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Shalom Zachar

Compiled by Rabbi Moishe Dovid Lebovits

Reviewed by Rabbi Benzion Schiffenbauer

Baruch Hashem, it is rare to go through a Friday night in shul without an announcement about a shalom zachar. What is the source for the shalom zachar? What is the reason for it? Why is it done for a male and not a female? When should the shalom zachar be made? Where should it be made? What foods are customarily served at a shalom zachar? These and other issues will be discussed in this article.

Source

The Gemara¹ says that Rav, Shmuel and Rav Asi were walking to a "shevu haben." Rashi² says this means a seudah made when redeeming a firstborn (pidyon haben). Tosafos³ says that it is a seudah made for leaving the mother's womb. The Taz⁴ brings a Midrash Rabbah⁵ that gives the following parable: A king decreed that all his guests should not see his face unless they have seen the face of the queen first. So too, Hashem says not to bring the korban (the newborn [male] child) until Shabbos has passed. Since every seven days is Shabbos, no milah can take place without a Shabbos. The day of Shabbos makes the newborn ready for the milah. Therefore, a seudah is made on Shabbos before the milah.⁶ The Drisha⁷ explains that we visit the child on Shabbos because he is an avel over the Torah that he learned in his mother's womb and then forgot.

Reasons Why is it called shalom zachar? There are many reasons given.⁸ Two of them are that this is the first mitzvah a newborn fulfills. It says, "Zachor es Yom HaShabbos l'kadsho," so we refer to the seudah as shalom zachar.⁹ Others explain that the child is free of sin and is like a tzaddik. Just as we visit a tzaddik, we visit a newborn child.¹⁰

When

The Terumas Hadashen¹¹ and others¹² maintain that the shalom zachar is made on Friday night since this is when everyone is home. This is indeed the custom.¹³

Where

It is apparent from many sources that the seudah should be made at the child's location, as it says in the Rama, "Go to the child..."¹⁴ However, the overwhelming custom is for the shalom zachar to be held in a shul and not necessarily in the newborn's home.¹⁵ One possible reason is that there simply is noThe ough space in the home to host so many people.¹⁶ Nonetheless, many people have the practice of having the shalom zachar in the home where the newborn is located.

Is a Seudah Required?

From some of the sources above, it would seem that there is no need to serve a meal,¹⁷ and refreshments would suffice.¹⁸ Since the shalom zachar is held after the Friday night meal, people have no appetite for a full meal.

Which Foods are served at the Shalom Zachar

Since the child is sad that his Torah was forgotten, lentils are served, which are customarily served to an avel in order to console him.¹⁹ The custom in most places is to serve arbis (chickpeas).²⁰ Which Shabbos

The opinion of the Rama²¹ is that the shalom zachar is held on the first Shabbos after the child was born. An interesting question arises when to make the shalom zachar if the child is born on Friday night. Some poskim maintain that the shalom zachar should be made that night,²² while others wait for the next week (which is also the night before the bris, known as the vacht nacht).²³

Invited to a Shalom Zachar

The custom is that the shamash of the shul announces that the father of the newborn is making a shalom zachar, rather than inviting everyone.²⁴ This is usually done at the end of Ma'ariv.²⁵ The reason is that a shalom zachar is a seudas mitzvah, and anyone who ignores such an invitation is placed in cherem in Shamayim.²⁶

Female

There is no shalom zachar made for a female.²⁷

Women Women should only go to a shalom zachar if there will be a separate place for them.²⁸

1. Bava Kamma 80a. 2. Maseches Bava Kamma ibid "yeshu." 3. Maseches Bava Kamma ibid "l'bei." 4. Y.D. 265:13. 5. Medrash Rabbah Emor 27:10. See Os Chaim V'shalom on 265:32. 6. Likutei Maharich 3:page 200 (new). Refer to Mishneh Halachos 6:166. 7. Y.D. 264:2. See Taz Y.D. 265:13. Refer to Aruch L'ner Maseches Niddah 30b. 8. Refer to Tosfos Maseches Bava Kamma 80a "libi," Taz Y.D. 265:13. 9. Migdal Oz (Yaavetz), introduction to Hilchos Milah 15. 10. Refer to Sefer Matamim Hachadash pages 82-83 (new). 11. 269. 12. Rama Y.D. 265:12. Refer to Dagul Mei'revavah Y.D. 178. 13. Taz Y.D. 265:13. Some poskim maintain to do it by day and others say at night and day (refer to Al Pi HaTorah Bereishis pages 166-167). 14. Ibid. 15. Teshuvos V'hanhagos 2:202. 16. Otzer Habris 1:3:2:7. See Teshuvos V'hanhagos 2:202, Zera Yaakov 24:page 95

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Praying for the Sick

Rabbi Michael Taubes

The Torah tells us that a person who has contracted Tzaraas is required to publicly announce the fact that he has become Tamei, ritually impure. The Gemara in Moed Katan explains that this is done for two purposes: first, so that other people will know to keep away from this person so as not to become Tamei themselves, and second, so that the public, upon becoming aware of this person's plight, will pray to Hashem for mercy on his behalf. The Gemara in Sotah extends this last idea by stating that whenever a person has a serious problem, he should inform the public so that they will request mercy for him. It appears from the context of a similar passage in the Gemara in Shabbos that whenever anyone or anything is in anguish, it is beneficial to have other people pray for mercy in his behalf.

The rationale for this would seem to be the idea expressed by the Gemara in Berachos that when a group of people, constituting a Tzibbur, davens to Hashem, the moment becomes an eis ratzon, a propitious time for Hashem to hear the prayers. Indeed, the Midrash in Devarim Raba states that the

Tefillos of a Tzibbur are always heard. Based on all of the above, apparently, the Minhag has developed that the Tzibbur recites special Tefillos, particularly Tehillim, on behalf of someone who is ill. It should be pointed out that the idea of reciting Tehillim for protection from trouble and harm is actually recorded by the Rambam. The Gesher HaChaim outlines certain specific prayers which have become customary to recite for a Choleh, a person who is ill.

