

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON VAEIRA - 5760

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Weekly Divrei Torah -Parshat Vaera

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Chodesh Shvat 5760 Daf Yomi: Yevamot 39

HELP IS AT HAND

We often have obstacles to soul work built into our bodies and our physical modes of action in the world. Sometimes we have actual bodily handicaps, whether from our genes, from accidental, or from long-standing unhealthy habits. Sometimes our ingrained patterns seem to have us trapped: We have a daily schedule, we have made commitments to others, we have more work than a person could do in a 30-hour day. We didn't mean to get into this situation and we would really like to have time and energy for spiritual pursuits. But we are too preoccupied with our physical and material world. We are imprisoned by the world in which we live.

What is the nature of such impediments? We have an example in this week's parsha in the life of Moshe. The Torah tells us that when Moshe was told by G-d that he should go and talk to Pharaoh about releasing the Jewish slaves, Moshe excused himself by saying he had a speech impediment - lit. "aral sifatayim" or "un-circumsized lips" (Exodus 6:30). Essentially, G-d's chosen prophet was saying: "I'm sorry, but I'm not really ready to have the Divine words filtered through me." G-d understood his problem and reassured him that he wouldn't have to speak - his brother Aaron would do it for him.

What happened? G-d didn't argue with Moshe about the speech impediment or promise a miraculous cure. He just said, in effect, "Don't worry - you'll have help." Moshe found that once he moved along in the direction G-d pointed, trusting that his brother would be by his side, his speech impediment no longer handicapped him in the same way.

There are two important lessons here. One is that impediments - even physical ones - are not necessarily what we think they are. More often than not, they are constructions reinforced by our minds and the minds of people around us, to prevent us from reaching our potential. Once Moshe discovered his true calling as leader of the Jewish people, he could talk quite clearly and could be understood very well.

Second, we have to know there is help for us. Aaron was there for Moshe to compensate for what Moshe himself was unable to do. This helps us understand that we do not have to be perfect or do it all ourselves. If there are tasks to be done that we can't do, someone else will pitch in. Ultimately, we are all one and the things that stand in my way do not stand in yours. As the Talmud declares: "One who is incarcerated in a prison cannot extricate himself - but others can." Likewise, no one person can perform all the mitzvot of the Torah; for example, Israelites can't perform the duties of a priest and there are certain mitzvot priests cannot do. Only the people as a whole can accomplish everything.

Another beautiful analogy comes from the Talmud (Shabbat 49a): The Jewish people are compared to a yona (dove). Why this kind of winged creature more than others? The Ba'alei Tosfot cite a mishnah that says: "All airborne birds, when they become exhausted, will rest upon a stone ledge or something similar. However, when a dove gets tired, it has the ability to continue flying by resting one wing and by staying up with the other." Likewise, the collective oneness of the Jewish people means that the lacking of one individual, or one trait of that individual, can be compensated by his friend.

B'S'D' How often we remain in our self-imposed prisons believing we can't get out, when another person holds the key and is more than willing to unlock the door if he only knew we needed it! You'd really like to go to a class, but you feel you can't get out of the house because the children need you at night. You want to spend time in prayer and meditation, but you can't seem to get enough sleep to get up early. You haven't been feeling healthy and you'd like to consult a nutritionist, but it costs too much money.

The first step is: Let your needs be known. We often go around thinking: "I'm the only one who can't manage my life; everyone else has things well in hand." Then we don't talk about our problems out of fear of embarrassment. The situation is quite the contrary. Most people in our society have difficulty managing their lives. It's just that everyone has a slightly different problem and we are taught to keep it under wraps. We can shift our attitude - trust that "your brother Aaron will speak for you" - that someone else will be able to see a solution when our impediments get in the way. The second step is one of humility - being willing to listen to those who are wiser, who have spent years walking a spiritual path. We often think: "My situation is unique; no one can understand; no one has had the troubles that I have." This is another mental block we put up as an obstacle, again because of anxiety and fear of being vulnerable to others. In fact, we are all in the same boat. And in terms of human problems, there is truly nothing new under the sun. Your solution may turn out to be unique, but it's important first to be willing to listen to advice.

These concepts emanating from our parsha are powerful lessons to be learned from the lives of the two most significant brothers of all time.

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MIDEI SHABBOS BY RABBI ELIEZER CHRYSLER

Those Holy Frogs

'Why did Chananyah, Misho'el and Azaryah prefer to be thrown into the furnace (in the days of Nevuchadnetzar) rather than bow down to his idol?' asks the Gemoro in Pesochim (53b). 'They learned a kal vo'chomer from the frogs', answers Todos from Rome. If the frogs, who were not commanded to sanctify Hashem's Name, leapt into the boiling ovens, they observed, then how much more so we, who are commanded, must allow ourselves to be cast into the boiling furnace in order to sanctify Hashem's Name.

But that's not correct, exclaimed the Sha'agas Aryeh! The Torah explicitly writes "And they will go up in your houses ... and in your ovens" - so how can Chazal say that they were not commanded?

The Gro, who was only seven at the time, heard the Sha'agas Aryeh's kashya, and gave the following answer: 'True, they were commanded,' he said. 'The command however, to jump into the ovens, was not issued to any specific frog: they were told to go into Par'oh's house, into his bedroom, onto his bed, into the houses of his slaves and of his people, into the ovens and into the doughs. Now what was to stop one frog from choosing to go into Par'oh's bedroom or bed, and telling his friend to leap into the oven?'

Clearly, the frogs that jumped into the oven, did so voluntarily. And it is from them that Chananyah, Misho'el and Azaryah learned a perfectly valid kal vo'chomer.'

When the Sha'agas Aryeh heard this young genius' answer, he picked him up and kissed him on his forehead.

The Gro's explanation of the Gemoro in Pesochim really vindicates the Rambam's interpretation of why Hashem punished Par'oh for

enslaving Yisroel, despite the fact that He had ordained it. The Rambam explains that Hashem punished Par'oh because He had not named any specific nation to perform this task, and that what Par'oh did was of his own free choice.

Now if the frogs were considered praiseworthy for volunteering to jump into the ovens, because they could have let others do it, it stands to reason that Par'oh deserved to be punished for volunteering to perform Hashem's dirty work when he could have passed the buck and let others do it.

Interestingly, the Meshech Chochmah in Parshas Lech Lecho answers the Sha'agas Aryeh's kashya differently than the Gro. Moreover, he too uses his explanation to vindicate the Rambam, though he works in the reverse order, first proving the Rambam right, and then answering the kashya on the frogs, as we shall now see.

The Meshech Chochmah, commenting on the Ramban, who in turn disagrees with the Rambam, on the grounds that anyone who carries out a command of Hashem deserves credit and not retribution, points out that that argument would have been sound if Hashem had issued a direct command to enslave Yisroel. But that was not the case, he argues.

Hashem merely related to Avrohom, in the form of a prophecy, that later in history, a nation would subjugate his children. Nobody was actually commanded to do so. That being the case, Par'oh more than anyone, should have known better than to lay a hand on Yisroel: firstly, because they were his guests; secondly, because he owed it to Yosef who had done so much for him and for Egypt in their hour of need.

