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Parshas Ki Sisa - Vol. 12, Issue 21

Compiled by **Rabbi Oizer Alport**

[Parshapotpourri] Parsha Potpourri by Ozer Alport

Vayar ha'am ki bosheish Moshe laredes min ha'har (32:1)

A mere 40 days after accepting the Torah at Mount Sinai, the Jewish people committed the worst sin in our national history: making and worshipping a golden calf. However, while this episode is recorded in the Torah and it is therefore incumbent upon us to study it, we are fortunately quite distant from being tempted to commit such sins, and it is difficult for us to relate to this story and find lessons in it that we can apply to our own lives.

Rabbi Dr. Yaakov Greenwald was a renowned psychologist in Monsey who was very close with the Steipler Gaon and wrote a book called Eitzos V'Hadrachos containing advice that he received from the Steipler. In one section, he discusses common mistakes that people make, one of which is the attitude that for every challenge that a person confronts, whether it be in the areas of shidduchim, health, or finances, there must be a clear answer, and until he is able to find the proper resolution to the situation, he is deeply perturbed not only by the actual problem, but also by his inability to determine how to respond to it.

This approach is incorrect. Because of our tendency to feel that we must immediately solve the problem, we blindly grasp for a way out and end up making bad choices that compound the original situation and make it even worse. If we find ourselves facing a dilemma with no readily apparent solution, it would be far preferable to simply accept the ambiguity and sleep on it until the proper course of action becomes clear or the situation resolves itself.

What was the immediate cause of the sin of the golden calf? Rashi writes (32:1) that when Moshe did not return at the time that the Jewish people expected him, they erroneously concluded that he had died. As a result, they were distraught and confused about who would lead them. As Rabbi Greenwald writes, the proper response would have been to wait patiently until they could assess the situation and rationally determine the best course of action. Had they slept on it, the issue would have resolved itself when Moshe returned the following day. However, they were unwilling and unable

to do so because they felt such a burning, pressing need for immediate action that they opted for an ill-fated plan that changed the course of history.

Rav Yisroel Reisman notes that we often find that when the Gemora raises a difficulty with a certain opinion or explanation, it responds kasha, which means that the question is indeed valid and no answer is readily apparent, yet the Gemora moves on without rejecting the original position, as Chazal understood that not every question has an easy answer. Similarly, when we find ourselves in challenging situations where the correct response is unclear, rather than rashly trade one set of problems for a new set, we should instead say kasha, mentally acknowledging the difficulty, but also giving ourselves time to assess the issue calmly and rationally, rather than feeling compelled to rush and make an immediate decision that we will likely regret. Along these lines, Rav Reisman cites an essay by Dr. Lewis Thomas, who served as Dean of Yale Medical School and President of Memorial-Sloan Kettering, in which he writes, "The great secret of doctors, known only to their wives, but still hidden from the public, is that most things get better by themselves; most things, in fact, are better in the morning." He explains that because most ailments will resolve themselves on their own within a few days, doctors could simply tell their patients to wait until the presenting issue goes away on its own. However, because doctors recognize that people are impatient and feel a need to actively address their maladies, they therefore advise their patients to get extra rest and drink a lot of fluids, not because this is truly necessary to heal the illness, but because the underlying problem will most likely resolve itself during this time.

In the first blessing of Shemoneh Esrei, we refer to Hashem as Koneh HaKol, which is traditionally translated as "Owner of everything." However, the Vilna Gaon writes that the word koneh is connected to the word m'sakein - to fix - as we praise Hashem for His unique ability to repair everything. Although building and worshipping a golden calf is not a sin that tempts us, the impetuosity that enabled it to happen is indeed an area in which we can all strive to improve, as we internalize the understanding that we may not have a good solution for every difficulty that we face, but rather than make it worse, we should instead acknowledge the kasha and leave it in the capable hands of the Koneh HaKol.

Vayeired Hashem be'anan vayisyatzeiv imo sham vayikra b'shem Hashem vaya'avor Hashem al panav vayikra Hashem Hashem K-el Rachum v'Chanun Erech Apayim v'Rav Chesed v'Emes Notzeir Chesed l'alafim Nosei Avon u'Fesha v'Chata'ah v'Nakeh (34:5-7)

In the aftermath of the sin of the golden calf, Moshe asked Hashem to show him His glory. The Torah records that Hashem descended in a cloud and passed before Moshe, who was standing in a cleft in the rock, and proclaimed the 13 Middos (Attributes) of Rachamim (Divine Mercy): Hashem, Hashem, G-d, Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to Anger, and Abundant in Kindness and Truth, Preserver of Kindness for thousands of generations, Who forgives Iniquity, Willful Sin, and Error, and Cleanses.

The recital of the 13 Middos appears frequently and plays a central role in our prayers, as the Gemora (Rosh Hashana 17b) teaches that they have tremendous significance and power. Rav Yochanan explains that Hashem so-to-speak wrapped Himself in a tallis like a Shaliach Tzibbur (prayer leader) and taught Moshe that whenever the Jewish people sin, they should proclaim these 13 Attributes, and Hashem will forgive their sins. Rav Yehuda adds that Hashem made a covenant with the 13 Middos promising that they will always have an effect and will never return empty-handed. Accordingly, we invoke these Attributes at times when we seek Divine mercy, such as on fast days and during the pivotal 10 Days of Repentance, confident in the Divine guarantee of their potency. However, the obvious difficulty is that experience has shown that this is not always the case. Many times we recite this passage, but do not obtain the outcome that we desire. How can this be reconciled with the Gemora's promise of its efficacy?

The Alshich HaKadosh and Shelah HaKadosh explain that in order to obtain the results we seek, it is not sufficient to merely read the 13 Middos of

Rachamim. They point out that the Gemora's wording in its discussion of this topic is ya'asu l'fanai k'seder ha'zeh, which does not mean, "They shall recite this order of prayer," but rather, "They shall perform this order of prayer." In other words, the Gemora is hinting to us that it is not enough to simply read the words from the siddur. In order to receive Hashem's promise that the 13 Middos will not return empty-handed, we must act them out by embodying His Attributes of mercy and compassion in our interactions with others.

Rav Yonason Eibeshutz disagrees with this interpretation. He notes that while it is possible to embody Hashem's Attributes of Rachum v'Chanun (Compassionate and Gracious), it is impossible to emulate the Attribute of K-el, which connotes His Divine, omnipotent status, something that is by definition beyond human capabilities. He brilliantly adds that this is alluded to in the paragraph that precedes our recitation of the 13 Middos of Rachamim, in which we say K-el horeisa lanu lomar shelosh esreh, which literally means that Hashem taught us to recite these 13 Attributes of Mercy. However, it can also be interpreted as saying that the Attribute of K-el, which is impossible to imitate, horeisa lanu - teaches us that the requirement is not to emulate the 13 Middos, but lomar shelosh esreh - merely to say them. However, this leads us back to our original question: If we are merely instructed to read the 13 Middos, who don't we always see the desired results after publicly reciting them?

Rav Yissocher Frand cites a sefer called Imrei Binah, which suggests that there is an additional component of the covenant that Hashem made with the 13 Middos of Rachamim. The Gemora says that prior to teaching Moshe the 13 Attributes, Hashem first wrapped Himself in a tallis like a prayer leader. This hints to us that even according to the opinion that it is enough to merely say the words, one must say them like a Shaliach Tzibbur. In other words, it is insufficient to recite the 13 Middos on behalf of ourselves; we must invoke them with the welfare of the entire community in mind. When we cry out with all our might pleading with Hashem to tear up any evil decrees against us, instead of only focusing on our own needs, we must endeavor to pray as a Shaliach Tzibbur by magnanimously moving outside ourselves and also focusing on the needs of others.

Rav Frand notes that this is often quite difficult to do. To combat the natural tendency to think only of ourselves, he quotes the sefer Mikdash Mordechai, which points out that the Torah's narrative of this episode stresses that prior to teaching Moshe the 13 Middos of Rachamim, Hashem first descended in a cloud. This teaches us that when life is going well, it is easy to think about others. However, when a person feels like he is inside of a tumultuous cloud, grappling with his own overwhelming struggles, it is much more challenging to do so. Therefore, Hashem specifically approached Moshe in a cloud to hint that even at such times, we are expected to selflessly empathize with others and pray on their behalf, an act which is guaranteed to merit Hashem's mercy and compassion.

Answers to the weekly Points to Ponder are now available!

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Parsha Points to Ponder (and sources which discuss them):

- 1) Rashi writes (30:31) that the anointment oil will remain for use in the Messianic era. For what will it be used? (Ramban Sefer HaMitzvos 3:7, Minchas Chinuch 107, Ayeles HaShachar)
- 2) The Medrash teaches (Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer 45) that prior to Moshe throwing down the Tablets and breaking them, the writing that was on the Tablets miraculously flew away. As the letters weren't written on the Tablets but were carved through them, how was it possible for them to fly away? (Maharsha Pesachim 87b, Korban HaEidah Yerushalmi Taanis 23a)
- 3) The Gemora in Gittin (60b) derives from 34:27 that it is forbidden to say parts of the Written Torah by heart. Is it permitted to say Tehillim from memory? (Shu"t Chavos Yair 175, Chai Odom 8:11, Mateh Ephraim 619:23, Kaf HaChaim Orach Chaim 49:6, Mishnah Berurah 49:6, Piskei Teshuvos 49:1, Ma'adanei Asher 5768)

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Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

One of the most important, albeit only subtly presented, messages in this week's Torah reading is that of the enormous influence that current culture fads and beliefs have upon the society of its time. I do not believe that there is any other way for us to review the events of the creation and the worship of the Golden Calf by the Jewish people.