The Gemara in Avodah Zarah discusses various personal requests that may be added to one's Shemonah Esrei, and states that one who has a sick person to pray for should request mercy for him in the Beracha of Refaeinu. The Rambam and the Shulchan Aruch rule accordingly. In keeping with this notion that one should somehow connect to a Tzibbur when praying for the sick, the Gemara in Shabbos states that when one davens for one sick person, he should ask that this person receive Hashem's mercy together with all of the other sick Jewish people. Rashi explains that by relating this sick person to others, ones prayers will be accepted in the merit of the many people now included. The Shulchan Aruch accepts this view. The Ramo notes that the Minhag is to recite a special Beracha in Shul on behalf of a sick person; this is the basis for the Mi Shebeirach which we say for the Cholim when the Torah is out, and to which the Tzibbur responds by saying Amen. It is interesting to note that at one time, the Minhag was to recite this Mi Shebeirach after Yishtabach before Borechu, as cited by the Ramo elsewhere. In his commentary to the Tur entitled Darkei Moshe, the Ramo adds that it is proper to give Tzedakah for the benefit of the sick person because along with Teshuvah and Tefillah, Tzedakah can annul any bad decree. Our practice today is to announce the Tzedakah pledge as part of the text of the Mi Shebeirach.

The Yerushalmi in Shabbos states that it is forbidden to make requests for one's personal needs on Shabbos. The Korban Ha'eida there explains that this is because part of the idea of Oneg Shabbos is that one should feel that all his needs are taken care of; one who davens for these needs displays the opposite feelings and causes himself to worry. Can one, then, daven for a sick person on Shabbos? The Tosefta in Shabbos quotes that Beis Shammai forbid it while Beis Hillel allow it. The Ramo rules that one may recite a Beracha on Shabbos for a Choleh who is dangerously ill that day. This is not, however, agreed upon by everybody, as the Taz and others point out by quoting those who disallow any Beracha for a Choleh on Shabbos. The Shulchan Aruch HaRav distinguishes between a Tzibbur who should not daven on Shabbos for a Choleh who is not dangerously ill at that moment, and an individual who may do so. Rav Yaakov Emden, concurs with the ruling that one may pray on Shabbos for a sick person who is dangerously ill that day, but strongly objects to the practice of reciting a Mi Shebeirach on Shabbos for one who is not that sick, stating that he would like to abolish this improper Minhag. He admits, however, that we don't have the power to prevent people from doing this since it is an old custom. Rav Moshe Feinstein writes that if the Choleh himself requests that prayers be recited on his behalf, one may comply even on Shabbos, even if he is not dangerously ill that day.

The Magen Avraham also is puzzled by our practice to recite a Mi Shebeirach on Shabbos for a Choleh who is not in danger and attempts to justify it. He adds, though, that in the text of this Mi Shebeirach, one should say the phrase... Indicating that although Shabbos forbids us to really cry out and pray for this Choleh, a recovery should still come speedily. This is indeed our practice. It is worth noting that according to the Midrash in Bereishit Raba, the sincere prayers of a Choleh on his own behalf are better than any others.

Rav Elyashiv ר"צ ר' עזריאל ר' ליפא ישראלסון has compiled an as-yet-unpublished manuscript of rulings, advice, and responsa of his grandfather, the posek ha'dor, HaGaon Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zt'l. It will iy'H be released by the Machon L'Hotzaas Kisvei uPiskei Maran Rav Elyashiv. Rabbi Israelson, shlita, showed Rav Elyashiv many of the rulings and the language format before he passed away.

For publication in the 5TJT, this author has translated a portion of the manuscript, which translation appears below. The entire sefer, titled "Mishnas HaGriSh b'Nissuin" is scheduled to be published in a few months. Unless otherwise noted, these p'sakim were heard from Rav Elyashiv by either Rav Israelson or one of his brothers.

[Note: Rav Israelson has granted permission to Rabbi Hoffman to give out a translation of an abridged version of the sefer at the forthcoming wedding of his daughter, b'ezras Hashem. The Five Towns Jewish Times wishes a special mazal tov to Rabbi Yair and Mrs. Masha Hoffman upon the engagement of their daughter Mirelle to Reb Rephael Giller, and a special mazal tov to Larry and Esta Gordon upon the engagement of their son Nison to Sari Gans.]

Chapter One: Shidduchim

Prayer. One who has reached a marriageable age should pray that Hashem arrange that he meet a good shidduch [Sefer Chassidim #135, 243], and that the process should be easy [Rashi, Berachos 8a.]. A person should not pray that a specific shidduch work out. Rather, the prayer should be directed in finding one's true shidduch¹. Parents should daven for their children and grandchildren that they merit proper shidduchim who are ba'alei Torah, G-d-fearing people, and gomlei chesed [Sefer Chassidim 156; cited in the prayer of the Shelah HaKadosh].

The Qualities One Should Search For. The central qualities that one should search for in a shidduch are: fear of heaven, good character traits, and proper Torah hashkafos.

Daughter of a Kohen. A yeshiva student may certainly marry the daughter of a kohen, and there is no concern not to do so. [See Pesachim 49a; Kovetz Igros Chazon Ish]

Listening to Parents. Even though the Rema explains that there is no obligation to listen to one's parents regarding shidduchim [YD end of Siman 240], nonetheless, if the shidduch involves a serious shortcoming that would bring shame to the family, one must listen to them. [See Teshuvos Siman 1] Relatives. There is no problem of making shidduchim with third cousins—that is a fourth cousin with a fourth cousin. Essentially, there is no problem with third cousins to third cousins as well.²

Two Tall People. A tall man may marry a tall woman without any concern. That which is mentioned in the Gemara [Bechoros 45b] to discourage this refers to a situation when they are exceptionally tall.

Shabbos and Yom Tov. It is permitted to discuss matters of shidduchim on Shabbos and yom tov. [SA OC 306:6] When there is a need to do so, it is even permitted to discuss matters of finance regarding a shidduch. A Kinyan Shidduch should not be made on Shabbos or yom tov. [Kaf haChaim 306:50] On chol ha'moed it is permitted to make a Kinyan Shidduchin; however, a full meal should not be made, rather only modest refreshments should be served. [OC 546:1 MB 546:2] It is permitted to write a Shtar Tenaim on chol ha'moed. [OC 545:5 MB 545:21] However, if a Zichron Devarim was written before yom tov, then a Shtar Tenaim should not be written on chol ha'moed.

Names. There are those who are quite strict to ensure that the bride's name should not be the same as that of the groom's mother, and that the groom's name should not be the same as the name of his future father-in-law. There are also those who are strict to ensure that the names of both fathers-in-law and both mothers-in-law not be the same. All this is from the Ethical Will of Rav Yehudah HaChassid. The essential stringency, however, only concerns that of a bride and her future mother-in-law. The other scenarios are merely minor concerns, and there is no need to be so uneasy about them, although the prevalent custom is to be strict on these matters.³ However, one may not

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Rav Elyashiv On Weddings

Halachic Musings

By Rabbi Yair Hoffman

be lenient regarding a bride and her mother-in-law except through making a change in the name. If the shidduch is appropriate in all areas, but the names are the same, it is possible to remedy this by adding a name to one of the parties. This can be done le'chatchilah, with no reservations. There is no difference whether it is added to the bride's name or to that of her mother-in-law. If the concept about the concern for the same name only became known to them after the wedding, then an additional name should be added to one of their names at that point.

