

*Tonight, the evening of Friday, May 9, we will count day 20, which is 2 weeks and 6 days of the omer.*

## יום העצמאות

### The Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash

#### “Reishit Tzemichat Ge’ulatenu”:

#### What Kind of Redemption Does Israel Represent?

By Harav Yehuda Amital

#### A. JOY AND TREPIDATION

“You shall say on that day: I will praise You, O God; although You were angry with me, Your anger is turned back and You comfort me.” (*Yishayahu* 12:1)

We experienced this verse on the day the State of Israel was declared. The fifth of *Iyar*, 5708 (May 14, 1948), was a day of God’s anger, for we received the bitter news of the fall of Gush Etzion and the many victims who were slaughtered here. But it was also a day of God “turning back” and “comforting me.”

Although intellectually I understand the importance of our celebration today, it is psychologically and emotionally difficult for me to rejoice. One reason for this difficulty concerns upcoming events in Gush Katif. One of the forty-eight traits by virtue of which the Torah is acquired is “sharing the yoke with one’s neighbor.” In other words, one must not let the other person bear his burden alone; one must not stand by and observe from the side. Rather, one must feel existential partnership with his brother who is in distress, and help share his burden.

Along with my anxiety for the residents of Gush Katif, I also have grave concerns, which should not be hidden, regarding the security situation following the disengagement, and regarding the political results of the disengagement process as well. My personal opinion is that until the coming of the Messiah, we will have problems with the Arab world; the question is just at what level.

Beyond these problems, there is another factor that clouds my joy: we are all part of Religious Zionism, a movement that is currently in deep crisis.

For these reasons, it is difficult for me to speak. Yet it is important to emphasize that my difficulty is only emotional. From an ideological perspective, I have no problem rejoicing on *Yom Ha-atzma’ut* this year. I danced and rejoiced on the fifth of *Iyar* 5708, when the State was declared without Gush Katif, without Jaffa, without Nahariya, and without the Old City of Jerusalem – so should I not rejoice today? We cannot deny that the current period is a bitter one, but then, too – when we heard about the fall of Gush Etzion – it was bitter, and nevertheless we rejoiced! Therefore the problem is more emotional than substantial.

This year we are hearing, for the first time, some voices from within the Religious Zionist camp calling on us not to celebrate *Yom Ha-atzma’ut* and not to recite *Hallel*. Although several leading rabbis have denounced this call, the very fact that rabbis have come out with a statement that “We have no portion and inheritance in the Lord of Israel” must give rise to very serious questions. What is the origin of this confusion, which has completely reversed the attitude of many people towards the State?

It seems to me that the main problem stems from the fact that among various groups, doubts have begun to arise concerning the expression, “*reishit tzemichat ge’ulateinu*, the beginning of the flowering of our redemption.” What is the source of these doubts? They arise from the philosophy of a great man, Rav Zvi Yehuda ha-Kohen Kook *zt”l*, and principally from the philosophy of his students. Since I believe that the majority of Religious Zionism does not identify with the philosophy that I shall discuss shortly, and I count myself among that majority, I feel a need to express my opinion and to serve as their mouthpiece. I hope that you will listen to what I have to say, although this is not an opinion that is usually voiced.

#### B. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STATE

In fact, the concept of the “beginning of the redemption” (*atchalta de-geula*) was spoken about long before the establishment of the State. The students of the Vilna Gaon and the students of the Ba’al Shem Tov who made *aliya to Eretz Yisrael* decided that they were living at the time of the “beginning of the redemption.” The son-in-law of R. Yehoshua Kutner brought a letter from Rav Eliyahu Guttmacher, one of the leading disciples of R. Akiva Eiger, written in the year 5634 (1874), in which he asserts that if there would be 130 families working the land in *Eretz Yisrael*, this would be considered the “beginning of the redemption.”

Before the founding of the State, Rav Avraham Yitzchak ha-Kohen Kook *zt”l* decided that we are living in the time of the “beginning of the redemption” on the basis of the well-known Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 98a):

“Rabbi Abba said: There is no more revealed sign of the redemption than that which is written: ‘And you, O mountains of Israel – you shall give forth your branches and bear fruit for My nation, Israel’ (*Yechezkel* 36:8).”

His son, Rav Zvi Yehuda, also spoke about this – but in his time the State was already established. And so the question arose: what was so special about the establishment of the State? If the land began to give its fruit to the Nation of Israel before the creation of the State, and the “beginning of the redemption” was already upon us, then what great change came about with the State’s birth?

The students of Rav Zvi Yehuda had an answer to this question: indeed, the establishment of the State brought about something new. In light of the Ramban’s teaching in his comments on Rambam’s *Sefer Ha-mitzvot*, they explained that the “beginning of the redemption” refers not to the Jewish nation dwelling in the Land of Israel, but rather to the absolute sovereignty of the Jewish nation over all parts of *Eretz Yisrael*. I heard this for the first time many years ago, and I was astounded to discover that they believed that a major component of the significance of the State was that it facilitated the fulfillment of the command to dwell in the Land of Israel and to conquer it, in accordance with the teaching of the Ramban. According to this understanding, if a major aspect of the purpose of the State is the fulfillment of the command to exercise sovereignty over *Eretz Yisrael*, then a State that hands over territories betrays its purpose, and we must question whether it is still “the beginning of the flowering of our redemption.” According to this view, the State is invested with significance by virtue of its exercising sovereignty over all areas of the land. To my mind, this is the source of the doubts among the Religious Zionist public today concerning the significance of the State.

I do not believe in this approach. I can testify concerning myself that I recited the blessing of “*She-hechyanu*” and I danced on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1947, at Be’erot Yitzchak, even though the U.N. had partitioned the land, and likewise in 1948. Our feeling was one of elation; it was as though there was an intoxicating drug in the air – Israeli independence. We weren’t rejoicing because of what the Ramban taught, but rather because of the fulfillment of Herzl’s vision. At that time, Rav Zvi Yehuda recounted: “I could not go out and participate in the festivities... for indeed, God’s word – ‘They have divided My land’ (*Yoel* 4:2) – was being fulfilled... In that condition – my whole body shaken, wounded all over, cut up into pieces – I could not rejoice” (excerpt from “*Eretz Ha-Zvi*”). We – the simple Jews among whom I regard myself – didn’t know about the Ramban. We knew that there was Israeli independence, Jewish sovereignty in our land – and we rejoiced over that.

#### C. JEWISH SOVEREIGNTY

I didn’t invent this approach. In the previous generation, there were Rabbis who spoke about the “beginning of the redemption,” the “revealed end,” the “footsteps of the Messiah” – and a few years later came the greatest Holocaust that had ever happened in all of Jewish history. Anyone who

thought that he was witnessing the signs of the complete redemption was proved wrong in the Holocaust.

When the State was established, some of the greatest Torah Sages in the world – some of whom I was fortunate to know – declared that although we are not living in the time of the “revealed end” of the “footsteps of the *Mashiach*,” there is still great importance to the political freedom of establishing a State. Rambam writes that one of the reasons for the festival of Chanuka is that “Jewish sovereignty was restored for more than two hundred years” during the period of the Chashmonaim (*Hilkhot Chanuka* 3:1) – even though we know the low moral standing of the many members of the Hasmonean dynasty. The Mishna teaches that on *Yom Kippur* the *Kohen Gadol* would recite eight blessings, one of which is “Upon Israel” (*Yoma* 68b). The Gemara explains that this blessing is “Upon Your nation, Israel, who need to be saved” (*Yoma* 70a). Rambam elaborates: “Its theme is that God should save Israel, and not let them be left without a king” (*Hilkhot Avodat Yom ha-Kippurim* 3:11). Again, although we know what type of kings ruled during the Second Temple period, and we know how deficient was their moral and religious level, Rambam nevertheless asserts that the “salvation of Israel” is expressed in sovereignty, royalty.

For these reasons, the Chief Rabbis, including Rav Herzog *zt”l*, ruled that the establishment of the State of Israel is “the beginning of the flowering of our redemption.” A situation in which *Am Yisrael* has “a king” (sovereignty) and freedom is a harbinger of redemption. We have no previous accounts; following the Holocaust, any previous accounts are hidden away. We do not know what is supposed to happen, what is destined to take place, but there is no doubt that the establishment of the State of Israel is of great significance in its own right.

After the Oslo Accords, when Israel transferred a few cities to Palestinian control, I participated in a panel discussion in New York with some other Israeli rabbis. One of the questions raised was whether it was still possible to speak of the “beginning of the flowering of our redemption,” following the handing over of territories to the Palestinians. One of the speakers answered that if Rav Kook spoke about the “beginning of the flowering of our redemption” in his time, we can certainly speak in such terms in our own times. In response, I said that, with all due respect to the teachings of Rav Kook, a Holocaust had happened in the meantime. Hence, I would not talk about drawing inferences from Rav Kook’s time to ours. Rather, I would say that if we believed in “the beginning of the flowering of our redemption” in 1948, then we could certainly still use this term after the Oslo Accords.

When Rav Herzog spoke of “the beginning of the flowering of our redemption,” he did not mean the messianic redemption; rather, he meant the simple redemption consisting of Jewish sovereignty in the land. The Chatam Sofer (*parashat Shoftim*, p. 37) comments that several times during the course of history, the Holy One wanted to redeem Israel with an incomplete redemption – as during the period of the Second Temple – but the nation of Israel refused, for we have no desire for an incomplete redemption, without *Mashiach*. The Chatam Sofer wrote this prior to the Holocaust, but after that terrible period during which people sailed aimlessly in boats, with no home, we understand that there was never any *chillul Hashem* – desecration of God’s Name – like the Holocaust, nor any *kiddush Hashem* – sanctification of God’s Name – like the establishment of the State. There can be no doubt that praise and thanks should be offered for the establishment of the State, even if it is not a messianic redemption, the “revealed end.”

Indeed, in 1948 we did not speak of the *Mashiach*. We prayed for *malkhut Yisrael*, and sufficed with sovereignty comparable to that of the Second Temple period. There is no doubt that we attained at least that much. During Ezra’s time, very few people came back to Israel; in our time – thank God, we have reached five, six million. We never had such numbers here!

