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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYAKHEL – Parah - 5785

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From: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to:
ravfrand@torah.org date: Mar 19, 2025, 1:37 PM Parshas Vayakhel
It Is the Thought and the Mode of Giving That Counts

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1328 Fascinating Muktzeh / Tevilas Keilim Shaila. Good Shabbos! This week, I would like to combine two different parsha insights from two different sources, which both point to the same mussar haskel (ethical lesson).

The pasuk in Parshas Vayakhel says, "The men came with the women; everyone whose heart motivated him brought bracelets, nose-rings, rings, body ornaments – all sorts of gold ornaments – every man who raised up an offering of gold to Hashem." (Shemos 35:22). All types of women's jewelry were brought for the Mishkan. The Targum translates that the women actually wore these pieces of jewelry as they went to deposit them in the area where the raw materials for the Mishkan were being accepted. The question is – since the women were anyhow going to give these items to the gizbar (foreman), why wear them? When a woman looks at her jewelry box and decides – I can spare this bracelet; I can give away these rings, etc. isn't she more likely to carry the items to the donation center rather than wear them.

I saw an answer quoted in the name of Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, that the women wanted to make a point: The point was "This is not spare jewelry that I have not worn in the last twenty five years. After all, styles change and tastes change. This was not a case of the women readily parting with old fashioned jewelry that they did not wear anymore. The women wanted to stress that this was their current jewelry. It was jewelry that they love and still wear. "I want to give it because I want to make a precious donation to the Mishkan. I want to show the Ribono shel Olam that this is something that I in fact treasure and appreciate." That makes the gift all the more meaningful, because I am literally taking the ring off my finger and giving it for the Mishkan. Now my finger will no longer have that ring. The lesson is that many times in life – especially regarding giving tzedakah and avodas Hashem – it is not the monetary value that makes it a significant gift. It is the way it is given.

This concept helps us to understand a different set of pesukim in the parsha, a few pesukim later. Two different pesukim mention women spinning goat hair to make yarn or cloth. First, pasuk 25 says: "Every wise-hearted woman spun with her hands; and they brought the spun yarn of turquoise, purple, and scarlet wool, and the linen." This means they donated all these cloths. This is not like going to JoAnn Fabrics (an 80-year-old regional fabric and craft chain of stores that is going out of business in 2025) today and buying ready-made cloth. They needed to take the raw material and spin it and make it into linen. Then, pasuk 26 says: "All the women whose hearts inspired them with wisdom spun the goat hair." This is a very similar pasuk. The first pasuk says they spun it and the second pasuk says they took the goat hair and spun it.

There is a difference regarding how this spinning is articulated by the two pesukim. Pasuk 25 says, "Every wise-hearted woman spun with her hands". Pasuk 26 says, "All the women whose hearts inspired them with wisdom spun the goat hair." Why the difference in language?

Rashi interprets this second pasuk based on a Gemara in Shabbos, that this is speaking about an amazing skill. Rashi explains that the women had a unique talent in that they spun the goat hair while it was still attached to the goats! Try that at home! I can't even imagine how you would do that. The question is why does Rashi interpret the pasuk this way? In fact, in Parshas Teruma, when the Torah says that they brought the goat-hair, Rashi does not mention this idea. Rashi just says there that they brought the hairs of goats! Why does Rashi mention this strange idea here? Granted, this is based on a Gemara in Shabbos (74b) – but why did they do that?

The Seforno says that the purpose of this was to provide the spun goats-hair with an extra special sheen (zohar nosaf). Apparently spinning the goats-hair while it is still attached to the goat creates a shinier end product.

The Maskil L'dovid writes that the reason is that it keeps the woven cloth cleaner. Since the goats-hair was not colored or dyed like certain other cloths, it had a tendency to get dirty, so they left it on the backs of the goats in order that it wouldn't drag on the ground and get dirty.

Rav Yonosan Eibenschutz gives a third reason in his sefer Tiferes Yonoson: By leaving it on the goats, it was not mekabel tumah (because since it was attached to a living creature, it was not susceptible to tumah impurity). Nonetheless, despite all the interpretations, it remains strange that they would spin this yarn while it was still attached to the goats.

We can ask yet another question: Pasuk 25 speaks of "every wise-hearted woman" (singular) while Pasuk 26 speaks of "women whose hearts inspired them with wisdom" (plural). Why the change from individual women in the first pasuk to all women – lashon rabim – in the second pasuk?

The Tolner Rebbe cites a Gemara and a story to address these questions. I too have a story to relate to this matter.

The Tolner Rebbe tells the story of a young chossid in the Ger community in Warsaw. This young man was very poor. He had a baby boy and he made a Shalom Zachor. The son of the Gerer Rebbe (i.e. – the son of the Imrei Emes, named Rav Meir Alter, who unfortunately was later killed in the Holocaust) came to the Shalom Zachor because he knew this young father. Unfortunately, he arrived late and by the time he came to the Shalom Zachor, there was nothing left. No beer. No arbes (chickpeas). No cake. Nothing. In comes the Rebbe's son and there is nothing left to eat at the Shalom Zachor. Now if this would happen today in America, there would be no problem. You go to the pantry and take out a bag of potato chips or popcorn or cookies. No problem. In Ger at that time, there was literally nothing left in the house. Imagine the situation – the Rebbe's son comes to the simcha and there is nothing to serve him.

The father searched high and low throughout the house and he finally found an onion. He took the raw onion and put it on a plate and brought it to Rav Meir Alter and said "Ahh! A tzibbele far de Rebbe's zun" (An onion for the Rebbe's son!). The Tolner Rebbe comments: If you were there and saw the derech erez and the enthusiasm and honor with which this father presented the onion to the Rebbe's son, you would think he was presenting him pheasant under glass! He was so touched by the fact that the Rebbe's son came. The baal simcha wanted to honor the Rebbe's son so much that he

honored him with a raw onion. The way he honored the Rebbe's son was as if he was serving him the greatest delicacy.

Today, there is a word for this. When I was growing up, either I never heard of this concept or was not aware of it. But when you go to a fancy meal, it is no longer sufficient for the food to taste good. Now there is the presentation. When those of you who are from my generation were growing up, did you ever hear anything about presentation? You would put the chicken and the piece of kugle on the plate, v'nomar amen!

This story is about the presentation of an onion. Because if all you have is an onion, but you give it with such derech eretz and kavod, you can turn an onion into a delicacy.

The Tolner Rebbe also brings the famous Gemara (Kiddushin 32a) "A person can feed his father great delicacies and be deserving of being chased out of the world."

