

B'S'D'

To: Parsha@YahooGroups.com
From: crshulman@aol.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VA'EIRA - 5762

To receive this parsha sheet in Word and/or Text format, send a blank e-mail to parsha-subscribe@yahoogroups.com or go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/parsha/join> Please also copy me at crshulman@aol.com For archives of old parsha sheets see <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/parsha/messages> For Torah links see <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/parsha/links>

www.yimidwood.org

Parshas Vaeira

RABBI ELI BARUCH SHULMAN

The Vilna Gaon, as you might imagine, was a prodigy even in his earliest youth. And there are many stories told about the brilliance that he showed even as a boy. There is one story that is told in this regard that relates to our parsha.

We read in the book of Daniel of how Nevuchadnezar set up a gigantic idol in the valley of Dura, and commanded that - on a given signal - all the assembled people should prostrate themselves before it, on pain of death. And so it was - as the signal was sounded, that all the people, young and old, men and women, gentile and even Jews, all bowed down before the idol, except for three men, who refused to bow; Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah. And so Nevuchadnezar ordered that they be thrown into a fiery furnace; but miraculously, they were not burned, and emerged unscathed.

The Gemara in Pesachim makes the following comment regarding this episode: From where did Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah learn to prefer to be thrown into the furnace rather than bow down to the idol? They learned it, says the Gemara, from the frogs in Egypt who filled the homes of the Egyptians and entered even into their ovens, as the Torah says. For they reasoned that if the frogs, who were not commanded to sanctify Hashem's name, were willing to enter into the ovens of Egypt to fulfill Hashem's will, then we, who are commanded in the mitzvah of kiddush Hashem, certainly ought to be willing to let ourselves be thrown into the furnace rather than desecrate Hashem's name by bowing to the idol. Now there is a problem in understanding this Gemara. And this problem was raised by the Shaagas Aryeh, one of the great Torah giants of the 18th century. Because the Gemara implies that the frogs were not commanded to jump into the Egyptian ovens. But that's not true, said the Shaagas Aryeh! After all, Moshe Rabeinu, relating the word of Hashem, had told Pharaoh explicitly: "Vialu Ubau Biveisecha Ubichadar Mishkavcha Vial Mitascha Ubiveis Avadecha Ubiamcha Ubitanurecha Ubimisharasecha." "Band they will go up into your home and your bedroom and upon your bed and the into the homes of your servants and people, and into your ovens and dough". So it seems that G-d had required the frogs to go into the ovens! How can the Gemara, then, say that the frogs were not commanded?

Among those present when the Shaagas Aryeh asked the question was the seven-year-old prodigy Eliyahu, the future Gaon of Vilna. And without hesitation he spoke up and answered the question, as follows: True, he said, the frogs were commanded to enter, among other places, the ovens of the Egyptians. But each individual frog was not given a specific mission. The frogs as a whole were commanded to go into Pharaoh's home, into his bedroom, into his bed, into the houses of his slaves and of his people, and into the ovens and into the dough. But there was nothing to stop any particular frog from choosing to go into Pharaoh's bedroom or bed, and letting some other frog go jump in an oven

And therefore those frogs that jumped into the hot ovens - if we can say such a thing about frogs - did so voluntarily. And it is from them that Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah took their cue.

When the Shaagas Aryeh heard the young genius' answer, he picked him up, kissed him on the forehead, and foretold a great future for him.

I would like to suggest that this comment of the Vilna Gaon does more than simply answer the Shaagas Aryeh's question. In fact, it gives us an important insight into the real point that the Gemara is making.

After all, the Gemara - at face value - seems absurd. Why should Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah have needed to learn a lesson from the frogs in Egypt? After all, everyone knows that idolatry is one of the three cardinal sins regarding which a Jew must give up his life rather than transgress them; and countless Jews throughout the centuries have done just that. Nowhere else - in the long history of Jewish martyrdom - do we find that anyone ever needed to draw inspiration from the frogs in Egypt!

And there is another difficulty: The Gemara seems to imply that the frogs' entering the ovens was somehow an act of self-sacrifice for the sake of Kiddush Hashem. But we're talking, after all, about frogs! It hardly seems likely that the frogs, when they entered the ovens, knew what they were getting into.

I believe that what the Gemara is really saying is this: Of course, Jews have often suffered martyrdom for their faith. And that was heroic. But they rarely did so alone. Rather, families and whole communities stood together and - in those times of supreme trial - drew strength from each other. But Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah were willing to sacrifice themselves at a moment when the whole world - including the Jews, including everyone whom they knew and respected - were not ready to do so. And therefore they had a right, we might have thought, to ask: Why us? Why should we three be the only ones in the whole world to stand up to Nevuchadnezar? We know it's wrong to worship an idol, even under duress; but everyone else is doing it! Why should we be the only heroes?

The Gemara therefore asks: From where did Chananiah Mishael and Azariah get the strength to stand up for kiddush Hashem when no one else was willing to do so? From where did they learn that "why me" is not an excuse?

And the answer is - from the frogs. Of course, frogs are not intelligent creatures. But the Gemara is asking us to use our imagination and conduct what Albert Einstein used to call a "thought experiment". Let us imagine that one of those frogs had been an unusually intelligent frog. And so we might imagine that frog hopping up to an oven and saying: "Hold on! I'm not going in there! I'll take my station in the kitchen cupboard, let some of those other, stupid frogs go in here".

If only one frog had been so gifted it wouldn't have mattered. Another frog would have taken his place. But let us imagine further that all of the frogs were of this same unusually intelligent variety. And that each one of them said to himself: "Why should I go into an oven? Let some other frog do that duty." And the end result would have been that not one frog would have gone into an oven, and Moshe's prophecy that the frogs would fill, among other places, the ovens of Egypt, would have gone unfulfilled. Which would have been, of course, a Chillul Hashem.

Now, of course, in the case of frogs the whole scenario is absurd. But that is exactly what happened in the valley of Dura. Each one of the assembled Jews knew as well as Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah that he or she ought to give up his life rather than worship an idol. But each one looked around and said: "Why me? Everyone else is going along and bowing down. Why should I be the one to take a stand?" And so the end result was a Chillul Hashem of colossal proportions.

Because Chillul Hashem begins with the words: "Why me?" And that was the insight of Chananiah Mishael and Azariah. And so they said, instead: "Kiddush Hashem has to begin with someone. And it may as well be - and what a merit that it should be - with us." And with that they earned themselves an eternal place in the annals of our people.

By learning the lesson of the frogs.

It's fascinating to note that this "lesson of the frogs" corresponds almost exactly a comment that the Rambam makes about the culpability of the Egyptians themselves. It seems that the Rambam was

bothered by a question that perplexed many commentators: Why were the Egyptians punished for enslaving the Jews when, after all, G-d had told Avraham Avinu, hundreds of years before, that: "Ger Yihiye Zaracha Biaretz Lo Lahem Viavadum Viunu Osam Arba Meos Shana." Since the slavery had been foretold, it would seem that the Egyptians had no choice; they had to enslave the Jews. Why, then, should they have been punished for it?

The Rambam answers that although it was foretold that the Egyptians, as a whole, would enslave the Jews, yet no particular individual Egyptian was mentioned in that prophecy. And therefore each individual Egyptian had a choice; he could also choose not to go along, and not to be a party to the persecution. But instead each Egyptian looked around and said: "Everyone else is doing it. Why should I be different?" Because they all chose to hide behind the crowd, they were culpable and ultimately were punished.

The Egyptians needed to learn the lesson of the frogs.

This lesson is also relevant to us. For while we are not, thank G-d, called upon to demonstrate the self-sacrifice of Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah, yet there are often times when we look around ourselves and see that everyone seems to be doing something that we know is wrong - and that they, too, probably know is wrong. And the temptation at such times is to say: "OK, it's wrong; but everyone else is doing it; why should I be the hero? Why me?"

At such times we have to remember the lesson of the frogs; the lesson that Chillul Hashem begins with the words: "Why me". And Kiddush Hashem begins when we begin to say: "Someone must begin to take a stand; and what greater merit than that it be we." Delivered in the YI of Midwood 5761. Rabbi Shulman's drashos and shiurim are archived at www.yimidwood.org

From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND ryfrand@torah.org
"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Vaera
The Nation Empowers Its Leaders

Moshe complained to G-d that as a result of their oppression, the Jewish people did not pay attention to him. Moshe further argued that even if the Jews would not listen to him, certainly Pharaoh would not listen to him, particularly since he (Moshe) was 'uncircumcised of lips' [Shmos 6:12].

However, the logic of Moshe's argument -- that Pharaoh would not listen to him -- is flawed. The "kal v'chomer" ("all the more so") does not follow, and may be refuted as follows: As Moshe himself stated, the reason that the Jews did not listen was because they were too weary -- from shortness of breath and from arduous labor. Pharaoh, on the other hand, did not have those distractions. So where is the proof that Pharaoh would not be prepared to listen?

The Sefas Emes (1847-1905) has an interesting approach to this question. The Sefas Emes explains that a Jewish leader is only as strong as the people who back him are. If the people do not want to be led, if a leader can not even sway the people to his side, then he in fact loses his power of speech. This explains why Moshe added the fact that "I am uncircumcised of lips" (aral sefasayim). The reason why I am 'tongue-tied' is because my power of speech is only by virtue of the fact that I represent the people. If the people do not listen to me and do not rally around me as their leader, then I am in fact 'tongue-tied'. A leader is no greater than the people he leads and if he does not lead them, he can not begin to represent them to others.