Amazing in its brazenness and brainlessness, a people witness to a plethora of miracles and Godly revelation itself, in a moment of crisis, reverts back to paganism and idolatry. The whole idea of worshiping images and statues as though they had life and powers is completely foreign to our society. It is not part of our current culture and by simply applying basic logic, we are able to see it for the empty falsehood that it is.

However, were we to live in a culture of paganism and idolatry as did our ancestors when they left Egypt there is no doubt that the Golden Calf could and would speak to us and enlist our thoughtful consideration, if not even our allegiance.

The Talmud tells us that Menashe, a king of Judah in First Temple times, when in a dream, was questioned by a leading rabbi who lived many centuries after the death of the king as to how he could believe and worship statues and idols responded: "Had you lived in my generation you also would have raised your garment in order to run more quickly to worship those statues and idols."

Menashe was a creature of his times and a captive of its prevailing culture. The rabbi who questioned him had other cultural challenges but could no longer relate to the culture that prevailed when Menashe was the king of Judah.

We see many cultural battles on challenges that are present in today's current Jewish world. These cultural battles raise passionate feelings on both sides of the questions that they raise. Nevertheless, I feel that even a few generations from now our descendants will look back at these cultural challenges and battles in amazement and wonder. They will say about us what we say about the generation that created the Golden Calf - "How could they have been so wrong?"

The answer to that lies in the recognition of the enormous influence that the prevailing culture plays in our lives and thoughts. The culture of liberalism, tolerance for wickedness and basically immoral behavior has so corroded our judgment and our view of the purpose of our lives that we see everything through a distorted mirror.

Jewish survival, moral growth and the preservation of the Jewish people and the Jewish State are the actions that should dominate our thoughts and behavior. Passing fads, which so occupy our current media, will be obsolete as we move on to newer fads and a different type of culture. The Torah attempted and attempts to raise us above temporary, passing fads. Only a traditional lifestyle based on Jewish core values and Torah principles will save us from the mockery of later generations.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

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The Unknown Melachos

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Carding

“If one of the melachos is carding, does that mean that one may not play cards on Shabbos?”

Question #2: Combing

“Someone told me that combing my hair on Shabbos violates the melachah of menapeitz? Is it prohibited to comb my hair on Shabbos?”

Question #3: Cloth

“Could you please explain the different melachos that involve the creation of cloth?”

Introduction:

Parshas Ki Sisa discusses the laws of Shabbos and of the yomim tovim. We are all aware that there are 39 melachos of Shabbos, and most of us are fairly familiar both with the concepts and with many of the details of such varied melachos as kosheir, tying knots, boreir, selecting, and hotza'ah, carrying. However, there are several melachos, for example, menapeitz, toveh, meisach, oseh batei nirin and potzei'a that are unfamiliar, and perhaps we could say virtually unknown, to most people. Since all of these melachos are involved in the manufacture of textiles, they all apply min haTorah on Shabbos and Yom Tov according to all opinions, which makes a wonderful incentive to study them. I will present these melachos in the order in which they appear in the list of the 39 melachos in the Mishnah in Shabbos (73a).

Menapeitz

Menapeitz is often translated as combing or carding, but neither term explains the melachah adequately. The origin of the word menapeitz means to break something in a way that it scatters (see Radak, Tehillim 2:9), as in the pasuk, ki'chli yotzeir tenapetzim, “You will shatter them, like a vessel made by a potter.” We find the word conveying the same idea in Shoftim (7:19), venafotz hakadim asher biyadam, “They smashed the jugs that were in their hands,” and, again, in Yeshayahu (33:3), mei'romemusecha noftzu goyim, “From Your loftiness, nations have dispersed.” The av melachah, or major category, menapeitz, is one of the stages involved in processing wool into a usable textile. The wool shorn from a sheep cannot be used immediately, because it is filthy and very tangled. Cleaning it involves the melachah of melabein, which we will not discuss in this article. Menapeitz includes untangling the wool.

While showering, many people use hair conditioner to facilitate combing the tangles and knots out of their hair. Realize how much more difficult this is for a sheep, whose hair is much curlier, and it has been quite a while since it last brushed its hair! (Wool and hair are essentially the same thing. The word “wool” is used when the hair is soft enough to be used as a textile fabric.) And yet, although the sheep does not care enough about its appearance to warrant using conditioner, combing out the tangles in the wool is absolutely necessary, if one is going to take wool of a sheep or any other animal and spin it into thread. Thus, the definition of the melachah is the separating or combing out of the strands of wool so that they can be spun into wool (Aruch, eirech nefes; Shu"t Avnei Neizer, Orach Chayim 170:2, 8, 9).

Sheep and other animals

Although the prohibition of shatnez applies exclusively to the hair of sheep and not to the wool of other animals, such as goats, camels, llamas and rabbits (see Kil'ayim 9:1), all opinions agree that menapeitz applies to the wool of all animals that may be used for clothing.

Silk

Although silk, unlike wool, is not hair, and is processed very differently, combing it out on Shabbos, so that it can be spun, also violates the melachah of menapeitz (Rashi, Shabbos 20b s.v. Gushkera).

Sinews

The halachah requires that Sifrei Torah and tefillin be sewn by a strong, very special type of “thread” made of sinew. The processing of these sinews so that they can be used as thread is also considered an act of menapeitz (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 9:15).

Linen and cotton

There is a dispute among rishonim whether the melachah of menapeitz applies min haTorah to textile materials that grow from the ground (vegetable-based), such as cotton, jute, or flax, which becomes linen. Rashi and several other early authorities contend that menapeitz applies only to materials that do not grow from the ground (Rashi, Chiddushei Ran and Meiri, all in their commentaries to Shabbos 73b; Tosafos, Shabbos 74a s.v. Af al gav), whereas the Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 9:12) and the Semag rule that menapeitz applies to all materials. The Chayei Odom rules according to the Rambam that menapeitz does apply to vegetable-based textiles.

Cottonseed

According to several rishonim, combing out cotton, which removes the seeds, violates a different melachah, dosh, threshing, because it separates the usable textile material from

the seeds, which are not usable for clothing (Rashi, Shabbos 73b, Ran and Meiri ad locum). The melachah of dosh is violated when one breaks the natural, physical connection between two items that are dissimilar in their use, thus creating a product that can be used easily. For example, threshing breaks the connection between the kernels and the chaff, thus making the kernels usable, and squeezing separates the juice or oil from the fruit. The Chayei Odom concludes that someone who combs out cotton or similar textiles, thus removing the seeds and, at the same time, preparing the fibers for cloth manufacture, violates two melachos, dosh and menapeitz. (However, see Semag who does not seem to agree.)

(Cottonseed is crushed for its oil. At the time of the Gemara, cottonseed oil was used as inferior kindling oil [see Rashi, Shabbos 21a s.v. Mish'cha]. Today, it is a source of cooking oil, used, for example, in the production of potato chips.)

Menapeitz times two

According to some authorities, one can violate the melachah of menapeitz twice on the same material. Certain methods of processing wool involve combing out the material and then soaking it in a special solution, so that it will absorb dye better. This soaking causes the wool to clump again and one needs to comb it out a second time. According to the Maasei Rokei'ach, if both of these actions were performed on Shabbos, this second combing would be a second Torah violation of the melachah of menapeitz (Hilchos Shabbos 9:12).

Carding

Before we go on to the next melachah, let us examine the first two of our opening questions: “If one of the melachos is carding, does that mean that one may not play cards on Shabbos?”

Although many halachic authorities prohibit playing cards on Shabbos (see commentaries to Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 322:6), no one contends that it violates any melachos. As we now see, the melachah called menapeitz has nothing to do with playing cards. It is sometimes called carding because in Old French and Old English the word card means a brush used to disentangle fibers prior to spinning them.

Menapeitz and combing hair

“Someone told me that combing my hair on Shabbos violates the melachah of menapeitz? Is it prohibited to comb my hair on Shabbos?”

There are two questions here. The first is whether combing hair on Shabbos or Yom Tov is included under the melachah of menapeitz. The second is whether it is permitted to comb one's hair on Shabbos or Yom Tov.

Regarding the first question, the Avnei Neizer demonstrates very conclusively that combing (human) hair is not included under the melachah of menapeitz. The question is why this is true. He proposes that the melachah of menapeitz applies only to hair or wool that is no longer attached to its living source (Shu"t Avnei Neizer, Orach Chayim #171). According to this approach, there could be a prohibition of menapeitz when combing a wig. I will simply comment that, although I have seen many authorities prohibit combing wigs on Shabbos, none of these sources prohibit it because of menapeitz.

A simpler answer is that menapeitz means to prepare fiber so that it can be used as a textile, and that is not the purpose in combing hair (Nimla Tal, menapeitz #15).

Combing hair

Having established that combing your hair does not violate menapeitz, we will now discuss whether it is permitted on Shabbos. According to the Rivash, a rishon who was the av beis din of Algiers in the fourteenth century, it is forbidden to comb your hair on Shabbos. This is because when combing, one pulls out hair, which violates a different melachah of Shabbos, that of gozeiz, which means shearing (Shu"t Harivash #394). This melachah includes any activity that disconnects something connected to a living creature, including clipping nails, shaving, shearing wool, and removing cuticles. The Rivash's ruling is cited by Shulchan Aruch and later authorities as accepted halachah (Orach Chayim 303:27).

Cloth

At this point, let us discuss the next of our opening questions: “Could you please explain the different melachos that involve the creation of cloth?” To explain them, we need to understand what happens to fiber after it is combed out, until it becomes finished cloth.