What does the Gemara mean? Someone can feed his father delicacies, but if he does it in a disrespectful fashion, he can lose his Olam Habah for that act. On the other hand, someone can force his father to grind at the millstone and thereby earn his Olam Habah. (Tosfos explains the case where the father was drafted into the army and the son volunteered to go in place of the father to do the harder work in the army, while the father was left behind to do the grinding that the son would have otherwise done himself). It is literally "the thought that counts" – the presentation that counts!

I remember many years ago when I was in Kollel. We did not have much money in those days. My mother-in-law, ob"m, had a birthday. We didn't have the money to go out and buy her a nice gift. So my wife made her a quilt. My wife bought the material and made her mother a quilt. It wasn't even a big quilt. It was the same story as the Gerer chossid with the Rebbe's son. We didn't have the money. We wanted to give a present. So my wife put her personal love and effort into the quilt, and her mother greatly appreciated that because she knew what kind of effort was put into it.

If you don't have the expensive goods, there is a way to compensate for that. This idea explains our pasuk in Vayakhel. The women (mentioned in pasuk 25) who were wealthier and could afford the techeiles or the argaman (expensive cloths) went ahead, wove it and dyed it and presented it. However, these other women (mentioned in pasuk 26) were the women who had nothing. All they had was goat-hair. Of all the contents that were contributed to the Mishkan – gold, silver, brass, techeiles, argaman, etc., etc. – the last item on the totem pole was goat hair. What kind of gift for the Mishkan is goat-hair? The answer is "We are going to make it special. How are we going to make it special? We are going to weave it in a way that takes an amazing amount of effort. We are going to spin it on the backs of the goats!"

Now, who cares about that? Once it was made into cloth, no one was going to know that. As a matter of fact, these goat-cloths were covered up. No one even saw the finished product. So for whom are they doing this? The answer is, they were doing this for the Ribono shel Olam. The Ribono shel Olam knows the effort that these women put into this. "I want to make it special. I don't have the money. I don't have the dyes. All I have is goat hairs." How does a person make goat hair significant? The answer is by using a special skill (the Gemara calls it a chochma yeseira) to be able to do this. That is why pasuk 26 says "v'chol hanashim" (and all the women). I will ask a question: Have you ever tried petting a goat? Have you ever tried grabbing a goat? Whenever I go to the zoo with my grandchildren and we are in the petting area, I try to grab onto a goat's little horns. It takes about two seconds until the goat jerks his head away and I can't hold on anymore. Can you imagine taking a goat onto your lap and then starting to spin the goat hairs? What do you think the goat would say about all this?

The pasuk says "and all the women" because no one could do this job alone. It is like branding a cow. It takes three big cowboys to pin down the cow and brand it. The first pasuk speaks of "Every woman" (singular) because it was no big deal. An individual woman takes the material. She dyes it. She donates it to the Mishkan. Finished! But when you want to do this special act of spinning while the hair is still on the back of the goats – in order to elevate the quality of the gift – you need many women to do it. That is why the two

pesukim use different language. The first pasuk did not require any special motivation, but the second pasuk refers to women who wanted to compensate for their "non-glamorous donation" so it says "all the women asher nasan leebana osana" (in plural). This means they were inspired to do this and it took several women at a time to do it. That is why Rashi brings the Gemara in Shabbos here about this special skill. The change of language of nasa leeban teaches us that this is something special. Not special in value, but special in effort!

This is the old message of "rachmana leeba ba'ee". At the end of the day, the Ribono shel Olam wants our hearts. A person may only be able to bring a very inexpensive gift. But if that is all he can do and yet he does it with his heart and soul, it can be even more significant than a more expensive and glamorous contribution.

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. 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.

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from: **The Rabbi Sacks Legacy** <info@rabbisacks.org> date: Mar 20, 2025, 11:15 AM subject: Mirrors of Love (Vayakhel)

COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Mirrors of Love

VAYAKHEL

The Torah in Parshat Vayakhel, which describes the making of the Mishkan, goes out of its way to emphasise the role women played in it:

The men accompanied the women, and those who wanted to make a donation brought bracelets, earrings, finger rings, and body ornaments, all made of gold.

Ex. 35:22 Every skilled woman put her hand to spinning, and they [all] brought the spun yarn of sky-blue wool, dark red wool, crimson wool and fine linen. Highly skilled women volunteers also spun the goats' wool.

Ex. 35:25-26 Every man and woman among the Israelites who felt an urge to give something for all the work that God had ordered through Moses, brought a donation for God.

Ex. 35:29 Indeed the emphasis is even greater than it seems in translation, because of the unusual locution in verse 22, Vayavo-u ha-anashim al hanashim, which implies that the women came to make their donations first, and the men merely followed their lead (Ibn Ezra, Ramban, and Rabbenu Bachye).

This is all the more striking since the Torah implies that the women refused to contribute to the making of the Golden Calf (see the commentaries to Ex. 32:2). The women had a sense of judgment in the religious life – what is true worship, and what false – that the men lacked.

Kli Yakar (R. Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz, 1550–1619) makes the further point that since the Tabernacle was an atonement for the Golden Calf, the women had no need to contribute at all, since it was the men not the women who needed atonement. Nonetheless, women gave, and they did so before the men.

Most moving, though, by far is the cryptic verse:

He [Betzael] made the copper washstand and its copper base out of the mirrors of the dedicated women [ha-tzove'ot] who congregated at the entrance of the Communion Tent.

Ex. 38:8 The Sages (in Midrash Tanhuma) told a story about this. This is how Rashi tells it:

Israelite women owned mirrors, which they would look into when they adorned themselves. Even these [mirrors] they did not hold back from

bringing as a contribution toward the Mishkan, but Moses rejected them because they were made for temptation [i.e., to inspire lustful thoughts]. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "Accept [them], for these are more precious to Me than anything, because through them the women set up many legions [i.e., through the children they gave birth to] in Egypt." When their husbands were weary from back-breaking labour, they [the women] would go and bring them food and drink. Then they [the women] would take the mirrors and each one would see herself with her husband in the mirror, and she would seduce him with words, saying, "I am more beautiful than you." And in this way they aroused their husbands' desire and would be intimate with them, conceiving and giving birth there, as it is said: "Under the apple tree I aroused you" (Song 8:5).

This is [the meaning of] what is *מְרִירָת הַצִּבְּאוֹת* [lit., the mirrors of those who set up legions]. From these [the mirrors], the washstand was made.