A Person Must Carefully 'Budget' His Utterances

There is an interesting Medrash that verifies something I once heard as a child. The Medrash HaGadol on the pasuk [verse] "When Pharaoh will speak to you saying..." [Shmos 7:9] makes reference to a pasuk in Amos [4:13]: "For behold, He forms mountains and creates winds; He recounts to a person what is his conversation (mah seicho)..." The Medrash states that in this pasuk, Amos is referring to the fact that when G-d creates an individual, he decrees upon him how many conversations he will have in his life and how many words he will speak. The neshama is basically provided with an allotment of words

before it comes down into this world. Once a person reaches his ration of words, his time is up.

The Imrei Shammai explains that a person's life span can thus be calibrated by the number of words it was decreed that he would speak in his lifetime. Therefore, someone who minimizes his idle conversation is in effect prolonging his life. Since no one wants to be 'stingy' with his words when he is teaching Torah or speaking in matters of learning, where is there a place to 'cut down'? Obviously, the place to economize is in regards to idle speech (devarim betailim).

No good ever comes out of too much talking. This is axiomatic. The more one speaks, the more trouble he gets himself into. Now we have an incentive. If we viewed words the way we view dollars and realized that we have a limited number to 'spend', we would be a lot more judicious with the words that we use.

Stop Hitting Those Stupid Frogs Already!

The pasuk says "And Aharon stretched his arm over the water of Egypt and the frog ascended and it covered the land of Egypt" [Shmos 8:2]. Rashi comments on the fact that the word frog is written in the singular (Tsefardeah). We know that the plague involved thousands if not millions of frogs, so why does the pasuk seem to indicate that only one frog initially ascended from the Egyptian waters?

Rashi explains in the name of the Medrash that in fact only one frog came out initially, but the Egyptians would beat it with swords and each time they would hit it, the frog would subdivide. As they kept hitting the frogs, they kept multiplying geometrically until there were hundreds of thousands and millions of frogs.

What lesson is this Medrash teaching us? The Steipler Gaon (1899-1985) explained as follows: Let us analyze the situation. The first time the Egyptians hit the frog, they certainly did not expect it to split into two. But then they hit it again, and again, and again. Each time they hit it, it divided again. So 'wake up and smell the coffee' already! Stop hitting the stupid frogs! Why did they keep hitting them? They saw that each time they hit a frog, they were only making matters worse. Why didn't they stop?

The Steipler explained that the Egyptians grew angrier and angrier each time they hit the frogs. Once a person becomes angry, he loses all sense of reason and rationality. Of course, the logical thing to do would have been to stop hitting the frogs, but when a person is very angry and frustrated, he loses control of his faculties. At that point, forget about logic. Logic is the language of the reasonable. An angry man is not reasonable.

Unfortunately, we can all relate to this concept. We can all relate to getting angry and to losing control. We know what a terrible state that is to be in. If we lose control, we say silly things. We do not hear that which people say to us in response. We are out of control.

That is true regarding a person who becomes angry occasionally. However, what if a person is always getting angry? That person is in very serious shape, because he is then always out of control. If he is always out of control, he is living a horrible life. The Talmud says "a person who constantly gets angry, all forms of Hell rule over him" [Nedarim 22a]. The simple reading of this Gemara is that an angry person will be judged harshly in the next world and all forms of Gehinnom will rule over him.

Rav Yeruchum Levovitz (1874-1936) adds that the simple meaning is not the complete meaning of the Gemara. The Gemara is not only speaking about the price the person will have to pay in the next world. The Gemara is also saying that the person who constantly becomes angry lives a living Hell in THIS world! That is what it is like to always be angry and out of control.

This explains why even though the most rational thing in the world would have been to stop hitting those stupid frogs, an angry person brings a living Hell upon himself by irrationally continuing to hit the frogs and further aggravating the matter.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, WA DavidATwersky@aol.com
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD
dhoffman@torah.org These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 313, Converting a Church Into a Shul. Tapes or a

complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrاند, Copyright 1 2002 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Torah.org depends upon your support. Please visit <http://torah.org/support/> or write to dedications@torah.org or donations@torah.org. Thank you! Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B Baltimore, MD 21208

From: listmaster@shemaisrael.com
PENINIM ON THE TORAH
BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM
PARSHAS VAERA

"And Hashem carried out the word of Moshe, and the frogs died - from the houses, from the courtyards, and from the fields." (8:9)

Pharaoh came around quickly. When he saw that his country was being overrun with frogs, he quickly repented, imploring Moshe Rabbeinu to seek relief for him. Moshe prayed to Hashem, and all the frogs died - well, almost all of the frogs died. Chazal teach us that, miraculously, the frogs who had entered the Egyptian ovens did not die. They were rewarded for their mesiras nefesh, dedication to the point of self-sacrifice. As the Commentators explain, they had a choice - either to go into the houses or into the ovens. Some of the frogs manifested such exemplary devotion to Hashem that they went where others shied away from going. They did not fear death if it was in the service of Hashem.

These frogs have presented a lesson for the many individuals who have undertaken it as their life's mission to serve Hashem and disseminate his Torah to the masses under circumstances that were far from appealing. Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zl, used the frogs as a catchword when rallying his students to go out and "do" for Klal Yisrael. His frequent refrain was, "You have been drafted in a time of crisis. Klal Yisrael is waiting for you." In a time when assimilation and low birthrates prompted predictions that the world Jewish population would decline precipitously, mesiras nefesh was in great demand. The frogs sent to plague Egypt entered the stoves of the Egyptians knowing that they would die. Yet, they went. Many years later, Chananayah, Mishael and Azaryah followed their example and entered Nebuchadnetzar's fiery furnace in order to sanctify Hashem's Name. "From this we learn," Reb Shraga Feivel would declare, "that when Hashem gives us a mission to fulfill, we have no right to consider our personal conflicting interests."

He planted a feeling in his talmidim, students, that they held the spiritual fate of American Jewry in their hands. He instilled in them a sense of obligation to worry about all Jewish boys who did not have the opportunity to attend a yeshivah. When it was time for the students to leave the confines of the bais hamedrash, he pushed them to act on behalf of the klal, community. He fired them with a sense of mission that gave them the fortitude to triumph over the myriad obstacles that they were certain to confront. He would admonish his students concerning their moral obligation to give something back to Klal Yisrael. He would state emphatically, "your first concern should be not what you can get out of a position, but what you can give."

Equally important is the self-confidence he imbued in his students. He would not tolerate negativity. To a student who complained that Reb Shraga Feivel's expectations of him were beyond his capabilities, he responded, "America is an "eretz lo zeruah" (literally, an unsown land i.e.: a desert), a place where the lo, no/or not, is planted everywhere. All one hears is, I am not capable; I cannot do it, We have to strive to change the prevailing negative attitude." Reb Shraga Feivel's students would do anything for their rebbe, because he would do anything for them. The love and devotion that flowed between the rebbe and talmid was legend. They were willing to go through fire for Reb Shraga Feivel - but, then, he would do the same for them. It was this zeal, devotion and courage that catalyzed the Torah education movement that we, their beneficiaries, enjoy today.

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Say to Aharon, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the land; it shall become lice.'" (8:12)

As was the case in the previous two plagues, Aharon initiated this plague. Since the water had protected Moshe as an infant when his mother placed him upon it, it would have been inappropriate for him to serve as the vehicle to inflict a plague upon the water. Likewise, since the dust of the land had protected him from discovery when he used it to conceal the Egyptian he had slain, it would have shown ingratitude for Moshe to be the

one to inflict the plague upon the earth. We derive from here a profound insight into the middah, character trait, of hakoras hatov, recognizing and showing appreciation and gratitude. One would normally assume that hakoras hatov means that if one person does a favor for someone else, the beneficiary of his favor "owes" him a favor. In this case, however, the ground has no sensitivity, no feelings. It is not a baal bechirah; it does not have the ability to choose between right and wrong, good and bad. When Moshe hid the Egyptian in the sand, it surely was not a favor "granted" by the sand. It had no choice in the matter. Moreover, the ground would not "suffer" were it to be besieged with lice. How, then, does the fact that Moshe did not strike the ground serve as a lesson in hakoras hatov?

Horav Meir Rubman, zl, derives from here that hakoras hatov is defined as a quality within an individual by which he recognizes and appreciates the benefit that he has received from others. It is of no consequence if the "benefactor" is aware of the gift or if he is sensitive to remuneration. His only concern is that he has received a service from someone, and he now owes something to the individual in return. In fact, he wants to repay the debt. It is not related to the benefactor's needs or feelings. The beneficiary is obligated to compensate the individual for the good he has received.

Thus, an individual who is not a makir tov, who does not recognize his obligation to the benefactor, is morally deficient. If we receive, we owe. It has nothing to do with who the benefactor is. Even a domain, inanimate object, must be recognized, because it is the responsibility of the beneficiary.

We may learn hakoras hatov from Hashem, Who, although not in need of our favors, will repay those who have served Him. Indeed, no person leaves this world "owed" by Hashem. He pays His "debt." It might take some time, but every good action, every act of loving kindness which we perform, will be repaid to us by the Almighty. I recently came across a poignant story which demonstrated this idea.