The messianic feeling, the sense of the “revealed end,” started after the Six-Day War. In realistic terms, it was difficult to understand how we had managed to defeat seven Arab armies with such ease. Admittedly, there were Torah giants who thought otherwise. In his typically resolute fashion, Rav Shlomo Goren *zt”l* said immediately after the war, in a speech at Mossad ha-Rav Kook, that all the events of that war were not miraculous.

As proof, he brought the verse, “And it was, when Pharaoh sent out the nation, that God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines ... for God said, ‘Lest the nation regret [leaving] when they see war [approaching], and return to Egypt’” (*Shemot* 13:17). Could God then not perform miracles for Israel in the war to conquer the land, as He did for them in Egypt? What Rav Goren wanted to say was that this was proof that wars of conquest of *Eretz Yisrael* are not carried out through miracles, but rather through human means. Hence, since the Six-Day War was a war for *Eretz Yisrael*, it could not be miraculous. Admittedly, this approach remains an uncommon one. For a large sector of the public, the Six-Day War actually strengthened the view that the significance of the State of Israel is bound up with ruling over *Eretz Yisrael*, rather than with the actual fact of Jewish sovereignty, autonomy and freedom. These people regarded the war as a revealed miracle, and as proof of the imminent messianic redemption.

#### D. MAINTAINING THE JEWISH MAJORITY

At the same time, after the Six-Day War, some Jews – both religious and secular – stood up and said that the partition of the land that had been forced upon us by the U.N. during the British mandate should be nullified. One of these people was Prof. Yisrael Eldad, who said to me: “We’re finished with the partition; let’s get back to the Greater Land of Israel.”

These people began to speak about a vision of the complete *Eretz Yisrael*, but they didn’t notice the Arabs living within the borders of that “Whole Land of Israel.” At the time of the establishment of the State, the Arab population within the borders of the country was relatively small, and there was a chance that the Jewish nation would remain the majority for the long term. Today, after our conquest of Judea, Samaria and Gaza, there arises a risk that the State will not remain Jewish. When the government agreed that marriage and divorce would be handled in this country in accordance with religious principles, and that public institutions would observe *kashrut*, this flowed from the sense that this is a Jewish country. But in a Jewish country there must be a Jewish majority, and this is diminishing with time.

For this reason, since the Six-Day War, no government of Israel has dreamed of annexing Judea, Samaria and Gaza as part of the State of Israel. We annexed the Golan Heights, where there are no Arabs, and Jerusalem – based on the view that we could deal with the number of Arabs living there. But annexing Judea, Samaria and Gaza? How long could we hold on without giving the Arabs the right to vote? Even those on the far left admit that the Arabs should not be granted the “right of return,” for this would destroy the Jewishness of the State.

Two approaches were proposed to deal with the problem of how to retain the entire land despite the demographic issue. One, led by Rechavam *Ze’evi Hy”d* and fundamentally secular, claimed that the solution was a “transfer” of the Arabs. Aside from the moral problem involved, no Arab state agrees to take in these Arabs. Still, the “transfer” approach arose from logical reasoning: if we want to annex the entire *Eretz Yisrael*, we must find a solution to the demographic problem.

A second approach, whose proponents included religious people with a zealous vision of a Greater *Eretz Yisrael*, claimed that the solution would be found with the coming of the *Mashiach*, and since the *Mashiach* is already knocking at the door, there is no need to worry about the pragmatic, actual ramifications of our actions. This messianic thinking – which perceived the *Mashiach* as already lurking somewhere in the Jerusalem mountains and soon to be revealed to us – is what led to this view.

To my sorrow, I have not merited Divine inspiration. I have never met a prophet who fit all of the Rambam’s identifying criteria, who told me that the *Mashiach* is already on the way. When I established the yeshiva, the architect who thought up the shape of the *beit midrash* planned it without windows. I told her about the *tzaddik* in whose town a *shofar* blast was once heard, and the whole community thought that the *Mashiach* had arrived. The *tzaddik* poked his nose out of the window, sniffed gently, and said: “No. When the *Mashiach* comes, it will be possible to sense it in the air.” A *beit midrash* needs windows, in order to be able to sense when the

*Mashiach* is coming. If I haven't yet sensed the *Mashiach's* footsteps – it is a sign that the *Mashiach* hasn't yet come...

In any event, we must rejoice today just as we rejoiced in 1948. We must recognize that just as the Holocaust was a gargantuan *chillul Hashem*, so the State of Israel is the greatest *kiddush Hashem*. We have a problem with giving away parts of *Eretz Yisrael*, but let us look at what the Holy One has done for us! We have an independent State, we are a prosperous country, and we are militarily strong. True, there is poverty and there are plenty of other problems, but it is difficult to conceive of the magnitude of the change that has been wrought in our condition over the past sixty years. We are permitted to rejoice wholeheartedly on *Yom Ha-atzma'ut*. Despite our pain, we must follow Rashi's words, "At a time of mourning – one mourns; at a time of joy – one rejoices" (*Bereishit* 6:6). This is "a time of joy," and therefore let us declare without reservation, "This day – God has made; let us celebrate and rejoice in it!" (*Tehillim* 118:24).

[This *sicha* was delivered on *Yom Ha-atzma'ut* 5765 (2005).

It was adapted by Shaul Barth with Reuven Ziegler and translated by Kaeren Fish.]

---

**Jerusalem Post :: Friday, May 9, 2008**  
**SIXTY :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

Usually in personal and national life things are pretty much settled by the time sixty years pass. However, this is apparently not so for our wonderful little country.

Benny Morris, the noted Israeli historian who has tempered his previous post-Zionist views greatly over the past few years has written a new book entitled "1948."

In reviewing the events and war that occurred in that first year of Israel's creation, he now comes to the stark conclusion that sixty years later that war has not yet ended and that the eventual victor has not yet universally been recognized and accepted.

This assessment, disappointing and threatening as it appears, nevertheless has some accuracy to it. Many in the Arab world, in fact the Moslem world in its great part, are still not ready to accept Israel as a fact and a permanent nation here in the Middle East.

Therefore, the drama still plays on with violence, mutual distrust and peace negotiations that merely appear to be tactics and are otherwise blatantly insincere. Yet, the fact that Israel is here as a fact and that it has prospered mightily in spite of this sixty year long war is itself a cause for celebration and commemoration.

The future for us here has never been a logical or certain one and the odds against Israel's success have always been almost overwhelming. Yet somehow we have persevered and accomplished. We will continue to do so, with the continuing help of the God of Israel, in the future as well.

Sixty years is one of the few dates mentioned in the Talmud as being significant in a person's lifetime. The Talmud records for us that great rabbis made great celebrations and meals to commemorate their achieving sixty – to be freed from the threat of *koresh* in this world.

Statistics indicate that one who reaches sixty has a good chance of living a long life. Sixty is therefore seen as a watershed at least as far as human life is concerned. Perhaps we can see that this number of sixty as being a watershed time in the story of the return of Israel to its ancient homeland.

Even though the threats to the existence of Israel are real, they are not really new ones. The players may have new names – Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran – but the threats and animosity are not new.

Israel was threatened with nuclear elimination by the Soviet Union decades ago. Real wars have been fought against us. But the State of Israel has outlived the Soviet Union and Saddam Hussein, just to mention two of our great and aggressive foes.

Ten years ago, the *intifadas* were much more dangerous than what is happening today, painful and unforgivable as the attacks on Sderot and Ashkelon and the Western Negev are. Most of us in Israel live in personal security, certainly in comparison with many other countries in the world.

The polls taken regularly here in Israel indicate that a very high percentage of those of us who live in Israel are very satisfied with our quality of life.

People who at sixty are satisfied with their lives are truly fortunate. I think that this is true of our national entity, the State of Israel, as well.

There are many gains that we can count. In the high-tech field, medicine, biotech, and agriculture there are enormous accomplishments. In the spiritual world, in spite of all of the struggles, divisions, controversies and setbacks suffered by the religious observant section of our population, there is a stronger Jewish people, religiously speaking, existing here today than there was sixty years ago.

Torah study abounds in all corners and even in all groupings in Israel. From a sheer sense of numbers, the religious world has arisen from the ashes of the Holocaust that almost destroyed it. The Chasidic courts and the *yeshivot* have institutions, infrastructure, campuses and numbers that are greater than what they had in Eastern Europe in the 1930's.

There is much yet left to accomplish in all areas of Israeli and Jewish life. But we should be ever mindful of the words of our rabbis in Avot that "one is not obligated to complete all of the tasks that face one, but nor is he free to abstain from the work at the tasks that still face one."

That rule is true for individual human beings. It is also true for nations and communities and certainly for the State of Israel as it marks its sixtieth year of existence. Many happy returns!

Shabat shalom.

---

**Weekly Parsha :: EMOR :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

The beginning part of this week's parsha refers to the special laws and status regarding kohanim – the descendants of Aharon. It is common knowledge that a study based on the DNA samples of many current day kohanim revealed a common genetic strain amongst a considerable number of those who participated in the study. This strain was found to be common even amongst people who lived in different areas of the world separated by thousands of miles and centuries of differing ethnicities.

The jury is still out whether these DNA findings have any halachic validity and as to what exactly these findings prove. Over the centuries of Jewish life the kohanim have fiercely protected their lineal descent from Aharon and zealously guarded their status of legitimacy as being kohanim. Kohanim are held in high regard in the Jewish world and are entitled to certain special privileges and honors in the Jewish religious society.

Though it seems that it is permissible for a *kohein* to waive some of those privileges if he so wishes, preferred behavior dictates that he not do so. The status of the *kohein* is to be preserved as a remembrance of their special role in the Temple services in Jerusalem. But in a deeper sense it is to be preserved to remind us of their special mission "to guard with their lips knowledge and to teach Torah to those who request it."

They are to be a blessing to the people of Israel and they are commanded to in turn bless the people of Israel. Blessed are those that are commanded to bless others. Thus the status of a *kohein* is representative of all that is noble and positive in Jewish life and tradition – knowledge, Torah, grace, security and peace.

The question of *ersatz* kohanim is discussed widely in connection with halachic decisions. Not every person who claims to be a *kohein* is really a *kohein*. Since true pedigrees are very difficult to truly ascertain today, the halacha adopts a position that who is really a *kohein* is a matter of doubt. Therefore great rabbinic decisors, especially in the United States, have oftenm, in cases of dire circumstances, "annulled" the *kehuna* of an individual.