The story is this. The Egyptians sought not merely to enslave, but also to put an end to, the people of Israel. One way of doing so was to kill all male children. Another was simply to interrupt normal family life. The people, both men and women, were labouring all day. At night, says the Midrash, they were forbidden to return home. They slept where they worked. The intention was to destroy both privacy and sexual desire, so that the Israelites would have no more children.

The women realised this, and decided to frustrate Pharaoh's plan. They used mirrors to make themselves attractive to their husbands. The result was that intimate relations resumed. The women conceived and had children (the "legions" referred to in the word *tzove'ot*). Only because of this was there a new generation of Jewish children. The women, by their faith, courage, and ingenuity, secured Jewish survival.

The Midrash continues that when Moses commanded the Israelites to bring offerings to make the Tabernacle, some brought gold, some silver, some bronze, some jewels. But many of the women had nothing of value to contribute except the mirrors they had brought with them from Egypt. These they brought to Moses, who recoiled in disgust. What, he thought, have these cheap objects, used by women to make themselves look attractive, to do with the Sanctuary and the sacred? God rebuked Moses for daring to think this way, and ordered him to accept them.

The story is powerful in itself. It tells us, as do so many other midrashim, that without the faith of women, Jews and Judaism would never have survived. But it also tells us something absolutely fundamental to the Jewish understanding of love in the religious life.

In his impressive recent book, *Love: A History* (2011), the philosopher Simon May writes:

"If love in the Western world has a founding text, that text is Hebrew." Judaism sees love as supremely physical and spiritual. That is the meaning of "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your might" (Deut. 6:5).

This is not the language of meditation or contemplation, philosophical or mystical. It is the language of passion.

Even the normally cerebral Maimonides writes this about the love of God: What is the love of God that is befitting? It is to love God with a great and exceeding love, so strong that one's soul shall be knit up with the love of God, such that it is continually enraptured by it, like a lovesick individual whose mind is never free from passion for a particular woman and is enraptured by her at all times ... Even more intense should be the love of God in the hearts of those who love Him. They should be enraptured by this love at all times.

Rambam, *Hilchot Teshuvah*, 10:5 This is the love we find in passages of Tehillim such as, "My soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. (Psalm 63:2)"

Only because the Sages thought about love this way, did they take it for granted that the Song of Songs – an extremely sensual series of love poems – was about the love between God and Israel. Rabbi Akiva called it "the holy of holies" of religious poetry.

It was Christianity, under the influence of classical Greece, that drew a distinction between eros (love as intense physical desire) and agape (a calm,

detached love of humanity-in-general and things-in-general) and declared the second, not the first, to be religious. It was this self-same Greek influence that led Christianity to read the story of Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit as a story of sinful sexual desire – an interpretation that should have no place whatsoever in Judaism.

Simon May speaks about the love of God in Judaism as being characterised by, "intense devotion; absolute trust; fear of his power and presence; and rapturous, if often questioning, absorption in his will ... Its moods are a combination of the piety of a vassal, the intimacy of friends, the fidelity of spouses, the dependence of a child, the passion of lovers..." He later adds, "The widespread belief that the Hebrew Bible is all about vengeance and 'an eye for an eye,' while the Gospels supposedly invent love as an unconditional and universal value, must therefore count as one of the most extraordinary misunderstandings in all of Western history."

The Midrash dramatises this contrast between eros and agape as an argument between God and Moses. Moses believes that closeness to God is about celibacy and purity. God teaches him otherwise, that passionate love, when offered as a gift to God, is the most precious love of all. This is the love we read about in *Shir ha-Shirim*. It is the love we hear in *Yedid Nefesh* [1], the daring song we sing at the beginning and toward the end of Shabbat. When the women offered God the mirrors through which they aroused their husbands' love in the dark days of Egypt, God told Moses, "These are more precious to Me than anything else." The women understood, better than the men, what it means to love God "with all your heart and all your soul and all your might."

[1] *Yedid Nefesh* is usually attributed to Rabbi Elazar ben Moshe Azikri (1533-1600). However Stefan Reif (*The Hebrew Manuscripts at Cambridge University Libraries*, 1997, p. 93) refers to an earlier appearance of the song in a manuscript by Samuel ben David ben Solomon, dated circa 1438.

How do you show love for the people and things that matter most to you? Is it through words, actions, or something else?

How does this detail about the mirrors connect to what we have learnt about the Jewish aesthetic?

Where else in Tanach have we seen physicality as a way to express love to God?

from: **TorahWeb** <torahweb@torahweb.org>

Date: Friday, Mar 8, 2024, 9:26 AM

Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger

One Hundred Percent Spiritual Participation

Though relatively new in fundraising lexicon, "One hundred percent participation" is the driver of matching dollar campaigns, crowdfunding, and bake sales, and has become an expected goal in communal and leadership engagement. But is its payoff really greater than a few deep pockets?

However skeptical we may be regarding how lucrative total participation is, the concept may actually explain a mystifying moment in the parsha.

"All the artisans who were engaged in the tasks of the sanctuary came ... said to Moshe, 'The people are bringing more than is needed for the tasks that Hashem has commanded to be done ... thereupon Moshe announced throughout: 'Let no man or woman exert any further effort toward gifts for the mishkan!'" (Shemos 36:4). It must be the first and only time that a fundraiser for a Torah establishment called off the capital campaign because of over-involvement. What about overruns and upkeep? Announcing that we have more than enough money must violate a cardinal fundraising principle. Perhaps if Moshe was to accept any more funds and thus yield extra, it would demonstrate that someone's donation did not make it into the mishkan. What was an uplifting sense of a community coming together to be collectively and individually responsible for the shechina would have been reduced to questions, doubts and discouragement expressed as each wondered if his donation really made it in. Indeed, if the surplus was large and publicly known, then for many there would be nary a difference between their contribution to the mishkan and their anonymity and the invisibility in Pitom and Ra'amses, lehavdil. By contrast, with the cessation of the collection when the mishkan's needs were precisely funded, every scrap of

cloth and every silver ring, no matter how tarnished, would win someone a place in the ohel. The donation of every Jew who wanted to be there became an essential and non-swappable component of the mishkan.