What Constitutes a New Name. In order for a name to be considered a new name, it is necessary for at least three people to call him either by the newly added name alone or with both names together. Regarding a bride and her mother-in-law, it is necessary for the majority of those who know her to call her by the new name.

The New Name. If the groom's new name was used for 30 days or more, it is necessary to use it in the kesubah. If one of them has the name "Moshe Yaakov" and the other's name is simply "Yaakov," this is not considered the same name, but rather two separate names entirely. However, if this "Moshe Yaakov" is referred to by everyone as "Yaakov" alone, then it is considered the same name. It would make no difference even if he is called to the Torah by the name "Moshe Yaakov." However, it would certainly be effective to start referring to him from that point onward as either "Moshe Yaakov" or just "Moshe." However, regarding a bride and her mother-in-law it is necessary that everyone, or at least the majority of people, start referring to her with both names. It is not sufficient for only her close family members to call her by both names. Ideally, a person who is named "Simcha" should not marry a girl whose mother is named "Simcha." Rather, they should add a name to one of them. Post facto, however, one may be lenient [Kav V'Naki, Vol. II Siman 380 citing Rav Elyashiv, zt'l.]. Someone whose name is "Yaakov" but everyone calls him "Yankel," or someone whose name is "Moshe" but he is called "Moishy," or if her name is "Esther" but she is called "Estie," all of these and other similar cases are considered to be one name and are included within the concept of a bride and mother-in-law with the same name. v

NOTES:

1. Rav Elyashiv, zt'l, citing his grandfather, the Leshem. Another segulah for a zivug is reciting Tehillim 121 after completing each Shemoneh Esreih prior to returning to one's spot (heard from Rebbetzin Kanievsky, a'h, quoting her father). 2. The concern is both that of danger as well as that the shidduch will turn out badly, as discussed in the responsum of Even HaRosh, by Rav Elyahu Kletzkyn, zt'l. 3. This was the general response that Rav Elyashiv would give when these questions were posed to him. However, there were circumstances when he varied his answer based upon individual circumstances. The translator can be reached at yairhoffman2@gmail.com. If someone would like to assist in the publication of the sefer itself, please contact the above e-mail as well.

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> to: weeklydt@torahweb.org
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Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Above Time and Beyond Time

"You shall guard the matzos" (Shemos 12:17). Do not read "the matzos" but rather "the mitzvos". Just as we do not allow the matzos to become chametz [by tarrying so that the dough rises], so too we do not tarry in performing mitzvos. Rather, if [the mitzva] comes you your hand, do it immediately (Rashi).

This analogy is problematic. If one tarrys and the dough becomes chametz it is not matza at all, while if one tarrys in performing a mitzva, it is still a mitzva, albeit one that is missing the extra dimension of alacrity.

Rav Hutner (Pachad Yitzchak, Pesach, 1) answers this question based on the Maharal's explanation of Rashi. By delaying the time of the mitzva, one views the mitzva as being under the influence of time. Time is a part of the

creation, but the refined soul of a Jew, which is heavenly, cannot be satiated by all the delicacies of this world (Koheles Raba 6:7). Therefore, the soul is above time, which was created as part of this world.

Alacrity represents the attempt to minimize the time gap between the opportunity to perform a mitzva and its completion. We left the gypt in a hurry, since this was the creation of Am Yisrael (Maharal, Gevuros Hashem chapter 51) as an entity above time. We are above time not only as an eternal nation, but also as a nation that attempts to break the barrier of time via alacrity in the performance of mitzvos. Failure to do so is not merely foregoing an extra enhancement of the mitzvah, rather it reduces the mitzva to something under the influence of time instead of being, as it should, above time. As such, it can be compared to tarrying when preparing the dough and allowing it to become chametz, which is an entirely different entity than matza.

Remarkably, the very hurriedness which was necessitated by our creation as a nation above time led to the fact that the dough we took out of Mitzrayim was matza and not chametz (Shemos 12:34). Moreover, the conclusion of the pasuk which demands alacrity (12:17) alludes to the eternity of our nation as being above time, "You shall guard this day for your generations as an eternal law."

Eternity, in practice, demands that the transcendent importance of mitzvos be taught to the next generation. Pesach is the time of, "You shall tell your son" (Shemos 13:8). Words do not suffice for this. A child must absorb his parents' attitude that mitzvos are the most important actions of a Jew. Alacrity is required to demonstrate this idea. Failure to be quick and focused in performing mitzvos risks a child's indifference to, and even abandonment of, Hashem's commands, thus endangering the eternity of mitzvos in one's family.

At a siyum we say "We run to the words of Torah, and they run to meaningless things." The Pachad Yitzchak contrasts the alacrity of the non-Torah world with the Jew's requirement to attempt to break the barrier of time by hastening to perform mitzvos.

Our children keenly observe our pace in approaching Torah and mitzvos, as well as our pace in dealing with worldly matters. In the world around us, people run to work, a necessary enterprise, but even more so to enjoyable sports and entertainments. If we do so, and do not run to Torah and mitzvos, it conveys an attitude which can have negative impact on ourselves, and certainly on our children.

The difference between chametz and matza is exceedingly small, k'chut hasa'ara (Chasam Sofer Drush 35 for Shabbos Hagadol). On Shabbos Parshas Hachodesh, as we prepare for Pesach, our alacrity and our attitude to the mitzvos we perform can make all the difference, both for ourselves as we run to the life of the next world and for the eternity of our generations.

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The Eighth Day

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Our parsha begins with childbirth and, in the case of a male child, "On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised" (Lev. 12:3). This became known not just as milah, "circumcision", but something altogether more theological, brit milah, "the covenant of circumcision". That is because even before Sinai, almost at the dawn of Jewish history, circumcision became the sign of G-d's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:1-14).

Why circumcision? Why was this from the outset not just a mitzvah, one command among others, but the very sign of our covenant with G-d and His with us? And why on the eighth day? Last week's parsha was called Shemini, "the eighth [day]" (Lev. 9:1) because it dealt with the inauguration of the Mishkan, the Sanctuary, which also took place on the eighth day. Is there a connection between these two quite different things?