The story took place in 1984, when a woman whom we will call Sarah Goldberg received a call from the administrator of a geriatric summer camp, where she thought her mother was safely ensconced. "Mrs. Goldberg," the administrator said in a quiet voice, "I am sorry to be the conveyer of tragic news, but your mother, Ethel Levine, just sustained a heart attack and died enroute to the hospital. I am very sorry. Please accept my deepest condolences."

The telephone began to slip from her hand as she adjusted to the traumatic news. Her mother had always been full of life, robust and exuberant. It was as if she would outlive everyone. How could she have died so suddenly?

"Mrs. Goldberg, Mrs. Goldberg," came the administrator's faint voice from the phone receiver which now lay on the floor, "are you still there?" he asked.

Sarah retrieved the phone in slow motion. Still in a state of shock, she answered, "Yes, I am here."

"Mrs. Goldberg, I feel terrible to add to your pain, but someone has to come to identify the body."

"I do not think I am up to doing it. I will send a close relative," she responded.

"That will be fine," answered the administrator.

"Once again, please accept our profound sympathy. Your mother was a fine woman. She loved you very much. In fact, she would always speak about you and your lovely children. She would rave about her marvelous daughter."

Sarah was shattered. Her mother was everything to her. Life would never be the same. At the funeral and during the first hours of shivah, seven-day mourning period, her tears flowed unrestrainedly. The shock was just too much for her to absorb so quickly.

A few hours after the funeral, as the family and closest friends sat in the house talking, remembering, crying, the phone rang, and someone handed the receiver to Sarah. A crisp voice asked, "I have a collect call for Sarah Goldberg from Ethel Levine. Will you accept the charges?"

"A collect call from whom?" Sarah asked incredulously. "Ethel Levine," the operator responded. "Is this someone's idea of a sick joke? I just buried her! How could she be calling me?" "Sarah," a beloved and dear voice came over the air waves, "I cannot seem to adjust to my medicine."

It was really her mother. Apparently, there were two Ethel Levines in the summer camp, and the wrong family had been notified. The relative who had been sent to identify the body had been so sickened and anxious by the sight of a dead body that she had given it only a quick, cursory glance and said, "Yes, that is her", before quickly moving away. Since coffins are kept closed during a Jewish funeral and there is no viewing of

the body, the real identity was not discovered. They had buried the wrong Ethel Levine.

"Looking back," sighs Sarah Goldberg, "no one can imagine the emotional roller coaster I was on. First, I am shocked to hear my mother is suddenly dead. Then just a day later, I hear she is very much alive and that I had buried the wrong person."

The story, however, is not over. Remember, they had just buried the wrong woman. While Sarah's mother was very much alive, they now had to break the news to the family of the other Ethel Levine. They would offer their condolences and ask that the other family make arrangements to transfer the body out of their mother's burial plot. Unfortunately, the response received was far from positive.

"She is buried already, let her be. We are not interested," was their response. "We are not to go through the pain and hassle of digging her up, buying a plot and giving her another funeral. Once is enough!" was their disgustingly answer.

Sarah was shocked by their chutzpah, audacity, and lack of respect for their mother, their total disregard for her honor. After all, how could she permit a stranger to lay in the burial plot designated for her mother? She begged the other woman's children to reconsider. She had rabbis and influential community leaders speak to them, to no avail. They remained intractable. Finally, she threatened them with a court order. This fear did the trick.

"So, are you at least going to give your mother a decent funeral?" Sarah asked the children of the other woman. To her consternation, the children responded that they could care less. They would settle for a simple gravesite service.

"In that case, I am coming," Sarah exclaimed passionately. During the period following the woman's death, she had developed a bond with the deceased and had become fiercely protective of her honor.

She went to the funeral. Except for her, no one else was present beyond the immediate family. They simply did not care. Standing by the new grave, watching the second Ethel Levine being lowered into the ground, Sarah became engulfed in a devastating sorrow for a woman she never knew, but to whom she had become inextricably bound in death.

Returning home after the funeral, Sarah reflected, "I have always wondered why the bizarre mix-up with my mother occurred. When I saw the dismal, wretched funeral that the second Ethel Levine had, I, however, understood G-d's Divine Plan. Ethel Levine must have been a very special woman. At least once in her lifetime she must have done something extraordinary, because three hundred people attended her funeral - thinking she was my mother. They paid homage to her - a homage she would never have received had the bizarre mix-up not occurred. G-d wanted to repay her good deeds by giving her an honorable funeral, one that she apparently would never have otherwise had. He arranged for the mix up."

What a moving story. The lesson is penetrating. Hashem recognizes, appreciates, remembers and repays every bit of good that one does. Should we not do the same?

"Pharaoh called to Moshe and Aharon and said, 'Go and bring sacrifices to your G-d in the land.' Moshe said, 'It is not proper to do soB for if we slaughter the god of Egypt in front of them (the people's) eyes, will they not stone us?'" (8:21,22)

Pharaoh was afflicted with four plagues which left Egypt in ruins. He finally capitulated and agreed to permit the Jewish People to offer their sacrifices to Hashem. There was one stipulation - they must do it in Egypt. Moshe had a problem with this criterion. To slaughter the Egyptian deity in front of the Egyptian pagans would stir up trouble. Surely the Egyptians would not tolerate having their god slaughtered without resisting. We wonder if Moshe was serious in this remark. Was he actually afraid this might occur? And if he was, was he not slightly embarrassed to say this in front of Pharaoh? After all, the nation had been brought to their knees. There was no fight left in them.

The Chasam Sofer asks this question and explains that indeed, Moshe was not afraid of the Egyptians rising up against them. Moshe meant to say however, that when the Egyptians would observe the slaughtering of their god, they would become so enraged that they would want to kill the Jews. Since they had been devastated by four plagues, they would not be able to harm the Jews. This would make their frustration that much greater - something that Moshe felt was improper. It is not right to cause another person unwarranted emotional pain. True, they deserved the most severe punishment for their cruel treatment of the Jews. This type of torture was unnecessary and inappropriate. Causing someone emotional trauma for no

reason is pure cruelty.

Horav Avraham Pam, zl, observes that this thought has much practical significance. He cites one instance in which an individual accepts upon himself a specific chumra, stringency, which others might find unnecessary or even foolish. Yet, in order to demonstrate that he is correct in his observance of this stringency he will go out of his way to perform it in front of those who disapprove of it. It is his way of saying, "I do not care about you, what you think, or what you do." This type of foolish action only leads to resentment and strife.

How important it is to go out of our way to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Moshe Rabbeinu was sensitive to the psychological needs of the pagan Egyptians. Should we not at least care about our fellow Jew?

Horav N. Z. Dessler, Shlita, recently shared with me a penetrating insight along these lines. Yosef HaTzaddik was incarcerated for ten years in an Egyptian prison. He was eventually released because of his ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. He established this reputation while in prison, when he correctly interpreted the dreams of the chief wine steward and chief baker. What catalyzed his liberation from prison? The Torah tells us that one day he noticed these men sitting with long faces, seemingly depressed. He asked them what was wrong, and the rest is history. Now let us imagine what would have happened had Yosef been thinking only of himself and had not been sensitive to the feelings of others. If he had not noticed that his two prison mates had long faces, nothing would have happened. Yosef would have remained in prison, and the entire story of Klal Yisrael in Egypt as we know it might not have occurred. History was formed because he cared about another person. That is the hallmark of a great man.

From: National Council of Young Israel YI_Torah@lb.bcentral.com
Parshat Va'era Daf Yomi: Baba Metzia 51
Guest Rabbi: RABBI SHALOM RUBANOWITZ
Young Israel of Los Angeles, CA

"Hain Bnai Yisrael Lo Shom'u Ailay, Vaich Yishmaeinee Phaarah, Va'ani Aral Sfasayim." "Behold, the children of Israel have not listened to me, how will Pharaoh listen to me? And I have sealed lips." (Shemos 6:12)

According to Rashi, this is one of the ten "Kal VaChomers" referenced in the Torah. The Kal VaChomer--one of the thirteen tools through which the Torah is interpreted--is best defined by the Latin, "a fortiori". As defined in the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary: "Latin, literally, from the stronger (argument), with greater reason or more convincing force -- used in drawing a conclusion that is inferred to be even more certain than another." Or as another popular definition goes, "This is a Latin expression which literally means with greater force. In logic, it is where, having made or established a large point, a minor point, subsumed in the larger point, is made at the same time; thus, there is no need to argue the validity of the minor point."

In short, the above phrase would be interpreted as follows: "if the Jewish people did not listen to me, than how much more so will Pharaoh not listen to me". And this would seem to make sense. After all, the Jewish people, slaves who surely desired their freedom, had every motivation to listen to their own son and brother, Moshe Rabbeinu, deliver a message of salvation, whereas Pharaoh, the enslaver, had every motivation to ignore such a message. Hence, the rendering of what appears to be a powerful Kal VaChomer.