Gold, copper, and cloths of many colors cannot build a structure that can contain that which is sublime and shares no dimension or quarter with the material and physical. However, the Magid of Dubnov explains that it was not the material goods that brought Hashem's presence to this world, rather it was the generosity, the anticipation of Hashem's presence which inspired the alacrity, the desire to be part of a national endeavor, and, yes, to witness and be part of one hundred percent participation in our quest for growth and spirituality. All of that and more were part of every gift, and that is what brought Hashem's presence to His people.

from: יעקב וינברגר - ישיבת הר ברכה <yaakov@yhb.org.il> date: Mar 20, 2025, 11:01 AM subject: Weekly update from the Har Bracha Yeshiva & Revivim Column

Blessing of "Matziv Gvul Almanah" (Establishing the Widow's Boundary)
Revivim

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

One who sees Jewish homes in their settlement should recite the blessing: "Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the Universe, who establishes the boundary of the widow" • During the difficult years of exile, although there were always Jews living in the Land of Israel, they did not recite this blessing over their homes • With the departure of the Old Yishuv (Jewish community) from the walls of Jerusalem, and the immigration of the Lovers of Zion movement, this blessing began to be recited over the newly established settlements • Ideally, one should recite 'Matziv Gvul Almanah' upon seeing a synagogue in the settlement • This blessing is not recited in areas that are already well-populated with masses of Jewish residents • The blessing should be recited over homes in regions where significant effort is still required to uphold the mitzvah of settling the Land, such as homes along the northern border, and near the Gaza Strip—especially when residents return after an extended period of abandonment

Q: Should 'Matziv Gvul Almanah' be recited when residents return to their homes in the Gaza border region and the northern border?

A: To address this, we must first clarify the halachic ruling. Our Sages taught (Berachot 58b) that one who sees Jewish homes in their settlement should recite: "Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the Universe, who establishes the boundary of the widow." This is also the ruling in Jewish law (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 224:10).

This blessing was instituted as an expression of gratitude to God for the return of the Jewish people to their Land, which is akin to re-establishing the widow's boundary. After we sinned, we were exiled from our Land and became a mockery among the nations, appearing like a broken and lonely widow with no hope of returning home. But now, Hashem has had mercy on us and returned us to our Land, to build homes, and dwell in peace and security. The words of the prophet Isaiah are beginning to be fulfilled:

"For you shall spread out to the right and to the left, and your offspring shall possess nations and resettle desolate cities. Fear not, for you shall not be ashamed, and be not confounded, for you shall not be disgraced; for you shall forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you shall remember no more. For your Maker is your husband—the Lord of Hosts is His Name—and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, called the God of all the earth" (Isaiah 54:3–5).

Blessing on the Mitzvah of Settling the Land

During the long years of exile, although Jews always lived in the Land of Israel, they did not recite this blessing over their homes. Jewish settlement in the Land was fraught with hardship, oppression, and humiliation, making it difficult to describe it as stable, or a source of comfort.

However, when Jewish settlement began expanding with the departure of the Old Yishuv from the walls of Jerusalem and the immigration of the Chovevei Tzion (Lovers of Zion), in the spirit of fulfilling the mitzvah of Yishuv Ha' Aretz (Settling the Land), the blessing began to be recited over these new settlements. It is recorded that Rabbi Shmuel Salant recited the blessing over

Petach Tikvah, and Rabbi Mordechai Gimpel Jaffe over Yehud.

Ideally, one should recite 'Matziv Gvul Almanah' upon seeing a synagogue in the settlement (as per the Rif's opinion), but this is not an absolute requirement (as ruled by R. Chananel, Rambam, and Shulchan Aruch, *ibid.*). Since this blessing was instituted in connection with the mitzvah of Yishuv Ha' Aretz, and even though the synagogue is the center of the community, all homes in the settlement contribute to fulfilling this mitzvah.

Where the Blessing Is Not Recited

Based on this, one might assume that the blessing should be recited over every city or village, from Nahariya to Ashkelon. However, in practice, it is not recited in these places because, by Hashem's kindness, these areas have been settled with Jewish towns and villages for many years. The pain of exile is no longer felt there, and one who sees Jewish homes in these areas does not particularly perceive them as part of the ongoing settlement of the Land. A fundamental rule for blessings over sights is that they are only recited over something that evokes a renewed sense of wonder. Therefore, in areas where Jewish settlement is already well-established, 'Matziv Gvul Almanah' is not recited.

Judea, Samaria, the Jordan Valley, and the Golan Heights

The blessing should be recited over homes in areas where continued effort is needed to ensure the fulfillment of the mitzvah of Yishuv Ha' Aretz—to keep these places in Jewish hands, rather than under foreign control, or left desolate.

Anyone who sees Jewish homes being built in these areas and feels moved by the sight of Jews reclaiming the mitzvah of Yishuv Ha' Aretz, should recite the blessing. These areas include Judea, Samaria, the Jordan Valley, and the Golan Heights.

The Negev and the Galilee

In the Negev and the Galilee, one should recite the blessing over settlements located in areas where the Jewish presence needs strengthening due to the fact that the majority of the local population consists of Arabs who support the positions of Israel's enemies, and oppose the existence of the State of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people.

Established Settlements in These Areas

According to rabbinic decree, 'Matziv Gvul Almanah' should be recited upon seeing a Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel for the first time. If one does not see it for 30 days and then sees it again, they should recite the blessing once more (Shulchan Aruch 224:10; 13).

However, the blessing depends on the emotional response to seeing the settlement. As with all sight-based blessings, only one who is moved by what they see should recite it (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 225:9; Rema 224:1; Mishnah Berurah 224:3).

Thus, if one sees an established settlement in a region requiring continued settlement efforts, they should only recite the blessing if they feel a sense of inspiration. If not, they should refrain. If much time has passed and new homes or neighborhoods have been built, and one feels moved upon seeing them, they should recite the blessing.

New Settlements

New settlements (under 20 years old) generally evoke greater emotion.

Therefore, most people seeing them for the first time experience at least some inspiration, and thus the blessing should generally be recited. If visiting again after 30 days, and especially if additional homes have been built, one should recite the blessing if they feel moved by the sight.

House Dedications and Neighborhood Celebrations

About 15 years ago, I gave a lesson on this topic, and had the privilege of having Rabbi Moshe Levinger ztz"l participate. After I established the principle that the blessing 'Matziv G'vul Almanah' was instituted in connection with the mitzvah of Yishuv Ha' Aretz, Rabbi Levinger added an innovation: when a celebration is held for the dedication of a new home in settlements where efforts are still needed to fulfill this mitzvah, the blessing 'Matziv G'vul Almanah' should be recited at the gathering.

Indeed, this is the proper practice, and the one reciting the blessing should be a guest who has not been in the settlement for 30 days, and has come to participate in the housewarming. All the more so when celebrating the

inauguration of an entire neighborhood—it is fitting for an esteemed guest to recite the blessing ‘Matziv G’vul Almanah’ aloud.