And with this, he concludes, we can understand the Gemoro in Pesochim. Hashem may have related to Moshe what the frogs would subsequently do, but that too, was in the form of a prophecy. The frogs themselves were not expressly commanded to jump into the ovens. Consequently, when they ultimately did so, it is considered as if they did it voluntarily, and that is why Chanayah, Misho'el and Azaryah could learn a kal vo'chomer from them.

It seems to me however, that one can answer the Sha'agas Aryeh's kashya quite differently: The Gemoro does not say that the frogs were not commanded to jump into the furnace (of course they were! Frogs do not possess free-will; they can only obey the Divine command - which was clearly spelt out in this case, in the pesukim that we discussed earlier).

What the Gemoro says is that they were not commanded to sanctify Hashem's Name (precisely because they have no free-will). And what Chanayah, Misho'el and Azaryah learned from the frogs is that, if frogs, who have no mitzvah of Kidush Hashem, can give up their lives to do the will of Hashem, then how much more so must they be willing to do likewise, seeing as in addition, they have the mitzvah of Kidush Hashem.

This lesson from the frogs is reminiscent of a Rashi at the end of Parshas Nitzovim, where he describes how Hashem exhorted Yisroel to learn from the sun and moon, who do not deviate from their Divinely-allotted tasks, even though they stand to gain nothing, one way or the other. How much more so should Yisroel, who are due to receive reward if they do the right things and punishment if they do not, follow the path of Torah and mitzvos that Hashem has laid down for them.

The higher the stakes, the more powerful the obligation!

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Moshe's 'Bad' Choice of Words

The parsha begins with G-d telling Moshe Rabbeinu [our teacher], "I am Hashem. I appeared to the patriarchs with the name Kel Shakai. However the name Hashem I did not make known to them" [Shmos 6:3].

The Medrash makes an interesting comment: G-d bemoaned the loss of the irreplaceable patriarchs. "Many times I revealed myself to the patriarchs with these other -- less intimate -- forms of my Name, but they never questioned Me".

"I promised Avraham the entire land of Israel, yet when he could not find a place to bury his wife Sarah until he paid a high price for a burial cave, he never complained or questioned me."

"I told Yitzchak to live in this land -- for I would give it to him and his descendants. Yitzchak could not find the basic necessity of water to drink with out hassling over wells with the shepherds of Gerar. Yet he never complained or questioned me."

"I promised Yaakov the entire land. Yaakov was unable to find a place to pitch his tent until he bought a place from Chamor ben Sheche m for 100 Kiset. Yet Yaakov never questioned me."

"But you have complaints. The situation deteriorated after I sent you to Pharaoh, and you are protesting and questioning if I know what I am doing."

We can argue, in Moshe's defense, that there is a simple difference. Moshe Rabbeinu, Heaven Forbid, was not a malcontent. He was not a complainer -- he was a leader.

The patriarchs suffered personal setbacks and disappointments. In such situations, a person is not allowed to complain. A person must accept the Judgment of G-d. Moshe, on the other hand, was not saying, "It is tough for _me_". Moshe is the leader par excellence, the faithful shepherd. Moshe's complaint and argument is on behalf of the _people_. Such a complaint is legitimate. That is Moshe's job. He is supposed to be the advocate of the Jewish People.

What, then, is the nature of G-d's objection regarding Moshe's behavior? After all, when Moshe -- following the sin of the Golden Calf -- said "erase me from your book", G-d did not object. When Moshe stood up for the nation during the entire period of the wilderness, G-d did not object. That was Moshe's job. Here however, according to the Medrash, G-d objected. Why?

The answer is that Moshe Rabbeinu used a poor choice of words here -- "Why have You done evil (haREOSA) to this people... From the time I came to Pharaoh ... he (Pharaoh) worsened the situation (heiRA) for this nation" [Shmos 5:22-23]. Saying or implying that G-d has been 'Bad' (RA) to the people is inappropriate. That was G-d's objection.

G-d is telling Moshe that whatever G-d does is for good. Whether we understand it or not, ultimately, ALL that G-d does, He does for the good that will come from it.

There are situations in life where trying to understand how they can possibly be good is extremely difficult -- if not nearly impossible. But that is a Jew's responsibility. This is what G-d is saying to Moshe. The patriarchs never uttered the word 'Bad' (RA). It may have been difficult. It may have been trying. There are many adjectives that can be used regarding situations brought about by Divine Providence, but not 'Bad'.

When the Patriarch Yaakov came to Pharaoh and Pharaoh asked Yaakov's age, Yaakov responded "The days of my life have been ... few and bad were the years of my life..." [Bereshis 47:9].

The Medrash says that at the moment Yaakov uttered those words, G-d said to him, "I saved you from Eisav and Lavan and I returned to you Dena and Yosef -- and now you are complaining that your years are few and bad? Your life will be shortened by the number of words in your statement."

But the question must be asked -- wasn't Yaakov right? True he was saved and he had children returned to him. But if not for the tzaros of Eisav there would have been any need to be saved. True, he was saved from Lavan -- but who needed twenty years of aggravation?

The answer is, again, that Yaakov's life may have been bitter -- but it was not bad. For each occurrence, there was something positive that emerged. The fight with Eisav developed the Jewish People's ability to deal with Eisav's descendants in future generations. Yosef's going down

to Egypt eventually paved the way for the salvation of the nation. These were difficult, trying, and even incomprehensible events -- but they were not Bad. Bad was an inappropriate word.

The Chofetz Chaim once gave a parable. Sometimes we take a medicine and it is terribly bitter. The medicine cures the disease. What word do we use to describe the medicine? Bitter -- yes; bad -- no! There are instances in life when our natural human reaction is to say that an event is bad, is terrible. But a Jew has the obligation to believe that everything that G-d creates is ultimately for the best. In the final analysis, it will work out for the best.

And G-d (Elokim -- the Attribute of Justice) said to Moshe: "I am Hashem" (the Attribute of Mercy) [Shmos 6:2]. Ultimately, we have to believe that any troubles which, through our limited perspective we have no way of explaining, ultimately, somehow, do make sense.

The paradigm of this concept is the Jewish experience in Egypt. Our Rabbis tell us that Moshe Rabbeinu wrote Megillos for the Jewish People, which they used to read on the Shabbos. Pharaoh tried to stop the Jews from reading those Megillos [scrolls] on Shabbos [Shmos 5:9].

What were those Megillos? What was in them?

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky suggests the following. The Talmud [Babba Basra 14b] says that Moshe Rabbeinu authored some of the chapters of Tehillim [Psalms]. Those were the scrolls that the Jews read in Egypt. One of the chapters was "A Psalm to the Day of Shabbos" [Tehillim Chapter 92]. However, if you examine that chapter, you will find that Shabbos is not mentioned at all. What is its connection to Shabbos? Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky suggests that the connection is that the Jewish people read that chapter on Shabbos when they were in Egypt.

Why did the Jewish people read that chapter on Shabbos? Tehillim 92 contains the words "when the wicked flourish like the grass, and all the doers of iniquity blossom forth..." Those words introduce the concept that "Bad things happen to the Tzaddik (righteous); Good things happen to the Rasha (wicked)". This issue understandably weighed heavily on the minds of the Jews in Egypt. "What is happening? We are righteous. The Egyptians are wicked. Why are we the slaves? We don't deserve this."