I do believe however, that the above logical argument appears to contain a serious flaw. In Gemmora parlance the challenge to this logic would be called a Pircha, which is as follows:

Earlier in the Parsha, the Torah gives us an explicit reason why Bnai Yisrael, the children of Israel did not listen to Moshe: "Vlo Sham'u el Moshe Mikotzer Ruach Umai'Avodah Kasha" - "they did not listen to Moshe from shortness of breath and hard labor" (Shemos 6:9). Thus, a perfectly legitimate and cogent reason is given for their lack of heeding to Moshe's words. They were enslaved. They were hard-worked and downtrodden. Harried workers do not have the peace of mind to luxuriate in the soothing preachings of a would-be savior. But how can such an argument be made for Pharaoh's inability to listen to Moshe? Pharaoh was ruler! Time belonged to him! He was neither

"short-breathed" nor over-worked! Pharaoh had all the time and peace of mind in the world to listen to Moshe! The question is thus obvious: How do our Rabbis view the above-referred phrase as one of the ten Kal Vachomers found in the Torah, where the Torah itself provides reasoning which negates any basis for any such a deduction?

Allow me to note yet another difficulty with the above verse. It appears, that Moshe provides additional reasoning for his charge that Bnai Yisrael will not heed his words, by concluding his argument with this: "Va'ani Aral Sefasayim" and I am covered of lip" (I have a speech defect!). After Moshe clearly articulates the Kal Vachomer, he seems to add another, unrelated reason his speech defect. This seems to be a very separate, valid, albeit independent argument I cannot speak well! The difficulty with this however, is in understanding why Moshe seems to find the need to provide an additional argument above the heretofore-cited Kal VaChomer, and further, in that two separate reasons are provided for Bnai Yisrael's improbable heeding of Moshe's words, why are these two independent reasons juxtaposed in a way in which they appear to be stated as one answer?

An enlightening view of the possible nature of Moshe Rabbeinu's purported speech defect, and hence an understanding of the source of the gift of speech itself, may provide an eye-opening solution to the above-posed queries. In the story of creation, the Torah states, "Vayeebach B'apov Nishmas Chaim" - "and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life" (Bereishis 2:7). In translating, nay, interpreting this, the Targum Unkelus says "Unfach B'Anpohi Nishmasa D'Chayii, VaHavas B'adam L'Ruach Memalela" and He blew into his nostrils/face the soul of life, and it became in man to be the spirit of speech". Thus, Unkelus equates Nishmas Chaim, the soul of life, our very neshama, with the "Ruach" the power and ability to speak. Our level of G-dliness, our very Neshama, is manifested through our capacity for speech. The lessons contained in this are profound and deep. Our talk represents the spark of G-d that has been planted within us. The necessary logic thus flows: Our speech, how we say things, when we say things, what we say, reflects our G-dliness, the level of Kedusha and holiness within us, and reversely, the level of our Kedusha and G-dliness reflects the level and refined nature of our speech, and the capacity for language which we have achieved.

The Torah tells us that Bnai Yisrael could not listen on account of their "Kotzer Ruach". Armed with our newfound definition of "Ruach", I suggest the Passuk be read as follows: "Bnai Yisrael as our Rabbis tell us, were almost at the lowest possible state of Kedusha they reached Mem Tes Shaarei Tumah-the 49th level (out of fifty) of impurity. Moshe Rabbeinu, who brought the message of a deliverance in which they can serve the one HaShem free from a life of servitude to Egyptian masters and values, knew that there was a deep language barrier between himself and his people. Moshe had just spoken with HaShem, and thus reached the utmost refinement of his own "language", but what language did Bnai Yisrael speak? On what common spiritual grounds can they participate in a conversation with him?

Bnai Yisrael did not hear Moshe from Kotzer Ruach" from a deficiency in the Ruach Memalela", that power of speech the breath of HaShem with which we were imbibed with at creation. Steeped in idolatry, Egyptian mores and the pathos of the Egyptian lifestyle, a way of life they could not shake off due to the mind-numbing "Avoda Kasha" the demoralizing workday existence of the lowly slave, they simply did not speak the same language as the man of G-d, Moshe Rabbeinu. Recognizing this, Moshe Rabbeinu says, in the purest form of Kal Vachomer, "if Bnai Yisrael, the children of Israel, who, however subjugated and subsumed by Egyptian society, surely must still have had within their consciousness some memory of their great heritage and some cognizance of the vast spiritual blessings of their forefathers if they could not hear my words, read: if they could not "speak my language", then how can I expect Pharaoh, king of the Egyptians, the progenitors of the anti-G-d movement and purveyors of all forms of immoral behavior to understand my words, to relate to my form of communication? Thus, in connection with Pharaoh, says Moshe, I am surely an "Aral Sefasayim" I will surely be unable to find any common spiritual ground and thus any form of common language.

As I write this Dvar Torah, I am in the midst of celebrating, Baruch HaShem, the Bris of my first son, Shlomo Meir. Contemplating the above, I cannot escape noting what I believe is no coincidence: the Mitzvah through which a male is brought into the fold of Yiddishkeit and Torah is called Milah, which also means "word". What reflects our Yiddishkeit are the "words" we use, and our Yiddishkeit is in turn influenced by the words we use. One of the reasons we merited to leave Egypt is "Shelo Shinu es Leshonam", "On account of us preserving our language"; on our maintaining our connection with the seat of our Ruchniyus, our spirituality. As Jews in Galus, we may be forced to use the words of an alien culture, yet we can never be forced to speak a different language. So long as we maintain and refine our spiritual stature, we will always be ready and available to hear and understand the call of our final deliverer, Mashiach Tzidkainu, and have no doubts about the meaning of his message, Bimehairah B'yomeinu, Amein.

http://www.jpost.com/Editions/2002/01/10/Columns/SHABBAT_SHALOM: Merit, not pedigree, is what counts
BY RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

(January 10) Parshat Va'era (Exodus 6:2 - 9:35)

"A man from the house of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi, and the woman conceived and bore a son" (Exodus 2:1,2).

Lineage, or its Hebrew-Yiddish equivalent, yichus, is one of the most over-used words in our contemporary Jewish vocabulary, especially in more religiously observant circles. "What is his background?" is a frequent first question asked by anyone interested in making a match.

This fact of life makes the order in the biblical text concerning Moses's background strangely disjointed. At his birth we are merely told that a man from the house of Levi took a daughter of Levi, and the woman bore a son - a virtually anonymous parentage. It is only five and a half chapters later that a complete genealogy is presented, relating the great liberator of his people to patriarch Jacob and his son Levi, and concluding: "These are Aaron and Moses, whom God has said are to take the children of Israel from the land of Egypt... They are Moses and Aaron." (Exodus 6:26-27)

But why is this genealogy here, and not at the initial mention of his birth? And why are the order of the names Moses and Aaron switched from one verse to the next?

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsh, forewarns our first question by explaining that until this point Moses really had not succeeded; after all, as a result of his first encounter with Pharaoh not only were the Jews not freed, but their work load was made even heavier. It is only from this point forward that Moses begins to succeed. The prelude to the successful Moses is described by his genealogy.

Rabbi Hirsh adds another significant dimension: specifically at the time of the Moses's phenomenal success and even supernatural acts, it is critical for the biblical text to record the wholly natural and human ancestry of our greatest prophet. "Our Moses was a human being, born to human beings, remains a human being and will never transcend his fundamental humanity" (Hirsh, ad loc). Every human being is a child of God as well as of his mortal parents, and every human being has the potential to reach the heights of Moses.

I would take Rabbi Hirsh's explanation one step further. At the conclusion of last week's Torah portion, we read one of the most mysterious and problematic passages of the entire Bible. Moses is directed by God to say to Pharaoh, "thus says the Lord, 'My first born son is Israel.' And I say to you, send out my son so he may serve Me, and if you refuse to send him out, I shall kill your first born son" (Exodus 4:22, 23).

And then the text continues with an almost unfathomable incident: "And it happened on the road to the inn, and God met him desiring to slay him. And Zippora [Moses's wife] took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son, causing it to touch his feet... And she said, 'you are a bridegroom of blood for me' and He released him; she said, 'A bridegroom of blood for circumcision'" (Exodus 4:24-26).

What happened here? Who wanted to slay whom, and why? What

causes Zippora to become the first mohel in Jewish history?

The midrash suggests that Moses had neglected to circumcise his son, either because he had promised his Midianite father-in-law Jethro that his first born would be raised for a life of idolatry (Mehilta Yitro 1) or because he was too involved in the process of redeeming his nation to worry about his paternal religious obligations (Rashi ad loc).

In either case, Moses transgressed - and the Almighty sought to punish him. Zippora saved the situation by circumcising her son in the nick of time.

This story, when understood from this perspective, contains a dire message not only for Pharaoh but especially for the Israelites. Its prelude was a warning to Pharaoh that if he refused to free God's first born son, Israel, his (Pharaoh's) first-born son - and the first-born son of all Egyptians - would be slain, as a measure-for measure punishment.

But at the same time, the entire Book of Genesis takes a very strong stand against primogeniture, the pre-eminence of the biological first-born, and favors meritocracy. After all, Abraham's first-born Yishmael is overtaken by Isaac, Isaac's first-born Esau is overtaken by Jacob, and Jacob's first-born Reuben is overtaken by Joseph. It is achievement in life rather than placement at birth which prevails.