Blessing Upon the Return of Residents to Their Homes

From the above, it is clear that ‘Matziv Gvul Almanah’ should be recited when seeing homes in the northern border region, or near Gaza, where residents have returned after an extended absence.

Today, anyone who values the mitzvah of Yishuv Ha’Aretz is deeply moved by the sight of homes being re-inhabited, and they should recite the blessing. If a celebratory event is held for the residents’ return, a participant who has not seen the area in 30 days should recite the blessing aloud for all.

Advice for Those in Doubt If someone is uncertain whether a location falls into the category of areas that need strengthening, or if they feel sufficiently moved to recite the blessing, they can say it in the style of Talmudic study: “Tanu Rabbanan: One who sees the homes of Israel in their settlement says: ‘Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who establishes the boundary of the widow.’” By doing so, on one hand, they recite the blessing in a halachically appropriate manner, and on the other hand, they avoid the concern of making a blessing in vain, since some authorities (such as the Yaavetz) hold that when studying the Talmud, one may recite a full blessing. **Blessing ‘Dayan Ha’emet’ Q:** Should one recite the blessing ‘Dayan Ha’emet’ (the True Judge) upon seeing homes that were severely damaged by bombings in the Gaza border communities, and along the northern border?

Our Sages taught (Berakhot 58b) that one who sees Jewish homes that have been destroyed in the Land of Israel recites the blessing: “Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, the True Judge.” Just as the blessing ‘Matziv G’vul Almanah’ was instituted to mark the settlement of the Land, the blessing ‘Dayan Ha’emet’ over destroyed homes is a recognition of the breach of this mitzvah.

Therefore, someone who saw the ruins of Jewish homes that were destroyed in Gush Katif should have recited ‘Dayan Ha’emet’, since their destruction undermined the mitzvah of Yishuv Ha’Aretz. However, regarding homes that were damaged or even destroyed in border communities, whether in the south or the north, one should not recite ‘Dayan Ha’emet’, because Israel’s sovereignty over these areas remains intact, and their destruction is not permanent. With God’s help, we will win the war, and rebuild them.

Using a Microwave for Dairy and Meat

It is possible to use the same microwave for both dairy and meat foods by ensuring proper separation between them. This separation must account for two key concerns:

Direct Contact: Dairy and meat foods should not be placed directly on the same plate. **Steam and Moisture:** There should not be significant moisture transferring from the microwave’s interior into the food being heated.

Therefore, one must ensure:

Food should not be placed directly on the microwave’s fixed glass plate. Instead, dairy foods should be placed on a designated dairy plate, and meat foods on a designated meat plate, and these plates should be placed on the microwave’s glass plate. A special cover should be designated for dairy foods and another for meat foods. Even though steam escapes through the small vents in microwave-safe covers, the amount of moisture that reaches the microwave’s walls and ceiling is not enough to impart flavor. Certainly, it is not strong enough to extract any absorbed taste from the microwave’s walls and transfer it into the food being heated. Additionally, one may establish the microwave’s default status as dairy. If they wish to heat meat food, they should place an additional plate or other barrier on the microwave’s glass plate and cover the meat food with a lid, container, or bag. The same procedure should be followed when heating parve food that will be eaten with meat.

Kashering a Non-Kosher Microwave & Kashering for Passover

A microwave can be kashered in three steps:

Cleaning: Remove any leftover food residue from spills and splatters.

Purging the Turntable: Immerse the rotating glass plate in boiling hot water.

Steam Purging: Place a dish with soapy water inside the microwave and heat

it on the highest setting for about ten minutes. This process purges any steam absorbed into the microwave’s walls from previous non-kosher or chametz

This article appears in the ‘Besheva’ newspaper and was translated from Hebrew.

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date: Mar 20, 2025, 5:07 PM

Stop Arguing, Just Take a Look at Me!

Why Did Esther Not Refute Haman’s Vile Accusations against the Jews?

By Rabbi YY Jacobson

"I wouldn't belong to a club that would have me as a member." -- Groucho Marx

"The modern Jewish maxim is Incognito, ergo sum, I am invisible, therefore I am." -- Sidney Morganbesser.

The Case for Genocide

In the biblical Book of Esther, which we just read and studied last week on Purim, there is a moment that is so timely and relevant, it could have been written today, for Purim 2025.

Haman, the Prime Minister in the large and powerful Persian Empire, makes a short but powerful presentation to the Persian king, Achashverosh (Ahasuerus), successfully persuading him to embrace his plan of Jewish genocide.

"There is a certain people," Haman says to Achashverosh(1), "scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your realm. Their laws are different from all the other nations, and they do not observe the King's laws. Therefore, it is not befitting the King to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let it be recorded that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand silver talents ... for deposit in the King's treasuries."

Haman's argument is straightforward: Jews are different. They are alien, outsiders, an obstruction to normal society, and a threat to your kingdom. They don't fit into the rest of the human family. They have their own faith and their laws, which in their mind are superior to the king's laws. They are a nuisance, a danger, a growth in an otherwise harmonious and integrated society. They ought to be disposed of.

The Talmud (2) records an oral tradition describing Haman's presentation in more detail. "They don't eat from our food," Haman lamented to the King; "they do not marry our women, and they do not marry their women to us. They waste the whole year, avoiding the King's work, with the excuse: Today is Shabbat, or today is Passover."

Haman also discusses gross Jewish habits: "They eat, they drink and they mock the throne. Even if a fly falls in a glass of wine of one of them, he casts away the fly and drinks the wine. But if my master, the King, touches a glass of wine of one of them, that person throws it to the ground and does not drink it (3)."

The Jews, Haman argues, see themselves as superior to us; they will forever stand out. They are an enemy. Who needs them?

Ilhan Omar did not invent the lie. She was repeating it.

Repeating Haman's Words

Some six centuries after Haman, these same words would be repeated by Philostratus, a third-century teacher in Athens and Rome, who summarizes the pagan world's perception of the Jews.

"The Jews," Philostratus wrote, "have long been in revolt not only against the Romans, but against humanity; and a race that has made its own life apart and irreconcilable, that cannot share with the rest of mankind in the pleasures of the table, nor join in their libations or prayers or sacrifices, are separated from ourselves by a greater gulf than divides us from Sura or Bactra of the more distant Indies (4)."

The same argument, in one form or another, would be repeated thousands of times throughout history.