In the confusion of immigration to the United States at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries there were people who disguised themselves as kohanim in order to earn the monies of *pidyon haben* – the redemption of the first born son from the *kohein*. These people were charlatans, but many other simple Jews assumed that somehow they were kohanim without any real proof of the matter. Even tombstones that declared that one's father was a *kohein* were not to be accepted as definitive proof of the matter. Therefore the DNA results are most interesting and provocative.

The halacha has not yet determined with certainty the trustworthiness of DNA results in matters that require halachic decision. Therefore it is

premature to speculate whether DNA testing will ever be used as a method of determining one's true status as a kohein. But ever is a long time coming so we will have to see. Meanwhile the kohanim should retain their tradition of pedigree to the best of their abilities. Shabat shalom.

---

**TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Emor**  
**For the week ending 10 May 2008 / 5 Iyyar 5768**  
**from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu**  
**by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair**

#### OVERVIEW

The kohanim are commanded to avoid contact with corpses in order to maintain a high standard of ritual purity. They may attend the funeral of only their seven closest relatives: father, mother, wife, son, daughter, brother, and unmarried sister. The kohen gadol (High Priest) may not attend the funeral of even his closest relatives. Certain marital restrictions are placed on the kohanim. The nation is required to honor the kohanim. The physical irregularities that invalidate a kohen from serving in the Temple are listed. Terumah, a produce tithe given to the kohanim, may be eaten only by kohanim and their household. An animal may be sacrificed in the Temple after it is eight days old and is free from any physical defects. The nation is commanded to sanctify the Name of G-d by insuring that their behavior is always exemplary, and by being prepared to surrender their lives rather than murder, engage in licentious relations or worship idols. The special characteristics of the holidays are described, and the nation is reminded not to do certain types of creative work during these holidays. New grain may not be eaten until the omer of barley is offered in the Temple. The Parsha explains the laws of preparing the oil for the menorah and baking the lechem hapanim in the Temple. A man blasphemes G-d and is executed as prescribed in the Torah.

#### INSIGHTS

##### Concrete Time

“And you shall count to yourselves from the day after the Shabbat (which means the day after Pesach begins) from the day of your bringing the Omer offering which is waved, seven Shabbatot - complete and perfect they must be”. (23:15)

“When are they perfect? When they do the will of the Omnipresent.”(Midrash)

Nothing in this world lasts forever. Everything has its time and then passes. Even the heavens and the earth will pass into nothingness. Nevertheless, everything that comes into the world has a certain period of existence however short or long. However, there is one thing in the world whose existence has no span whatsoever. It is no sooner present than it has already passed, and is no longer.

That thing is time itself.

Every second that emerges into Creation is gone in the blink of an eye. Time passed is no longer, and every second becomes immediately and at once, the past.

Time can be made substantive, however. Man's actions in time, can give time itself an eternal existence. Every action gives the time in which that action is done the substance and the character of the action itself. Therefore, if we use our time to do a mitzvah, a kind act, or to learn Torah, then because mitzvot are eternal they in turn eternalize man's time.

This is what the Midrash means when it says “When are they (the weeks) perfect? When they do the will of the Omnipresent.” The Counting of The Omer is a paradigm for the years of the life of Man. The “Seven Shabbatot” allude to “The days of our years have in them seventy years.” (Tehillim). The mitzvah of Counting The Omer demands that “complete and perfect they must be.”

When those hours do the will of G-d, then Time itself stays eternally concrete and substantial.

Source for ‘Concrete Time’: Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin

##### Bored With Breathing

“And you will bring a new ‘mincha’ offering to G-d”

Are you “burned out”?

You seem to hear that phrase a lot these days. “I’m ‘burned out’ from this; I’m ‘burned out’ from that.” “I’m bored with this; It’s just lost its excitement for me.”

Why do people burn out?

Take two people working hard, one self-employed, the other working for a salary. There’s a big difference between them. Usually, when we work for a salary, our interest in the company is because it provides us with a living. If the company doesn’t do well and there is no bonus to look forward to, our apathy, rather than our enthusiasm, tends to grow.

When we are self-employed, on the other hand, we put our very soul into our work. We are the company. We enjoy our moments of triumph and we grieve over our disasters, but bored and burned out? Never.

Unlike the salaried employee whose remuneration is fixed from the beginning with only limited scope for profit participation, a self-employed person knows that the sky’s the limit. The company’s success is our success.

When we learn Torah we should think of it like it was our own business. In your own business, if things aren’t going right, who is there to put them right? Only yourself. If it takes extra time at the office, we would certainly, and gladly, put in the extra hours.

When we sit down to learn Torah do we mentally “punch in”? Are we waiting for the next coffee break? Or do we feel the exuberance and challenge of our learning as though it was ‘our own business’?

How does the Torah refer to the monumental event of its giving at Sinai?

“And you will bring a new ‘mincha’ offering to G-d.”

Why is the reference so oblique? It’s true that at the Festival of Shavuot we do bring a “new mincha offering to G-d”, but is that the most conspicuous aspect of Shavuot? How about the giving of the Torah itself? Wouldn’t it have been more appropriate to spell out that on this day the Torah was given at Sinai? And yet it is with these few covert words that the Torah hints to the central event of Judaism. Why?

The Torah doesn’t specify the date of its giving because it doesn’t

want us to feel that it was given as a “one-off” event. Rather, it

wants us to feel it’s being given to us every day. G-d wants us to

receive the Torah every day as though we were hearing it for the first time on Sinai

The Torah is our life’s breath.

We breathe millions of times in our lifetime, but no one gets tired of breathing. Why not? Since we understand that our life depends on breathing it’s not a subject for boredom. Boredom can only set in when a person sees something as optional. Breathing isn’t optional; it’s obligatory.

We should feel the same way about the Torah, for it is our life’s breath.

Sources for ‘Bored With Breathing’: Kli Yakar, Moser Derech, Rabbi Simcha Wasserman, Rabbi Yaakov Niman, Rabbi Meir Chadash

---

#### Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

##### PARSHAS EMOR

**Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, each of you shall not contaminate himself to a (dead) person among his people.” (21:1)**

The Midrash comments, “It is written, ‘The fear of Hashem is pure, enduring forever,’” (Tehillim 19:10). Rabbi Levi says, “From the fear that Aharon feared of Hashem, he merited to receive the parsha of taharah, ritual purity, which does not leave his family forever. This is a reference to the parsha that deals with becoming tamei to a corpse. The commentators cite the pasuk in Malachi 2:5, “I gave these to him (the founders of the Priestly line of Levi, Aharon and his great-grandson, Pinchas) for the sake of the fear which he feared Me.” This is a reference to Aharon HaKohen who accepted the Torah from Moshe Rabbeinu with trepidation and fear. The Midrash relates that when Moshe anointed Aharon with the anointing oil, Aharon trembled and said, “Woe is me, perhaps I have defiled the holy oil.” In other words, Aharon’s consummate fear of Heaven was the reason that Hashem chose him to be the Kohen Gadol.

Horav Gedalyah Schorr, zl, suggests an alternative explanation. When Hashem created the attribute of fear, it was so that people would fear danger, frightening people, precarious situations, etc. Some fear calamity, while others fear illness. Some individuals shudder from the thought of a

natural disaster, while others stand in trepidation of an evil empire. For the average person, fear is very real, engulfing a person in one way or another. Not so, Aharon HaKohen, the quintessential yarei Shomayim. Instead of wasting Hashem's creation of fear on inconsequential fear, he focused it entirely on Hashem. He feared only Hashem: nothing and no one else. He understood that there is nothing to fear but the Almighty Who controls everything. This is the meaning of the pasuk in Malachi which attributes Kehunah Gedolah, the High Priesthood, to Aharon because of his exceptional sense of yiraas Shomayim: "I gave these to him for the sake of fear - I gave him the ability to fear all that is frightening, and he went and 'he feared Me.'" He took that fear and focused it only on Me.

In truth, this should be the focus for all of us. Of whom are we really afraid? Everything is up to Hashem; everything is controlled by Him. Therefore, we channel our fear towards the incorrect source. If we would fear only Hashem, we would realize that there is nothing else to fear, because everything is in His hands.

In any event, the Midrash is teaching us that, as a result of Aharon's exemplary sense of yiraas Shomayim, he was privileged to have the parsha of tamei meis directed to him and his descendants. This is enigmatic. Is it necessary to have a special merit to warrant having this parsha directed only to the Kohen? Why is it that only a Kohen is prohibited from coming in contact with a corpse? Furthermore, how is it a privilege that one earns through special merit?

Rav Schorr explains that the Kohanim were imbued with a unique koach ha'taharah, power of purity, which is part of their essence, which they must constantly strive to preserve and maintain. It was in the merit of Aharon's fear of Heaven that they originally received this unusual power. It is in their enduring development of—and adherence to—this special virtue that they continue to exemplify taharah.

**Each of you shall not contaminate himself to a (dead) person among his people. (21:1)**

The word b'amov, "among his people," teaches us a powerful lesson. If the deceased is "among his people," meaning that there are other Jews available to care for the body and take responsibility for a quick and proper burial, then a Kohen may not participate and become tamei, contaminate himself, to the body. If, however, the corpse is isolated, with no one around to arrange a burial, a situation which is referred to as meis mitzvah, then even the Kohen Gadol is required to involve himself in burying the corpse. Let us try to digest this halachah. Tumaas meis, the spiritual defilement that emanates from a corpse, is extremely stringent. It is the highest, most intense form of tumah. It teaches us that the departure of the neshamah, soul, creates a void created in the human body. A human being is the repository of a holy neshamah. While the neshamah is within him, the individual is tahor, ritually pure, clean and holy. The moment the neshamah leaves his body, this all changes and tumah sets in. Thus, even though Kohanim may become tamei to their seven close relatives, the Kohen Gadol, who must maintain a strict standard of holiness and purity, may not become tamei even to his close relatives. He may neither leave the Mikdash, nor may he defile his state of kedushah, holiness.

Nonetheless, this entire exalted level of kedushah is set aside, indeed, abrogated, when it comes into conflict with kavod ha'brios, the respect and dignity to be accorded to a human being. How great is the respect one must demonstrate towards the body of a person which serves as the receptacle for the neshamah, that even the Kohen Gadol who is never permitted to defile himself - even to his close relatives - must be metameh himself for a meis mitzvah. If a Jewish corpse lay in disrespect with no one to bury it, then the Kohen Gadol must do so. From the highest level of kedushah, to the nadir of tumah, all of this is set aside for kavod ha'brios, the dignity of man.