Toveh -- Spinning

Toveh is the melachah that immediately follows after menapeitz. The definition of this melachah is taking combed fiber and making it ready to be used for the manufacture of clothing. Spinning combed fiber into thread is the most common application of this melachah, and comprises the av melachah.

Taking a thread and straightening it so that one can sew with it is also included under the melachah of toveh (Shabbos 75a, as explained by Rabbeinu Chananel). Similarly, twisting threads together to make a thicker thread, called shozeir in Hebrew, is also included under the melachah of toveh (Yerushalmi as quoted by Rokei'ach). This process is sometimes colloquially called cabling or plying, although the correct term for

it is simply twisting or braiding. Twisting tzitzis threads around themselves, a requirement for the mitzvah, is included under the melachah of toveh and therefore prohibited on Shabbos and Yom Tov (Kitzur Hilchos Shabbos, Chapter 22). Similarly, twisting or braiding fibers into a wick is also included under the melachah of toveh (Shaar Hatziyun 514:52).

Felt

Textile fibers are not always spun into thread. An alternative way of manufacturing fiber into a usable textile is by pressing it -- which makes it into what is called felt. According to the Rambam, the melachah of toveh includes not only spinning fiber into thread, but also pressing fiber into felt (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 9:15; cf. Ra'avad ad locum, who explains that manufacturing felt is included under the melachah of boneh and not toveh. Both agree that making felt on Shabbos is prohibited min haTorah). Felt is used as backing to reinforce the shoulder, underarm and neck areas of garments, but one can actually manufacture garments completely out of felt. I have seen blankets, coats, hats and even tents made out of felt.

Meisach

Although many of us have little personal experience with either menapeitz or toveh, we probably have even less experience with the remaining three melachos on our list for today, meisach, oseh batei nirin and potzei'a. Weaving cloth involves several different stages, each of which is its own melachah. Once one has thread, the next stage is creating a warp. This has nothing to do with the shape of a piece of wood. The warp is the "body" of the fabric. One way to create a warp is simply to place the threads onto a loom. One now has a warp through which one can weave threads in a perpendicular direction, thus creating cloth. Placing the threads onto the loom constitutes the melachah of meisach, and weaving other threads through them is the melachah of oreig, weaving. Here is a second way of performing the melachah of meisach: A common child's craft involves taking cloth loops and place them onto a specially-constructed metal frame about six or eight inches square. The child then manually weaves other pieces of cloth perpendicularly over and under the loops that are already on the frame. Finally, one crochets the edges and thereby removes the ends of the loops from the metal frame. When finished, one has created a pretty potholder. In this particular craft, several melachah activities were performed. Placing the loops onto the metal frame creates a warp, and therefore constitutes the melachah of meisach. Weaving the second series of loops through those already on the frame is oreig. It is unclear which melachah activity is performed when the item is crocheted. It might be makeh bepatish, which can be explained as completing the final stages, or boneh, building.

By the way, meisach can also be performed without having any loom at all.

Oseh batei nirin

One of the 39 melachos is oseh batei nirin, which I will not translate, but rather, explain. When weaving with a loom, one needs to have a method whereby one raises some of the warp threads while keeping the other threads depressed. This creates what is called a shed through which one inserts the wool thread, thus weaving the material. The heddle is the name of the implement used to raise and lower the warp threads, and this is done by placing the warp threads through the eyes or loops of the heddle. (There are several excellent works that have pictures to explain this process. Among them are the Artsroll, Shabbos Chapter 13, and Ma'aseh Oreg by Dayan Yisroel Gukovitzki.) Among the halachic authorities, we find three primary opinions defining oseh batei nirin. According to some opinions, creating these loops is the melachah of oseh batei nirin (Tosafos Rid, Shabbos 73b; Gra in Shenos Eliyahu; Lechem Mishneh, Hilchos Shabbos 9:16; Tiferes Yisrael, Shabbos 7:18). A different opinion contends that placing the warp threads in the loops is the melachah (Rashi, Shabbos 73a). Yet a third opinion contends that oseh batei nirin is not a stage in weaving cloth, but rather it is a type of hand-weaving process in which the final product is like a netting, mesh or basket weave. According to this approach, the melachah of oseh batei nirin has nothing to do with using a loom.

Potzei'a

The last of the five melachos that we will study in this article is potzei'a. Potzei'a is unusual in that there is no Gemara that explains what the melachah is. I have seen four different opinions among the rishonim to define the melachah. In the Rambam's opinion, the melachah of potzei'a constitutes undoing the weave of cloth that has already been woven, for the purpose of forming one larger piece. There are two ways to combine smaller pieces of fabric. The more common way is to sew together their edges. Indeed, this involves a melachah, but not potzei'a. Sewing two items together is the melachah of tofeir, sewing. Potzei'a is involved when someone does not want to sew the edges of the cloth together, but instead wants to blend the weave together. This is done by undoing the weave at the edge of each of the two pieces of fabric and then reweaving them together so that they form one new, larger piece of fabric. In the Rambam's opinion, doing this involves two different melachah activities. Undoing the weave is the melachah of potzei'a, and then, reweaving it is the melachah of oreig, weaving. In his opinion, potzei'a is the opposite of weaving, similar to the way

building and razing (soseir) or kindling (mav'ir) and extinguishing (mechabeh) are opposite melachos.

A second opinion is that of the Ra'avad, who contends that potzei'a is the removal or disconnection of newly woven fabric from the loom. He feels that removing threads from the weave is not potzei'a but is included under the melachah of korei'a, tearing. Just as tearing something sewn together is korei'a, so is removing threads from the weave (Ra'avad, Hilchos Shabbos 9:20; Shenos Eliyahu, Shabbos chapter 7). A third opinion, that of Rashi (Shabbos 73a s.v. Hapotzei'a), is that potzei'a is thinning a thread that has been already spun but is thicker than one needs to weave. The melachah is removing some of the fiber from the thread. One would violate this melachah min haTorah if one thins the thread to facilitate using it for weaving. A fourth opinion is that potzei'a is untwisting the end of a thread, so that one can now combine two threads together, end-to-end. This involves undoing the tight spinning on the ends of two threads, and then spinning them together, so that they now form one long thread (Re'ah, quoted by Ran and Ritva, Shabbos 73a). According to this opinion, potzei'a, the first step, is the opposite of the melachah of toveh, spinning thread; the second step, twisting the ends of the two threads together so that they form one thread, is toveh.

In conclusion

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (Shemos 20:10) notes that people mistakenly think that work is prohibited on Shabbos, in order for it to be a day of rest. He points out that the Torah does not prohibit doing avodah, which connotes hard work, but melachah, activities or actions which bring purpose and accomplishment. Shabbos is a day that we refrain from constructing and altering the world for our own purposes. The goal of Shabbos is to allow Hashem's rule to be the focus of creation, by refraining from our own creative acts (Shemos 20:11).

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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva
Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"א

Rav Aviner answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample:

Ma'aser for Food for a Family with a New Baby Q: Is it permissible for use Ma'aser to buy food for a family with a new baby? A: If they are poor. Ma'aser is for the poor.

Debt at Kiosk that Closed Down Q: I had a debt at a Kiosk that closed down and I haven't been able to locate the owner. What should I do? A: Try your hardest to find him. If it is impossible, give the money to a Tzedakah that benefits the most amount of Jews. For example, an organization that helps Tzahal soldiers, because we all benefit from Tzahal.

The Letter Shin of Tefillin Q: Why does the letter Shin have three heads on the right-hand side of the head Tefillin and four heads on the left side (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 32:42)? A: Some explain that the three heads correspond to the three Forefathers and the four heads correspond to the four Foremothers (Eliyahu Rabba ibid. #65).

Selling Weapons Q: Is it permissible for the State of Israel to sell weapons to another country? A: If they are not murderers (Rambam, Hilchos Avodah Zarah 9:8, Hilchos Rotzeach U-Shemirat Nefesh 12:13. And see a discussion of this entire subject in the book "Kol Yehudah" of Ha-Rav Yehudah Gershuni p. 172).

Visiting Arabs who are Ill Q: Our youth group is going to the hospital to hand out candy to the sick. What should we do about the Arab patients? A: Give to them as well. Our Rabbis taught: "We sustain the non-Jewish poor with the Jewish poor, visit the non-Jewish sick with the Jewish sick" (Gittin 61a. Rama, Yoreh Deah 251:1).

Eliyahu's Chair Q: Is it permissible to sit on Eliyahu's Chair just to sit down? A: Yes.

Student who Disturbs All the Time Q: I am a teacher and there is a student who constantly disturbs the class. What should I do? A: It seems that something in his life is bothering him. Have a personal conversation with him.

Tevilah For a Nutcracker Q: Does a nutcracker require immersion in a Mikveh before use? A: Yes. In the book "Tevilat Kelim" of Ha-Rav Tzvi Cohain, p. 197.

Hilchos Pesach

This Shabbos we read *Parshas Parah* (at the beginning of *Parshas Chukas*). It discusses the preparation of the *Parah Adumah* (Red Heifer) which was burned at this time of the year by the Jews in the *Midbar* (desert), to be sprinkled with its ashes and be cleansed from impurity (i.e. Tum'as Mes) in order to be eligible to join in the eating of the *Korbon Pesach*. *Shulchan Aruch w/Mishnah Brurah 685:1*

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www.ou.org/torah/parsha/rabbi-sacks-on-parsha

Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Covenant & Conversation – Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

The Sabbath: First Day Or Last? (Ki Tissa 5777)

In the immensely lengthy and detailed account of the making of the Tabernacle, the Torah tells the story twice: first (Ex. 25:1 – 31:17) as Divine instruction, then (Chs. 35 – 40) as human implementation. In both cases, the construction of the building is juxtaposed to the command of the Sabbath (31:12-17; 35:1-2).