The greatest Roman historian, Tacitus, living in the first century CE, had this to say about the Jews: "The Jews regard as profane all that we hold sacred; on the other hand, they permit all that which we abhor... toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity, they sit apart at meals and they sleep

apart, and although as a race they are prone to lust, they abstain from intercourse with foreign women."

One example he mentions to describe the moral conflicts between the Romans and the Jews is worthy of note. "The Jews," Tacitus writes, "regard it as a crime to kill any newborn infant." The Romans, as the Greeks before them, killed mentally and physically handicapped infants. Keeping such children alive was unaesthetic and a burden for society who would have to support these disabled humans (5).

First Lady Intervenes

Back to the Haman story of Purim. The viceroy's arguments persuade the King. A decree is issued from the Persian throne. Every Jewish man, woman, and child living under Persian dominance would be exterminated on a particular date. Then, in a stunning and gripping turn of events, the First Lady, the Jewish queen Esther, invites her husband and Haman to a drinking wine feast.

As we recall, Esther, from all the thousands of young women who were brought from across the Empire as potential candidates for the role of queen, succeeded in gaining the affection and grace of the King. "The King loved Esther more than all the women, and she won more of his favor and grace than all other women; he set the royal crown upon her head (6)."

Years later, during this wine feast, the King pledges to Esther that he will fulfill every request of hers. She utilizes the opportunity to make the fateful pitch. "If I have won Your Majesty's favor and if it pleases the King," Esther tells the King (7), "let my life be granted to me as my request and my people as my petition. For we — I and my people — have been sold to be destroyed, slain and exterminated. Had we been sold as slaves and servant-girls, I would have kept quiet. The compensation our adversary [Haman] offers cannot be compared with the loss the king would suffer [by exterminating us, rather than selling us as slaves]."

Clearly, Esther is attempting to approach the issue from two sides, a personal one, and an economic one.

First, she exposes her Jewish identity. The queen is a member of the people condemned to death. Esther knows, however, that this alone may not do the trick, so she continues to discuss dollars and cents (Haman too, as recorded above, used a two-point approach in persuading the King: logic and money). By selling the Jews as slaves, Esther argued, Achashverosh would be profiting far more than by exterminating them. The money Haman offered him is miniscule vs. the potential profit from their sale into slavery. The King, who never realized that Esther was Jewish, is outraged at Haman. He has his minister executed. In subsequent conversations with Esther, Achashverosh grants the Jews the right to self-defense against anybody who would dare to harm them.

The entire climate in the Persian Empire toward the Jews is radically transformed. Esther's first cousin, the Jewish sage Mordechai, replaces Haman as Prime Minister.

Why Not Answer The Accusations?

Yet, one question remains. Haman did not argue the case for Jewish extermination on the basis of senseless, venomous passion. He presented what was to the King a sound and persuasive case. The Jews, Haman argued, were an alien growth, a bizarre people, a separatist nation that did not accept the King's authority; they do now follow his orders, and consider their law superior to the King's.

A leader could not tolerate such a superior nation with dual loyalties in his empire. This is a strong accusation. The King accepts it and, as a result, issues a decree demanding his subjects to dispose of all the Jews — men, women, and children. Yet nowhere in her entire dialogue with the King does Esther refute this argument.

Why did Achashverosh consent to the abolishment of his original plan if he believed Haman's accusations to be valid?

You might say that Esther's charm and grace were the exclusive factors in the King's change of heart. Yet, as we have shown above, Esther does not rely on this alone. That is why she presents a logical argument for slavery vs. genocide. She refutes Haman's economic offer by demonstrating that the king would lose money. Esther thought through her argument to her

husband. How, then, could she ignore Haman's powerful argument advocating a "Judenrein" society?

It is clear from the entire story that Achashverosh was a successful and powerful leader who made sure to protect his position at all costs, even if that meant eliminating his own gorgeous queen (reminiscent of what happened to Stalin's wife). If the king truly felt that the Jews were a threat to his Empire, did Esther think that just because of her looks he would cancel his edict meant to safeguard his kingship? Esther should have refuted the accusation Haman made against her people!

When False Notions Face Reality

Some questions are canceled out via answers; some arguments are refuted by counter-arguments. But there are those beliefs that require neither debate nor dialogue to disprove them. When reality is exposed, the questions and distortions fade away into oblivion.

Haman's argument fell into this category. Esther responded to Haman's argument for Jewish genocide not by dialogue, but by her very presence. The moment she identified herself as a member of the Jewish people and as a product of its faith, Haman's "thesis" vanished into thin air.

Achashverosh knew Esther intimately. She was his wife for five years. As the Megillah tells us, he was enthralled by her. He adored her, cherished her nobility and refinement, and would do almost anything for her (he explicitly told this to her more than once). He chose her from thousands upon thousands of young women, all of them not Jewish. Yet the king never realized that she was a daughter of the Jewish people and a product of its upbringing.

When the King suddenly discovered that she was a proud member of the Jewish people, an adherent of the Jewish faith, Haman's argument was moot. Esther's living presence demonstrated its absurdity.

"I am that horrific scary Jew Haman was walking about," Esther was saying.

"Look at me, and you will know what a Jew is. I am a product of these people, an embodiment of their values and lifestyle." The King did not have to hear another word. He got it. The Jew was a blessing for society, a beacon of moral purity, justice, compassion, authenticity, and love. The last thing he needs to worry about is the Jewish people and their faith. If anything, they will prove to become the greatest blessing for his Empire.

Looking at Esther, the King grasped that this alien nation who lived by another code ought to be respected. They may be different, but it is an otherness that elevates other nations rather than threatens them. (Leo Tolstoy wrote: "The Jew is that sacred being who has brought down from heaven the everlasting fire, and has illuminated with it the entire world (8).") The Jew may be different, but it is this "otherness" that has the power to inspire all of the nations of the world to live and love deeper, to encounter their path to G-d, truth, justice, and kindness.

Should We Hide?

The lesson for our times is clear. Sometimes, Jews think that by hiding the "otherness" of Judaism and the Jewish people, they will gain the approval of the world. Yet the facts prove otherwise: Assimilation, the eclipsing of the otherness of the Jewish people, has never assuaged anti-Semitism. Look at what happened on October 7th and its aftermath. The most left-wing assimilated and secular Jews were hunted down with the same hate as the most religious Jews.

The Jews of Shushan (the capital of the Persian Empire at the time of the Purim story) were assimilated (9). Yet, this did not deter the Persian viceroy and king from believing that despite all of the Jews' compromises and attempts not to be "too Jewish," they were still strange and different. This pattern has repeated itself in every milieu. Never in history has assimilation solved the problem of Jew hatred. Jews in Germany were the most assimilated and integrated in mainstream society, yet it was in that very country where the worst Jew hatred in history sprouted. Jewish students at Harvard and Colombia have been integrated beautifully for decades, yet they have become the punching bag of so many haters, all in the name of freedom and human rights.