Human dignity plays a critical role in life. The dignity of every man is sacred and must, therefore, be preserved. Moshe Rabbeinu carefully weighed each word he said in his final rebuke to Klal Yisrael, in order not to cause anyone any undo embarrassment. Indeed, the obligation to protect the feeling and dignity of our fellow man applies not only to the righteous, or even to the common man, but rather, it applies even to the lowliest and coarsest components of the nation. This is clearly demonstrated in the Talmud Gittin 57a where Rabbi Elazar notes the seriousness of putting a

man to shame. Bar Kamtza was a man of exceptionally base character, a man who had no qualms about disparaging his own coreligionists to the Roman emperor, and, as a result, was the vehicle that catalyzed so much death and destruction. Yet, even his dignity was held sacred. The humiliation of this vile person brought upon Klal Yisrael the loss of its Bais Hamikdash, because Hashem espoused the cause of Bar Kamtza.

The list goes on, with Hashem punishing the donkey who rebuked Bilaam. Certainly, Bilaam was not a person who contributed to the value of spiritual life in this world. Yet, he was a human being who was humiliated, and therefore, Hashem championed his cause.

As mentioned earlier, the principle of kavod ha'brios finds expression in the halachah that states, "Rabbinic enactments and various scriptural prohibitions are set aside when they conflict with human respect and dignity" (Berachos 19b). Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, demonstrates that the concept of kavod ha'brios does not stop at refraining from insulting or degrading one's fellow human being. One is obliged to enhance and even magnify his fellow human being's prestige and honor. The Talmud in Chullin 6b relates that Chizkiyahu HaMelech destroyed the copper snake that Moshe Rabbeinu had fashioned in the wilderness. This was because the people were getting carried away and beginning to worship this copper snake as an idol. The Talmud wonders why none of Chizkiyahu's predecessors destroyed the copper image, especially after they had destroyed all of the other idols. They explain that makom hinichu l'hisgader, "They left him (Chizkiyahu) room for accomplishment!" In other words, they left him the opportunity to enhance his own reputation by destroying what had become an idol. We learn from here that augmenting Chizkiyahu's prestige and allowing for his reputation to achieve lasting fame was more important than destroying a troublesome idol - even at the expense of desecrating Hashem's Name.

Rav Chaim explains that our surprise at the overwhelming significance attributed to kavod ha'brios is the result of our lack of comprehension of the towering stature of a human being. Were we to recognize and appreciate the incredible potential inherent in every human being, we would not marvel at the honor that is due. Man is created in the image of G-d. Thus, he has the ability to scale unfathomable heights. Indeed, it takes a great person to perceive the inherent greatness of man.

The Chazon Ish, zl, was such an individual. His yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, coupled with his emunah, faith, in the Almighty, coalesced to form an individual whose essence was a symphony of praise for Hashem, characterized by an appreciation for the majesty of those who study His Torah and strive to emulate His ways. His love for man was a product of his extreme love for his Creator. He wrote: "I take pleasure in gladdening the hearts of others, and I feel it a great obligation never to cause any discomfort to any man - even for a moment."

This is how he lived his life, as this principle guided his actions and relationships with people. In 1951, a polio epidemic swept across the Holy Land, leaving devastation in its wake. Many children were sacrificed to its effects. One day, one of the rebbeim at the Lomza Yeshivah related to the Chazon Ish about an especially tragic story of a young child who had died. He was an only child to his devastated parents who were inconsolable from grief. In addition, they had received few visitors during the week of shiva, seven-day mourning period, since people were afraid of attracting some of the lingering germs. Immediately, the Chazon Ish asked, "Do you think that my visit will be of some importance to them?" When the rebbe replied in the affirmative, the Chazon Ish immediately rose to leave for the individual's house.

The Chazon Ish was slightly near-sighted, and he often studied without his glasses. Nonetheless, he would never leave his apartment without wearing his glasses, explaining, "Without glasses, I might not notice someone's nod or other form of greeting, which might, chas v'shalom, Heaven forbid, offend them."

A reporter for a secularist newspaper related that he was curious about this great man called the Chazon Ish. He wanted to know what made him so special. After making the trip to Bnei Brak, the Chazon Ish invited the reporter to take a walk with him. They were walking slowly, in silence, when suddenly the Chazon Ish slowed down markedly. When the reporter expressed his wonderment, the Chazon Ish explained, "In front of us walks

a cripple. It is not proper to pass by with our sure, healthy steps. Better to slow down and remain behind him.” This was a powerful example of the Chazon Ish’s greatness. A rosh yeshivah once came to the Chazon Ish and asked to have hataras neder, an annulment of a vow he had made. The Chazon Ish asked a scholar with whom he had been speaking to serve as the second member of a bais din, judicial court of three, and he asked someone to check the street for a third “judge”. A third individual joined them shortly. The bais din was convened, and the three judges performed the necessary annulment. After the third judge who had been brought in from the street had left, the Chazon Ish said, “We must do this once again. I know the individual who served as our third judge, and, although he is a wonderful, virtuous person, he is not learned, which is a requisite for being a judge for the annulment of a vow. Once you called him in, I did not want to say anything for fear of humiliating him.”

In closing, I quote Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, who cites the Talmud in Bava Metzia 86b that recounts how Avraham Avinu welcomed the three wayfarers to his tent: “Let some water be brought and wash your feet” (Bereishis 18:4). Avraham did not know that they were really angels. He thought they were Arabs who worshipped the dust of their feet, and he refused to permit an object of idolatry to enter his home. Chazal relate that the angels responded to Avraham, “Do you suspect us of being Arabs who bow down to the dust of their feet?” Because of Avraham’s error, because he wrongly suspected the angels of being Arabs, Yishmael descended from him! Imagine how much pain Avraham must have been experiencing post Bris Milah, yet he served the guests. Due to one error in judgment, he was punished with a son like Yishmael. This is the lesson of kavod ha’brios, human dignity - human potential: never belittle it.

**He (the Kohen Gadol) shall not marry a widow, a divorcee, a desecrated woman, or a harlot. (21:14)**

The Torah has already prohibited a Kohen from marrying a divorcee, a desecrated woman, or a harlot. Why does it repeat itself concerning the Kohen Gadol? After all, the Kohen Gadol is a regular Kohen with some added mitzvos. Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, explains that added mitzvos elevate and transform the individual to the point that he becomes an entirely new being. Thus, since a Kohen possesses more mitzvos than the rest of Klal Yisrael, his relationship to mitzvos - even those that apply to the rest of the Jewish nation - is different. His Shabbos is different than the Shabbos of other Jews. When the Torah states the mitzvos that apply to the common Kohen and retools them for the Kohen Gadol, they are not simply added mitzvos - they are a completely new application for an entirely different person. The prohibition that applied to the Kohen in general is not the same as the one which applies to the Kohen Gadol, because the Kohen Gadol is a different entity as a result of his additional mitzvos. The Kohen Gadol’s relationship with all mitzvos is different than that of other Kohanim, due to his unique and exalted status.

We must remember that when we say the words asher kideshanu b’mitzvosav, ‘Who sanctified us through His commandments,’ we mean just that. Every time we perform a mitzvah, we become elevated to a higher status and become different people than we were before we performed the mitzvah.

**When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not remove completely the corners of your field. and you shall gather the gleanings of your harvest; for the poor and the proselyte shall you leave them. (23:22)**

The Sifri notes this pasuk’s placement in middle of the chapter dealing with the Moadim, Festivals. They explain that the Torah is teaching us the significance of leaving gifts for the poor. It is regarded as if one had shared in the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash and brought his korbanos, sacrifices, there. This explains the placement of this pasuk amidst the Moadim, but it does not address its location right in middle of the Festival of Shavuous, celebrating the Giving of the Torah. Horav Yerachmiel Krom, Shlita, distinguishes the mitzvos sichlios, “common sense” mitzvos—which are basically humanitarian in nature, easy to understand and accept, those that quite possibly one could figure out on his own—from those that are beyond human cognition.

It is important for a Jew to understand that the Torah has 613 mitzvos, all of which were given to us by Hashem, and that the only reason for us to

carry out these mitzvos, regardless of their rationale, is that Hashem commanded us to do so. The only protection against the yetzer hora, evil inclination, is the Torah and the yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, generated by our adherence to its precepts. When we perform certain mitzvos because they “seem right” or they are humanitarian, we fall into the trap of allowing our minds to decide what is important and what is not. In a lecture to the student body of the Rabbiner Seminar in Berlin, a yeshivah comprised of students who were both G-d-fearing and erudite, the Rosh Hayeshivah of Baranovitz, Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, explained the significance of yiraas Shomayim as the only factor in determining and motivating one’s proper behavior. Ethics, culture, refinement and intelligence do not protect the individual from falling into the abyss of immorality, cruelty and behavior fitting for the lowest of the low.

The Rosh Yeshivah cited Avraham Avinu’s excuse to Avimelech, explaining why he had claimed that Sarah Ineinu was his sister. He said, “Because I said there is but no fear of G-d in this place and they will slay me because of my wife” (Bereishis 20:11). The word rak, but, seems superfluous. He should have simply said, “There is no fear of G-d in this place.” Why does he add the word “but”? Rav Elchanan replied with the same reply that is presented by the Malbim in his commentary to the Chumash: Avraham was teaching Avimelech that intellect and ethics, character refinement and proper demeanor, if motivated by one’s logic, are no guarantee that this person will not act totally paradoxical if his lust is aroused or if his intellect is “turned off.” Seichel, common sense and logic do not protect one from sin. Only yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, of the Divine supervisor, Who oversees every one of our actions, protects us from falling into the nadir of depravity. The fear of Hashem and the overwhelming shame associated with sinning in His Presence, knowing that He watches what we do and knows what goes on in our minds, are the only real deterrents from sin.

This is what Avraham told Avimelech: “Whereas I have noted that your nation is advanced in their intellect, their character traits are refined, and their demeanor is graceful and impressive. Indeed, there is rak, but only one, deficiency that I notice: there is no yiraas Elokim, fear of G-d, imbedded in your people. It is this one virtue which is most important to me, because, without it, the other attributes are inconsequential. My life is not secure in such a place. They would easily kill me to get at my wife.