There are halakhic and theological implications. First, according to Jewish tradition, the juxtaposition was intended to establish the rule that the Sabbath overrides the making of the Tabernacle. Not only is the seventh day a time when secular work comes to an end. It also brings rest from the holiest of labours: making a house for God. Indeed, the oral tradition defined 'work' – *melakhah*, that which is prohibited on the Sabbath – in terms of the thirty-nine activities involved in making the sanctuary.

At a more metaphysical level, the Sanctuary mirrors – is the human counterpart to – the Divine creation of the universe (for the precise linguistic parallels between Exodus and Genesis, see *Covenant and Conversation*, Terumah 5763/2003). Just as Divine creation culminates in the Sabbath, so too does human creation. The sanctity of place takes second position to the holiness of time (on this, see A. J. Heschel's famous book, *The Sabbath*). However, there is one marked difference between the account of God's instruction to build the Sanctuary, and Moses instruction to the people. In the first case, the command of the Sabbath appears at the end, after the details of the construction. In the second, it appears at the beginning, before the details. Why so?

The Talmud, in the tractate of Shabbat (69b), raises the following question: what happens if you are far away from human habitation and you forget what day it is. How do you observe the Sabbath? The Talmud offers two answers:

R. Huna said: if one is travelling on a road or in the wilderness and does not know when it is the Sabbath, he must count six days [from the day he realises he has forgotten] and observe one. R. Hiyya b. Rav said: he must observe one, and then count six [week] days. On what do they differ? One master holds that it is like the world's creation. The other holds that it is like [the case of] Adam.

From God's point of view, the Sabbath was the seventh day. From the point of view of the first human beings – created on the sixth day – the Sabbath was the first. The debate is about which perspective we should adopt.

Thus, at the simplest level, we understand why the Sabbath comes last when God is speaking about the Tabernacle, and why it comes first when Moses, a human being, is doing so. For God, the Sabbath was the last day; for human beings it was the first. However there is something more fundamental at stake.

When it comes to Divine creation, there is no gap between intention and execution. God spoke, and the world came into being. In relation to God, Isaiah says:

I make known the end from the beginning,

from ancient times, what is still to come.

I say: My purpose will stand,

and I will do all that I please. (Isaiah 46:10)

God knows in advance how things will turn out. With human beings, it is otherwise. Often, we cannot see the outcome at the outset. A great novelist may not know how the story will turn out until he has written it, nor a composer, a symphony, nor an artist, a painting. Creativity is fraught with risk. All the more so is it with human history. The 'law of unintended consequences' tells us that revolutions rarely turn out as planned. Policies designed to help the poor may have the opposite effect. Hayek coined the phrase 'the fatal conceit' for what he saw as the almost inevitable failure of social engineering – the idea that you can plan human behaviour in advance. You can't.

One alternative is simply to let things happen as they will. This kind of resignation, however, is wholly out of keeping with the Judaic view of history. The Sages said: 'Wherever you find the word *vayehi* [and it came to pass] it is always a prelude to tragedy.' When things merely come to pass, they rarely have a happy ending.

The other solution – unique, as far as I know, to Judaism – is to reveal the end at the beginning. That is the meaning of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is not simply a day of rest. It is an anticipation of 'the end of history', the Messianic age. On it, we recover the lost harmonies of the Garden of Eden. We do not strive to do; we are content to be. We are not permitted to manipulate the world; instead, we celebrate it as God's supreme work of art. We are not allowed to exercise power or dominance over other human beings, nor even domestic animals. Rich and poor inhabit the Sabbath alike, with equal dignity and freedom.

No utopia has ever been realised (the word 'utopia' itself means 'no place') – with one exception: 'the world to come'. The reason is that we rehearse it every week, one day in seven. The Sabbath is a full dress rehearsal for an ideal society that has not yet come to pass, but will do, because we know what we are aiming for – because we experienced it at the beginning.

We now begin to sense the full symbolic drama of the making of the Tabernacle. In the wilderness, long before they crossed the Jordan and entered the promised land, God told the Israelites to build a miniature universe. It would be a place of carefully calibrated order – as the universe is a place of carefully calibrated order. Nowadays, scientists call this the 'anthropic principle', the finding that the laws of physics and chemistry are finely tuned for the emergence of life. Just so did the Tabernacle have to be exact in its construction and dimensions. The building of the Tabernacle was a symbolic prototype of the building of a society. Just as it was an earthly home for the Divine presence, so would society become if the Israelites honoured God's laws.

The ultimate end of such a society is the harmony of existence that we have not yet experienced, living as we do in a world of work and striving, conflict and competition. God, however, wanted us to know what we were aiming at, so that we would not lose our way in the wilderness of time. That is why, when it came to the human execution of the building, the Sabbath came first, even though in global terms, the 'Sabbath of history' (the Messianic age, the world to come) will come last. God 'made known the end at the beginning' – the fulfilled rest that follows creative labour; the peace that will one day take the place of strife – so that we would catch a glimpse of the destination before beginning the journey.

Only those who know where they are travelling to will get there, however fast or slow they go.

from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>

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Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Ki Tisa
For the week ending 18 March 2017 / 20 Adar II 5777
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Insights

Nischt auf Shabbes Geredt

“And on the seventh day you shall desist; you shall desist from plowing and harvesting.” (34:21)

“Nischt auf Shabbes geredt (Yiddish: “Not to speak of it on Shabbat”) — you know, they’ve got an amazing sale next week downtown!”

“Really! Nischt auf Shabbes geredt, when does it start?”

“Well, nischt auf Shabbes geredt, if I remember correctly, it’s on Friday, but it could be, nischt auf Shabbes geredt, on Shabbat, nischt auf Shabbes geredt.”

Shabbat is a delicate creature. She’s very easily scared away. To experience what Shabbat really can be we must push the working week away with two hands, and use those hands to embrace the Shabbat.

“If you ...refrain from discussing the forbidden (on Shabbat), then you will delight in G-d...” (Yeshayahu 58:13-14)

Our Sages teach that this verse teaches us that our speech on Shabbat should not be like that of the weekday. The Shulchan Aruch, the Code of Jewish Law (in Aruch Chaim 307) says that on Shabbat it is forbidden to discuss worldly matters, and that one should speak briefly even about that which is permissible.

“And on the seventh day you shall desist; you shall desist from plowing and harvesting.”

This verse hints to these two ideas: “Plowing” — charisha — hints to the forbidden speech about the mundane and the worldly. “Harvesting” — katzira — literally “cutting”, suggests that one should cut down to the minimum even conversation that is permissible on Shabbat.

And the reward: “Then you will delight in G-d.”

Sources: based on the Noam Megadim in Mayana shel Torah

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OU Torah

The Hindu Princess and the Golden Calf

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

She was a Hindu princess. She was one of the brightest students in my graduate school class. We studied psychology, and she went on to return to her country and become a psychotherapist of world renown. For our purposes, I shall refer to her as Streena.

We were a class of 12, and except for one lapsed Catholic, she and I were the only ones who had a serious interest in religion. And we were the only ones who actively practiced our faith.

This was back in the days when religion was far from a popular subject in psychology departments. Religion was seen as foolish, at best, and as quite possibly a sign of neurotic pathology. So neither of us was very public about our religious practices.

In the early afternoons, when the time for the Mincha service rolled around, I would usually find an excuse to absent myself from the psychology department library where our group hung out. There was a small synagogue not far from the campus, and I would make my way there and unobtrusively return to the library when Mincha was over.

But there were times when it was impossible for me to leave the building. During those times, I would make use of a small side room and pray in private.

It was during one of those times that I discovered that I was not the only one to use that side room for prayers. Streena was there too.

I remember the first time I noticed her there. I had just taken the customary three steps back after concluding my Amidah, or Shemoneh Esrei. She was in the far corner of the room, doing her utmost not to disturb me. She was deep in prayer herself, but what was most striking was that she had small object in her hand.

When it was apparent to me that she too had concluded her prayers, I approached her and inquired about that object. She showed me what looked like a small doll, only she referred to it by a Hindu name that meant that it was her deity, her God. Plainly and simply, it was an idol.

Over our years in graduate school, we had numerous conversations about religion, the nature of prayer, and of course the nature of the divinity. I stressed that when I as a Jew prayed, I did not pray to any image, statue or portrait. I prayed to an invisible and unknowable God. She found that impossible to accept. “When I pray,” she insisted, “I must have some concrete visual image before me. I know that this little doll is not the deity. But it is what I call a concretization of the higher power that I worship.”

The stark contrast between Streena’s mode of prayer and my Jewish conception of the way in which we are to conceive the Almighty is one of the lessons of an exceedingly provocative episode in this week’s Torah portion, Ki Tisa (Exodus 30:11-34:35). I refer to story of the Golden Calf.

Moses ascends the mountain to receive the holy tablets. He is delayed in his return, and, in their impatience, the Jewish people collect gold, fashion an idol out of it in the shape of a calf, and worship it with sacrifices and an orgiastic feast.

Every reader of the Torah has been puzzled by the sudden descent of the people from a state of lofty spiritual anticipation to the degrading scene of dancing worshipfully before a graven image.