The solution for the Jewish people is not to deny their otherness. That will never work. Rather, just like Esther, we ought to be proud of the lifestyle and

moral ethic of the Torah. When we learn how to embrace our otherness with love and grace, rather than with shame and guilt, it will become a source of admiration and inspiration for all of humanity. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks would always say, the world respects Jews who respect Judaism. The are embarrassed by Jews who are ashamed of their G-d, faith, and history. How Do We Survive?

And there is one more grand lesson from this story: You can't argue with the facts.

Jews often wonder what is our path forward? What is the tool for our continuity and success? How do we survive and thrive with such adversity and hatred?

The answer is: Just take a look at the Jew. He has been around for 3300 years and remains fully intact, vibrant, and vivacious. Ancient Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome are gone.

Which Jews survived and endured? Historically, all Jews who swayed from the Torah and Mitzvos and tried to emulate the other nations have been lost. They are not around any longer. Only the Jews who clung to Judaism have remained, millenia later.

This is what Esther teaches us. We can argue as much as we want about the science and the sociology. But just take a look at me: I am the Jews you heard the rumors about. Now draw your own conclusion.

Look at the Jewish people and draw your own conclusion. Take an honest look at the Jew who survived for 3300 years, and you got the answer. The arguments are moot.

(This essay is based on a talk delivered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, at a Purim farbrengen, Purim, 5729, March 4, 1969. (11)).

1) Esther 3:8. 2) Megilah 13b. 3) Wine poured in idolatrous service is, according to Torah law, forbidden to the Jew. The rabbis decreed that wine touched or poured by an idolator, even if not in service to his deity, be prohibited for a Jew to drink (See Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 123:1). 4) Quoted in Why The Jews? (By Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, NY, 1983) p. 83. 5) Ibid. pp. 86-88. 6) Esther 3:17. 7) Ibid. 7:3-4. The translation of the last clause of the verse follows Rashi's interpretation. 8) Quoted in Radican Then, Radical Now (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, London 2000) p. 3 with reference noted there. 9) See Talmud Meggilah 12a; Shir Hashirim Rabah 7:8. Introduction to Manos Halevi. Sicah, Purim 1941. 10) Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (Harmondsworth, 1978) p. 178. 11) Published in Sichos Kodesh 5729 vol. 1 pp. 401-414. Toras Menachem 5729.

from: **Rabbi Chanan Morrison** <chanan@ravkooktorah.org> date: Mar 20, 2025, 4:13 AM

Rav Kook on VaYakhel

Art and Creation

"Moses informed the Israelites: God has selected Betzalel... and has filled him with a Divine spirit of wisdom, insight, and knowledge in all craftsmanship." (Exodus 36:30-31)

What exactly were these three gifts of wisdom, insight, and knowledge that God bestowed upon Betzalel? The Sages wrote that the master craftsman was privy to the very secrets of creation. Betzalel knew how to "combine the letters with which the heavens and the earth were created," and utilized this esoteric knowledge to construct the Tabernacle (Berachot 55a).

We find that King Solomon mentioned the same three qualities when describing the creation of the universe:

"God founded the earth with wisdom; He established the heavens with insight. With His knowledge, the depths opened, and the heavens drip dew. (Proverbs 3:19-20)

What is the difference between wisdom, insight, and knowledge? How do they apply both to the Creator of the universe and to the human artist?

Chochmah, Binah, and Da'at Chochmah (wisdom) is needed to design the

fundamental structure. In terms of the creation of the world, this refers to the laws of nature which govern the universe. The intricate balance of natural forces, the finely-tuned ecosystems of life — this is the underlying chochmah of creation.

In art, chochmah fulfills a similar function, determining the work's underlying structure. Using wisdom, the artist decides on the overall composition, the balance of light and shade, colors, perspective, and so on.

Binah (insight) refers to the future vision, the ultimate goal. The Hebrew word binah is related to the word boneh ('to build'). The emphasis is not on the current reality, but on the process of gradually building and progressing toward the final, complete form. Therefore, Solomon ascribed chochmah to forming the earth, and binah to establishing the Heavens. The foundation of the earth - its current physical structure — is based on chochmah. Binah, on the other hand, corresponds to the Heavens, the spiritual content that reflects its final form.

What is binah in art? The spiritual aspect of art is the sense of wonder that a great artist can awaken through his work. Betzalel was able to imbue the Tabernacle with magnificent splendor, thus inspiring the observer to feel profound reverence and holiness. The great beauty of his work succeeded in elevating the emotions, as it projected a majestic image of God's grandeur.

The third attribute, da'at (knowledge), refers to a thorough attention to detail. "With His knowledge... the heavens drip dew." The rain and dew were created with da'at. They sustain every plant, every blade of grass, every creature. God created the universe not only with its fundamental laws of nature (chochmah) and spiritual direction (binah), but also with meticulous care for its myriad details — da'at.

Attention to detail is also important in art. The artist should make sure that the finest details correspond to the overall composition and heighten the work's impact.

Betzalel knew the letters of creation, the secret wisdom used to create the universe. With his gifts of chochmah, binah, and da'at, Betzalel was able to ensure perfection in the Tabernacle's structure, its vision, and its details. His holy sanctuary became a suitable vessel for God's Presence, completing the sanctity of the Jewish people by facilitating their special closeness to God.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. II, pp. 263-264)

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At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table

Vayakhel MARCH 22, 2025

ROUND TRIP GREATNESS

Living the Parashah — Shemos by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman

They said to Moshe as follows: "The people are bringing more than enough... [Therefore] Moshe commanded... "Man and woman shall not do more work toward the gift for the Sanctuary" (Shemos 36:3-6).

The builders and artisans informed Moshe that there were more than enough materials for the construction of the Mishkan, its vessels and the making of the Kohanim's vestments. Moshe therefore issued a call which brought the preparation of materials to an end.

Why did Moshe say, "Man and woman shall not do more work"? Why didn't he say, "Man and woman shall not bring any more materials"? Sefer Kli Chemdah suggests the following:

Picture a person who had prepared materials for the Mishkan, was getting ready to transport them to where the construction was taking place, and then heard the announcement that nothing more was needed. Surely, he would be

hurt to see that his efforts were for naught. Moshe Rabbeinu did not want this to happen. Therefore, he announced that no more “work,” meaning preparation of materials, was needed. However, if someone had already prepared the materials, he was asked to bring them. They could be used for future repairs or to make additional vessels.