The place to begin is a strange midrash recording an encounter between the Roman governor Tyrannus Rufus 1 and Rabbi Akiva. Rufus began the conversation by asking, “Whose works are better, those of G-d or of man?” Surprisingly, the Rabbi replied, “Those of man.” Rufus responded, “But look at the heavens and the earth. Can a human being make anything like that?” Rabbi Akiva replied that the comparison was unfair. “Creating heaven and earth is clearly beyond human capacity. Give me an example drawn from matters that are within human scope.” Rufus then said, “Why do you practise circumcision?” To this, Rabbi Akiva replied, “I knew you would ask that question. That is why I said in advance that the works of man are better than those of G-d.”

The rabbi then set before the governor ears of corn and cakes. The unprocessed corn is the work of G-d. The cake is the work of man. Is it not more pleasant to eat cake than raw ears of corn? Rufus then said, “If G-d really wants us to practise circumcision, why did He not arrange for babies to be born circumcised?” Rabbi Akiva replied, “G-d gave the commands to Israel to refine our character.”² This is a very odd conversation, but, as we will see, a deeply significant one. To understand it, we have to go back to the beginning of time.

The Torah tells us that for six days G-d created the universe and on the seventh he rested, declaring it holy. His last creation, on the sixth day, was humanity: the first man and the first woman. According to the sages, Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit already on that day and were sentenced to exile from the Garden of Eden. However, G-d delayed the execution of sentence for a day to allow them to spend Shabbat in the garden. As the day came to a close, the humans were about to be sent out into the world in the darkness of night. G-d took pity on them and showed them how to make light. That is why we light a special candle at Havdalah, not just to mark the end of Shabbat but also to show that we begin the workday week with the light G-d taught us to make.

The Havdalah candle therefore represents the light of the eighth day – which marks the beginning of human creativity. Just as G-d began the first day of creation with the words, “Let there be light”, so at the start of the eighth day He showed humans how they too could make light. Human creativity is thus conceived in Judaism as parallel to Divine creativity,³ and its symbol is the eighth day.

That is why the Mishkan was inaugurated on the eighth day. As Nechama Leibowitz and others have noted, there is an unmistakable parallelism between the language the Torah uses to describe G-d’s creation of the universe and the Israelites’ creation of the Sanctuary. The Mishkan was a microcosm – a cosmos in miniature. Thus Genesis begins and Exodus ends with stories of creation, the first by G-d, the second by the Israelites. The eighth day is when we celebrate the human contribution to creation.

That is also why circumcision takes place on the eighth day. All life, we believe, comes from G-d. Every human being bears His image and likeness. We see each child as G-d’s gift: “Children are the provision of the Lord; the fruit of the womb, His reward” (Ps, 127:3). Yet it takes a human act – circumcision – to signal that a male Jewish child has entered the covenant. That is why it takes place on the eighth day, to emphasise that the act that symbolises entry into the covenant is a human one – just as it was when the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai said, “All that the Lord has said, we will do and obey” (Ex. 24:7).

Mutuality and reciprocity mark the special nature of the specific covenant G-d made, first with Abraham, then with Moses and the Israelites. It is this that differentiates it from the universal covenant G-d made with Noah and through him with all humanity. That covenant, set out in Genesis 9, involved no human response. Its content was the seven Noahide commands. Its sign was the rainbow. But G-d asked nothing of Noah, noThe ven his consent. Judaism embodies a unique duality of the universal and the particular. We are all in covenant with G-d by the mere fact of our humanity. We are bound, all of us, by the basic laws of morality. This is part of what it means to be human.

But to be Jewish is also to be part of a particular covenant of reciprocity with G-d. G-d calls. We respond. G-d begins the work and calls on us to complete it. That is what the act of circumcision represents. G-d did not cause male children to be born circumcised, said Rabbi Akiva, because He deliberately left this act, this sign of the covenant, to us.

Now we begin to understand the full depth of the conversation between Rabbi Akiva and the Roman governor Tineius Rufus. For the Romans, the Greeks and the ancient world generally, the gods were to be found in nature: the sun, the sea, the sky, the earth and its seasons, the fields and their fertility. In Judaism, G-d is beyond nature, and his covenant with us takes us beyond nature also. So for us, no The very thing natural is good. War is natural. Conflict is natural. The violent competition to be the alpha male is natural. Jews – and others inspired by the G-d of Abraham – believe, as Kathryn Hepburn said to Humphrey Bogart in *The African Queen*, that “Nature, Mr Allnut, is what we are put in this world to rise above.”

The Romans found circumcision strange because it was unnatural. Why not celebrate the human body as G-d made it? G-d, said Rabbi Akiva to the Roman governor, values culture, not just nature, the work of humans not just the work of G-d. It was this cluster of ideas – that G-d left creation unfinished so that we could become partners in its completion; that by responding to G-d’s commands we become refined; that G-d delights in our creativity and helped us along the way by teaching the first humans how to make light – that made Judaism unique in its faith in G-d’s faith in humankind. All of this is implicit in the idea of the eighth day as the day on which G-d sent humans out into the world to become His partners in the work of creation.

Why is this symbolised in the act of circumcision? Because if Darwin was right, then the most primal of all human instincts is to seek to pass on one’s genes to the next generation. That is the strongest force of nature within us. Circumcision symbolises the idea that there is something higher than nature. Passing on our genes to the next generation should not simply be a blind instinct, a Darwinian drive. The Abrahamic covenant was based on sexual fidelity, the sanctity of marriage, and the consecration of the love that brings new life into the world.⁴ It is a rejection of the ethic of the alpha male.

G-d created physical nature: the nature charted by science. But He asks us to be co-creators, with Him, of human nature. As R. Abraham Mordecai Alter of Ger said, “When G-d said, ‘Let us make man in our image’, to whom was He speaking? To man himself. G-d said to man, Let us – you and I – make man together.”⁵ The symbol of that co-creation is the eighth day, the day He helps us begin to create a world of light and love.

1 Quintus Tineius Rufus, Roman governor of Judaea during the Bar Kochba uprising. He is known in the rabbinic literature as “the wicked”. His hostility to Jewish practice was one of the factors that provoked the uprising.

2 Tanhuma, Tazria, 5. 3 This is also signalled in the Havdalah prayer which mentions five havdalot, “distinctions”, between sacred and profane, light and darkness, Israel and the nations, Shabbat and the weekdays, and the final “who distinguishes between sacred and profane.” This parallels Genesis 1 in which the verb *lehavdil* – to distinguish, separate – appears five times. 4

That, as I have pointed out elsewhere, is why Genesis does not criticise idolatry but does implicitly criticise, on at least six occasions, the lack of a sexual ethic among the people with whom the patriarchs and their families come into contact. 5 R. Avraham Mordecai Alter of Ger, *Likkutei Yehudah*.