One such reader, himself a pagan, was the king of the Khazars, a nation in Central Asia, whose search for religious truth is the theme of one of the most intriguing books of Jewish philosophy, Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi’s Kuzari. In that king’s dialogue with the Jewish sage who is his spiritual mentor, he condemns this behavior and challenges the sage to justify the apparent idolatry of the Jewish people. The sage, who is actually the voice of the author of the Kuzari, responds, in part:

“In those days, every people worshiped images... This is because they would focus their attention upon the image, and profess to the masses that divinity attaches itself to the image... We do something like this today when we treat certain places with special reverence—we will even consider the soil and rocks of these places as sources of blessing... The objective was to have some tangible item that they could focus upon... Their intent was not to deny the God who took them out of Egypt; rather, it was to have something in front of them upon which they could concentrate when recounting God’s wonders... We do the same thing when we ascribe divinity to the skies (for example, we call fear of God ‘fear of heaven’)...”

This is but one explanation of the motivation for what is one of the greatest recorded sins of our people. But it is an especially instructive explanation, for it renders understandable, in our own terms, an act that is otherwise totally mystifying.

In our own inner experiences of prayer, we have all struggled with the difficulty of “knowing before Whom we stand”. It is frustrating to address an abstract, invisible, and unknowable deity. It is comforting to imagine that we stand before a mortal king, or a flesh and blood father figure, someone physical and real. I think that we can all confess to moments when we have, at least in our visualizations of the Almighty, resorted to the same process of concretization as Streena did.

Ideally, we know that we must resist the temptation to “humanize” God, to anthropomorphize Him. We believe in a deity Who sees but is not seen, hears but is not heard, and who is as far from human ken as heaven is from Earth. In this fundamental belief, we differ from other religions; and indeed not only from Hinduism but from certain forms of Christianity as well.

Nevertheless, we can sympathize with Streana's need to pray to her doll, and in the process we can come to grips with what must have been going on in the minds of our ancestors when they stooped to idolatry and committed the sin which the Almighty has never totally forgiven, the worship of the Golden Calf.

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Drasha - Parshas Ki Sisa

Consumer Oriented

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

In one of the most difficult portions of the Torah, and chapters in our history, this week the Children of Israel make a Golden Calf and serve it. The act warrants their annihilation, and Hashem threatens Moshe with just that, adding that He is ready to build a nation from Moshe himself. "Hashem said to Moses, 'I have seen this people, and behold! it is a stiff-necked people: And now, desist from Me. Let My anger flare up against them, and I shall annihilate them, and I shall make you a great nation.'" (Exodus 32:9-10) But Moshe beseeches Hashem to forgive the nation for the calamitous sin of the Golden Calf, and Hashem acquiesces, offering an historic formula which is the precursor to every prayer of penitence. Hashem entails the supplication that is known as "the thirteen attributes of Hashem."

They include the words "Hashem, Hashem, G-d, Compassionate and Gracious, Slow to Anger, and Abundant in Kindness and Truth..." (Exodus 34:6-7).

Those powerful, deep, and concise statements that embody anthropomorphic qualities to an Omnipotent Creator contain significant meaning far beyond mortal comprehension.

What is astonishing is that almost immediately after Hashem forgives the people, Moshe beseeches Hashem to accompany them for the precise reason that Hashem was angered by them!

"If I have now found favor in Your eyes, my L-rd, let my L-rd go among us — for it is a stiff-necked people, and You shall forgive our iniquity and error, and make us Your heritage." (Exodus 34:9) Was it not stiff-neckedness that caused Hashem to want to annihilate them?

It had become a nuisance for most of those who strolled in the Swiss forest in the early 1950s. Hikers would come home and spend time removing the sticky cockleburs that had fastened to their clothing. But it was something that their forebears had lived with for years and another hindrance that nature had put in their way.

But George de Mestral did not look at the cockleburs that had snagged his sweater as a nuisance. In fact, he realized that Divine genius played a vital role in their physiology.

Returning home after a walk one afternoon, he took out a microscope to get a better look at Hashem's prodigy. When he realized that the burs were actually comprised of thousands of natural hooks that would engage countless loops he realized that this was no nuisance of nature. Their sticky nature was actually the way that these seed pods were transported to find new breeding grounds. They would latch themselves to the fur of animals and be transported.

De Mestral realized that he could carry this wisdom to the more mundane world. And so with a system of a fuzzy felt and crocheted hooks, he combined more than just two divergent materials. He also combined two words, velvet and crochet, now employed in the lexicon and inventory of both schoolchildren and rocket-scientists. He invented, or perhaps introduced us to, Velcro®.

The Dubno Maggid explains that after Moshe heard the wondrous quality of Unrestricted Compassion, he realized that Hashem was actually offering a product that was well-tailored to our mortal needs. It was in fact Moshe's biggest argument for Hashem to accompany His nation.

"Angels don't need those attributes! It is the fallible human who needs that ever-lasting, unceasing mercy! It is only because we are stiff-necked that we need Your unending kindness!"

That is why after Moshe heard Hashem's argument, followed by His attributes, he presented his plea for Divine accompaniment. Often, we do not take advantage of the great goodness of Hashem. We leave His attributes in heaven, distancing our mundane needs from His all-powerful abilities. Moshe teaches us that it is distinctly our capriciousness and mortality that needs His omnipotence. We must realize that the attributes of Hashem are specifically assigned to sustain His nation. And all we have to do is utilize that unceasing, unyielding, and everlasting product to our advantage. Good Shabbos

If you would like to be on a shiur update list which sends messages regarding Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky's various lectures in NY City and Long Island and other locations, please send a blank email to rmkshiur-subscribe@jif.org.il You will receive bulletins about those classes.

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Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum –

Parshas Ki Sisa

This shall they give - everyone who passes through the census - a half-shekel of the sacred shekel. (30:13)

Why was Klal Yisrael commanded to contribute a half-shekel coin? Would it have been so difficult to give a whole shekel? This question has been treated extensively by the various commentators. The gist of their commentary focuses on the need for each individual Jew to view himself as a mere half. No Jew is whole, alone and in and of himself. Horav Yoshiyahu Pinto, Shlita, offers a powerful insight into the half-shekel requirement. He explains that a Jew should view every occurrence, every circumstance, every issue that he faces, as being only half of the story. Another side to the story always exists. Whatever he might be going through right now is only part of a larger picture. With emunah and bitachon, faith and trust, in Hashem, he will understand the "rest of the story".

Numerous stories and parables have received written and oral expression, which emphasize this verity. I have selected a classic culled from the Kisvei, writings, of Horav Chaim Vital, zl, which he redacted from his revered Rebbe, the holy Arizal. A story of this caliber from such a source increases its authenticity and should enrich and ennoble our emunah.

Yosef was a young married man who, together with his younger brother, would visit their widowed mother after shul on Friday night. They entered the house to notice their mother reading a Tehillim that had belonged to their father, who had passed away two years earlier. When their mother looked up from the sefer, they noticed that her eyes were damp from crying. Yosef looked at her and said, "Imma, two years have passed since our father left us. Why are you still crying? It is enough! Imma, it is time to move on. Hashem made a decision. We must abide by it." Their mother rose from her chair and said, "Yosef, you are right, but I cannot forget. I cannot stop crying. I miss him so much. I will make a special attempt especially for you to put a smile on my face and live with joy."

They spent some time together and bid one another Gutt Shabbos. The mother retired to bed in a much better mood than she had been in some time. Soon she began dreaming of an exquisite garden filled with the most beautiful, fragrant flowers. As she stood there in awe, an old man with a long, white beard appeared and asked if she wanted to see her late husband. "Certainly," she said, and she followed him to a clearing where a large group of (what appeared to be) righteous men were listening intently to a shiur, lecture, being rendered by a young man. She looked closely and was shocked to see that the young rebbe was none other than her late husband.

"My husband, why did you leave me at such a young age? How are you able to teach Torah to the righteous ones in Gan Eden?"

"Let me explain to you," he began. "The world in which you live is but a place where gilgulim, transmigrated souls, are sent to complete the spiritual repair of their lives. The real world is up here. During my first sojourn in life, I was a great Torah scholar. Because of my overriding desire to learn Torah, I refused to marry and raise a family. It would be too time-consuming. When I came here I was told that I had failed to fulfill the first mitzvah of the Torah. Thus, I was compelled to return to marry and have a

family - but only long enough to set my sons straight on the path of Torah. Once this was achieved, I was called back."

"Why does our son not have good fortune in his business ventures?" she asked. "Do you remember that Yosef was involved in a din Torah, litigation, with another Jew? Well, although he won, the other fellow was very angry and was about to take revenge against Yosef. My prayers on Yosef's behalf succeeded in sparing him, but at the expense of his financial success. The decree against him will have reached its designated time in one more year, when his ventures will take an about-face."

"Why does our son, David, have such difficulty in finding his appropriate match?" she asked. "His zivug, match, is presently only thirteen years old. She will move to your city in five years, at which time they will 'meet' and become engaged."

"One last question: Why did our youngest die at the age of three at the hands of a gentile alcoholic? This was such a tragedy for us. Why?" she asked. "Our youngest son was the gilgul of a great tzaddik who, at birth was kidnapped from his parents and raised by gentiles. Later on, he was redeemed and grew up to be a Torah luminary. Those few years during which he had nursed from a gentile, however, prevented his soul from ascending to its rightful position in Gan Eden. It was necessary for it to return in the body of our son, to nurse from a righteous woman, for which position you were chosen."