Moshe Rabbeinu provided this Psalm, which acknowledges the principle of the wicked flourishing. Years later, it might have been possible to begin to appreciate that the experience of Egypt molded us into a special nation. However, while in slavery, without the benefit of time and hindsight, there was no way for them to understand any rationale or redeeming feature of the slavery experience.

Such experiences often must remain simply a matter of faith. We need to maintain that faith, and remember that ultimately we will understand the good in everything.

Sources and Personalities The Chofetz Chaim (1838-1933) Rav Yisrael Meir HaKohen of Radin. Author of basic works in Jewish Law and Jewish values (halacha, hashkafa, and mussar). Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky (1891-1986) Rav of Tzitevia, Lithuania; Toronto, Canada; and Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Torah Vodaath, New York. Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twersky@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Yerushalayim dhoffman@torah.org Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrاند, Copyright 1 2000 by Rabbi Y. Frاند and Project Genesis, Inc. Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway learn@torah.org 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B <http://www.torah.org/> Baltimore, MD 21208 (410) 602-1350 FAX: 510-1053

From: Yated USA[SMTP:yated-usa@ttec.com]
Yated Neeman USA Columns I
Parsha Perspectives PARSHAS VOEIRAH-HITTING PAY DIRT BY
RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

The sensitivity displayed in this week's portion serves as a lesson to any student of the Torah. The first two of the 10 makos that befell Egypt revolved around water. During the first makah, the waters of Egypt turned into blood; the second makah found frogs permeating the entire land. In order to generate those miraculous events, Moshe's match was required to strike the waters. Moshe, however, did not strike the water, himself. Instead his brother Ahron was told to do the smiting. After all, as a three-month-old child, floating in a reed basket, the waters of the Nile saved Moshe, hiding him from Pharaoh's soldiers who were killing all Jewish males. It would not be fitting for one who was saved by the water to strike it. The next makah, lice, emerged from the earth afflicting all of Egypt. Again, Moshe was told not to be the agent of transmutation. After all, he must be grateful to the earth that hid the Egyptian whom he had previously killed. Of course, the ba'alei mussar derive from Moshe's behavior the importance of hakaras hatov. "Imagine," they point out, "Moshe had to refrain from striking inanimate objects because he was saved by them years back! How much more must we show gratitude to living beings who have been our vehicles of good fortune." Such lessons deserve commentaries unto themselves, and there are countless stories of hakaras hatov to accompany them. However, I am bothered by a simple question. Why is striking water or earth a display of ingratitude? Was it not the will of Hashem to have the dust and waters converted to blood, frogs, and lice? Would it not be a great elevation for the waters and the dust to be transformed to higher components of Hashem's service? That being the case, wouldn't it be most fitting that Moshe be chosen to elevate the simple waters or lowly dirt into objects that openly declare the presence of an Almighty Creator, Who exclaims through his humble servant, "Let My people serve Me in the desert"?

Perhaps a story about the famed Megaleh Amukos, Rabbi Nosson Schapira of Krakow, can help us understand why Moshe refrained from hitting the water and the dust. A wealthy businessman from Warsaw would do business each month in the Krakow market. On each visit he noticed an extremely pious widow huddled near her basket of rolls reciting Tehillim. She only lifted her eyes from her worn sefer to sell a bagel or roll. After the sale she'd shower her customer with a myriad of blessings and immediately she'd return to the frayed pages of the small sefer that were stained with teardrops of devotion. Upon observing her each month, the Krakow businessman came to a conclusion. "This pious woman should not have to struggle to earn a living. She should be able to pursue her prayers and piety with no worries." He offered to double her monthly earnings on one condition: she would leave the bakery business and spend her time in the service of Hashem. The woman, tears of joy streaming down her face, accepted the generous offer and thanked the kind man with praise, gratitude and blessing. A month later, when the man returned to Krakow, he was shocked to find the woman at her usual place, mixing the sweet smell of rolls with the sweet words of Tehillim. As soon as he approached, the woman handed him an envelope. "Here is your money. I thought it over I can't accept your offer." "A deal is a deal," he exclaimed. I refuse to renege on my commitment. You must accept my money. Otherwise we will see Rabbi Schapira!" After the businessman presented his case to the Rav, the woman spoke. "The reason this generous man offered to support me was to help me grow in my spirituality and devotion. From the day I left my bagel business I've only fallen in ruchniyoos. Let me explain. "Every day that it would rain, I would think of the farmers who planted the wheat for my bread. I would sing praises for the glory of rain as I felt the personal

guidance of Hashem with each raindrop. When the sun would shine, I would once again thank Hashem for letting the farmers harvest in good weather. When I would grind the flour and then sift it again I'd find countless reasons to thank the Almighty. When the bread would bake golden brown, I'd thank Hashem for the beauty of the product and its sweet smell. And when a customer would come, I'd thank both Hashem for sending him and then bless my patron, too! Now this is all gone. I want no part of a simple, all-expense-paid life."

Moshe had a very deep and meaningful relationship with the water and the dust. Each time he saw the Nile or would tread upon the dust of the ground, he remembered the vehicles of his good fortune and used them to praise Hashem. Blood, frogs, and lice are surely miraculous, but they were not Moshe's personal salvation. Striking the water or earth may have produced great miracles for Klal Yisrael, but in doing so, Moshe would be left without the simple dirt that yielded piles of personal praise. When one forgoes marveling at a lowly speck of dust and chooses to focus instead upon huge mountains, he might not ever hit pay dirt, but rather he may only bite the dust. Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky is the Associate Dean of Yeshiva South Shore and author of the Parsha Parables series.

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Yated Neeman USA Columns I

PENINIM AHL HATORAH: PARSHAS VOEIRAH BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt; I shall rescue you from their service; I shall redeem you I shall take you to Me for a People. (6:6,7) Sforno takes a somewhat novel approach to explaining the four expressions of redemption which the Torah employs to describe the various stages of Yetzias Mitzrayim. The four leshonos shel geulah as interpreted by Sforno are: "v'hotzaisi" "I will bring you out," when the plagues begin the slavery will end; "v'hitzalti" - "I will save you," when you leave their borders; "v'gaalti" - "I will redeem you," with the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. After the death of your oppressors, you will no longer be slaves; "v'lakachti", "I will take you unto Me as a nation," at Har Sinai with the giving of the Torah. We must attempt to understand Sforno's words. Although Klal Yisrael was incarcerated in Egypt for hundreds of years, they remained descendants of a noble and dignified lineage. Why did they need to see their master's demise before they could feel a sense of freedom? Should not the many miracles performed by Hashem-for them-have been sufficient cause to establish their personal trust in Him? Would not the idea of leaving the shambles of Egypt (after the makos) be adequate reason to end their insecurity? Why was another step necessary to eradicate their original slave mentality from their minds? Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, Shlita, derives a significant lesson about human nature from Sforno's words. We are our own worst enemy. Once an individual has made up his mind about himself, it is difficult to change his impressions. A negative self-image can be one of the greatest deterrents to our development. Once one has a low image of himself, either self-imposed or created by others-be it teachers, parents, or friends-it is extremely difficult to transform that picture. Although Bnei Yisrael were liberated from Egypt, they still remained slaves in their own minds. They were not free men; they viewed themselves as free slaves. They were afraid of the image of their cruel oppressors that was etched in their minds. It was necessary for them to see the Egyptian corpses washed up onto shore to convince them that they were finally free men. Horav Leibowitz posits that this feeling extends to one's spiritual persona. In fact, probably the most common cause of spiritual deterioration is the lack of appreciation for one's own greatness. When the yetzer hora, evil inclination, coerces us to sin, it says, "You can do it. You're just an ordinary guy. You do nothing special. Your sin will not make much of a difference anyway.