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Tazria

The end of parshas Tazria deals with *Tza’ra*’as [the spiritual blemish often (mis)translated as leprosy] that appears on clothing. The pasuk [verse] says, “The kohen will see the garment after it was washed, [vhenay lo hofach

hanega es ayno] and he sees that the nega [blemish] has not changed, the garment is unclean, you should burn it in fire.”

The pasuk uses interesting language: “vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno,” which means that the appearance of the nega has not changed. This is actually an idiomatic expression. The word “ayno” literally means “eye,” and the expression literally means, “The blemish has not changed its eye.”

I saw a beautiful insight, quoted in the name of the Chidushai HaRim. The Gemara in Meseches Ayrachin says that a number of avayros [sins] can cause tza’aras. The most commonly known avayrah is loшон horah [evil tongue; slander]. However, the Talmud in Meseches Ayrachin also says that the punishment of tza’aras comes “al tzoras ho’ayin.” Tzoras ho’ayin [literally – narrowness of eye] does not only mean a person who is tight-fisted or cheap. A tzar ayin is a person who never sees the good side of anything and always sees evil. It is the opposite of a generosity of spirit. It is a stinginess, regarding not only money, but regarding viewing life, in general. A tzar ayin is a person who does not like to see other people’s success. The only success that he is interested in is his own success.

If tzoras ho’ayin causes tza’ra’as, then the tikun [correction] that causes the tza’ra’as to go away, is the person doing teshuva [repenting] and switching from being a tzar ayin to a tov ayin. That means that one who is like a student of Bilom HaRoshoh, who Chazal say had this trait of tzoras ho’ayin, of stinginess of spirit, must change to become from the students of Avrohom Avinu – to become a tov ayin [one with a good eye]. If the tza’ra’as stays the same and does not get better, the garment is unclean and the person does not have a tikun for his avayrah.

The Chidushai HaRim says that there is a double meaning when the pasuk says, “vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno” – “and behold, the tza’ra’as did not change its appearance.” “Lo hofach hanega es ayno” – His ayin [eye] did not change. In order to do teshuva, this person’s ayin must change. He must change from being a tzar ayin to being a tov ayin. The pasuk is hinting to us, “Vhenay lo hofach hanega es ayno.” His ayin did not change. He has the same stinginess, the same unwillingness to share and be generous.

“Ayno,” here, does not merely mean that the appearance did not change, but the ayin did not change. The tzoras ayin, the avayrah that brought on this terrible punishment, is still in place.

The Chidushai HaRim continues with a classic chasidische vort: The word “nega” is really the same word as the word “oneg.” What is the entire difference between the word “oneg” – pleasure and the word nega [in the Hebrew lettering]?

The only difference is the placement of the [letter] “ayin.” The “nun” and the “gimel” are in the same places. The only difference is whether the “ayin” is at the beginning or at the end. What is the difference between “nega” and “oneg?” What is the difference between a person having tza’ra’as and a person having pleasure? It all depends on the placement of the “ayin.” That is this person’s problem. The problem is with the “ayin.” His problem is with his perspective and his approach to life. His problem is with his ayin, so his tikun must be “hofach hanega es ayno.” He must change his “ayin.” He must take the “ayin” from the word “nega” and make it into “oneg.”

However, if someone is so stingy of spirit that he cannot be gracious and he cannot see the good side of life, then he remains a metzorah and “henay lo hofach hanega es ayno” – the nega remains and he must burn the garment because he is incapable of changing his “ayin.” He is incapable of changing his perspective.

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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Tazria

Upon completion of the days of her purity for a son or for a daughter. (12:6) The term "son" or "daughter" denotes a stronger, more definitive relationship than that implied by referring to a child as either one's male or female offspring. A son is the product of a viable, strong relationship, part of a legacy, who serves as a link in a generational chain. He identifies with his parent as the product of a relationship forged on the principles of devotion to a Higher Power, to Hashem. "Son" or "daughter" indicates pedigree. Thus, we call attention to the fact that previously, in pesukim 2 and 5, the Torah refers to the woman's offspring as a zachar, male, or a nekeivah, female, rather than a son or daughter, as it does here. Why did the Torah alter its vernacular?

Horav Shalom Schwadron, zl, suggests that the transformation from male/female to son/daughter occurs as a result of the phrase, "Upon the completion of the days of her purity." This is reference to the mother's (and father's) adherence to the laws of taharas ha'mishpachah, family purity. When a relationship is concretized in kedushah and taharah, sanctity and purity, the offspring produced by this union is a son/daughter, a link in the chain of mesorah, tradition, from Har Sinai. A human being is created with a purpose in life, with definite goals that he is to achieve. The Torah guides him and imbues him with Yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, which is the reason for his living a life of kedushah and taharah. A home without yiraas Shomayim lacks the resources for maintaining spiritual restraint, depriving the offspring of forging a greater, more profound relationship with his/her past and future. The nomenclature, son/daughter, is applied to one who plays an active and participatory role in maintaining the legacy of kedushah and taharah in his life - as did his parents.

A family which focuses its life goals on spiritual advancement will inculcate these values and goals into the next generation. If yiraas Shomayim is paramount in the home, their relationship is Heavenly-sanctioned, since kedushah and taharah are its mainstays. Why does yiraas Shomayim play such a critical role? One would conjecture that middos tovos - positive character traits, ethics and moral correctness - should have primacy. It seems that the power source of positive spiritual energy is fear of G-d, without which nothing else seems significant. Why? A number of years ago I wrote concerning a lecture given by Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, in the early 1930's to a group of German Rabbanim. It is certainly worth repeating for its timeless value and message.

This is a well-known insight by the Malbim, zl, which the Rosh Yeshivah quoted:

Going back to Parshas Vayeira, as Avimelech complains to Avraham Avinu for claiming that Sarah Imeinu was his sister when she was actually his wife, Avraham replied, Rak ein yiraas Elokim ba'makom hazeh, "Only because I said there is no fear of G-d in this place" (Ibid. 20:11). A lack of Heavenly fear was prevalent in Gerar. Thus, Avraham feared for his life. The Malbim underscores the Torah's use of the word rak, "only," as if intimating that, indeed, Gerar was a wonderful place. It had culture, refinement; its people were upstanding, kind and polite. Regardless of the community's exemplary qualities, however, at the end of the day one's life could still be forfeited, if he were to stand in the way of someone's desire. Why? "Only," because Gerar lacks yiraas Elokim, fear of G-d. When mortal, subjective, prejudicial man is the ultimate authority, if laws are manmade, then they have little value. Man makes the law; man can alter the law as he sees fit. The only law that will compel society to be disciplined and law-abiding is Heavenly Law, the code authored and regulated by Divine Authority.