"But why did his death have to come through such tragic circumstances?" she asked. "Our son was destined to die at a young age regardless," he explained. "A great decree against our community was decreed in Heaven which would have annihilated it. Our son's neshamah was chosen to serve as atonement, thereby averting disaster for our community." He concluded his dialogue, saying to his wife, "You must move on. An appropriate match has been proposed for you. You should marry him, and you will be blessed with a happy, long life. Your suffering is over." She woke up from her dream with a new, refreshed feeling, understanding that it was truly time to move on. This is not an isolated incident, but one, which occurs constantly to each and every one of us. We just require greater insight and belief in order to confront the challenges of life.

However, you must observe My Shabbasos. (31:13)

Tishmoru is written in the plural, implying that the exhortation to observe Shabbos is being spoken to a group. The Chafetz Chaim, zl, commented, "It is not enough that you and your household observe Shabbos. You must see to it that other Jews also observe Shabbos." Thus, it is not a singular command. Rarely do we find the Torah instructing us not only to personally observe, but also, to see to it that our observance influences others. I write this specifically because our observance, our valuing Shabbos, our sensitivity to this mitzvah is the only way the alienated Jew will ever come to appreciate Shabbos. When he sees how much it means to us: externally, our changed demeanor both in the way we dress and the way we act; and internally, our being at peace with ourselves, with our family, suffused by the glow and warmth of Shabbos, then it will imbue him with second thoughts.

Shabbos attests to Hashem as the Creator of the world. As He "worked" for the Six Creation days, He "rested" on the Seventh day. We are to emulate the Creator. Shabbos is an eternal sign between Hashem and His People. To profane Shabbos is to deny the sign, to eschew the bond created by this relationship. Sforno observes, regarding the admonition not to build the Mishkan on Shabbos, Ach es Shabsosai tishmoru, ki os he Beini u'beinchem, "However, you must observe My Shabbasos, for it is a sign between Me and you," that if we damage, undermine and ultimately destroy the ose, sign, of Shabbos, there will be no reason for Hashem's Divine Presence to rest among the Jewish People. In other words, one primary contingency in building the Mishkan is that Shabbos be respected and observed. If there is no Shabbos - then there is no need for the Mishkan. The two go hand in hand with one another.

The sacred nature of the Mishkan applies as well to the Bais HaMikdash. Therefore, the imperative that Shabbos be observed as a contingency for warranting Hashem's Divine Presence holds true as well for the Bais HaMikdash. Our Batei Mikdash are gone, with a mere reminder of those glorious days and that magnificent edifice -- the Kosei Maaravi. Should we not accord the remnant of what is left of the Bais HaMikdash with equal respect? Hashem's Presence is inextricably bound up with shemiras Shabbos, Sabbath observance. It is, therefore, perplexing and hypocritical that those who long ago eliminated Shabbos from their religious preferences would battle for their own form of ritual observance, which is inconsistent with halachah. Why bother? Why is Shabbos any less of an important ritual? A building is a holy place only as long as that edifice serves as a repository for holiness. One cannot sever their religious relationship with Hashem, the Source of Holiness, and expect the kedushah to be available for him.

To know that I am Hashem, Who makes you holy. (31:13)

Chazal (Shabbos 11:B) teach, "Hashem said to Moshe, 'I have a good (very special) gift in My treasury (where I keep My precious treasures). It is called Shabbos. I wish to give it to Klal Yisrael. Go and inform them.'" Shabbos is a precious treasure that Hashem

saved especially for His children. We must learn to appreciate the unique nature of this gift, and, above all, how much it means to Hashem. The Tzaddik, Horav Avraham, zl, m'Porisav related in the name of the Chidushei HaRim, the meaning of, Leich v'hodiam, "Go and inform them" (which Hashem said to Moshe). Leich implies to go in the future. This means, says the Gerer Rebbe, that every Erev Shabbos, Moshe Rabbeinu himself goes to every Jew and informs him that Shabbos is coming. This implies that regardless of a Jew's geographical position - both physical and spiritual - the distance notwithstanding - Moshe will notify him that Shabbos is arriving. Thus, every Jew is able to sense the kedushah, holiness, of Shabbos when it arrives. Anyone who has ever reached out to an unaffiliated Jew and invited him for Shabbos will notice a certain sense of calm, a spiritual uplifting which overcomes him when he experiences his first Shabbos. This applies to every Jew, every Shabbos, everywhere.

The Bais Avraham m'Slonim once visited Teveriah. On Shabbos morning, after davening, he sat at the table together with his Chassidim. They had recited Kiddush, and potato kugel was brought out to the table. The Rebbe (as is customary) divided the kugel and gave shirayim, small portions, to each chasid. They began to grab for the kugel, which annoyed the Rebbe. He related the following story (in way of conveying a lesson to them).

The holy Horav Shmelke, zl, m'Nikolsburg, was well-known for his generosity. He would give everything that he had to the poor. As a result, he was the primary address to which to turn for those in need. One day, a man who was obviously a victim of abject poverty stood by his door with his hand out, begging for alms. The Rebbe was beside himself, since he did not have a cent in his house. Suddenly, he reminded himself that his wife kept her jewelry hidden beneath the mattress in her room. He went there and removed a gold ring set with a beautiful diamond. When he brought the ring to the poor man, the fellow began to dance with glee and left.

The Rebbetzin was coming up the walk and noticed this poor man who was all smiles, and she began to wonder what could her revered husband have given him. They had nothing at home. When she discovered what Rav Shmelke had done, she screamed, "That ring is worth three hundred rubles. The poor man has no idea what you just gave him! He will go and sell it for a few pennies!"

Immediately, Rav Shmelke ran out and searched for the man. When he caught up with him, he said, "I just wanted you to know that the ring that I gave you is worth hundreds of rubles. Do not sell yourself short." (Obviously, there is an important lesson concerning tzedakah, charity, to be derived from here, but that is not the focus of this thesis.)

That Shabbos, Rav Shmelke related the incident to his Chassidim. In summation he said, "This is what Hashem told Moshe, 'I have a special gift for you in My treasury and Shabbos is its name. I wish to give it to Klal Yisrael. Go and inform them.' What is meant by, 'Go inform them'? Hashem was teaching Moshe to see to it that the Jewish People understand the extraordinary significance of Shabbos. They should learn to appreciate its value - not to give it away for a piece of kugel! There is much more to Shabbos than Kiddush with its many palate-friendly foods. Shabbos is a holy day reserved for achieving spiritual ascendancy, for taking stock of our lives and charting a course for spiritual success in the following week. It certainly is not about kugel!"

The people saw that Moshe had delayed in descending the mountain, and the people gathered around Aharon and said to him, "Rise up, make for us gods!" (32:1) One error, one simple mistake was all that was needed to precipitate Klal Yisrael's tragic rebellion, their egregious demonstration of infidelity-- the construction of the Golden Calf. How did a people who had recently received the Torah under circumstances that were unreal become so faithless, almost overnight? It was all due to a mistake, an error in judgment. They thought that Moshe was to have been back, but they erred. Once they exhibited fear, Satan was certain that he had ensnared them. They were putty in his hands. He seized the opportunity and created an illusion of a deceased Moshe being carried in Heaven. This is all that was needed to break their resolve. I could understand this, had this not occurred after they had witnessed the greatest Revelation in history. After being privy to hearing the Shechinah and seeing such an unparalleled display of Heavenly-orchestrated miracles and wonders, they should have maintained their faith. An error, regardless of its magnitude, should not have been able to sway them.

In his commentary, Horav Eliemelech Biderman, Shlita, quotes Horav Moshe, zl, m'Kobrin, who says, "A moment of yishuv ha'daas, serenity, calm/relaxation, is worth more than all of the money in the world." The ability to have a settled mind, to think rationally concerning the issues confronting a person, is invaluable. First and foremost, it is difficult to serve Hashem unless one's mind is tranquil and at peace. Anxiety undermines the ability to cogitate properly before Whom one stands. Without serenity, one is hard-pressed to maintain middos tovos, proper character traits, or success in Torah study. Furthermore, it is only when one is at peace that he may properly introspect and clarify what is truly important to him in life and the steps he must take to achieve success.

Obviously, today's society with its advanced technology does not lend itself to yishuv ha'daas. Life is fast-paced, and we are weighed down with obligations; the drive to earn a living sits heavily on all of us. Is it any wonder that one who, despite all of these impediments, is able to achieve a sense of quietude; has a treasure of greater value than material wealth?

Having said this, let us return to our question: How did the Jewish people, who had just received the Torah, fall under the nefarious influence of the *erev rav*, mixed multitude, to rebel against Hashem, who had just-and continued-to do so much for them? The Lelover Rebbe (Horav Biderman) quotes an insightful observation from the Nesivos Shalom, which I feel explains much of the failure of our People to stand resolute upon being confronted throughout history with the challenge of anti-Semitism. This insight explains why many (following the French Revolution) absconded and fell prey to the malevolent Haskalah, Enlightenment, which laid the groundwork for the scourge of the German Reform movement.

In Megillas Esther (9:24), we find that Haman ha'rasha, the wicked, sought l'humam u'l'abdam, "to confuse and to destroy them (the Jews)." The Nesivos Shalom explains that Haman knew quite well that he could not obliterate the Jewish People when they had yishuv ha'daas. When they were calm and relaxed, they were a formidable enemy whom he could not touch. Therefore, his first attempt was l'humam, to confuse and frighten them with his evil decrees. Then - and only then - once they were not in control of their minds, when they were not thinking rationally due to the external pressure - could he effectively try to annihilate them.

One final note. The Lelover cites Chazal (Bereishis 61) who compare the yetzer hora, evil inclination, aka the Satan, to a fly. A fly disturbs a person's serenity and peace of mind by flying into their faces and buzzing in their ears. This, too, is the yetzer hora's goal - to disturb our peace of mind, to agitate and create anxiety, so that we are unable to properly think.