Leave the Torah study and mitzvah observance to those who are spiritual giants, not to the plain guy like you." Every Jew must recognize his own self-worth and the love that Hashem has for him as an individual-as a Tzelem Elokim. If we would only realize that we are princes, created in the image of Hashem, the idea of sin would be unfathomable. Our self-image and our sense of pride should deter us from sin. As we sit at the Seder table on Peasch night, we recall the Exodus and the events leading up to the unique moment of the giving of the Torah. These milestone occasions should elevate our self-image and bring about the realization that we are the children of Hashem. How can a son possibly rebel against such a loving Father? How truly fortunate are we to be endowed with so much. It is simple questions such as these that guide us to appreciate how special we are, imbuing us with a greater understanding of our responsibility to observe mitzvos.

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PENINIM ON THE TORAH by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
PARSHAS VOEIRO

Say to Aharon stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt and they shall become blood throughout the land of Egypt. (7:19)

Interestingly, Aharon, not Moshe, was designated to strike the river. Chazal attribute this to the fact that the river had protected Moshe as an infant when Yocheved, his mother, placed him upon it. From a perspective of gratitude, it would have been wrong for Moshe to be the vehicle for inflicting a plague on the river. Moshe would have had to strike the earth that protected him when he buried the Egyptian that he killed. Once again, Aharon initiated this plague. When we note the extent to which the Torah demands gratitude even to an inanimate object, we begin to realize the overriding importance for us to recognize and appreciate the benefits we receive from human beings. We must endeavor to understand the need to teach this lesson specifically in the context of the makos Mitzrayim, Egyptian plagues. Certainly, other areas of the Torah are just as appropriate for teaching this lesson. Furthermore, if it had been so important for Moshe Rabbeinu to personally administer the plagues, why did not Hashem Yisborach command him to initiate the plague without striking the water or the earth? The plague could have begun through Moshe without confronting the issue of ingratitude.

Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, derives from here a profound and pivotal lesson in emunah, faith, in Hashem. He cites the Chovas Halevavos who emphasizes the significance of unequivocal belief in Hashem, which is developed through one's reflection upon His creation and constant rulership of every aspect of the world. One must recognize the benefits that we receive from the Almighty, expressing constant gratitude to Him for His favors. Our emunah in Hashem must generate a sense of hakoras hatov, appreciation. Moreover, as Horav Solomon notes, hakoras hatov and emunah complement one another. The hakoras hatov we demonstrate to Hashem is consistent with our level of emunah. Our level of emunah is in consonance with our feelings of gratitude to the Almighty. In other words, gratitude is not simply a fine character trait; it is an integral component of emunah in Hashem Yisborach!

This lesson is derived from the first three plagues: Even the most incredible revelation of Hashem's might and Providence will not have lasting value as long as we do not develop the middah, character trait, of hakoras hatov, expressing gratitude. Only after this middah is integrated into our psyches can the lessons and experiences of hashgachah, Providence, effect us. The purpose of yetzias Mitzrayim, the exodus from Egypt, was to bring us closer to Hashem, to be able to serve Him and, ultimately, to receive His Torah. In His infinite wisdom, Hashem prepared the circumstances and initiated the ten plagues, so that Klal Yisrael would have a yediah berurah, clear knowledge, of His existence and supervision over the world. Similarly, He taught us the middah of hakoras hatov, because one complements the other. Moshe did not

personally introduce the first three plagues because of the imperative to show appreciation - even to an inanimate object. Implicit in this statement is the realization that one must most certainly show appreciation to the Source of all good - Hashem. The appreciation they were to express to Hashem was to prepare them for the greatest moment - when they would experience the Revelation of Hashem and the Giving of the Torah. Hakoras hatov is a character trait that defines one's mentchlichkeit, humanity. Indeed, our greatest gedolim, Torah giants, were individuals who exemplified this character trait. They endeavored to be certain that they showed their appreciation to anyone from whom they benefited.

The Chofetz Chaim once fainted in the bathhouse. He was alone, unconscious in the bathhouse, when by chance the attendant entered the room. Immediately, the man did everything to revive the Chofetz Chaim. After a little while, he succeeded. One cannot imagine the Chofetz Chaim's gratitude to this simple man who happened to be in the right place at the right time. For the rest of his life, the attendant was an honored guest of the Chofetz Chaim, always standing in the front of the shul by his side. During every festival, the Chofetz Chaim drank "l'chaim" with him, kissing him on the forehead, blessing him that he would attain longevity - even greater than the Chofetz Chaim. This man lived to be over ninety, passing away shortly after the Chofetz Chaim.

Horav Simcha Zissel, zl, m'Kelm paused for a few minutes upon coming home from shul every Friday night - to observe and reflect upon the Shabbos preparations, the beautifully set table, and the delicacies that his wife had prepared for Shabbos. His wife had exerted considerable effort to provide him with an ambiance to enhance the spirituality of Shabbos Kodesh. He wanted to savor this moment, so that his appreciation of her actions would be accordingly appropriate.

For some, it was a lifelong display of gratitude; for others, it was a moment of reflection; for yet others, it was the ability to transcend personal pain and grief long enough to offer a few words of thanks. Soon after Horav Yitzchak Hutner, zl, was told the sad news of his wife's passing, he sought out the chief physician who had attended to her. We can imagine the doctor's state of mind as he was approached by this gadol, moments after he had lost his wife. Horav Hutner, pointing to the kriah, tear in his frock, said, "See, I have just torn kriah and made the blessing of Dayon Ha'Emes, the true Judge, accepting the Almighty's judgement. Yet, I would like to thank you for all you have done for my wife." The doctor stood there dumbfounded. Never had he heard such words emanating from a grieving husband so soon after he had been left bereft of his life's partner.

From: Rabbi Pinchas Winston [SMTP:winston@torah.org] Subject: Perceptions - Parashas VaAira: Not For Appearance Sake Only

...
Aharon took Elisheva, the daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon, as a wife ... (Shemos 6:23)

Being the wife of the Kohen Gadol, the first one and most famous of all, is an unbelievable merit. Being the brother of the head of the tribe of Yehudah, the famous Nachshon ben Aminadav who exhibited unbelievable trust in G-d when he walked into the sea to make it split is another incredible merit. From all sides, Elisheva had special merits, as the Talmud points out:

Five extra joys Elisheva had [at the time the Mishkan was set up] over other daughters of Israel. She was the sister-in-law of the king (Moshe Rabbeinu), the wife of the Kohen Gadol, her son (Elazar) was the administrative kohen, her grandson (Pinchas) was anointed for war, and her brother (Nachshon) was a prince of a tribe ... (Zevachim 102a)

On the other hand, the Talmud (and the Midrash) reminds us: she had to mourn the loss of her two sons -- Nadav and Avihu, who died on the same day, on the eighth day of the inauguration of the Mishkan.