Rav Elchanan spoke prior to the malignant change in Germany's government. When the Nazi party came to power, it was all too obvious that Rav Elchanan's message was on the mark. Suddenly, the polite, cultured, refined German became a cruel monster, capable of committing the most heinous atrocities.

A story related by Horav Yissachar Frand, Shlita, attributed to Horav Yitzchak Hutner, zl, gives practical expression to the above. When Rav Hutner was a student in Slabodka, he remembers that Horav Avraham Elya Kaplan, zl, who later became Rosh Yeshivah, director, of Hildesheimer seminary in Berlin, went to Germany. He returned before Rosh Hashanah. The Rosh Yeshivah, reverently known as the Alter m'Slabodka, asked Rav Avraham Elya for his impression of the German people.

Rav Avraham Elya raved about the German People's kindness, their impeccable manners and refinement of character. He even cited their manner of speech as demonstrating extreme politeness to one another. For instance, if someone asked for directions, the response would not simply be a curt set of directions; rather, after completing the directions, the man would politely ask, "Nicht wahr? Is this not correct?" This indicated his refinement. By refraining from asserting himself in a definitive manner, he would always conclude the sentence, "Nicht wahr?" In this manner, he maintained the dignity of the questioner.

The students who were privy to this exchange between Rav Avraham Elya and the Alter debated whether it was appropriate to praise the Germans. It was not as if we derived a way of life from other gentile nations. Why should the Germans be any different? What did they have to offer us that others did not? We do not learn how to live from the gentile world. Baruch Hashem, we have a Torah that guides our lifestyle. One student among them persisted in defending the Germans, maintaining that any people who ended their statements, "Nicht wahr?" indicated a sense of modesty and politeness worthy of emulating.

It took a half a century for the truth to be publicized, for that same student to declare his error publicly. Rav Hutner had just concluded his shiur, lecture, when a Jew walked in and asked, "Do you remember me? I was that student in Slabodka who complimented the German manner of speaking, who was amazed by their gentle manner and refinement of speech."

The Rosh Yeshivah said that he did remember the man and stuck out his hand to greet him, "Shalom aleichem." The Jew reciprocated, but, instead of a hand, he had a hook where his hand had been amputated. Apparently, he had lost his hand during his internment in the concentration camp.

The man looked at Rav Hutner and said, "When the Nazi cut off my hand, do you know what he said? He said, It hurts - Nicht wahr: Is this not correct? - You were right; I was wrong!"

Rav Elchanan observed that Hashem had created man after He had created all of the other creatures. Animals, both domesticated and wild, all fowl and beasts - all preceded mankind. Rav Elchanan commented that man is a composite of all of the preceding creations. He has in him the nature of every creature. Thus, at times, he may manifest the qualities of the most docile creation, while, at other times, he acts like a venomous snake or a vicious man-eating lion. What keeps all of these natural inclinations in check? What controls are in place to see to it that the man remains a decent, ethical and virtuous human being? Only one guarantee exists: yiraas Elokim, fear of G-d. With it - one is a mentch. Without it - he is, sadly, capable of the worst abominations and the most cruel, heinous brutalities against his fellow man.

from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to: Parsha Potpourri <parshapotpourri@shemayisrael.com> date: Thu, Apr 7, 2016 at 8:01 PM subject: [Parshapotpourri] Parsha Potpourri by Oizer Alport - Parshas Tazria

Parshas Tazria - Vol. 11, Issue 27 Compiled by **Rabbi Oizer Alport**
U'vayom ha'shemini yimol besar orlaso (12:3) In Parshas Vayishlach, Sh'chem abducted and defiled Yaakov's daughter Dina (Bereishis 34:2). Dina's brothers Shimon and Levi were appalled by this immoral behavior, and as part of their plan to avenge their sister's honor, they convinced all of the men in Sh'chem's town to circumcise themselves. On the third day after the circumcision, Shimon and Levi approached the city with confidence, knowing that the townsmen were weakened by their circumcisions and

unable to defend themselves, and succeeded in killing all of the men in the town (34:13-26).

Why does circumcision cause so much pain specifically on the third day? The Mishnah in Taanis (26a) teaches that the Anshei Ma'amad - representatives of the nation whose role was to stand by and observe while the communal sacrifices were being offered - would fast every day of the week, except for Erev Shabbos, Shabbos, and Sunday. The Gemora (27b) elucidates that they did not fast on Friday or Shabbos because it would be disrespectful to Shabbos, while on Sunday they were unable to fast because it is the third day after mankind was created, as Adam was created on Erev Shabbos.

What is the problem with fasting on the third day after we were created? Rashi explains that the third day of creation isn't conducive to fasting because it is inherently a weak day. As a source for this idea, Rashi cites the aforementioned episode involving the townsmen killed by Shimon and Levi. Rav Yehuda Wagschal of Yeshivas Mir in Yerushalayim points out that Rashi is teaching us that the pain experienced on the third day is not due to the natural healing process as one might have assumed, but rather because bris mila (circumcision) is considered a form of creation, and somebody who has been circumcised is therefore weakest at that time.

The Gemora in Kiddushin (38a) teaches that Hashem completes the days of the righteous. This is traditionally understood to mean that He allows them to live complete years by dying on the date on which they were born. However, at the funeral of Rav Chaim Volozhiner, one of the eulogizers, Rav Dovid of Novhardok, noted that while Rav Chaim was born on the second day of Shavuos (7 Sivan), he died on 14 Sivan. Why didn't such a righteous person merit to complete his years?

Rav Dovid suggested that a person's true birthday is not the day on which he is born physically, but rather the day of his bris mila, at which time he is born spiritually. Although the Gemora's source for this teaching is Moshe, who died on the day of his birth (7 Adar), this can be explained by the fact that Moshe was born already circumcised. Rav Dovid concluded that with this new interpretation, it's not surprising to note that Rav Chaim Volozhiner died one week after his birthday, precisely on the day of his bris.

We see from here that bris mila isn't just a mitzvah, but as Rashi writes, it's considered the creation and birth of the person. This is a fascinating concept, but it needs further explanation. Why in fact should such a relatively minor procedure be considered so significant? Dovid HaMelech writes in Tehillim (115:17) Lo ha'meisim yehalelu K-ah - the dead do not praise K-ah (Hashem). Citing this verse, Rashi (Yeshaya 38:11) explains that K-ah is a Divine name which may only be invoked by the living to praise Hashem. What is so unique about this name, and why can it specifically only be used by those who are still alive?