Rav Elchanan gave this lecture on the eve of World War II, when the most cultured European nation, Germany, was about to unleash a war of terror that would demonstrate beyond any shadow of a doubt the veracity of the above statement: without yiraas Shomayim one can become a monster.

Horav Meir Simchah HaKohen, zl, m’Dvinsk explains the pesukim with which we commenced our thought. The Torah tells us in the beginning of this chapter about the Festival of Shavuous, “You shall convoke on this very day - there shall be a holy convocation for yourselves - you shall do no laborious work; it is an eternal decree in your dwelling places for all generations.” Why? Because this is the day on which the Torah was given to us. It is the day that Hashem selected us to become His holy nation. One might think that the joy of receiving the Torah is applicable only concerning those mitzvos that are not clearly rational, such as Tefillin, mixing wool and linen, circumcision, etc. No! On Shavuous we received all the mitzvos, the entire Torah - even, the mitzvos that are seemingly rational, as tzedakah, loving the proselyte, performing acts of loving-kindness. It all came to us from Hashem. Unless one believes that a mitzvah such as honoring one’s parents is founded and based in the Torah, and that is the reason for carrying it out, he can eventually disregard even such a rational mitzvah - when it does not “agree” with him. This is why the mitzvah of tzedakah is placed right in middle of the Festival of the Giving of the Torah; to teach us that the reason for giving tzedakah is the Torah - nothing else. In fact, in a shmuess, ethical discourse, Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, commented that although a person’s natural instinct is to love to give charity and despise usury, once the Torah commands it, the mitzvah should become our primary motivation for fulfilling the giving of tzedakah and abhorring the taking of usury.

Rav Chaim gives a powerful mashal, analogy, to help us better understand this concept. Imagine, before us on the table is a spoiled, disgusting plate

of food. In addition, someone has placed a powerful poison into the food that would immediately kill whoever eats it. Obviously, nobody will touch the plate. The question is: Why? Is it because it is disgusting, or is it because it is poison? The correct answer should be: Naturally, one would not eat it because of its loathsome condition, but now that it is poison, its foul taste is secondary to its lethal properties. This is what the Torah has done for us. We now understand that mitzvah observance is therapeutic, and transgression is detrimental to our spiritual health. We also know that the only determining factor for success is Torah adherence. Otherwise, we are like everybody else. For those who do not understand what that means: Look around contemporary society.

#### **Va'ani Tefillah**

**Ki Hu amar vayeHi, Hu tzivah va'yaamad.**

**For He spoke and it was; He commanded and it stood.**

We must endeavor to understand the reason for what seems to be a redundancy in the text. The Shaar Bas Rabim explains that essentially the koach ha'briah, power to create, and koach ha'kiyum, power to sustain, are two unique and distinct forces. In order for the world to exist, however, both are essential. Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, takes a somewhat alternate approach. He understands, "He spoke and it was," as referring to Creation ex-Nihillo from nothing. The second part of the pasuk, "He commanded and it stood," denotes the principle that the continuous existence of the universe is totally dependent upon Hashem's continuous command that it continue to exist.

Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, comments that all of the acts of G-d at the time of yetzias Mitzrayim, the exodus from Egypt—and particularly the miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea—have demonstrated that He Who "Spoke and it was" is also the One Who "commanded and it stood still." These miracles have shown the world that His will reigns supreme in the word which He "called" into being. With only one signal from Him, the entire world order—which He Himself has created and upon whose alleged blind, masterless constancy men base their plans—comes to an utter standstill.

Sponsored in memory of my Rebbe by Charles & Debby Zuchowski and Family

---

#### **Rabbi Frand Yissocher on Parshas Emor**

##### **Customs Going Back To The Days of Pharisees and the Sadducees**

Parshas Emor contains the Biblical command of Counting the Omer: "And you shall count for yourselves on the morrow of the Sabbath, from the day when you bring the Omer of the waving, seven weeks, they shall be complete." [Vayikra 23:15]. The interpretation of the phrase "on the morrow of the Sabbath" (m'macharas haShabbos) was one of the classic debates between the Tzedukim and the Perushim [Sadducees and Pharisees].

Rabbinic interpretation, based on the tradition of the Oral Law, was that the "morrow of the rest day" meant the day after the first day of Pesach, namely the 16th of Nissan. It is based on this tradition that our practice is to begin counting the Omer on the second day of Pesach.

The Tzedukim were literalists who did not believe in the Oral Law, and interpreted "the morrow of the Sabbath" to mean Sunday. Thus, the Sunday of Pesach would be the first day of the Omer count and the holiday of Shavuos would always be Sunday, 7 weeks later.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach made an interesting observation. The Shabbos before Pesach is referred to as "The Great Sabbath" (Shabbos haGadol), and there are dozens of explanations why this is so. Rav Shlomo Zalman offered his own interesting conjecture.

We see from this pasuk [verse] that the first day of the Yom Tov of Pesach is called Shabbos. Thus, the week of Pesach contains within it two days called "Shabbos" — the normal Shabbos day, and the first day of Pesach which is also called Shabbos. How does one differentiate between a "regular Shabbos" and "Shabbos that is really Pesach"? Rav Shlomo Zalman answers that the regular Shabbos is called "Gadol" as it states (in the Sabbath addition to the Birkat HaMazon) "for this day is 'Gadol' (i.e. — great) before you". Since the regular Shabbos is called 'Gadol,' the Shabbos before Pesach — to distinguish it from the other day that week called Shabbos -- is known as "Shabbos haGadol".

Rav Shlomo Zalman also has another interesting observation. When we call someone for an Aliyah to the Torah, we call him REB so-and-so ben so-and-so. Where did this term "REB" come from? Rav Shlomo Zalman suggests that perhaps this custom began with the Tzedukim and the Perushim. The people who followed the Perushim were the Rabbanan (followers of the Rabbis). Every follower of the Perushim therefore had the title "Reb", that signified which camp he belonged to. It was a badge of honor to be called Reb, meaning the person was not a Tzeduki, but rather a follower of the Rabbis.

#### **There Is Capital Punishment, But Only After We Learn To Appreciate Human Life**

The end of Parshas Emor contains the parsha of the Blasphemer (Megadef). The son of an Egyptian father and a Jewish mother got into a fight and uttered a blasphemy against the Name of Almighty. The people did not know what to do with such a person. His case was brought before Moshe. In the meantime, the blasphemer was placed under guard. At this point, Hashem taught Moshe that the punishment for blasphemy is stoning (s'kila) by the entire congregation. [Vayikra 24:10-16].

In order for the narrative to continue smoothly, at this point it should say, "Moshe spoke to the children of Israel and they brought the blasphemer outside the camp and they all stoned him. And the children of Israel did as Moshe commanded." [Vayikra 24:23]

The Torah does indeed teach this, but only after a six verse tangent that seems to interrupt the narration of the blasphemer. The "tangent" reads as follows:

"And a man -- if he strikes mortally any human life, he shall be put to death. And a man who strikes mortally an animal life shall make restitution, a life for a life. And if a man inflicts a wound in his fellow, as he did, so shall be done to him: A break for a break, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; just as he will have inflicted a wound on a person, so shall be inflicted upon him. One who strikes an animal shall make restitution, and one who strikes a person shall be put to death. There shall be one law for you, it shall be for convert and native alike, for I, Hashem, am your G-d." [Vayikra 24:17-22]

How are we to understand this strange interruption in the narrative? Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, explained that this section marks the first time in Jewish history that capital punishment was being carried out. This was a very significant event.

Taking a life is not a small matter. We do not execute the blasphemer because life is cheap. The Almighty wanted to emphasize to people that they were about to kill another human being. "But you should know that killing another human being under other circumstances (when it is not because he is being executed by the Court for committing a capital offense) is a terrible thing. Under normal circumstances, one who kills another person shall himself be put to death. Not only that, but if a person even wounds his fellow man then he deserves to pay with an 'eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'."

We know that this expression is not to be interpreted literally. Rabbinic exegesis teaches that this means that one has to pay the value of an eye or the value of a tooth. But there is a very interesting Rashbam in Parshas Mishpatim. The Rashbam asks, why is the Almighty making life difficult for us? If the Torah wanted to teach that one is obligated to make monetary restitution for such cases, why didn't it say so explicitly? Why do we need to hear, up until today, that the Torah is barbaric because it demands "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"?

The Rashbam explains by emphasizing there is a difference between peshuto shel mikra [the literal meaning of a text] and Rabbinic exegesis. Even though we practice halacha according to Rabbinic exegesis, we do not disregard "peshuto shel mikra" entirely. The literal meaning teaches important lessons. There is a message in peshuto shel mikra. The message in this case is that technically speaking, this is what should happen to a person: if he knocks out someone's eye, he should have his own eye put out. So severe a sin is it to damage another person that it really should require 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'.

Were it not for the fact that there was an Oral Law (to temper the literal meaning), Hashem could never have recorded the Written Law in this

fashion. People would be misled. Given the fact however that we do have an Oral Law, the literal meaning of the verse gives us another dimension of understanding in terms of what the law should morally really be.

Once the Torah has clearly spelled out the important lesson of the value of life and the value of property in this "tangent", then and only then can it proceed to conclude the narrative. Once the children of Israel have integrated the teaching of the importance of human life and property into their personalities, then and only then, were they allowed to go out and proceed with an execution of the blasphemer, the first execution in Jewish history.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD  
RavFrاند, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frاند and Torah.org.

---

### [Rav Kook List]

#### Israel Independence Day : Yom Ha'Atzma'ut Rav Kook and Zionism

During the controversy over the Heter Mechirah of the Sabbatical year, Rabbi Yaakov David Wilovsky (the 'Ridbaz') of Safed leveled a serious accusation. He accused Rav Kook of abandoning his religious beliefs and becoming a Zionist in his old age. (In fact, Rav Kook was imbued with a deep love for Eretz Yisrael from a very early age.)

For an Orthodox rabbi to support a secular movement that publicly proclaimed that it has nothing to do with religion' was close to heresy. Indeed, Rav Kook's outlook on secular Zionism is a complex topic, the subject of numerous books and academic articles, and certainly beyond the scope of a short essay. Nonetheless, the following quotes from his writings and letters shed light on his views on this secular and often anti-religious movement.