In fact, the Midrash uses Elisheva and her "simchos" as an example of the idea that Hashem will delight in the actions of the righteous in the "Time-to-Come" (Vayikra Rabbah 20:2). This means that events can happen -- negative events -- to the righteous, even though they themselves don't deserve such consequences. That is a function of this side of history.

The Midrash on Tehillim says that the following verse applies to Elisheva:

I said to the roisters, "Do not be wasteful ..." (Tehillim 75:5)

-- because she enjoyed four joys in one day, and then, in the end, had to mourn the loss of two sons that very day. Hence, King David advises: don't take too much pleasure in This World; it is fleeting and can go as fast as it comes.

Shlomo HaMelech, Dovid's son echoed the same thought in Koheles when he wrote:

Vanity of vanities -- it is all vanity.

-- except, for fear of G-d, Koheles ends off. Things, events, and even people do not last forever, and may be taken away from us before we are prepared to give them up. But that's life ... in This World at least. And, Elisheva's rise to the heights of prominence, and then her sudden drop to a state of mourning makes this point quite clear.

Another lesson learned out from Elisheva is from the fact that her relationship to Nachshon is mentioned. From here the Talmud finds a source for the idea of investigating the brothers of a potential bride. Says the Talmud: most girls are very similar in nature to their brothers, and therefore, looking at the brothers can provide crucial insight into the nature of a potential wife. (Bava Basra 110a).

It may not be absolutely true. However, it does show, once again, that a posuk that seems to have little to teach can be, in fact, a source of tremendous wisdom and insight.

...

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From: Yeshivat Har Etzion's Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash [SMTP:yhe@vbm-torah.org] Subject: SICHOT -14: Parashat Vaera Student Summaries of Sichot Delivered by the Roshei Yeshiva Parashat Vaera SICHOT OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A

[Editor's note: Although we usually mail only one sicha on the parasha, this week we are sending two, because they are closely related. Both sichot were delivered on Shabbat Parashat Vaera 5755 (1995) - the first on leil Shabbat, and the second at Seuda Shelishit.]

Chazal's Criticism of Moshe Rabbenu

....

The Sins of Gedolei Yisrael

Summarized by Matan Glidai Translated by David Silverberg

In the previous sicha, we encountered Chazal's sharp criticism of Moshe Rabbenu in massekhet Sanhedrin. This criticism emerges also from a series of passages in the Midrash Rabba (6:1-2), where the censure of Moshe's complaint becomes even stronger. The Midrash goes so far as to say that Moshe engaged in "foolishness and nonsense." After all, God had told him from the outset that Pharaoh would harden his heart, that there would be difficulties and obstacles before the redemption reached its completion. Moshe, however, tried to "outsmart" the Master of the World and complained, "Why did You bring harm upon this people?" In this context, the Midrash posits the principle that one who involves himself in public affairs forgets his wisdom and Torah. The Midrash then continues by describing God's wonderment over the fact that Moshe - the most humble of all human beings - expressed himself in such a way.

Criticism against Moshe was raised in last week's parasha as well. Moshe predicts, "But they will not believe me" (4:1), despite the fact that God had guaranteed him that "they will listen to you" (3:18). The Midrash there (3:12) comments that "Moshe here spoke inappropriately." The Midrash then goes on to claim that God's signs came as a rebuke to Moshe for his suspicions: the staff turned into a snake to symbolize Moshe's "usurping the profession of the snake," and Moshe's hand became leprous as punishment for his improper remarks about Benei Yisrael.

From our perspective, these midrashim present a difficult dilemma. How are we to relate to such harsh reproach? We view Moshe Rabbenu as the greatest of all prophets, the human being who reached the highest possible level of spirituality. How can we accept the fact that he sinned? A similar problem arises with regard to the sins of other gedolei Yisrael, such as the incident of David and Batsheva, etc.

We generally find within the Jewish world two extreme and opposing approaches to this problem. Most secular Jews adopt the approach of the Enlightenment and Biblical criticism, which relates to gedolei Yisrael as ordinary people. They sinned, very simply, because they were fallible human beings just like us. Just as we occasionally make mistakes, so did they. By contrast, many in the religious camp adopt the opposite approach, namely, that gedolei Yisrael are superhuman. One cannot draw any comparison between us and them. They have no emotions, struggles or drives, and certainly never sin: "Whoever says that David sinned is in error; whoever says that Reuven sinned is in error" (Shabbat 55b-56a). This approach applies the same principle to other apparent sinners. Although this approach evolves

from an admirable concern for the preservation of our respect and reverence for our gedolim, it reaches absurd conclusions. One cannot simply ignore sins explicitly mentioned in the Scripture and midrashim.

We must adopt a different approach. On the one hand, we cannot overlook the sins of gedolei Yisrael, but at the same time, we may not look at these sins in isolation from their specific context. The Midrash states clearly that Moshe sinned. King David certainly sinned, as clearly evidenced by the prophet Natan's harsh critique and David's own confession. His process of repentance is recorded in detail in Mizmor 51 of Tehillim. Although the gemara (Ketubot 9a) discusses whether or not Batsheva technically had the status of a married woman, in any case David's act clearly involved a sin - a fact which we cannot ignore. Regarding Reuven, as well, we are clearly dealing with a sin. The gemara (Shabbat 55b) tells us that he didn't sleep with Bilha, but rather rearranged his father's beds. Clearly, however, Reuven sinned, as indicated by Yaakov's deathbed rebuke to him: "Unstable as water, you shall excel no longer; for when you mounted your father's bed, you brought disgrace - my couch he mounted!" (Bereishit 49:4).

However, although we cannot deny these sins, we must view them in light of Chazal's overall attitude toward these personalities. Generally, Chazal and the Rishonim relate to Moshe with obvious reverence. The Rambam speaks at length (Hilkhot Yesodei Ha-Torah 7:6) about Moshe's uniqueness over all other prophets, going so far as to say that Moshe was like the angels in that he was perpetually ready to receive prophecy. The Rambam also devotes one of the thirteen principles of faith to the singularity of Moshe Rabbenu. In truth, God Himself spells out the praise of Moshe: "Not so My servant Moshe; with him I speak mouth to mouth and he beholds the likeness of God" (Bemidbar 12:6-8). Chazal exhibit the same respect and reverence for other gedolei Yisrael, as well, depicting them as giants of character and deed.

We must relate to the gedolim in the same manner as Chazal. Just as we have a tradition of Halakha, so too do we have a tradition regarding these matters. Just as we do not deviate even one iota

from Chazal's specifications regarding the four species on Sukkot, for example, so we may never stray from their approach towards the personality of King David. We must view Moshe, David and others as giants in the full sense of the term.

However, we cannot relate to them as superhuman beings, bereft of any emotion or human experience. We are still dealing with human beings, and they may even have experienced stronger drives than we do: "Whoever is greater than his fellow, has a greater [evil] inclination" (Sukka 52a). Even these people can stumble occasionally, for they, too, struggle with a "yetzer ha-ra." Were Avraham not to have had any human emotions or drives, and would thus have taken his son to be sacrificed just as one would an animal, then akeidat Yitzchak would not have constituted as monumental a display of faith and religious resolve as it did; it would have lost its significance. Thus, we cannot overlook the sins of several of gedolei Yisrael, but we must view them in the broader context of Chazal's overall attitude towards these exceptional personalities. These are giants who sinned, but whose sins do not diminish their greatness.