Hence, God's referral to Israel as His first-born is both compliment and challenge: Divine choice but also Divine charge. Israel must be worthy of the premiership; otherwise, it will be forfeited, as was the case with the other firstborns of the Bible. And, to make the point indubitably clear, if Moses - the chosen of God to lead His first-born Israel - is lax in circumcising his son, a crucial religious obligation of initiating one's progeny into Jewish fate and destiny, then Moses himself will be punished.

Israel must be committed - even to the point of shedding blood - to its national and religious ideals; God is a loving but demanding bridegroom.

This is the true meaning of the placement of the genealogy in this week's Torah portion, immediately prior to the miracles which will make Moses the great liberator. Moses was chosen by God not because of his birth placement but because of his life's achievement. When the Bible waits to delineate Moses's biological roots after his accomplishments, it is confirming the principle of meritocracy over primogeniture; even the eldest brother Aaron must play second-fiddle to the younger and more worthy Moses.

Israel may be God's first-born son; but in order to retain that distinction, we must behave in a manner which is worthy and distinctive.

Shabbat Shalom

From: RABBI LIPMAN PODOLSKY podolsky@hakotel.edu
Parshas Va'era 5762

See and Do

"These were the heads of their fathers' houses: the sons of Reuven... The sons of Shimon... These were the names of the sons of Levi..." (Shmos 6:14-16)." Why does the Torah emphasize the names of Levi, while those of Reuven and Shimon are seemingly ignored?

The Sh'lah HaKadosh (Rav Yeshayah HaLevi Horowitz) suggested: It is known that the tribe of Levi was not subject to slavery. Still, Levi did not ignore his brothers' suffering; he did not bury his head in the sand of freedom and fun. He wished to actively participate in his brothers' anguish. How so? This is where the names come in. He named his sons after his brothers' bondage: "Gershon" -- for they were "gerim" (aliens) in a foreign land. "Kehas" -- for they gritted their teeth (kehos) in their suffering. "Merari" -- for their lives had been embittered (maror). Hence the singling out of the names of Levi.

Levi embodied the fundamental Torah principle to identify with our friends in their time of distress. In the language of our Sages this is known as "Noseh b'ol im chaveiro" -- to help our friend carry his burden.

"The Torah is acquired through 48 ways... (Avos 6:6)." Torah cannot be acquired by merely opening up a book of Torah literature. There are forty-eight prerequisites without which one is doomed to failure. One of these is to be "Noseh b'ol im chaveiro." The Tiferes Yisrael teaches that this includes physical assistance, financial assistance, and emotional

identification. The first two are completely reasonable. By extending ourselves physically or financially, we help ease our friend's burden and alleviate his distress. But what is the point of feeling his pain? If I offer no real help, of what value is my empathy? Further, what benefit did Levi do for his brothers by naming his children after their misfortune?

"The Rabbis taught, when the Jewish people suffer and one member separates himself [from them], two ministering angels who accompany each person come and place their hands on his head. They declare, 'This person who disassociated himself from the community shall not see the consolation of the community...' Rather, one should suffer together with the community. Just as Moshe Rabbeinu who suffered with the community, as it says, 'Moshe's hands grew heavy, so they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it (Shmos 17:12).' Did Moshe not have a pillow or cushion to sit on? Rather, thus said Moshe, 'Since the Jewish people are suffering, so should I suffer together with them.' Moreover, anyone who suffers together with the community will merit to see the consolation of the community (Taanis 11a)."

Once again we behold this extraordinary aspect of "carrying the burden with our friend." Though we may not directly help them, there seems to be a distinct benefit in experiencing empathy, in feeling compassion. This is the empathy that Levi practiced by naming his children after his brothers' slavery. But still, what is the reasoning behind this? What gain could possibly there be?

Benefit #1: There is a mitzvah to emulate the ways of Hashem. "Just as He is merciful and gracious, so should you be merciful and gracious (Shabbos 133b)." By emulating Hashem, we become one with him. This was the secret that spurred Avraham's development into the greatest Ba'al Chesed (philanthropist) who ever lived.

One of Hashem's middos is that He 'feels' pain when Klal Yisrael feels pain. "I am with him in pain (Tehillim 91)." "In all their affliction, He was afflicted (Yeshaya 63:9)." On this verse the Medrash comments, "Said Hashem to Moshe, 'Do you not feel that I am suffering just as Yisrael is suffering? You should know that from the place from where I am speaking to you amongst the thorns (in the burning bush), it is as if I am a partner in their suffering (Shmos Rabba 2:5)." Thus, the obligation to actually feel the pain of our fellow Jews applies to each one of us.

How do we go about developing this midda? How can we learn to feel another's pain? We must learn from Moshe Rabbeinu. "Moshe grew up and went out to his brethren, and he saw their suffering (Shmos 2:11)." Rashi comments: "He focused his eyes and his heart to suffer for them." Moshe made it his daily practice to look at the Jews and to put himself in their place. He established a ritual whereby he would sit and contemplate their untold anguish. He would picture the grief he would have experienced in their unbearable situation. Using his imagination, he was able to conjure up the emotions that he expected he would have felt under such extreme duress. Eventually, he became one of them.

Not just anyone can be elected leader of Klal Yisrael. It is far too easy to close one's eyes; to pretend not to have seen; to excuse oneself, "After all, am I not occupied with matters of consequence?" That is the problem with many politicians. After they have become accustomed to the upholstered chair of their congress chamber, once they have become used to the attention (political flattery) they receive from the "leaders" of the world, after they have made "friends" of all the "movers and shakers", who sees poverty? Who sees deprivation, misery, pain? One's eyes become attuned to a different wavelength, to a different spectrum. One fails to see.

Not so Moshe Rabbeinu. "He saw their suffering." He actively looked and took it to heart. So much so, that he simply could not remain in bed while these unfortunates continued to suffer.

Listen carefully to the following Medrash: " Moshe grew up and went out to his brethren, and he saw their suffering (Shmos 2:11)." What does it mean by 'and he saw'? [It means] that he would look at their suffering, and weep, and exclaim, 'I have pity for you! If only I could die for your sake!' For there is no work [more difficult] than building, yet he would lend his shoulder and help each and every one of them [carry his burden] (Shmos Rabba 1:27)." Absolutely unbelievable! Moshe himself, who had grown up as a prince in the palace of Pharaoh, physically went out and attempted to alleviate the suffering of the Jewish slaves. Instead of curling up on a lazy-boy recliner with a pina-colada in a half-coconut with a diminutive umbrella, fanned with palm fronds by his many personal servants (and no one would have said 'Boo'), he aroused himself, davened vasikin, and went personally to the aid of his brothers -- slave labor!

And this brings us to Benefit #2. When one becomes sensitive to another's pain, one becomes more likely to actually help that person.

Apathy breeds inaction. Moshe saw; ergo Moshe acted. This was Moshe's midda, and for this he was appointed our leader and savior.

When we see a passing Hatzalah ambulance, let us not relegate it to the back burners of our brain. Rather, let us contemplate: Someone is not well, perhaps injured, in pain, and most certainly scared. Maybe that person is my age, just like me. How would I feel in their place now? How nervous I would be, all alone, without my parents, without my friends! How insecure I would feel! And then let us offer a short, heart-felt tefilla for their wellbeing. We would have wanted them to do the same for us.

There is far too much coldness in this world, far too much selfishness. May Hashem open our hearts to see others, and by doing so, may we ultimately merit to see Him -- To see ourselves.

This sicha is brought to you by Yeshivat Hakotel - The Wohl Torah Center - Old City of Jerusalem, Israel Visit our website at <http://www.hakotel.edu> To subscribe, send email to: hk-podolsky-subscribe@lists.hakotel.edu <http://www.hakotel.edu/torah/rp.html> - HaRav Nebenzahl on the parsha hk-nebenzahl-subscribe@lists.hakotel.edu - HaRav Bina - thoughts for alumni (hk-bina-subscribe@lists.hakotel.edu) - HaRav Steinberger on the Rambam (hk-rambam-subscribe@lists.hakotel.edu) (C) 5762/2002 by Lipman Podolsky and American Friends of Yeshivat Hakotel

From: Kerem B'Yavneh Online[SMTP:feedback@kby.org] To: kby-parsha@kby.org Subject: Torah and Eretz Yisrael Va'era

Torah and Eretz Yisrael

Rosh Hayeshiva HARAV MORDECHAI GREENBERG, shlita

The Torah says about two things that they are a morasha (heritage) of Israel, Torah and Eretz Yisrael. It says about the Torah, "The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the Congregation of Yaakov" (Devarim 33:4), and about Eretz Yisrael it says, "I shall give it to you as a heritage." (Shemot 6:8) Both of them are also referred to as gifts. About Eretz Yisrael it says, "I shall give it to you," and also about the Torah it says, "For I have given you a good teaching, do not forsake My Torah." (Mishlei 4:2) Similarly, it says about the receiving of the Torah by Moshe, "You ascended on high ... you took gifts of man." (Tehillim 68:19)

The difference between a gift and a heritage is, that in order to receive a gift, the willingness of the recipient and an act of acquisition are necessary, whereas regarding an inheritance there is no need for any of this, and it is transferred to the person without his consent.

However, Chazal reveal another facet of the expression morasha, that even this requires effort in order to convert it from a heritage into an inheritance (yerusha). It says in the Yerushalmi (Bava Batra ch. 8.):

R. Hoshia said: Everywhere that it says morasha it has the connotation of uncertainty. They asked: But doesn't it say, "the heritage of the Congregation of Yaakov?" He answered: There is nothing more doubtful and weak than it (when a person first begins to learn), but after he toils in it -- he understands it all (and "inherits" it).

