who is in complete control of his thoughts to ask a woman about her welfare. According to Rashi, such a man would still be prohibited from asking a woman about her welfare. On the other hand, according to the Ritva, it would "not" be permitted for a man to ask a husband about his wife (when the wife will not know about it), since there still exists the concern that he will have sinful thoughts.

How, though, does the Ritva explain the Gemara here that says that the Mal'achim were permitted to ask Avraham Avinu about his wife? The DIVREI SHALOM (2:14) explains that the Ritva learns like TOSFOS here. Tosfos says that the Mal'achim were permitted to ask only "where is Sarah," but not to ask about her welfare.

HALACHAH: The SHULCHAN ARUCH (EH 21:6) rules like Shmuel, who says that it is prohibited to ask a married woman about her welfare, even via a messenger, and even via her husband.

The Shulchan Aruch rules like Rashi's understanding of the Gemara in Bava Metzia and says that it is permitted to ask a husband about his wife's welfare.

It is interesting to note the comments of the BEN YEHOYADA to the Gemara here. The Ben Yehoyada suggests that this Isur applies only a man who is completely unknown to the woman; by inquiring about her welfare, he creates a bond of affection. If, however, the man is a relative of hers, or is a frequent guest in her home, it is not prohibited to inquire about her welfare, because it is clear that his intention is not to form a bond of affection, but rather to express to her his gratitude for her hospitality, and, on the contrary, it is a proper act of Derech Eretz to express concern about her welfare.

The TAZ rules that if the woman was ill or there was some other circumstances which would deem it inappropriate "not" to ask about her welfare, then one may add in a letter that one is writing to her husband, "Please inform me of the welfare of your wife."

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