Today, there are many people disloyal to the tradition of Chazal who focus only on the sins of gedolei Yisrael, rather than on their greatness. Therefore, specifically in our day and age, we must be sure not to take these sins out of their appropriate context, and must rather relate to our Biblical heroes in light of the attitude of Chazal and the Rishonim toward them.

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http://www.otmall.com/mj_ht_arch/ Mail-Jewish Volume 20 ... From: Seth Ness <ness@aecom.yu.edu> Date: Sun, 25 Jun 1995 10:22:01 -0400 (EDT) Subject: mechitza height

hi, what are the factors involved in how high a mechitza should be? What are the reasons behind 3 feet, 50 inches, 60 inches etc? Seth L. Ness Ness Gadol Hayah Sham ness@aecom.yu.edu

From: Aryeh Frimer

<F66235%BARILAN.bitnet@taunivm.tau.ac.il> Date: Tue, 27 Jun 95 13:20 O Subject: Mechitza Height The height of a mechitza depends on what its purpose is supposed to be. If its purpose is to divide the room into two separate areas for prayer, then a wall of 3 feet should suffice as it does for all other halakhic matters. If however the purpose of the mechitza is to prevent physical contact between men and women, then 50 inches (Rav JB Soloveitchik Zatsal, personal communication 1970) or 60 inches (Rav Moshe Feinstein, Igrot Moshe, several places) of even a glass mechitza is required. If the function is to prevent visual contact (Hungarian poskim) then a solid floor to over the head mechitza is required. Similarly, according to the first two schools, a balcony requires no mechitza, while the visual contact school does require a mechitza.

Mail-Jewish Volume 28 From: Carl M. Sherer

<csherer@netvision.net.il> Date: Tue, 8 Jun 1999 17:14:57 +0300 Subject: Mechitza Question

In the last issue published in March, Jonathan E. Schiff wrote: > What I am wondering is how central (if that is an intelligible question) is > the Mechitza to Orthodox practice and, more importantly, why?

And you added: > [That a mechitza is required is pretty clear. What I think would be > valuable as a response to this posting is: > A) Listing of early sources for Mechitza > B) Indications of the Talmudic sources for the halacha > Mod]

I think the earliest source for Mechitza is the Mishna in the last Chapter of Succa, which describes the Simchas Beis HaShoeva in the Beis HaMikdash. The Mishna says that on Motzei Yom Tov a "tikun gadol" was made in the Beis HaMikdash. The Gemara says that "tikun gadol" was the erection of a Mechitza. See Mishna Succa 5:2 and

Gemara Succa 51b.

In the Daf Shiur that day, the Magid Shiur (teacher) brought a halachic dispute between R. Moshe Feinstein zt"l and the Satmar Rav zt"l regarding the reason for mechitza. I should qualify this by saying that I am writing this from memory, and as such, any mistakes are mine, and were surely not included in the shiur. R. Moshe zt"l held that Mechitza was to avoid the men being distracted by the women, and therefore R. Moshe held that the mechitza need only come up to the level of the women's shoulders. Rav Moshe's tshuva is in Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim 1:39. The Satmar Rav zt"l held that the mechitza was to prevent the men from looking at the women at all, and therefore the mechitza must be taller than the women's height. I do not know where the Satmar Rav's tshuva regarding the matter is written down. It is important to note that Rav Moshe zt"l did NOT dispute the question of whether there is an issur of histaklus (men looking at women); he also held that there is a prohibition. Rather, the dispute related to the rationale behind mechitza (pardon the pun) and the halachic implications for the height of the mechitza. Carl M. Sherer <mailto:csherer@netvision.net.il> <mailto:sherer@actcom.co.il>

From: Norman Tuttle <TUTTLE@Sensormatic.com> Date: Thu, 10 Jun 1999 10:20:37 -0400 Subject: RE: Mechitza Micha Berger <micha@aishdas.org> asserts that >That gemara could actually be used as a source that mechitzos are NOT >required for prayer. After all, they put one up for the simchas heis >hasho'eivah (SBhS), when there was undo levity. But they took it down as >soon as regular services resumed!

No! The SBhS took place in the Ezras HaNashim ("women's chambers"). The regular temple services (Avodah) did not take place in the Ezras HaNashim, so there were ample accommodations for the men without being distracted by the women who could enter the Ezras HaNashim. One could use this Gemara for both justifying the Shul which is structurally built with separate sections (eg. sep. room, balcony) vs. a Mechitza-type set-up (one room with a temporary or portable division). It seems that both are Kosher but actually the structural version is preferable since the Temple (Beis HaMikdash) used it year-round while a Mechitza was only for temporary use.

From: Shlomo Pick <picksh@mail.biu.ac.il> Date: Thu, 10 Jun 1999 14:28:32 +0200 Subject: re: Mechitza MR. R. or Dr. Micha Berger wrote: "This is an interesting argument. Down to the halachah's basics, it [=mechitza] need only be 3 tefachim (10" or so) high." Where does this come from? If it is a law of reshut - domain - then you would need 10 tefachim. if it is a law of tzniut, i.e. modesty, then it may have to be higher. but where does three come from? what does it have to do with leaving the realm of lavud? shlomo pick

From: Chana Luntz <heather@luntz.demon.co.uk> Date: Wed, 13 Nov 1996 11:37:27 +0000 Subject: Help with Mechitzah In message <199611121145.GAA13666@cnj.digex.net>, Shlomo-Zalman Jessel <mss@pluto.mssc.huji.ac.il> writes >> Our shule here in Israel wants to build a new mechitzah. We want a >certain kind of one-way plexiglass, and so far haven't been able to >locate it in Israel. Most manufacturers offer a kind of one-way glass >whose transparency depends on the lighting, angle and reflections in the >room. We want something that is only one-way, regardless of lighting >conditions.

In my experience - having davened on the other side of a number of these, is that you are looking for the impossible. That is they *always* under certain lighting conditions turn into mirrors (on the women's side) - and I assume that that means they become one way from the men's side. In particular, I can verify that the one way glass in Kollel Beis HaTalmud in Melbourne, Australia does this - and I know that in the Lakewood Yeshiva (ie Lakewood, New Jersey), they have taken the precaution of having *both* a one way glass, *and* a curtain. The curtain being drawn when the amida is being said, so there is no question of the women davening to a mirror - which is halachically assur. (In both

the places cited above, the women's gallery is very high up, and the one way glass only goes from waist up, so there is probably no way for the men to see in regardless of what the glass does). My one time davening in the Bostoner Rebbe's place in Boston makes me think also that they had some problems with the one way glass. It may well be that the only way to get this glass to work as desired is to put powerful lights on the men's side and ensure that the women's side has limited natural light.