In the Mishna Avot (2:17) it says, "Prepare yourself to learn Torah, for it is not an inheritance of yours." The same question is asked, doesn't it say, "the heritage of the Congregation of Yaakov?" Rather, morasha connotes a degree of uncertainty. Namely, from the perspective of the one who is bequeathing, he entrusts it to the inheritor. However, from the side of the inheritor the connection is weak, until he prepares himself for it, toils and justly merits it as an inheritance. Israel and Torah, both of them are morasha. From the end of the One who is bequeathing them, no one else has a share in them, and they are Israel's alone, but to actually inherit them, Israel needs acquisition and toil.

Furthermore, the two of them are mutually conditional. Just as there is no Eretz Yisrael without Torah -- "If despite this you will not heed me ... I will lay your cities in ruins ... And you, I will scatter among the nations" (Devarim 26: 27-33) -- so, too, there is no Torah without Eretz Yisrael, "because the primary purpose of the mitzvot is for those sitting in the land of G-d," as the Rambam writes in Parshat Acharei Mot. Thus, Hashem said to Avraham, "Go for yourself from your land ... to the Land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation." (Bereishit 12:1-2) What is, "a great nation?" -- "And which is a great nation that had righteous decrees and ordinances, such as this entire Torah that I place before you this day?" (Devarim 4:8)

The connection between Torah and Eretz Yisrael is expressed through the active participation of the Sefer Torah in the entrance to the Land. In

Parshat Behaalotecha Moshe says, "We are journeying to the place of which Hashem has said, 'I shall give it to you,'" and the first step is -- "When the Ark would travel Moshe said, 'Arise Hashem, and let Your foes be scattered.'" (Bamidbar 10:29,35)

Similarly, in the beginning of Yehoshua (1:6-8; 3:3), the entrance to the Land is linked to the Torah:

Be strong and courageous for it is you who will cause this people to inherit the Land that I have sworn to their fathers to give them. Only be very strong and courageous, to observe, to do, according to the entire Torah that Moshe My servant commanded you ... This Book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth.

They commanded the people saying, "When you see the Ark of the Covenant of Hashem, your G-d, and the Kohanim, the Levites, carrying it, then you shall move from your place and follow it.

Furthermore, just as the entrance of the Ark symbolizes the possession of the Land, so too the hiding of the Ark symbolizes the beginning of the exile. Thus, King Yoshia tells the priests before their descent into exile, "You no longer have any carrying of your shoulder." (Divrei Hayamim II 35:3) Chazal derive from here that he instructed them to hide the Ark, which was carried on the shoulder.

Therefore, Chazal said, "When Israel were exiled, there is no greater bittul Torah than this." In contrast, we see in our own times that as Israel are gathered, the Torah also is gathered and increases in the Land.

However, the recent years have taught us that Torah and Eretz Yisrael are still in the state of morasha and not yerusha, and they are of the things that are acquired through affliction. We must prepare ourselves to acquire them, since they are not an inheritance for us.

From: Kol Torah[SMTP:koltorah@hotmail.com]

To:koltorah@hotmail.com

KOL TORAH A Student Publication of the Isaac and Mara Benmergui Torah Academy of Bergen County Parshat Shemot 21 Tevet 5762 January 5, 2002

This week's issue has been sponsored by Ruby and (Coach) Bobby Kaplan in honor of their new granddaughter Menucha Malka (a future point guard), daughter of their children Ilana and Jeffrey Gdanskyy
FASHIONING OPENINGS TO UTENSILS ON SHABBAT
BY RABBI HOWARD JACHTER

Last week we discussed the debate among Poskim whether one may open a can on Shabbat. This week we will explore the prohibition of creating openings to utensils on Shabbat. The debate surrounding the scope of this prohibition has many practical ramifications for our observance of Shabbat. We will discuss the debates concerning the permissibility of opening cardboard cartons, bottle caps, children's juice boxes and peel-off seals. It is important to note from the outset that the best practice is for one to avoid encountering these issues, and to open on Erev Shabbat any items that one anticipates will be needed on Shabbat (see Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata 9:note 1).

The Prohibition to Fashion Openings - Old and New Hole

The Gemara (Shabbat 146a) notes the biblical prohibition to fashion a new opening on Shabbat. The Gemara, however, does permit reopening an "old (preexisting) hole." Rashi (s.v. Nekev Yashan) explains that the Gemara speaks of an "old hole that was sealed, that when one reopens the hole he is not considered to be creating a hole, because the hole has been created and the prior sealing of the hole was insignificant."

Accordingly, it is biblically prohibited to puncture holes in a metal juice or baby formula can. The holes created are unquestionably "new holes." Some Poskim also note that when one removes the "ring tabs" from certain orange juice containers that he creates a new opening. These Poskim claim to have verified with the manufacturers that there is no preexisting opening on the orange juice container. Thus, one creates a new opening when opening these orange juice containers.

It is somewhat difficult, though, to determine what is an "old hole." For example, Halachic authorities debate the permissibility of opening the glued spout of a cardboard carton on Shabbat. Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 4:78) rules that it biblically forbidden to open the spout of such a carton on Shabbat. Rav Moshe writes, "even though the milk cartons has a preexisting hole, the opening is sealed thoroughly and the original opening is nullified. Thus, when one opens the spout, he creates a new opening." Rav Simcha Bunim Cohen (The Laws of Yom Tov, p.186) notes that even Rav Moshe would permit puncturing the bottom of the container, thereby ruining the container, and then tear

open the top of the carton and pour out the contents. See Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata 9:3, footnote 20, where Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and many other major Poskim are cited as agreeing with this idea.

On the other hand, Teshuvot Migdalot Merkachim (number 36, cited by Rav Simcha Bunim Cohen, The Laws of Yom Tov p.186) believes that it is essentially permissible to open the spout of a cardboard carton on Shabbat. His assessment of the situation is that the spout already exists but that it is temporarily closed somewhat so that the contents do not leak from the container. The Debretziner Rav (Teshuvot Beer Moshe 6:89) essentially agrees with this assertion. Both of these writers, though, advise following the strict opinion on this issue. Rav Yosef Adler reports that Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik subscribes to the lenient view on this issue.

Bottle Caps

Poskim in the past two decades have vigorously debated a considerable length the permissibility of opening a twist-off bottle cap that breaks when unscrewed. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Teshuvot Minchat Shlomo 1:91:12) rules that it is forbidden to open such a bottle cap on Shabbat, since by doing so one creates a functional bottle cap. He explains: Even if one should break the container and remove all of its pieces from the bottle cap, as long as the bottle cap is connected to its bottom ring, it cannot serve as a bottle cap for another container. Accordingly, it becomes a functional bottle cap only when one twists the cap and thereby removes the bottom ring from it. Hence, opening the bottle cap constitutes an act of 'creating a vessel' (Tikkun Kli).

Rav Shlomo Zalman cites the Shulchan Aruch (O.C.322:4) as a precedent to this ruling. The Shulchan Aruch forbids removing a splinter from a piece of wood to use to use as a toothpick, because doing so constitutes a forbidden action of fashioning a Kli. Rav Shlomo Zalman claims that twisting open the bottle cap similarly fashions a functional bottle cap.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (cited by Rav Efraim Greenblatt, Teshuvot Rivevot Efraim 4:189) and Rav Rav Yosef Shalom Eliashiv (cited in Shalmei Yehuda, p.104) are among the prominent Poskim who concur with Rav Shlomo Zalman's strict ruling.

On the other hand, many prominent Poskim rule leniently regarding this question. Rav Ovadia Yosef (Teshuvot Yechave Daat 2:42) and Rav Eliezer Waldenberg (Teshuvot Tzitz Eliezer 14:45) are among the major Poskim who subscribe to the lenient approach to this question. Rav Ovadia and Rav Waldenberg argue that the bottle cap is a functional bottle cap even before one removes the bottom ring. They point out that it serves as a bottle cap for the bottle it is covering. Thus, the fact that before it is broken it cannot serve as a bottle cap for another container is irrelevant.

Moreover, Rav Waldenberg questions the analogy to the Shulchan Aruch's ruling that forbids taking a splinter from wood to serve as a toothpick. He argues that the two cases are not comparable because the bottle cap is designed to have its bottom ring removed, thus one is not creating a new Kli.

Rav Waldenberg adds that one's intention when opening the bottle cap is simply to gain access to the drink and not to create a bottle cap. He writes, "No one opens a container in order to obtain a useful bottle cap for a different container."

Rav Ovadia Yosef develops this theme further. He cites a very fundamental insight of the Maggid Mishneh that appears in his commentary to the Rambam, Hilchot Shabbat 12:2. The Rambam writes that if one extinguishes metal in water he violates a Torah prohibition of Mechabeh (extinguishing) only if his intention is to temper the metal. The Maggid Mishneh asks why does the Rambam require intention to temper the metal in order to violate the prohibition to extinguish on Shabbat. Does not the Gemara state many times that one is responsible for an inevitable action even if it is not his intention for that act to happen (Pesik Reisha)? The Maggid Mishneh answers that one is regarded as fashioning a utensil only if this is his intention. In this case, if he does not intend to temper the metal he is not responsible for having done so, even if it is inevitable that it will happen.