The Gemora (Menachos 29b) teaches that the name K-ah represents the creation of two worlds - Olam HaZeh (this world) and Olam HaBa (the World to Come) - as Yeshaya writes (26:4) Ki b'K-ah Hashem tzur olamim - with the name K-ah, Hashem created the worlds. The Gemora explains that the é in this name corresponds to the World to Come, while the ä signifies the creation of the physical world in which we presently live.

As such, Rav Wagschal explains that the Divine name K-ah represents the synthesis of these two seemingly incompatible worlds. How indeed is it possible to synthesize the spiritual and the physical? When somebody uses his physical assets and resources in this world to serve Hashem, He uplifts the ephemeral by connecting it to the eternal. However, only somebody who is still alive is capable of doing this. Because a dead person is no longer part of this world, he is unable to elevate it and bridge the two worlds, and as a result, he cannot praise Hashem using the name K-ah which embodies this idea. The deeper lesson this teaches us is that the definition of life is the ability to fuse and unite the two worlds. As long as a person's physical body is connected to a spiritual neshama (soul), the person is alive, and the moment they separate, the person dies.

In Tehillim (115:17-18) Dovid continues *Lo ha'meisim yehalelu K-ah v'lo kol yordei dumah, v'anachnu nevarech K-ah* - the dead and those who have descended into silence do not praise K-ah, but we will bless K-ah. Who are the "we" to whom Dovid is referring? The Medrash (Pirkei D'Rav Elizer 28) explains that it refers to the Jewish people who are circumcised. Chazal are teaching us that the opposite of the dead who are unable to praise Hashem are Jews who are circumcised and considered alive, but this requires clarification.

Rav Wagschal explains that the purpose of the mitzvah of *bris mila* is to sanctify the part of a person which is the most connected to the world of physicality. By elevating our basest desires and connecting them to mitzvos, we become alive, and in this sense, a person's *bris* is considered the time when he is created. Even though he is physically alive and breathing for seven days prior, it is only when he is given the ability to channel the physical world and utilize it for spirituality that he is truly alive. This also explains why the Gemara (Berachos 18b) teaches that the wicked are considered dead even while they are physically alive. Because they insist on enjoying the material world as an end unto itself and are unwilling to infuse it with spirituality, they lack the definition of life and are therefore considered like they are already dead.

As we find ourselves surrounded by a society that promotes and emphasizes the physical, it is essential to remain cognizant of this fundamental lesson, which is particularly relevant as we prepare for the upcoming Yom Tov of Pesach, during which we eat only matzah, the most basic of foods, and reorient our values and priorities. A person who gets caught up in the pursuit of temporal pleasures not only forfeits his spiritual lot in the next world, but he isn't even actually living during his time in this world. Only those who integrate the two worlds by utilizing *Olam HaZeh* for the pursuit of spirituality can truly be considered alive.

Badad yeisheiv *mi'chutz l'machaneh moshavo* (13:46) The Torah requires a metzora to dwell in isolation outside of the Jewish camp. The Gemara in Arachin (16b) explains that although other ritually impure individuals are not required to separate themselves from the community, the metzora receives the unique punishment of being divided from his family and friends due to the fact that his *lashon hara* and gossip split spouses and friends apart.

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin suggests that in addition to the punishment aspects of the metzora's sentence, there is also a therapeutic component to the Torah's treatment of him. The reason that this individual spoke *lashon hara* is that he has a psychological chip on his shoulder and views other people as out to get him, such as by not treating him with the appropriate respect or stealing business from him. Because he views society through this distorted lens, he comes to hate all of mankind and narcissistically wishes that they would leave him alone and stop taking what is rightfully his.

In order to remedy this warped worldview, the Torah commands us to give him what he wished for by sending him outside of the camp to live alone, free from interaction with others. Under such conditions of isolation, it will be only a matter of time before feelings of loneliness overwhelm him and he will yearn for human contact. This will cure him of his antisocial illness and will teach him the value of human contact and friendships. As he is forced to call out "*Tamei, tamei*" to beseech the very same people whom he used to gossip about to pray on his behalf, he will internalize the importance of appreciating others and focusing on their positive qualities, and he will be permanently healed of the underlying illness which caused him to become a metzora in the first place.

from: Torah Musings <newsletter@torahmusings.com>
date: Thu, Apr 7, 2016 at 11:20 AM
subject: Torah Musings Daily Digest - **Nail Biting in Jewish Law**

Posted by: Gil Student

Nail biting **by R. Gil Student**

Nail biting is a habit that many consider improper yet still continues, out of both nervousness and convenience. This practice is hardly new and, despite its lack of sophistication, enjoys halachic benefits in certain situations. The Gemara (Mo'ed Katan 18a) even tells that Rabbi Yochanan bit his nails on at least one occasion.

I. Shabbos

The Shulchan Arukh (Orach Chaim 340:1) rules that you may not cut your hair or nails on Shabbos. Doing so is biblically forbidden, similar to shearing a lamb's wool. Some might suggest that cutting fingernails is different than shearing wool because the shearing yields useful wool while fingernails are discarded (more on that later). Perhaps cutting fingernails is only rabbinically forbidden. However, Rav Ovadiah Yosef (*Yechaveh Da'as*, vol. 4 p. 279) quotes numerous authorities who hold that cutting fingernails is biblically forbidden.

The Magen Avraham (340: intro) differentiates between using a tool (scissors or clippers) to cut your fingernails and doing it manually (peeling with your fingers or biting). Using a tool is biblically forbidden but manual removal is only rabbinically forbidden. This becomes important when a hanging nail causes pain. The Shulchan Arukh (Orach Chaim 328:31) rules that if your fingernail is mostly disconnected (hanging) and is causing you pain (not just discomfort but pain), then you may remove it manually but not with a tool. Peeling or biting the nail that is mostly removed is a double rabbinic prohibition (*shevus di-shevus*), which is permitted in a case of pain. Using a tool on a nail that is mostly removed is problematic because a single rabbinic prohibition remains in force even when there is pain, unless it reaches the point that one would be classified as ill.