Furthermore, flies also tend to feed on open wounds. They carry filth and disease, transmitting the germs to the wound, causing an infection, which can be debilitating. The yetzer hora follows a similar pattern. Once a person sins, the yetzer hora's goal is to see to it that the person does not repent of his sin. The Chassidic Masters teach, "The yetzer hora is not concerned with the sin - it is the accompanying melancholy that he generates that is important. Thus, the yetzer hora is like a fly that steals peace of mind from a person."

The Jewish nation was not a candidate for rebelling against Hashem until the yetzer hora confused them with a vision of Moshe's death. This brought on fear and depression. True, they were on a spiritual high, but such a high works only when the person is at ease with himself, when he is calm and serene. Once depression and melancholy set in he is fodder in the hands of the yetzer hora - as evinced by the *cheit ha'eigel*. Their aveirah, transgression, was the result of a loss of serenity, leading to an inability to think cogently.

Go! Go down! For your people that you brought up from the land of Egypt has become corrupt. They hand made themselves a molten calf. (32:7,8)

The idyllic relationship that had emerged between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael when we overwhelmingly accepted the Torah at Har Sinai changed with the sin of the Golden Calf. After the *chet ha'eigel* - nothing has been the same. Had Moshe Rabbeinu not intervened, it would have been - deservedly - all over. Indeed, the sin continues to dog us to this very day since, in variations, we have yet to comprehend the repeat performances we have in some way presented. U'b'yom pakdi u'pakadeti aleihem chatasam, "And on the day that I make My account, I shall bring their sin to account against them" (ibid. 32:34). The sin of the Golden Calf cannot be completely expunged, because it left an indelible taint on the People, a spiritual malfeasance affecting the entire nation. It has not left us, as the errors in faith, which precipitated the Golden Calf, continue to plague us.

In order to understand the concept of u'b'yom pakdi u'pakadeti, fully, and how we continue to exhibit a faithlessness akin to the manner exhibited with the creation of the Golden Calf, it is necessary that we try to understand the actual sin, so that we may clearly observe its present mutation.

It is understood that the nation that followed the lead of the *erev rav*, mixed multitude, in constructing the *eigel ha'zahav* was misled in error and incognizant of the gravity of its sin. That was the beginning. As in all sin, once the breach has been made, the follow-up becomes justifiable in the eyes of the sinner, for he has found excuses for his malevolent behavior. The people sought tangibility in their service, something or someone corporeal to which they could relate. Not everyone is capable - especially following 210 years of Egyptian slavery, culture and idolatry - to establish mental focus on a Supreme Being, a monotheistic G-d, whom they cannot see or hear. It is a process which they were circumventing. They did not realize that there are no shortcuts in achieving spiritual ascendance.

We do not require images, be they temples made of mortar and steel, to define our worship. Hashem is a personal G-d Who can be reached from wherever we may find ourselves. The use of an image in order to foster awareness is outrageous to us. The *shul* -- or any religious edifice for that matter -- exists for the pure utilitarian purpose of service as a place of assembly.

We may ask, why then did Hashem command us to construct the Mishkan which was to serve to atone for the *eigel*? If image is wrong, if it reeks of paganism, what is there about the Mishkan and the Keruvim, which were images, that is different? This question is asked in the Kuzari, and the answer defines Torah Judaism. He writes: "Their only sin was in their use of an image and making use of a choice of symbol entirely on their own, without first being told to do so by a *tzivui* Hashem, a command from G-d."

The Mishkan teaches us (and this is one manner in which it atones for the sin of the *eigel*) that we may relate to Hashem only as He defines, not as we want. We do not worship Hashem according to our intellect, whim or fancy. We serve Him obediently in the manner that He commands us. We do not serve Hashem in a manner that makes us feel "good", "close to Him". We serve at His pleasure and dictate. Thus, the Keruvim, which are images, are not only permissible, they are critical to the construction of the Mishkan - because Hashem has so commanded. Perhaps this is why the Keruvim are fashioned from the same ingot of gold as the Kapores, Cover of the Aron. This teaches that such an image is part and parcel of the Mishkan, because it is Hashem's command. When man acts of his own volition, in response to his own intelligence, it is an *eigel*. Anyone reading these lines understands that we are alluding to one of the major issues plaguing our people: religious pluralism. There is only one way to serve Hashem, as dictated by Him and interpreted by our Sages. Anything less than complete obedience to the word of G-d is self-worship as defined by the *eigel ha'zahav*. Interestingly, the worshippers of the Golden Calf had no qualms concerning defiling themselves through their profligate behavior. They "served" Hashem by debauching themselves before an idol. As long as we ascribe to similar forms of the self-worship evinced by the *eigel hazahav*, we will be relegated to suffer the consequences of our actions - or inactions!

Dedicated l'zechar nishmas our husband, father, grandfather Harav Daniel ben Harav Avraham Aryeh Leib Schur z"l Horav Doniel Schur Z"L nifter 21 Adar 5776 t.n.tz.v.h. by his wife, sons, daughters and his whole family

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Parashat Ki Tisa: Taking advantage of our traits

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

In this week's Torah portion, one of the Jewish nation's most serious transgressions is described: the sin of the Golden Calf.

Moses our Master, the nation's leader, went up to Mount Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights to receive the Torah and deliver it to the nation. During this time, the nation, camping at the foot of the mountain, created a golden calf and began to worship it.

This sin of *avoda zara*, idol worship, is very foreign to us nowadays. It is hard for us to grasp the temptation to create an idol and worship it, but the sages of the Talmud tell us (Sanhedrin 102) that in that time, idol worship was very attractive and hard to resist.

After the nation sinned with the golden calf, God said to Moses, "I will not go up in your midst, since you are a stiff-necked people" (Exodus 33:3). Even though He will fulfill his promise to bring the people of Israel to the Promised Land, He Himself will not take part in the journey. He canceled the plan to build the Tabernacle and have His Divine Presence rest among the people of Israel; He will not travel the long route to the land with them, and His House will not reside among the houses of the nation.

The reasoning for this given in the verse is that the Children of Israel are a "stiff-necked people." The term "stiff-necked" is given here as the reason God is revoking His relationship with the people of Israel - because the nation is stubborn, inflexible and uncompromising.

If God would be among the people and they would insist on sinning, it could be dangerous, since sinning in front of the House of God is a much greater defiance than if God is not part of this journey.

Faced with this decree, Moses asks God to forgive the people's sin, to stay with them, and not to cancel His plan to build the Tabernacle. He adds a surprising argument to this request for forgiveness: "If I have now found favor in Your eyes, O Lord, let the Lord go now in our midst [even] if they are a stiff-necked people, and You shall forgive our iniquity and our sin...." (ibid. 34:9).

That the people are a "stiff-necked people" – the reason God chooses not to be part of the journey to the Promised Land – becomes Moses's argument for the opposite decision, for why God should forgive their sin and build the Tabernacle among them.

What is Moses's argument? Because the Children of Israel are so stubborn and uncompromising, this inflexibility will ensure their loyalty to God. Their deep faith and sense of fateful belonging are so deeply rooted and strong that they will keep the nation connected to its unique history and eternal beliefs. Throughout history, Moses's words were proven to be correct time and time again. The people of Israel survived decrees and destruction, torture and horrors, and despite this remained loyal to its heritage and to its God. A Jew never surrenders. He will insist on living in accordance with his values, or – if there is no other choice – not live at all.

Moses teaches us with these words that there is no human trait that is always bad, that has no positive side to it. Every characteristic can always be used for beneficial purposes. Even if it seems to us that parts of our personalities make it difficult for us to move forward and succeed, we must keep in mind that these same traits can become positive ones, if used properly. Taking advantage of our strengths in a beneficial and healthy manner can help us live a better and more complete life.

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Ki Tissa: The First and Second Luchot

Why Break the Tablets?

"As he approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses was angry. He threw down the tablets in his hand, shattering them at the foot of the mountain." (Ex. 32:19)

Why did Moses need to break the luchot? He could have put them aside for a later time, when the Jewish people would be worthy of them. The Torah does not record that Moses was criticized for destroying the holy tablets. On the contrary, the Talmud teaches that God complemented Moses for this act: "Yashar Kochacha!" "Good job that you broke them" (Shabbat 87a). Why did they have to be broken?

The question becomes stronger when we note the exceptional nature of these unique luchot. They were "the handiwork of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets" (Ex. 32:16). The second luchot did not possess this extraordinary level of sanctity. When God desired that a second set of tablets be prepared, He commanded Moses, "Carve out two tablets for yourself" (Ex. 34:1), emphasizing that these tablets were to be man-made. Furthermore, unlike the engraved writing of the first luchot, God said, "I will write the words on the tablets" (ibid). The letters were written, not engraved, on the second tablets, like ink on paper. Why were the second luchot made differently?

Beyond Man-Made Morality

The two sets of luchot correspond to two different paths to serve God.

The first path is when we utilize our natural capabilities to live an ethical life. We perform good deeds and acts of kindness out of a natural sense of integrity and morality.

However, God meant for the Jewish people to aspire to a higher level, beyond that which can be attained naturally, beyond the ethical dictates of the intellect. It is not enough to help the needy, for example, because of natural feelings of compassion. This is praiseworthy. But the higher path is to help those in need because through this act one fulfills ratzon Hashem, God's will.

Ethical deeds that are the product of human nature are like a candle's feeble light in the bright midday sun, compared to the Divine light that can be gained through these same actions. The loftier path is when the Torah is the light illuminating our soul. We do not follow the Torah because its teachings correspond to our sense of morality, but due to our soul's complete identification with the Torah, which is ratzon Hashem.