The Maggid Mishneh's comments are cited by the Magen Avraham (318:36). The Ohr Sameach (commenting to Rambam Hilchot Shabbat 12:2) describes the Maggid Mishneh's assertion as "a profound insight" and "a precious jewel." The Ohr Sameach explains that intention in this case defines the act. Tempering metal is usually entirely removed from one's purview and thus one is not responsible for tempering metal unless

he has specific intention to do so.

Rav Ovadia reasons that the same applies to opening the bottle cap. The fact that one creates a functional bottle cap for another utensil is beyond one's purview, as he opens the bottle. Hence, he is not defined as creating a bottle cap, since creating a bottle cap is entirely beyond his purview. Rav Ovadia concludes, though, that it is best to accommodate Rav Shlomo Zalman's opinion and open the bottle before Shabbat. Rav Waldenberg offers as an alternative solution, that one discard the bottle cap immediately after removing it. This concretely demonstrates that he does not intend to create a functional bottle cap for another utensil.

Interestingly, Rav Shlomo Zalman modifies his original ruling in his emendations and addenda to Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata (number 61). Rav Shlomo Zalman writes that one may be lenient in a case where it is obvious that the bottom ring is distinct from the rest of the bottle cap. In such a design, the cap is clearly functional and complete even before it was sealed onto the bottle. Rabbi David Ribiat (The 39 Melachot p.838-839 and footnote 78) writes that he believes that this comment of Rav Shlomo Zalman seems to apply to the caps of the plastic milk bottles that are currently used. Rabbi Ribiat cautions that technology in our times changes rapidly and the Halacha might change with even the slightest change in the packaging design.

Children's Juice Boxes

Both Rabbi Ribiat (The 39 Melachot p.838) and Rabbi Simcha Bunim Cohen (The Laws of Yom Tov p.191) permit puncturing the top of children's juice box on Shabbat. Rabbi Ribiat explains: The containers are disposable and usually discarded immediately after use. Puncturing the box to insert a straw is not Assiyat Petach (fashioning an opening) because there is no need for a proper spout, but merely for a simple opening. The puncture-hole in the cardboard exterior of the carton is factory made; the interior foil lining that one punctures is thus comparable to a wrapper.

Peel-off Seals

Rabbi Simcha Bunim Cohen (ibid.) permits one to remove peel-off seals on Shabbat. These seem to be analogous to the Tosefta's (cited by the Mishna Brurah 314:25) permission to remove the leather from the top of a wine barrel if he does not intend to create a spout. Removing the seal does not create an opening. It merely constitutes removal of the cover of the spout; just as removing the leather is regarded as merely removing the cover of the top of the wine barrel.

Conclusion

We have discussed some of the major issues that arise regarding creating openings in utensils on Shabbat. Our discussion of these matters, however, is far from exhaustive. Many more issues remain to be discussed regarding opening various items on Shabbat. New issues will almost certainly arise in this context during the next few decades. We must be alert to notice an activity that is questionable and present the issue to a competent Halachic authority. We shall conclude with the advice that we presented at the outset of this essay - one should try to open on Erev Shabbat any item he anticipates he will need on Shabbat.

Kol Torah c/o Torah Academy of Bergen County 1600 Queen Anne Road Teaneck, NJ 07666 Phone: (201) 837-7696 Fax: (201) 837-9027 koltorah@hotmail.com <http://www.koltorah.org>

From: RABBI JONATHAN SCHWARTZ jschwartz@ymail.yu.edu To: chabura613@hotmail.com Subject: Internet Chaburah -- Parshas Voera Prologue

In connection with the plague of Barad, we read of the devastating effects the Makka had upon the barley and flax industries. However, the Torah tells us that the wheat and spelt crops were not damaged because they are late ripening (Shemos, 9:32). Rashi explains that since they were late-ripening, they were soft when the hail struck and were able to bend with the wind. The flexibility on the part of the crops enabled them to bounce back and they were not uprooted.

This lesson in flexibility has practical applications as well. The Talmud (Taanis 20b) encourages us to be as soft as a reed and not as stiff as a cedar tree. Avos D'Reb Nosson (41:1) offers an elaboration of this theme. When a strong wind comes, a reed bends in the direction of the wind. Because of this ability, despite bending, a reed does not become uprooted. A cedar tree does not bend at all. However, when a powerful wind comes along, the cedar tree breaks and falls.

Rav Yosef Leib Bloch (Shiurei Daas) used the example of the wheat stalk and the reed in its application to man. A person needs to be strong in

his ideas and principles. That strength should be so powerful that nothing should be able to uproot him from his values. But the proper way to express these principles is like the wheat stalk and the reed. One needs to show flexibility and softness when talking to others. One who is obstinate and inflexible with others might seem to be strong but the lack of flexibility on his part is really a weakness. A soft approach based on solid convictions is the lasting approach, even in the face of strong oppositional opinions and winds.

Soft things often bring about creasing. This week's chaburah examines some of the issues surrounding the folding of clothing. It is entitled:

Tallis Tidying

The Talmud (Shabbos 113a) notes that one may fold his Keilim even 4 or 5 times. Rashi explains that this is true if it will be used for that very Shabbos. The Talmud then addresses 4 criteria that must be filled if one is to be able to be allowed to fold clothes on Shabbos. They include the fact that the clothes must be new and white and that the folding be done by one person who possesses a second set of clothes that he will alternate with. Rashi notes that absent of these criteria, the folding of the garments appears as if one might be trying to remove stains from his clothing, a violation of the laws of MeLaben.

Tosafos, commenting on the above notes that one may not fold his Tallis after the services on Shabbos if it is going to only be used the next day. Raaviah (245) adds that he agrees with Tosafos but if the folding is not in its original folding, it is ok to do. The position of the Raaviah is also cited by the Mordechai (Shabbos, 388) who notes that the reason for the Heter is that if it is folded on non-familiar folds so the folder demonstrates that he is not particular about the folding. Kol Bo holds that today's folding is not as strong as the folding of the olden days and thus, it would be permissible to fold things even on their original folds.

When the issue is discussed in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim, 302:3) quotes each position. First, he notes the strict position of Tosafos as that which is Halachic. Thus, he notes that when necessary for the shabbos and when completing all 4 stated criteria then one may fold clothes on Shabbos. In absence of these criteria, he may not. He then cites the position of the Raaviah adding that "Neerayin Devarav." This statement touched off a major debate among the Poskim (Chida among others) as to whether the Michaber supported the position of the Raaviah or was only quoting it as a legitimate position that we do not Paskin like.

The Chayei Adam (24) allows one to fold his Tallis on Shabbos as long as he does not fold it on original folds. He stresses that this is only true if he will wear the Tallis on THAT Shabbos. Whereas this position agrees with the Raaviah, how does he limit it to a Tallis needed for that Shabbos alone? Shut Machne Chaim (III:O.C. 24) explains that the Chayei Adam was concerned with unnecessary Tircha on Shabbos. Aruch HaShulchan (302:10) notes that the only Tircha in folding clothing is if one is particular about the folding. Mishna Berurah (302:19) adds that the Halacha is like the Raaviah and one may fold his Tallis not on the folds on Shabbos. However, he adds that one who is Machmir, is praiseworthy. Maharsham (Daas Torah 302:3) explains that the folding may not be done unless the folder will re-fold the Tallis after the Shabbos on the correct folds. Otherwise the reverse of the folding would be a permanent folding as far as Shabbos were concerned. Avnei Tzedek (Shut, O.C., 30) notes that one who never folds the Tallis the same way on Shabbos is ok. His constant changes show that he is not intending to fold exactly and he need not redo it after Shabbos.

L"Halacha, Shmiras Shabbos K'Hilchaso (15:45-46) feels that one must fold his Tallis not on the folds and switch them from week to week or he cannot fold the Tallis on Shabbos. Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Shut Yichaveh Daas II:40) feels that any deviation from the pressed folds on a Tallis is considered deviation enough and would be Mutar on Shabbos. Otherwise he does not recommend it but notes that those who fold their Tallises on Shabbos have a leg to stand on.

<http://www.torahweb.org/mindex.htm#parsha>

[From last year]

RABBI YAAKOV HABER
NATURAL MIRACLES

Our parasha presents us with the first seven plagues visited upon the Egyptian people as a display of Divine omnipotence and retribution. Many commentaries both on the Torah and the Passover Haggadah note the

repeating pattern of sets of three makkot. The first two were preceded by Moshe's warning to Pharaoh to release his Jewish slaves or else suffer the Divine consequences. The third of the set was not accompanied by any such warning. In last year's TorahWeb D'var Torah (On Makkot and Scientific Endeavors), we addressed one approach to the first two makkot of each set. This year, we wish to delve into the purpose of the third, warning-less plague.