The Shulchan Arukh (*ibid.*) quotes a disagreement between Rashi and Rabbenu Tam about the permission to bite off a hanging fingernail or piece of skin that is causing you pain. According to Rashi, you may only bite that nail off if it is coming off toward the fingertip. According to Rabbenu Tam, it must be in the other direction, toward the palm. The Shulchan Arukh rules that we must be strict for both opinions, which effectively means that you may never bite off a nail in that situation. However, many authorities rule that this limitation only applies to skin and not nails. Among them are Chayei Adam (21:4), Kitzur Shulchan Arukh (80:55) and Shemiras Shabbos Ke-Hilkhasah (14:54). *Piskei Teshuvos* (new series, 338:56) says that if you do so, you have authorities on whom to rely. *Peninei Halachah* (Shabbos, Harchavos 14:2:1) suggests that you can even be lenient regarding skin because Rashi and Rabbenu Tam really agreed that anytime there is pain, you can be lenient on a double rabbinic prohibition. While his argument regarding skin makes logical sense, his textual support seems very lacking. But regarding nails, he has ample support.

II. Chol Hamoed

In order to encourage people to take a haircut and shave before Yom Tov, the Sages forbade doing so on Chol Ha-Mo'ed, the intermediary days of the holiday. Some authorities rule that if you shaved before Yom Tov, you may shave on Chol Ha-Mo'ed. However, the Shulchan Arukh (Orach Chaim 531:1) rules that regardless of whether you shaved before Yom Tov, you may not shave on Chol Ha-Mo'ed (some say that shaving today is different than it used to be, but that is a separate discussion).

What about cutting your nails? The Shulchan Arukh (*ibid.*, 532:1) rules that even though you are supposed to cut your nails before Yom Tov, the Sages' decree does not apply to nail cutting. Therefore, you may cut your nails on Chol Ha-Mo'ed. However, the Rema (*ad loc.*) records the Ashkenazic ruling forbidding nail cutting on Chol Ha-Mo'ed. The Magen Avraham (*ad loc.*, 1) rules that if you cut your nails before Yom Tov, you may cut them on Chol Ha-Mo'ed as well. His reasoning is as follows: since many permit shaving on Chol Ha-Mo'ed if you shaved before Yom Tov and many also permit cutting your nails regardless, we can at least permit cutting your nails on Chol Ha-Mo'ed if you cut them before Yom Tov.

However, if you neglected to cut your nails before Yom Tov, then you have to wait until the festival is completely over. There is one other option. The Mishnah Berurah (532:3) permits peeling or biting your nails on Chol Ha-Mo'ed. Even though this is forbidden on Shabbos and Yom Tov, on Chol Ha-Mo'ed the rule is more lenient since some permit even cutting. Therefore, even though you should prepare for Yom Tov by cutting your nails, you may still bite your nails on Chol Ha-Mo'ed.

III. Mourner

Many of the rules of Chol Ha-Mo'ed apply to a mourner. Among these prohibitions is that a mourner, both during the week-long shivah and the month-long sheloshim, may not shave or cut his nails (Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 390:7). However, the Shulchan Arukh (ibid.) records explicit permission for a mourner, even during shivah, to peel or bite his nails.

IV. Washing

After cutting your nails, you are required to wash your hands (Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim 4:19). Do you also have to wash after biting your nails? What if you only bite one nail, do you really have to wash your hands? Piskei Teshuvos (4:21 n. 206) quotes the Malbim (Artzos Ha-Chaim, ad loc., no. 18), Kaf Ha-Chaim (ad loc., no. 28) and Tzitz Eliezer (7:2) who say that you have to wash even after cutting only one fingernail. However, he quotes (ibid., n. 208) in the name of the Chazon Ish that you do not have to wash after cutting (or biting) part of a single nail. Rav Shlomo Aviner (Piskei Shlomo, vol. 1 p. 10), in the context of ruling that you do not have to wash after filing your nails, quotes the same from the Chazon Ish. Piskei Teshuvos (ibid., n. 209) also quotes the Ben Ish Chai (Rav Pe'alim 2:4) that you only have to wash after cutting nails that extend beyond the fingertip. Most nail biters have shorter nails than that.

V. Order and Disposing

It is a mitzvah to shower and groom before Shabbos (Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim 260:1). The Rema (ad loc.) quotes a specific order in which you should cut the nails of each finger and hand. I am unsure whether that order also applies to biting your nails. However, the Taz (ad loc., 2) quotes the Arizal as saying that there is no need to follow that order. He also quotes the Tashbetz as saying that the Maharam of Rotenburg personally did not follow the order. The implication from the Taz is that he rules that you do not have to follow the order. The Magen Avraham (ad loc., 1) says that the Arizal even mocked the order of cutting fingernails. However, the Magen Avraham concludes that you should be strict anyway, which the Mishnah Berurah (ad loc., 8). The Arukh Ha-Shulchan (ad loc., par. 6) says that some follow the order and some do not ("those who are careful, are careful and those who are not, are not"). So I am not too worried about biting my fingernails in the proper order. If you are only biting the nails of one or two fingers, then this does not apply anyway.

The Gemara (ibid.) says that we should be careful how we dispose of fingernails. It says that a tzadik buries his fingernails, a chasid burns them and a rasha just tosses them down. The Gemara is concerned that a pregnant woman might step on the discarded fingernail and feel so much pain that she miscarries. Therefore, the Gemara concludes, you can throw fingernails on the ground in a place where women do not normally walk, such as in a beis midrash (the Gemara's example) or the men's section of a synagogue. However, you are not allowed to throw your fingernails on the subway (which I see frequently) or anywhere else that women walk. Instead, you must discard them.

Some authorities say that nowadays it is best to flush the cut fingernails down the toilet or down a sink. Piskei Teshuvos (new series, 260:9 n. 91) quotes this from the Ben Ish Chai (year 2, Lekh Lekha, no. 14), Rav Betzalel Stern (Respona Be-Tzel Ha-Chokhmah 2:35) and Rav Moshe Stern (Respona Be'er Moshe (6:133). Rav Yisrael Belsky also held this way (R. Moishe Dovis Lebovits, Piskei Halakhah of Harav Yisroel Belsky on Orach Chaim and Yoreh Deah, p. 61). While some are still strict and require burning (see Piskei Teshuvos, ibid., n. 92), flushing fingernails seems to be a widespread practice. This applies to fingernails bitten off, as well.

VI. Bad Habit

Rav Eliezer Melamed (Peninei Halakhah, Shabbos, vol. 1, English translation, p. 278):

One should make every effort to stop biting his nails entirely; apart from being impolite, a habitual nail biter is likely to bite his nails on Shabbat as well, this violating Shabbat.

While Rav Melamed does not cite a source for this ruling, Piskei Teshuvos (4:22 n. 209) writes similarly and quotes a story that the Chazon Ish rebuked a habitual nail biter, saying that he is presumably a Shabbos violator. This sounds to me like strong advice, not a halakhic ruling.