#### Historical Precedents

Rav Kook noted that our generation is not the first to experience a return to the land of Israel lead primarily by Jews lax in religious observance. When Ezra led the return to Eretz Yisrael in the beginning of the Second Temple Period, many of the settlers who joined him were Sabbath-desecrators and worse; and yet this was a period of tremendous expansion of Torah wisdom.

Also during the corrupt reign of Herod, the nation suffered from a cruel leadership far removed from Jewish ideals. The irony of Herod as the builder of the holy Temple is even bitterer, Rav Kook wrote, than the current phenomenon of secularists building up the Holy Land. But the external construction, the physical bricks, "may be carried by those who fail to penetrate the profound secrets of the righteous. And not just bricks - they may even be the ones orchestrating the construction."

#### The Positive Influence of Eretz Yisrael

Rav Kook suggested that we need not be overly concerned about the quality of Jews arriving in the Land, for the Land will naturally determine who is deserving of living in it.

"There is no need to check the level of kashrut of those who come, for the Land will vomit out the true chaff; and those who remain shall be called 'holy.' Just as we do not separate food from its natural dregs before eating it, but rather leave this process to life's natural functions."

Furthermore, the merit of the Land helps even the unworthy:

"The merit of the Land even guards over the wicked. Even a non-Jewish maidservant in the Land of Israel is promised a portion in the World to Come [Ketubot 111a]. Certainly the Talmud is not speaking of a righteous maidservant, who would anyway merit the World to Come .. Rather this is an ordinary maidservant, with sordid deeds and evil traits. Nonetheless, the merit of living in the land of Israel helps her gain a portion in the World to Come. ..

"All the more so that one may find in each Jew, even the most unworthy, precious gems of good deeds and positive traits; certainly the Land of Israel helps elevate and sanctify them. And if this is not evident in them, it will become so in their descendants."

#### Sacred Roots

Despite the current secular nature of Zionism, the return to Zion in our generation was first promoted by great tzaddikim, and Zionism still derives its spiritual nourishment from these holy roots.

"In previous times, God's counsel appeared to the unique righteous, the elevated holy of previous generations, who ignited in the hearts of God's people a holy inner fire, a burning love for the holiness of Eretz Yisrael. Due to their efforts, individuals gathered in the desolate Land, until significant areas became a garden of Eden, and a large and important community of the entire people of Israel has settled in our holy land. ...

"But recently, little by little each tzaddik and truly great scholar has abandoned the settlement of the Holy Land ... And this holy work has gradually passed over to those lacking in knowledge and deed... Yet we see that their dedication in deed and action is nourished from the initial efforts of the true tzaddikim, who instilled the holy desire to rebuild the Holy Land and return our exiles to it."

#### Breaking of the Vessels

Rav Kook compared the fall of Zionism into the hands of the secularists with the 'breaking of vessels' that took place during Creation. The original light and holiness was simply too great to be contained within the limitations of the physical vessels. It is our task, he wrote, to return these fallen sparks to their elevated source.

But why did the return to the Land of Israel need to be appropriated by a secular nationalist movement? Rav Kook attempted to solve this Divine secret by discerning certain aspects lacking in the traditional Jew.

"The fundamental moral force hidden in [the Zionist movement] ... is its catch-phrase, 'the entire nation.' This nationalism proclaims .. that it seeks the deliverance of Klal Yisrael, the entire Jewish people. It does not concern itself with individuals or parties or sectors. ... And with this perspective, it reaches out to the Land of Israel and the love of Zion with an unusual bravery and courage."

"It is clear that we cannot confront this adversary without the same elevated moral strength that speaks in the name of the entire nation, all of Israel. We may not distinguish and divide; we may not say, 'This one is ours and we worry about him, but this one is not.' .. [We must] care in heart and soul about the welfare of the entire nation and its salvation, in the widest possible meaning."

Additionally, Rav Kook explained that the pre-Messianic Era requires a more practical, materialistic orientation so that the Jewish people may return to their land as a healthy, balanced nation, after centuries of a detached statelessness in exile.

"We have a tradition that there will be a spiritual revolt in Eretz Yisrael and the Jewish people during the initial period of national revival.. The aspirations for sublime and holy ideals will cease and the national spirit will sink... The need for this revolt will be the tendency for materialism, which must be powerfully generated in the entire nation after the passage of so many years in which the need and possibility of material pursuits were completely absent. When born, this proclivity will trample angrily and stir up storms. These are the birth pangs of the Messianic Era." [Orot HaTechiyah 44 p. 84]

However, secular Zionism can only bring about the external rebuilding of the Jewish people in their homeland. The complete rebuilding will only come about when Zionism is restored to its original holiness.

"Secular nationalism may be defiled with much defilement, hiding many evil spirits. But we will not succeed by expelling this movement from the nation's soul. Rather we must energetically return it to its elevated source, to combine it with the original holiness from which it flows." [Orot HaTechiyah 22 p. 75]

#### True Zionism

And what about the Ridbaz's accusations that Rav Kook had become a Zionist? Rav Kook responded that Zionism, when based on its true ideals, is nothing to be ashamed of:

"My dear friend! If all of the Zionists would love the Land of Israel and desire the settlement of the Holy Land for the same reason and holy goal

that I intend - because it is God's land, that God chose and loves out of the entire world, containing special holy qualities for prophesy and Divine inspiration ...

"If all of the Zionists were to think this way, then it would be certainly a great honor for every important rabbi and Torah scholar and tzaddik to be such a Zionist. Even your honor should find nothing embarrassing in this form of Zionism."

[Based on Igrot Hare'iyah vol. I pp. 56, 88, 207-208 (1907); vol. I p. 448 (1910); vol. II pp. 171-172, 194-195 (1913); vol. III pp. 157-158 (1918)]  
Comments and inquiries may be sent to: RavKookList@gmail.com

---

## Haftorah :: Parshas Emor :: Yechezkel 44:15 by Rabbi Dovid Siegel

This week's haftorah gives us a glimpse into the kohanim's status during Mashiach's times. The prophet Yechezkel begins by directing our attention to the specific regulations of the kohanim's garb. He then refers to their restriction from wine and shaving and mentions their prohibition from marrying certain women. This list seems to be, at first glance, a total repetition of the details of our parsha. Yet, a more careful analysis reveals to us something shocking about the elevated status of the ordinary kohain of Mashiach's times. His restrictions and regulations are similar to those of the Kohain Gadol mentioned in this week's parsha. This suggests that the ordinary kohain's spiritual status will be likened to that of the Kohain Gadol. Evidently, the Jewish people's status will be so elevated that the ordinary kohain will assume levels of sanctity tantamount to the most sanctified person of earlier times.

The prophet Yechezkel conveys this message by drawing our focus to the priestly garb during their service. It will be exclusively linen rather than the customary complex woolen and golden material of earlier times. In addition, the kohanim will be forbidden to wear their garb outside the Bais Hamikdash thereby limiting all mundane association with the garb. Their hair length will be regulated and limited to that of the Kohain Gadol of earlier times - not too long, not too short. They will even be forbidden to marry widows thus limiting their marriage to virgins. (see comments of Radak, Abravenel and Malbim to these respective passages) All of these regulations run parallel lines with those of the earlier Kohain Gadol. In fact, some of them were previously prescribed for the Kohain Gadol during his elevated Yom Kippur service. We conclude from this that the daily Temple service of Mashiach's times will assume higher levels of devotion than ever and resemble, on some level, the Yom Kippur service of earlier generations. The earlier experience of the Kohain Gadol on the holiest of all days in the holiest of all places will eventually become part of the daily service of Mashiach's times!

In order to digest this overwhelming development let us study the inner workings of the Kohain Gadol. In this week's parsha, the Torah gives us the reason for the Kohain Gadol's elevated status. After listing all his specific regulations the Torah states "And he should not leave the Mikdash and not profane the sanctity of Hashem because the crown of Hashem is upon his head." (Vayikra 21:12) Sefer HaChinuch (in Mitzva 270) elaborates upon the concept of "the crown of Hashem". He cites the opinion of the Rambam (in Hilchos Klei Hamikdash 5:7) that the Kohain Gadol was confined to the Bais Hamikdash area throughout his entire day of service. In addition, Rambam teaches us that the Kohain Gadol was forbidden to leave the holy city of Yerushalayim during nightly hours. This produced an incredible focus on Hashem and His service yielding the supreme sanctity of the Kohain Gadol. Sefer HaChinuch profoundly states, "Although the Kohain Gadol was human he was designated to be Holy of Holies. His soul ranked amongst the angels constantly cleaving to Hashem thus detaching the Kohain Gadol from all mundane interests and concerns." (ad loc) Sefer HaChinuch understands the Kohain Gadol's elevated sanctity as a product of his total immersion in the service of Hashem. His surroundings of total sanctity together with his constant focus on Hashem and His service produced the holiest man on earth. His

elevated life-style was restricted to one of total sanctity because his total interest and focus were devoted to purity and sanctity.

We can now appreciate the sanctity of the ordinary kohain of Mashiach's times and its message for us. First, a word about the general status of the Jewish people during that era. The prophet Yeshaya refers to this illustrious time in the following terms, "And the land will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem likened to the water that fills the sea." (Yeshaya11:9) Rambam elaborates upon this and states, "And in this time there will be no jealousy or quarreling... the preoccupation of all will be 'to know Hashem'...the Jewish people will be great scholars who will understand Hashem to maximum human capacity." (Hilchos M'lochim 12:5) In essence, the entire Jewish nation will be absorbed in learning Hashem's truthful ways. Their total focus will be on Hashem's expression in every aspect of life thus revealing more and more of His unlimited goodness and knowledge. It stands to reason that if this will be the knowledge of the ordinary Jew, how much greater will be that of the kohain who is privileged to stand in the actual presence of Hashem! One cannot begin contemplating the ordinary kohain's daily experience with Hashem. His profound knowledge of Hashem together with his direct and constant association with Him will truly elevate him to the sanctity of "Holy of Holies". His awareness of Hashem's presence will therefore, in certain ways, become tantamount to that of the Kohain Gadol on the holiest day of the year. May we soon merit to witness and experience such elevated levels of sanctity, so sorely needed in our times.

Rabbi Dovid Siegel is Rosh Kollel of Kollel Toras Chaim of Kiryat Sefer, Israel.  
Copyright © 2008 by Rabbi Dovid Siegel and Torah.org.