The Sages hinted to this level in the Passover Haggadah. "If God had brought us near to Mount Sinai and not given us the Torah, it would be enough [to praise Him]." What was so wonderful about being close to Mount Sinai?

As the Jewish people stood at Mount Sinai, and prepared themselves to accept the Torah, God planted in their souls a readiness to fulfill His will. This preparation was similar to the natural inclination of moral individuals to perform acts of kindness.

This explanation sheds light on a difficult verse in Mishlei: "Charity will uplift a nation, but the kindness of the nations is a sin" (Proverbs 14:34). According to the Talmud in Shabbat 146a, "Charity will uplift a nation" — this refers to the Jewish people, while "the kindness of the nations is a sin" — this refers to other nations. What is wrong with the kindness of the nations?

Performing acts of kindness and charity out of a natural sense of compassion is certainly appropriate and proper — for other nations. For the Jewish people, however, such a motivation is considered a "chatat" — it "misses the mark" (the literal meaning of the word cheit). The path meant for the Jewish people is a higher and loftier one.

Under the Mountain

After receiving the Torah and before the sin of the Golden Calf, the Jewish people were like angelic beings (Psalms 82:6, Shemot Rabbah 32:1). They sensed ratzon Hashem with such clarity that their desire to do good was not based on character traits, but because the light of God and His will that could be found in such acts. Their souls completely identified with the light of Torah.

At that point in time, they deserved the first set of luchot. These tablets were the work of God, just as their own natural inclinations matched God's will. And the writing was engraved in the tablets themselves, not a separate material like ink on paper. So too, their souls were united and identified with God's will.

Their state was so elevated, their holiness was so intrinsic, that they were almost at a level beyond sin, like celestial bodies that cannot change their paths. This is the meaning of the Talmudic statement that the Jewish people stood literally "under the mountain" (Ex. 19:17), i.e., that God coerced them to accept the Torah as He raised the mountain over their heads. This metaphor alludes to a state whereby their inner connection to the Torah was so strong that they lacked true free will whether to accept the Torah.

The Golden Calf

But for the Erev Rav, the mixed multitudes of peoples who left Egypt with the Israelites, this service of God was simply too lofty. They aspired only to the regular level of ethical perfection, based on character traits and human intellect. Therefore, the Erev Rav demanded a physical representation of God. They wanted a service of God rooted in that which one can feel and sense, the natural feelings of human compassion and kindness.

Tragically, the Erev Rav succeeded in convincing the Israelites to abandon their lofty level. Even worse, as they relied on their natural sense of morality, they lost even this ethical level due to their undisciplined desires. They descended into a state of complete moral disarray — "Moses saw the people

were unrestrained” (Ex. 32:25) — and they transgressed the most serious offenses: idolatry, incest, and murder.

After the Jewish people had abandoned their elevated state, they required a new path of Divine service. But as long as the covenant of the first luchot existed, no other covenant could take its place. Moses realized that they would not be able to return to that lofty state until the end of days. The first luchot needed to be destroyed so that a new covenant could be made. Interestingly, the Torah notes that Moses destroyed the tablets “under the mountain.” The first luchot belonged to Israel’s unique spiritual state of “under the mountain,” when God’s will was so deeply implanted in their souls that they had little choice but accept the Torah.

The Holy Shekel

The covenant of the second luchot signifies a lower path of serving God, one closer to our natural faculties. Thus the second tablets combined both man-made and heavenly aspects. Moses carved out the stone tablets, but the writing was from God.

God nonetheless desired to leave us with a residual form of the loftier service of the first luchot. For this reason, we have the mitzvah of donating a half-shekel coin to the Temple, thus connecting every Jew with the holy service in the Temple. This donation, the Torah emphasizes, must come from the shekel hakodesh, from the highest motives, for God’s sake alone — “an offering to God” (Ex. 30:13). And the Torah introduces the mitzvah of the half-shekel with the words, “When you will raise the heads of the Israelites” — a hint that it raises up the Jewish people to their once lofty level, when they encamped at Mount Sinai.

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Two Types Of B’ris Halachic Musings By Rabbi Yair Hoffman

Many people describe two types of b’ris milah. They describe the kind with waiters, hot dishes, crêpes, and fancy chafing dishes. At those affairs, they offer scrambled eggs, hot pancakes with syrup, whitefish, and all sorts of fish platters, including the much-liked sable. The other b’ris is simpler—the kind that has tuna and egg salad, assorted rolls, and danishes. Both types have fresh bagels, orange juice, and coffee.

This article is about two different types of b’ris milah, but not of the culinary type. This article discusses halachic and procedural differences in the manner in which the b’ris milah is performed, which produces different physical results as well.

The best way to characterize the two different methods is with the terms “two-step method” and “one-step method.”

Some mohalim practice the two-step method. This is the more traditional method—practiced for thousands of years. This method is near-universal among chassidish mohalim. Other mohalim practice the one-step method. In America, in the Litvish world, this is the most common method. Few mohalim practice both methods, but some do.

Mohalim are also rather territorial about their particular method. It is a somewhat thorny issue with many of them, so be careful if you bring up the subject.

Not For The Faint

Of Heart

What follows is not for the faint of heart, so proceed with caution. However, the material under discussion is Torah and we are obligated in learning all sections of Torah—even those that can make us a little queasy. So here goes.

Two Parts. The orlah has two parts—an upper part and an inner part. The inner part is referred to as the “or ha’priyah.” The inner part is termed a mucous membrane, similar to the inside of an eyelid.

The Two-Step Method. In the two-step method, the upper part is lifted upward and cut with the mohel’s knife. This is the first step. The inner part is peeled back and torn with the mohel’s sharpened thumbnail, and then pulled down toward the body of the baby.

This is the second step. The lowered inner part eventually fuses together with the remnant of the upper part. The thumbnail’s role in the second step is even mentioned in the Midrash. The Yalkut Shimoni (#723) on the verse in Tehillim “Kol atzmosai tomarnah” states as follows: Dovid HaMelech says, “I praise You (Hashem) with each of my limbs and fulfill mitzvos with them . . . fingernails—to perform priyah with them.”

The One-Step Method. In the one-step method, the mohel uses a hemostat to grasp the inner orlah along with the upper orlah. A hemostat looks like a scissors, but it is actually

a clamp type of device that allows the mohel to more easily raise the inner orlah and the outer orlah together. The mohel then takes his knife and removes them together. In this method, the milah and the priyah are accomplished at the same time. Some of the “one-step” mohalim are able to grasp it in a manner that they can cut the inner orlah as well, even without the aid of a hemostat.

Physical differences. The physical differences between the one-step method and the two-step method are not minimal. The one-step method takes off more of the inner skin. The two-step method involves tearing, peeling, and moving the inner part of the orlah downward, but not actually removing it.

History And Benefits

Of One Step

Rabbi Moshe Bunim Perutinsky, z’l, author of the Sefer HaBris, writes that although in the time of the Rishonim the one-step method was not used, it was used in the times of the Geonim. He admits that the one-step method was not commonly done in Europe or in the time of the Rishonim or Acharonim.

Rabbi Perutinsky claims (see Sefer HaBris p. 206) that there are five benefits to the one-step method:

There is less blood.

The operation is much faster.

The wound heals more quickly.

There are no problems of the or ha’priyah ever coming back to necessitate a possible (rabbinic) redo of the b’ris.

When a hemostat is used, there is no concern that too much or too little of the orlah will be cut.

He also writes that these benefits make the one-step method preferable to the two-step method. It is just that not everyone was able to do it in this manner and that the two-step method was easier and therefore more common.

The Two-Step Proponents

The proponents of the two-step method claim that the wording of both the Rambam (Hilchos Milah chapter 2) and the Shulchan Aruch (YD 264:3) makes it clear: The halachah states that first one does the milah, and then one does the priyah. The language of the Rosh is that the blessing of “l’hachniso l’briso shel Avraham Avinu” is recited in between the milah and the priyah.

Dayan Weiss (Minchas Yitzchak, Vol. IX #100) cites a number of Acharonim who condemn any changes in the traditional method of milah. He writes that Heaven forbid anyone should change the way b’ris milah has been performed throughout the ages, and he strongly urges that the milah be done with the two-step method.

Rav Perutinsky responds that this is not considered a change, since Rav Hai Gaon used to do it in this manner. He also writes that had the Acharonim seen the responsum of Rav Hai Gaon, they would never have written against the one-step method.

Rav Vosner, zt’l, the author of the Shevet HaLevi (Vol. IV #133), writes that since the Rambam and Shulchan Aruch essentially ignored the responsum, they either disagreed with it or felt that the responsum was of dubious authenticity. The Rivash in responsum #165 also dismisses a different responsum attributed to Rav Hai Gaon.

In contrast to Dayan Weiss, zt’l, and Rav Vosner, zt’l, Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt’l (Igros Moshe YD I #155) does not consider the one-step method a problem at all, but states that “meheyos tov” to leave over some of the or ha’priyah to be removed by the fingernail—since this method is explicitly mentioned in the Midrash. Nonetheless, it is this author’s recollection that Rav Yisroel Belsky, zt’l, a talmid muvhak of Rav Moshe Feinstein, still did the two-step method.

The Sefer Milah K’hilchasa recommends that if one does the one-step method, he should actually leave over half of the or ha’priyah in order to fulfill the opinion of the Yad Ketanah in the Shulchan Aruch as to what would define priyah.

Both methods hold that the other method is valid. The question is which one is preferable. One should consult with one’s own rav or posek as to which method to pursue.

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