Regards Chana

From: Joshua W. Burton <jburton@nwu.edu> Date: Wed, 13 Nov 96 01:14:39 -0600 Subject: One-way glass

Shlomo-Zalman Jessel <mss@pluto.mssc.huji.ac.il> writes: > Our shule here in Israel wants to build a new mechitzah. We want a > certain kind of one-way plexiglass, and so far haven't been able to > locate it in Israel. Most manufacturers offer a kind of one-way glass > whose transparency depends on the lighting, angle and reflections in the > room. We want something that is only one-way, regardless of lighting > conditions. If you find such a material, I will gladly explain how to use it to build a perpetual motion machine, which will save substantially on heating and electric bills for the shul. Seriously, there are many tricks for making an object _look_ transparent in one direction and not the other, including color, differential lighting levels, and specular versus diffuse reflectivity. But a true one-way mirror is a physical impossibility, whether ba'Aretz or in galut. Joshua W. Burton (847)677-3902 jburton@nwu.edu

From: Nahum Spirn <spirn@omnifest.uwm.edu> Date: Wed, 13 Nov 1996 18:35:33 -0600 Subject: Re: One-way mechitza My shul in Milwaukee, the Lake Park Synagogue, was looking into the idea of a one-way mechitza as well, and I spoke to Rabbi Safran in Baltimore who uses the black/white screen material our moderator described. I got a sample from the supplier, too. I decided that it wasn't what we were looking for. First of all, it too depends on lighting, and is nowhere near as efficient as real one-way glass (which, BTW, they use, I am told, in 770). Second, it isn't pretty or elegant at all. Rabbi Nahum Spirn

From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il]
The Weekly Daf #308 Yevamot 34 - 40 bbi Mendel Weinbach, Dean,
Ohr Somayach Institutions
The Ten-Year Deadline

The daughter of Rabbi Chisda married the Sage Rava after ten years of widowhood. When she became pregnant it caused a stir amongst Rava's colleagues, because Rabbi Yochanan had stated a law of nature that a woman who remains unmarried for ten years after her first marriage is no longer capable of bearing children.

Rava's wife cleared up the mystery by informing him that during her widowhood she had in mind to marry him, and the rule stated by Rabbi Yochanan had been qualified by Rabbi Nachman who declared that if the woman had in mind to get married she could conceive even after ten years.

The background for this dialogue is supplied by Tosefot on the basis of an incident related in Mesechta Bava Batra (12b) to illustrate that since the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, prophecy was removed from the prophets and allocated to fools and children. Rabbi Chisda's little daughter sat in his lap as two of his disciples, the Sages Rava and Rami bar Chama sat before him. "Which of these two do you want to marry?" he asked the child. "Both," she announced, to which Rava quickly responded "and me last."

She did indeed marry Rami bar Chama first, and after his death she was certain that her childhood prophecy would be fulfilled and that she would marry Rava. The latter, however, had a wife already and she had to wait ten years until that woman died. Having her mind on eventually marrying Rava during all these years saved her from losing her ability to bear children.

On the basis of the rule and qualification found in our gemara, the Midrash thus explains a passage from the Book of Ruth (1:12). In it, Naomi discourages her widowed daughter-in-law from accompanying her to Eretz Yisrael in the hope of someday marrying other sons she may eventually bear. "I have grown too old to marry a man," she told them, "and even if I said that I have hope, and even if tonight I would marry a man and then give birth to sons, would you wait until they grow up?"

Naomi explained that, since it was ten years short a day since the death of her husband, her ability to bear children in a new marriage would depend on one of two things: 1) "I said that I have hope" -- that she had her hopes set on marriage; 2) "If tonight I would marry a man" before the ten years came to an end.

Yevamot 34b

The Preferred Mitzvah

Should a man die childless, the Torah made it a mitzvah for his brother to perform yibum by marrying the widow. The Torah thus put aside the prohibition on a man marrying his brother's wife even after his death in order for this mitzvah to be done.

But what if the brother is not motivated to marry her for the sake of the mitzvah but only because of her beauty or some other ulterior motive? The Sage Abba Shaul viewed this as bordering on a violation of the ban on marrying a brother's wife, and he even considered the idea that a child born from such a marriage would be a mamzer. The other Sages disputed this approach and held that regardless of the motive, the yibum was a valid fulfillment of the mitzvah.

These two conflicting opinions determine whether today we encourage yibum or its alternative, chalitzah. The mishna in Mesechta Bechorot (13a) quoted in our gemara declares that in earlier generations when people had the right attitude and did yibum for the sake of the mitzvah, it was preferable for yibum to be done. Since in later generations people began to perform yibum for different reasons and not for the sake of the mitzvah, it is preferable to do chalitzah. This is clearly in line with the view of Abba Shaul.

The Sage Rami bar Chama, however, quotes Rabbi Yitzchak as stating that this position of endorsing the view of Abba Shaul was subsequently abandoned in favor of the view of the other Sages which makes yibum preferable even today.

There is a major debate amongst the commentaries as to whether we rule like Abba Shaul or the other Sages. Rabbeinu Alfis (Rif) cites the statement of Rami bar Chama as support for the view of the other Sages and therefore concludes that yibum is preferable. Rabbeinu Tam of the Tosafists and Rabbeinu Chananel rule like Abba Shaul and conclude that chalitzah is preferable.

The accepted practice in virtually every Jewish community today is to avoid yibum in favor of chalitzah. Yevamot 39b

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From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] Reply To: neustadt@torah.org;jgross@torah.org;genesis@torah.org

Dear Readers and Subscribers: For the next several weeks this corner will attempt to deal with queries on Hilchos Shabbos recently presented to Rabbi Neustadt. If you have a question in Hilchos Shabbos which you would like Rabbi Neustadt to address in this column, please mail in your question as soon as possible. A Gut Shabbos Jeffrey Gross

Weekly-halacha for 5760 Selected Halachos Relating to Parshas Vaera

BY RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

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

COMMON HILCHOS SHABBOS QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

QUESTION: Is it permitted to put cooked kishke, kugel, rice, etc., wrapped in plastic bags or foil sheets into the cholent before Shabbos?

DISCUSSION: Some poskim(1) hold that it is prohibited because it violates the rabbinical injunction of hatmanah. Usually, hatmanah means to insulate a pot of food so that its heat is retained or even intensified [depending on the type of material used for insulation](2). But in the opinion of the Taz, quoted by the Mishnah Berurah(3), to submerge a vessel containing food into another vessel containing food is also a form of hatmanah(4). Thus, a plastic bag containing kishke or a foil-wrapped kugel which is submerged in a larger pot of cholent, may be considered a violation of hatmanah.

Other poskim, however, do not consider this a form of hatmanah(5). They maintain that this is a case of two separate foods - cholent and kugel - that are being kept warm on a fire; it is not a case of one food (cholent) "insulating" the heat level of the lesser food (kishke, kugel)(6). Still other poskim suggest that a foil or plastic wrapping is not considered a "vessel" normally used for "insulation"(7).

But all poskim permit placing wrapped kishke or kugel in a cholent - before Shabbos - if one of the following conditions is met: If the kishke or kugel is not completely cooked before it is placed in the cholent, and it is being put into the cholent to finish cooking(8). This is permitted because the purpose of putting the bag or foil into the cholent is not to insulate the kishke or kugel. Rather, the bag or foil is merely holding food that requires further cooking, which is permitted(9). If the bag or foil is left partially open, or if it is punctured(10), it is permitted to submerge it in the cholent, even if its contents are fully cooked. This is permitted because one would never insulate a food in an open or punctured container; obviously, the foods were placed in the cholent in order to absorb its taste(11).

Note: Some people who cook cholent in a crock pot place the cholent ingredients in a bag and then put the bag in the pot. This is permitted according to all views, since the purpose is not to "insulate" the food but to keep the pot as clean as possible(12).