---

## h a a r e t z

### Portion of the Week / Broken but worthy By Benjamin Lau

In this week's portion, we read that priests with physical defects could not serve in the portable Tabernacle or the Temple in Jerusalem: "Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God" (Leviticus 21:17). The physically disabled person's exclusion from service in the Temple is anathema to a society that considers all human beings equal.

The responses of both early and later biblical commentators do not effectively address this issue. Rashi links this prohibition to the way in which flesh-and-blood monarchs and governors are treated: "When the Torah tells us, 'Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God,' it is saying that such people should not approach the temple, as it is written, '... offer it now unto thy governor' (Malachi 1:8)."

Rashi refers to Malachi's prophecy, which compares service in the Temple to an appearance before a pasha (governor): "A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: If then I be a father, where is mine honor? And if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 1:6-8).

The idea expressed here, which Rashi echoes, is that worship in the Temple must be regarded in the same manner with which we regard ceremonies in the palaces of monarchs and governors. The prophet Malachi, who lived during the Persian era, was thinking of a Persian pasha, who would behead anyone guilty of presenting to the throne a defective gift. If this is the way a pasha is treated, it stands to reason that God certainly deserves such respect as well. The only "broken tool" God welcomes is a broken heart: "Rabbi Abba, son of Yuden, says: 'Whatever God disqualifies in animals he considers perfectly acceptable in human beings. In animals, he disqualifies all those that are "blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen [abnormal growth]" (Lev. 22:22), yet he accepts a broken heart and an oppressed spirit in human beings.' Rabbi Alexandri states: 'Whereas, if an ordinary priest uses broken tools when serving God

[that is, offers physically handicapped animals as sacrifices], such action is totally unworthy, God's instruments are all broken, as it is written, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart" [Psalms 34:18], "He healeth the broken in heart" [Psalms 147:3], "with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" [Isaiah 57:15], "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit" [Psalms. 51:17], and "a broken ... heart" [ibid.]" (Leviticus Rabba, section 7).

In the wake of this midrash, a dispute broke out among poskei halakha (rabbis who rule on Jewish law) as to whether the physically handicapped could serve as cantors in the synagogue. Rabbi Abraham Gumbiner (Poland, 17th century; author of "Magen Avraham," a commentary on the "Shulhan Arukh") permits such persons to be cantors, basing himself on the above midrash: "God uses broken tools."

Rabbi Yair Bachrach (Germany, late 17th century) also discusses this issue. He was asked about a specific case - a blind man, whom the public barred from serving as cantor on the High Holy Days because of his physical handicap. Rabbi Bachrach rebuked this community and was criticized for his position; his critics argued that the physically handicapped should not fill official posts in the synagogue. Concerning this criticism, he replied, "Contrary to your stand, I have never taken the position that such a person should be barred because prayers have replaced animal sacrifices and because a priest serving in the temple must be without any physical defect. Here I will emulate God, who says 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts' [Isaiah 55:8]. Obviously, a cantor should not be equated to a priest ... [I differ with] the philosophers [who] argue, 'A physical defect is evidence of a mental one.'"

Apparently, in Rabbi Bachrach's era, it was widely believed among philosophers that physical perfection was proof that a given individual was also a perfect human being. However, since he did not think like a philosopher, Rabbi Bachrach rebuked the community for attempting to prohibit a blind person from serving as cantor in the synagogue.

Even in ancient times, there was a tendency to place less emphasis on the philosophers' view of physical perfection as an expression of a person's wholeness and to instead accept people as they were. The Mishnah (in Tractate Megillah) states that the physically handicapped cannot recite the priestly blessing in the synagogue. The Talmud's scholars add further categories to this list of prohibited individuals: "Rav Huna says: A person who cannot stop saliva from dribbling from his mouth cannot recite the priestly blessing." Questioning this position, the Talmud noted that, in the very city where Rav Huna lived, there was a priest who could not control his saliva and yet who did recite the priestly blessing in the synagogue. Could Rav Huna then be classified under the rubric, "Do what I say, not what I do"? Answering the question with "That individual was a well-known figure in the city," the Talmud continues by citing a source that states that the habitual presence of physically handicapped individuals in society is the factor that can determine whether they can participate together with other priests in the recital of the priestly blessing or whether their physically flawed appearance might arouse a social problem.

This definition is accepted as a principle of Jewish law in the "Shulhan Arukh." Were it not for society's normal reaction to the physically handicapped, the position of Jewish law on this issue would not have changed. The public can exert immense influence in determining the place and status of the physically disabled in society. Society's attitude toward physically handicapped individuals is not a divine decree but is rather dependent on the community's attention to, and feeling of responsibility toward them. If we can learn to see the goodness and light in each person, we can include all people - the disabled and those whose bodies are whole - in the community and can enable all members of society to join together in "mending the world" in the Torah's spirit.

---

**YatedUSA Parshas Emor 4 Iyar 5768**  
**Halacha Discussion**  
**by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt**

Using one oven for both meat and dairy demands vigilance lest one transgress any of the laws pertaining to basar-b'chalav. Ideally, separate

ovens for meat and dairy are the solution for preventing basar-b'chalav mix ups, and many people do have separate ovens for that very reason. Those who do not, however, should familiarize themselves with the answers to the following questions.

**Question:** Can an oven be used for meat and dairy dishes at the same time?

**Discussion:** It is prohibited to bake uncovered<sup>1</sup> meat and dairy dishes in one oven for the following three reasons:

1. The meat may come into actual contact with the dairy or vice versa, either through touching, or when particles from one dish splatter onto the other.
2. When two foods are baked or roasted simultaneously in one oven, they absorb each other's aromas (reicha).
3. When moist foods or liquid mixtures are baked in an oven, steam (zei'ah) is emitted, carrying the taste of one food to the other.

If, b'diavad, one cooked meat and dairy dishes in the same oven simultaneously, he must consult a rav to determine whether the food may be eaten or not.<sup>2</sup>

**Question:** Can an oven be used for meat and dairy dishes that are baked consecutively?

**Discussion:** The first two problems mentioned above — items touching or splattering each other, and reicha — do not apply, since the meat and dairy dishes will not be in the oven at the same time. We are, however, still concerned with the issue of zei'ah. This is because whenever moist foods (as opposed to "dry" foods like a potato) are baked in an oven, steam is emitted. When, for instance, uncovered meat is cooked in an oven, the steam emitted carries the taste of the meat and "deposits" it onto the walls and roof of the oven. When moist dairy foods or liquid mixtures are subsequently cooked uncovered in the same oven, their steam rises, absorbs the meat taste from the walls and roof of the oven, condenses, and falls back into the dairy dish. The dairy dish is now prohibited as basar b'chalav.

The poskim debate whether or not we need to be concerned with this problem. Some hold that there is no issue of zei'ah when baking or roasting inside a closed oven, since the oven's heat is intense enough to completely dry out and evaporate the steam which rises from the food even before it reaches the walls or roof of the oven.<sup>3</sup> Thus no steam is deposited onto the walls or roof of the oven to later condense and fall back into the dairy food. According to this opinion zei'ah is never a problem for foods baking inside a hot oven,<sup>4</sup> and it is, therefore, permitted to use the same oven for meat and dairy consecutively, even l'chatchilah, as long as the surface of the oven roof and walls is free of any meat spills or residue. Many people follow this opinion.<sup>5</sup>

But other poskim are more stringent. In their opinion we can not or do not know for certain that all of the steam will be evaporated before being deposited onto the oven walls or roof, and it is, therefore, still possible that some meaty steam will enter the dairy food.<sup>6</sup> [Note, however, that even according to the strict opinion, this problem affects only most gas ovens. With electric ovens or other ovens where the heating element is on top, zei'ah would be no problem since the steam will definitely dry up and vanish before it reaches the walls and roof of the oven.<sup>7</sup>] To avoid this eventuality, one should adhere to the following procedure:

First, determine the primary use of the oven — is it going to be used mainly for meat, or for dairy dishes? For the sake of this Discussion, let us assume that the primary use of the oven will be for meat dishes. For halachic purposes, this oven now becomes a "meat oven," in which liquid or solid meat dishes will be roasted and baked, covered and uncovered. [To later use the oven for dairy dishes, one should line the racks with aluminum foil. The foil should be changed when dairy dishes are placed in the oven.]

Before using this oven for dairy, one must first make sure that the oven is completely clean from any meat spills or residue. Once that is ascertained, a dairy dish (or a parve food which will be eaten with dairy) may be placed into the oven as long as one of the following two conditions is met: 1) The dairy dish is thoroughly covered; 2) The dairy dish is not moist. Since, generally, only moist or liquid dishes produce steam,<sup>8</sup> there will be no way

for the meat steam which found its way onto the walls and roof of the oven to be released from the walls and roof and enter the dairy dish, as occurs when moist dishes are cooked.

Question: According to the stringent opinions mentioned earlier, what can be done so that an uncovered, moist dairy food or liquid mixture can be baked l'chatchilah in a meat oven?

Discussion: Before moist dairy foods can be baked in a meat oven,<sup>9</sup> the oven needs to be properly koshered. There are different opinions as to whether our ovens can be koshered and what means may be used to kosher them.<sup>10</sup> Some poskim maintain that there is no easy, practical<sup>11</sup> way to kosher our ovens, since an oven cannot be koshered unless sparks are actually seen during the koshering process.<sup>12</sup> Other poskim are of the opinion that our ovens can be koshered only through a self-cleaning cycle, which heats the oven to approximately 900-1000 degrees.<sup>13</sup> But the majority of poskim<sup>14</sup> are of the opinion that heating the oven at its highest setting for one hour is sufficient to kosher an oven for consecutive use of meat and dairy, and many households follow this opinion.<sup>15</sup>

To review: Whether or not ze'ah is a concern when cooking uncovered, moist dairy inside a meat oven is debatable. There are many who follow the more lenient opinion and use their oven for meat and dairy consecutively, as long as they ascertain that there are no spills or residue on the surface of the oven.<sup>16</sup> Still, in deference to the more stringent opinions mentioned earlier, it is appropriate, at the very least, to kosher the oven by heating it at its highest temperature setting for one hour before using for moist, uncovered dairy, or for parve food which will be eaten with dairy.<sup>17</sup> Obviously, having two separate ovens for meat and dairy, or self-cleaning an oven between meat and dairy, avoids all of these halachic concerns.