Most commentaries explain that after having ignored the Divine word brought by His prophet twice, Pharaoh deserved punishment without prior warning. Perhaps we can suggest an alternative explanation. R. Chaim Shmuelevitz, zt"l, the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, in his Sichos Mussar (Ma'amar 2, 5731), elaborates on Nachmanides' fundamental principle concerning miracles. According to the Midrash, Yocheved, the mother of Moshe, was born upon entry of the nascent Jewish nation into Egypt, bringing their number to seventy souls (see Genesis 46:26 and Rashi there). Now, the exile in Egypt lasted 210 years. Since Moshe was eighty years old when he spoke to Pharaoh and shortly thereafter the Jews left Egypt (see Exodus 7:7), this directly indicates that Yocheved was 130 when she gave birth to Moshe. R. Avraham ibn Ezra, in his commentary to Genesis (46:23), questions this Midrash. If the Torah describes the miracle of the birth of Yitzchak to Sarah when she was 90, shouldn't it certainly describe the miraculous birth of Moshe to a 130-year-old mother! Ramban (Nachmanides) defends the position of the Midrash by stating that only miracles that are predicted by a prophet are described in the Torah. Other events, however miraculous they may be, brought about benefit the righteous or punish the wicked, are not recorded. R. Shmuelevitz explains the rationale behind these omissions. Only miracles predicted accurately by a prophet would unquestionably be attributed to G-d by all observers. Other, unpredicted miracles might be explained away by a variety of rational explanations however far-fetched these explanation might be. The reason, in turn, that not all miracles that occur are patently miraculous to all is in order to preserve Man's free choice. Whereas he has the option of correctly attributing the source of the event to G-d, he also may choose otherwise. R. Shmuelevitz gives several modern-day examples. A believer would surely attribute the miraculous rescue of the Mirrer Yeshiva of Lithuania through Shanghai to direct Divine Providence; the skeptic would ascribe it to Japanese Consuls and Visas. Whereas the agnostic would explain the lightning victory of the Israeli Defense Forces over the millions-strong Arab invading armies in 1967 to brilliant military planning on the part of the Israeli generals, jet-fighters, and tanks, the one who looks beyond the "veil of nature" would undoubtedly see the "Hand of G-d." Many have applied the same analysis to the recent Persian Gulf War and other major historic events in our history. Thus, Man himself chooses to see G-d in the seemingly natural. He is not forced to do so.

The makkot in Mitzrayim were clearly meant to increase awareness of the existence of G-d and His involvement in human affairs. The narrative constantly stresses "I am G-d", "I am G-d in the midst of the land", etc. Hence, we can suggest that Pharaoh, as representative of his nation, was presented with two distinct opportunities for recognizing the Divine Hand. The first two makkot of each set of three, were predicted by Moshe, the prophet. Recognition of G-d under such circumstances would have been much easier and therefore less significant. (Although, even here Pharaoh failed to do so.) Another unique, more meaningful opportunity was presented in the third makka of each set. These were without a prior, prophetic prediction. Seeing these as acts of G-d would be more penetrating and lasting.

In our Amida prayer, we state "and on your miracles that are with us every day." This passage serves to highlight the theme developed above. We are charged to remove the "mask of nature" and to see the Hand of G-d both in our individual lives and in the history of the Jewish nation.

From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Veira

By RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT Rav of Young Israel of Cleveland Heights
A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav.
KIRUV RECHOKIM: IS EVERYTHING PERMITTED?

Of paramount important to Orthodox Jewry today is kiruv rechokim, bringing our fellow Jews back to religious observance. Thank G-d, the concerted efforts of many devoted individuals and organizations have borne fruit, and thousands of Jews the world over have come back to their roots and become Torah observant.

We must bear in mind, however, that although kiruv rechokim is supremely important, it does not supersede Halachah. "The ends justify the means" is a philosophy utterly rejected by the Torah, and compromising halachic standards for the

sake of being mekarev is forbidden.

A sensitive issue that presents itself to just about anyone involved in kiruv is the problem of men and women shaking hands. Physical contact of this sort is a serious transgression(1) and should be studiously avoided(2). Although kiruv professionals prepare themselves to deal with this problem, those of us who are not adept at handling such potentially embarrassing situations should not put ourselves in a position where we are liable to violate the Halachah.

Before learning Torah with a potential ba'al teshuvah, it is proper - when possible - to have him recite Birchos ha-Torah(3). When studying with a girl or with a woman, though, one need not be particular to do so(4).

Kiruv at the Shabbos table

Since kiruv veterans agree that a most effective method of kiruv is the Shabbos invitation, let us review some of the potential trouble spots so that we do not transgress the Halachah while acting upon our good intentions: If the guest does not live within walking distance of our home, he should be invited for the entire Shabbos so that he does not drive home on our account. The guest should be told that according to Jewish law, it is prohibited for him to drive on Shabbos. Experienced kiruv workers maintain that when properly explained, the guest will often accede to the request. In the event that the guest will come for Shabbos only if he can drive home, there are authorities who permit inviting him anyway, provided that there is a reasonable chance that the invitation will lead to kiruv(5). The guest should be informed that sleeping quarters have been arranged for him and he may change his mind at any time and decide to sleep over. Since not all authorities agree with this leniency(6) and not all cases are identical, the specific case should be presented to a rav for a final decision. When possible, a guest at our table should be asked to wash his hands before eating bread(7) and to recite the proper blessing before and after food is eaten(8). If the guest cannot read the Hebrew text, he may recite the blessing in any language that he understands(9). Alternatively, the host may recite the blessings aloud while the guest listens and answers amen(10). If none of these suggestions are practical, it is permitted to serve him food, even though he will not wash his hands or recite a blessing, either before or after the meal(11). While teaching a non-observant Jew how to recite a blessing, it is permitted for the host to recite Hashem's name(12). A non-observant Jew may be counted towards the minimum number of people required for zimun. Preferably, however, he should not be the one to lead the zimun(13). A female guest, whether single or married, must be dressed according to at least the minimum standards of tznius(14). A woman who is scantily clad should not be invited into our homes under any circumstances. If the female guest is dressed immodestly, then kiddush, blessings, divrei Torah, or zemiros may not be recited while facing her. If one cannot avoid facing her, one may close his eyes or face downward throughout the recitation of these devarim sh'bekedushah(15). A married woman's hair should be covered while she is sitting at our table. If it is not, there are poskim who are lenient and allow devarim sh'bekedushah to be recited in her presence(16). One may rely on these poskim when no other alternative is practical(17). A female guest should be asked not to sing zemiros along with the family. If this will result in alienating a potential ba'alas teshuvah, there is a minority view in the poskim who allow her to sing along with the rest of the family(18).

FOOTNOTES:

1 Rabbeinu Yonah (Sha'arei Teshuvah 3:80; 3:138); Igros Moshe O.C. 1:113; E.H. 1:56; Az Nidberu 2:73. 2 Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky quotes the Chazon Ish as maintaining that shaking hands falls into the category of yehareg ve'al ya'avur (see Teharas Am Yisrael, pg. 44). While other prominent poskim do not agree with this stringent view, it gives us an understanding of the severity of the issue. 3 Oral ruling heard in the name of Harav S.Y. Elyashiv. 4 Based on the view of the Gra, quoted in Beir Halachah 47:14. 5 Minchas Shelomo 2:10; Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 1:358. Several arguments lend support to this position: 1) The guest is desecrating the Shabbos regardless of my invitation; 2) Actually, we are minimizing his chillul Shabbos for the time period he will spend at our home; 3) He will be eating kosher food; 4) Several poskim hold that "aiding a sinner" does not apply to one who deliberately sins (see explanation of this logic in Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:72 and E.H. 4:87-1 quoting the Dagul me-Revavah); 5) The purpose of the invitation is for kiruv and not to aid a sinner in committing a sin. 6 See Igros Moshe O.C. 1:98-99; 4:71, who prohibits organizing a minyan for children on Shabbos when they will surely come by car. [There are several differences, however, between the situations described in these responsa and the situation with which we are dealing.] See also a stringent ruling by Harav S. Wosner (quoted in Avosos Ahavah, pg. 119). 7 Rama O.C. 163:2. 8 O.C. 169:2. 9 O.C. 185:1. 10 Mishnah Berurah 213:9. B'dieved, even if the guest failed to say amen, his blessing is valid. 11 Harav S. Z. Auerbach (oral ruling, quoted in VeZos ha-Berachah, pg. 154). [See also Minchas Shelomo 1:35 where Harav Auerbach maintains that when denying a guest food will lead him to become antagonistic toward Torah and religious Jews, it is permitted to feed him. See also similar ruling quoted in the name of the Chazon Ish in Pe'er ha-Dor 3:195]; Harav C.P. Scheinberg (quoted in Avosos Ahavah, pg. 118.); See also Igros Moshe O.C. 5:13-9 who finds much room for leniency on this matter. 12 Igros Moshe O.C. 2:56. 13 Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav C.P. Scheinberg (quoted in VeZos ha-Berachah, pg. 132) based on Mishnah Berurah 199:2 and Beir Halachah. See also Teshuvos Pnei Meivim 40. 14 Minimum requirements: Neckline must be high enough to cover the bone at the base of the neck (collarbone); sleeves must cover the elbow; skirt must cover the knees. 15 Mishnah Berurah 75:1; Chazon Ish O.C. 16:7. 16 Aruch ha-Shulchan O.C. 75:7. 17 Igros Moshe O.C. 1:39,42,43; O.C. 3:23,24; E.H. 1:114. 18 See Seridei Eish 2:8 quoting Harav S.R. Hirsch and other poskim who allowed singing under similar circumstances.

Weekly-Halachah, Copyright 1 2002 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halachah Series is distributed L'zchus Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available - please mail to jgross@torah.org . Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Baltimore, MD 21208