QUESTION: Is it permitted to take cholent out of the oven on Friday night, dish some out, and then quickly put it back in?

DISCUSSION: In order to return a completely cooked, still-warm dish to the oven on Shabbos, the fire in the oven must be covered especially for Shabbos. There are two reasons why the fire must be covered: The Rabbis were concerned that putting food back on a heat source appears as if one is cooking it.

The Rabbis were concerned that one may notice that the fire is too low and inadvertently adjust the temperature.

In the opinion of many poskim(13), returning food to the oven is prohibited since the flame inside the oven is not covered. Even though in some ovens no fire is visible, still there is nothing that distinguishes the oven from its regular weekday appearance(14). It still looks like someone is cooking and the chance of their adjusting the temperature is still very real.

This prohibition poses a problem to those who want to eat some of their Shabbos cholent on Friday night. They cannot remove the cholent from the oven, since, as we just explained, it is forbidden to put it back in the oven. They cannot dish cholent out of the pot while it is still inside the oven, since it is Rabbinically prohibited to dish out food while it is still on the fire, even if the food is completely cooked(15).

The solution to the problem is the following compromise: The oven rack should be slid part-way out of the oven so that the pot is not directly over the flame. The other part of the pot should remain inside the oven in an area which is yad soledes bo(16). In this manner the cholent is not really being removed from the oven, and "returning" it would be

permitted.

Note that a minority opinion maintains that if the stove knobs are covered or removed, the cholent may be returned to the oven(17).

QUESTION: Is it permitted to open a soda can on Shabbos?

DISCUSSION: A previous column quoted the ruling of Harav S.Z. Auerbach who permits opening soda cans on Shabbos(18). Since the publication of that column, a number of prominent Rabbonim have mentioned to me that the custom in the United States is to follow the opinion of the more stringent poskim - whose rulings were cited in the aforementioned column - who prohibit opening soda cans on Shabbos. Accordingly, one should consult a competent halachic authority as to whether or not he should rely on Harav Auerbach's ruling.

QUESTION: How do you wash, dry and put away silverware on Shabbos?

DISCUSSION: Silverware may not be sorted, for sorting violates the prohibition of borer. Accordingly, when silverware is placed in a dish washer, it must be loaded randomly. Even if the pieces of silverware were improperly positioned in the dishwasher, they may not be rearranged according to size and type(19).

Assorted cutlery which has been washed and dried may not be sorted and put away in any type of silverware organizer.

It is prohibited to pick out of the sink several or all of the items of one type, e.g., spoons, wash and dry them and put them away in their allotted compartments.

It is prohibited to pick up assorted pieces of silverware pieces out of the sink or off the drain board, dry each piece individually, and then place it in its allotted compartment.

But it is permitted, in the opinion of several poskim, to pick up and dry each piece of cutlery separately, as it comes randomly out of the sink or drain board, and put it directly in its compartment(20). This is permitted because the individual piece is being lifted out of the sink to be dried, which is an end in itself, and not specifically to be sorted.

It is permitted to pick up a jumble of silverware and throw it across the table so that the pieces scatter and separate. Once the pieces are not mixed in a jumble, they may be sorted and put away into their compartments(21).

QUESTION: How do you set the table with cutlery on Shabbos?

DISCUSSION: It is forbidden to pick individual pieces out of a jumble of silverware and set them on the table in their correct positions. It is permitted, however, to do so if it is done immediately prior to the meal. This means that if the meal(22) is supposed to start at 12:00 o'clock, for example, and it takes about 30 minutes to prepare for the meal, then the table may be set at about 11:30, but not earlier(23). Even if the lady of the house would like to set her table before going to shul or taking a walk, it is forbidden to do so(24).

When the silverware is not mixed together (but is being taken straight out of the organizer), it is permitted to take each type of implement and set it on the table in its desired place. But it is prohibited to take different types of silverware from their individual compartments, allow them to mix together in one's hand, and then set them on the table in their correct place. If it is done immediately before the meal, however, then this, too, is permitted.

FOOTNOTES: 1 Aruch ha-Shulchan 258:3; Minchas Yitzchak 8:17; Shevet ha-Levi 3:47. See Igros Moshe O.C. 4:74 (hatmanah 3) who prohibits placing kugel completely wrapped in aluminum foil on top of the cholent pot cover. 2 Insulating a pot which is left on the fire - even prior to Shabbos - is prohibited because the Rabbis feared that if one were to find on Shabbos that the insulation failed to heat the food sufficiently, he would inadvertently adjust the temperature of the fire. 3 258:2 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 6. [Chazon Ish O.C. 37:32 disagrees with the basic ruling of the Taz and does not consider a submerged vessel as a violation of hatmanah.] 4 The ruling is based on the argument that when an item is submerged, it is in fact being "insulated", since the submersion causes the temperature of the submerged item to be retained or intensified. 5 Note that the case that the Taz discusses involves a bottle of cold liquid being submerged in a bowl of hot water which is not on a fire. Our case involves a food being submerged in a food which is on a fire. The cases are not comparable for several reasons. 6 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Tikunim U'millim 42, note 242). 7 See L'ehoros Nossan 7:12; Az Nidberu 6:78; Am ha-Torah, vol. 13, quoting Debreciner Rav. 8 Minchas Yitzchak 8:17. 9

Provided that the item will be fully cooked before Shabbos or the heat source is covered, as explained in detail in The Weekly Halachah DISCUSSION, vol. 1, pg. 207-209. 10 Or if the bag is porous; Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Shevus Yitzchak, pg. 251). 11 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 42:63; Otzros ha-Shabbos 2:56 quoting Harav S. Wosner. 12 Based on O.C. 257:2 and Igros Moshe O.C. 1:95. 13 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:74-26; Minchas Yitzchak 3:28; Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (Shevus Yitzchak, pg. 89). 14 If there is an insert inside the oven, then it is permitted to return the cholent. 15 Mishnah Berurah 318:117; Igros Moshe O.C. 4:74:9. See Chazon Ish 37:15 who is somewhat more lenient. 16 At least 110 degrees Fahrenheit. 17 Harav A. Kotler (oral ruling, quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, pg. 354); Shevet ha-Levi 3:48. 18 See The Weekly Halachah DISCUSSION, vol. 1, pg. 137-138 for an elaboration. 19 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:74 (rechitza 4); 20 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 3:88); Harav N. Karelitz (Ayil Meshulash 11:5). Harav S. Wosner (Otzros ha-Shabbos, borer 74). There are, however some poskim who are hesitant about this leniency (see Ayil Meshulash, ibid., quoting Harav Y.S. Elyashiv). 21 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:74 (borer 11). 22 Zemiras which are sung prior to the meal are considered as part of the meal (Harav S.Y. Elyashiv, quoted in The Laws of Borer, pg. 25 and Harav N. Karelitz, quoted in Ayil Meshulash, pg. 117). 23 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:74-13; Harav S.Y. Elyashiv and Harav N. Karelitz (quoted in Ayil Meshulash, pg. 118). There is a minority view which holds that it is permitted to begin the preparation half an hour before the meal even if the actual preparation does not take that long (Harav S. Wosner, mi-Beis Levi 6, Borer 2). 24 Mishnah Berurah 321:45.

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