Note: Challah may be baked in the same oven that was used to roast uncovered meat, even though the challah may be eaten with dairy. Challah dough does not produce enough steam to release the meat steam that was deposited onto the walls and roof of the oven.<sup>18</sup> The oven should first be thoroughly cleaned from any visible meat residue. Preferably, the racks should be changed or covered with foil.

Question: Do the halachos mentioned earlier concerning meat and dairy in the same oven apply to microwave ovens as well?

Discussion: No, they do not. All poskim would agree that it is forbidden to use the same microwave oven for meat and dairy consecutively. The air space, roof and walls of a microwave oven do not become hot enough for us to assume that the steam that is emitted from the foods will be "burned" before being deposited onto the walls or roof of the oven. In addition, microwave ovens are small, compact units, which quickly fill up with steam from the food being warmed in them.

Koshering a microwave between meat and dairy or dairy and meat is halachically problematic. Some poskim<sup>19</sup> permit koshering a microwave by first scrubbing it clean, waiting twenty-four hours,<sup>20</sup> and then placing a cup of water inside the microwave and heating it for 5-10 minutes, until thick steam fills the oven.<sup>21</sup> Other poskim, however, are wary of permitting this procedure, and it is not recommended to rely on the lenient opinions.<sup>22</sup>

Even if koshering a microwave would be allowed, the poskim discourage using the same microwave for both meat and dairy, since it is a long-standing custom<sup>23</sup> that we do not kosher utensils from meat to dairy or vice versa. The poskim also recommend not to use the same microwave for meat and dairy even if one is careful to keep all of the food covered while being cooked or warmed in the microwave.<sup>24</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that those who need to use a microwave for both meat and dairy foods should make every effort to get two separate microwave ovens and designate one for meat and the other for dairy.

#### Footnotes

1 Technically, if one of the foods is tightly covered, they can both bake in the oven at the same time; see Y.D. 108:1. Practically speaking, however, this is not a good idea, for if the cover slips off or is lifted off inadvertently, or if one of the foods spills over, the food might very well be forbidden to eat, even b'diavad (see Kesav Sofer 54 and Igros Moshe, Y.D. 3:10).

2 Since, b'diavad, there are several factors that must be taken into account, such as the type of oven, the proximity of the foods to each other, the amounts of the foods in question, the type of foods ("sharp" or bland) and other factors.

3 In addition, the walls and roof of the oven are hot enough so that immediately upon impact any steam or condensation will burn and fizzle out and will not remain in the walls or roof of the oven.

4 It must be stressed that these poskim surely reckon with ze'ah as a factor rendering a food item dairy or meaty, but they maintain that inside a closed oven there is no ze'ah as explained above.

5 See She'alas Ya'avets 1:193, quoted by Yad Efrayim, Y.D. 97:2, Maharsham 3:208. See Sefer Zikaron Yad Moshe Tzvi ha-Levi, pg. 201, where Rav B.Y. Wosner proves from many sources that this is the opinion of most poskim and the prevalent custom.

6 Beis Shlomo, Y.D. 164; Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:40; Minchas Yitzchak 5:20; Chelkas Ya'avok 2:136.

7 Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:59.

8 Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:40 based on Pischei Teshuvah 92:6. This is a generality, since most solid foods do not produce much steam. If, in fact, a fair amount of steam was detected rising from a solid food, then we need to be concerned with it as we would be with a liquid food.

9 The following procedure is for using the oven l'chatchilah. B'diavad, there are several possible heterim that allow dairy food that was baked in a meat oven (or vice versa) to be eaten. See Maharsham 3:26; Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:40; Yabia Omer, Y.D. 5:7. A rav should be consulted.

10 The poskim discuss the following issues: 1. Are our ovens — which are made from metal but coated with porcelain — considered klei cheres which cannot be koshered without libun chamur? 2. Is it sufficient to kosher an oven by heating it with fire from an external source, or does the fire have to originate inside the oven? 3. Since most of our baking is done in pans, may we rely on libun kal since the food does not (usually) touch the actual oven surface? 4. Even if libun chamur is required, must sparks actually be seen during the libun?

11 Although an oven can be koshered by using a blowtorch, this is a dangerous and cumbersome process which should be undertaken only by a professional who is also well-versed in the halachah.

12 Sha'ali Tziyon 2:20; She'arim Metzuyanim B'halachah 116:2; Badei ha-Shulchan 92:8, s.v. l'chatchilah. See also Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:60.

13 Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling, quoted in Sefer Hilchos Pesach, vol. 1, pg. 181, and in Ohalei Yeshurun, vol. 1, pg. 72 and 77); Minchas Chein, pg. 29. When koshering the oven from meat or dairy to parve, half of the self-cleaning cycle (about an hour and a half) is sufficient; Rav M. Stern (quoted in Pischei Halachah, Kashruth, pg. 114).

14 Rav Y.E. Henkin (written responsum published in ha-Darom, vol. 15); Rav A. Kotler (oral ruling, quoted in Sefer Hilchos Pesach 1, pg. 180); Yesodei Yeshurun 6, pg. 157; Minchas Yitzchak 3:66 (see, however, 5:20, where he is hesitant); Chazon Ovadyah, pg. 73:4; Rav M. Stern, Pischei Halachah, Kashruth, pg. 114).

15 See Seder Pesach K'hilchaso, pg. 64, who quotes many poskim as allowing this leniency.

16 Another practical suggestion is to place some foil under the meat item being baked so that whatever spills over will not land directly on the racks or the oven floor but on the foil. The foil is then removed before the dairy item is inserted.

17 Some poskim additionally recommend that twenty-four hours elapse after using the oven for meat before the oven is used for dairy.

18 Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:40; 1:59.

19 Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling, quoted in Sefer Hilchos Pesach, pg. 182); Rav S. Wosner (mi-Beis Levi, Nissan 5753); Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:212; Yalkut Yosef (O.C. 451), pg. 360.

20 Scrubbing the microwave and waiting 24 hours before koshering a microwave is required, since the koshering process of a microwave is hagalah, not libun kal, and a thorough cleaning and a wait of 24 hours are prerequisites of hagalah; see Mishnah Berurah 451:22, 452:20 and Rama, Y.D. 121:2.

21 This leniency does not apply to microwave ovens with a browning element or to convection microwave ovens.

22 See Shevus Yitzchak, Mikrogal, pg. 57, quoting Rav Y.S. Elyashiv; The Laws of Kashrus, pg. 234.

23 Quoted by Mishnah Berurah 509:25.

24 Shevus Yitzchak, Mikrogal, pg. 57, quoting Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv

---

#### Mussar HaTorah

*Torah Insights into Human Nature – Dedicated in memory of Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l*

**Based on the talks of Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l, Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim – RSA**

Compiled by Rabbi Eliezer Grunberg Chaver Kollel Ner David  
© 2008 by Rabbi Aryeh Striks & Rabbi Shimon Zehnwirth. For more  
information call (818) 505-7999 or e-mail [mht@vths.org](mailto:mht@vths.org)  
5 Iyar, 5768 Vol. 9, No. 2 Parashas Emor  
“Command the Jewish People ...” (Vayikra 24:2)

The Midrash Rabbah (Vayikra 31:5) tells us that anyone who toils to understand the Torah is guaranteed that other people will listen to him. This, the Midrash tells us, is the meaning of the *pasuk* above: Hashem is telling Moshe that since he labored greatly to understand the Torah and its teachings, he can, “command the Jewish people” and they will heed his authority.

Moshe Rabbeinu was the greatest Jewish leader of all time, with many qualities that qualified him for his position. He cared for and loved every member of B’nei Yisrael with endless patience (see Rashi, Devarim 11:12). Moshe reached the highest level of prophecy ever achieved by a human being – speaking to Hashem, “face to face,” and was able to do so whenever he needed Divine guidance. Despite these extraordinary attributes, Moshe remained so modest that the Torah itself testifies (Bamidbar 13:3) he was the most humble of all men and that he was a, “servant of Hashem.” These are all character traits that are critical for a leader of B’nei Yisrael. Any one of them could be assumed to be the crucial prerequisite that gains the trust and compliance of the people. Why then, does the Midrash point to Moshe’s sweat and toil to understand the Torah – and not any of these other traits – as the reason that B’nei Yisroel will accept his leadership and command?

Expending energy – being *amel b’Torah* – is a necessary component for truly understanding the Torah and guaranteeing that it is absorbed accurately. We see that this is even true for Moshe Rabbeinu who heard the Torah first-hand, directly from Hashem. One cannot imagine a greater teacher than Hashem Himself, nor a better educational setting than forty days in *Shomayim*, in a prophetic interaction between Hashem and Moshe. Even so, had Moshe not worked so hard to ensure that his understanding of Hashem’s words was precise, it would have made a difference in his grasp and clarity in Torah. B’nei Yisrael would have sensed that difference, that lack of effort, and their trust in Moshe and his commands would have been lacking. It was only Moshe’s hard work and effort to plumb the fathomless depths of Torah that earned him the Jews’ unswerving loyalty and full commitment to follow his instructions.

This insight is not only relevant to teachers and rabbis. It is basic equipment for any head of a family, for any role model or any peer who seeks to guide his fellow man. To be successful and gain the confidence of your charges, you must have a solid grasp of Torah, which can only be acquired through hard work and genuine exertion. As the Gemara (Megilla 6b) teaches us: “R’ Yitzchak said, ‘If a person says, “I toiled and didn’t find,” - don’t believe him; “I didn’t toil and I found,” - don’t believe him.’ ” The greatest, most humble *tzaddik*, able to learn directly from Hashem on the most sublime level of prophecy, simply cannot gain complete comprehension, and his followers’ cooperation, unless he exerts himself in studying Torah. Moshe Rabbeinu only earned our nation’s loyalty through his painstaking effort to achieve total understanding of the Torah.

Let us summon all our energies to apply ourselves fully to the study of Hashem’s holy Torah, and in the merit of that toil, may we be blessed to “find” the treasure of clarity and comprehension of its timeless truth and beauty. We are then promised by the Midrash that we will merit another gift: the trust and loyalty of all those who follow our example and our teachings.

---

Please address all comments and requests to  
[HAMELAKET@hotmail.com](mailto:HAMELAKET@hotmail.com)

---