It is upsetting and frustrating for a person to see that his efforts were fruitless. Great people are careful to recognize the efforts of others on their behalf and to make them feel appreciated.

For Yonason Goldberg, it was a moment for which he had been waiting for a long time. He had traveled from Queens to Monsey to seek advice on an important matter from one of the generations luminaries, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky.

The discussion did not last as long as Yonason had expected. With his keen insight and unparalleled wisdom, R’ Yaakov quickly cut through to the heart of the matter, resolving it clearly and succinctly. With the discussion apparently over, the sage asked his visitor,

“Are you returning from here to Queens?” Yonason nodded in the affirmative.

“Well, then,” R’ Yaakov went on, “I have a favor to ask of you. Our grandchild has been staying with us and needs to go to the airport in Queens. We already arranged for a neighbor of ours to undertake this mitzvah. But for whatever reason, he is not comfortable driving alone. My rebbetzin and I had said that we would accompany him on the round trip. However, if you can take our grandchild, there will be no need for us to go along.”

Yonason was only too happy to save R’ Yaakov and his rebbetzin from having to make such a trip. However, he was not ready to leave just yet. He had waited so long for this opportunity; there were other questions, none of them terribly urgent or important, that he wanted to ask R’ Yaakov. He proceeded to ask his questions, one by one. As soon as R’ Yaakov answered a question, Yonason had something else to ask. Only later did he realize that R’ Yaakov had been trying, in his very polite and friendly way, to draw the visit to a close.

Then the doorbell rang. It was R’ Yaakov’s neighbor, who had come to make the trip to the airport. R’ Yaakov had been unable to reach him at home and cell phones did not yet exist. “We’ll be with you shortly,” R’ Yaakov told his neighbor with a smile.

Then he said quietly to Yonason, “We will have to go with my neighbor. Had you left before he came, I would have explained to him that we found a ride that made it unnecessary for my rebbetzin and me to come along — and he certainly would have understood. But now that my grandchild is still here and the neighbor is ready and eager to make the trip, I think that he will feel bad if we tell him that we have found a different ride.”

And so, to avoid hurting the feelings of their neighbor, R’ Yaakov and his rebbetzin made the trip to Queens and back

from: Rbbi Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Mar 17, 2025, 12:35 PM
Open, Sayeth Me!!

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff Dateline: Friday Evening Seudah, Desert: A Bitter Tasting Shabbos Question #1: Daniel asks you on Monday morning, “We spent last Shabbos at a hotel bearing a proper hechsher, and the coffee was served with small packets of sugar, sweetener, and pareve ‘creamer.’ I always thought that one may not open these packages on Shabbos, so I drank my coffee unsweetened -- a bitter experience. What was the hotel relying on?” Dateline: Shabbos Morning, Bright and Early: A True Family Crisis Question #2: The Klein family is in crisis this Shabbos morning! Someone finished the box of Sweetios before everyone else ate breakfast! May they open a new box this morning, or are they condemned to a Sweetios-less Shabbos? Dateline: Shabbos Late Afternoon: Forgot the Flats Question #3: Judith knocks on the rav’s door Shabbos afternoon. “I purchased disposable flatware for a sheva berachos/seudah shlishis, but forgot to open the package before Shabbos. May I open the package on Shabbos? Would it help to recite

the magic formula, nicht am Shabbos garet, before doing so?” Answer: Daniel, the Kleins, and Judith are all raising common questions regarding the opening of packaging on Shabbos. None of the scenarios above are unusual, and occasionally the entire Shabbos day is filled with such interesting predicaments. In a different article, I discussed the questions involved in opening cans on Shabbos. I will begin here by reviewing some points mentioned previously. In that article, we discovered that the laws of Shabbos prevent making a neat opening in a vessel, such as boring a hole in a storage drum (Shabbos 146a). I noted that Rav Moshe Feinstein prohibits opening a milk or juice carton on Shabbos, since creating the spout constitutes making a neat opening (Shu’t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 4:78). Does opening a single serve package, a cereal box, or a package of disposable tableware constitute making a neat opening? Does it involve any other Shabbos prohibitions? Ruining The previous article also analyzed the law of mekalkeil, literally, ruining, and noted that an act whose direct result is destructive is prohibited only midrabbanan. For example, digging a hole in the ground when one needs the earth but is not interested in the hole is halachically defined as a destructive activity and is therefore prohibited only midrabbanan. Razing Razing or demolishing a building in order to renovate it violates a Torah melachah called Soseir. As we learned in the previous article, many authorities understand that demolishing a container is included under this melachah; however, since this activity is usually mekalkeil, it will be prohibited only midrabbanan. For example, although smashing a barrel to obtain its contents constitutes Soseir, since the smashed barrel is mekalkal (ruined), it is prohibited only midrabbanan. Some authorities permit smashing a barrel to obtain the food inside, but most prohibit this (Biur Halacha 314:1). Some conclude that one should not admonish those who do, provided they do not make a neat opening in the process (Aruch Hashulchan 314:8). All authorities agree that to obtain the food inside, one may break open a mustaki, which is a barrel that was previously broken and then reconstructed in a feeble way using resin as glue. Since a mustaki is not considered a proper vessel, smashing it open to obtain the food inside is permitted, provided one does not make a neat opening in the process (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 314:1). Are any of the packages that Daniel, the Kleins, and Judith asked about comparable to a mustaki, which would permit tearing the packaging open for its contents? “Lulav Baskets” The previous article also cited the Gemara that permits ripping open a chosol, a type of basket made of lulav branches, in order to access the unripe dates or dried figs stored inside. Although one may not break open containers on Shabbos, one may tear apart a chosol because it is considered an artificial peel or shell around the fruit, and not a vessel (Kolbo, quoted by Beis Yosef and Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 314:8). Just as one may remove the natural peel or shell of a fruit on Shabbos, and it is not considered destroying a vessel, one may remove an artificial “peel” or “shell” on Shabbos. Do any of the above-mentioned packages constitute chosalos? Do non-edible items, such as paper goods, have a halachically-recognized artificial peel? Tearing through Letters or Designs In addition to the above questions, several other halachic concerns may arise while opening packages on Shabbos. Erasing, Mocheik, is one of the thirty-nine melachos of Shabbos performed in the building of the Mishkan. Each board used in constructing the walls of the Mishkan was marked in order to identify its correct place when the Mishkan was reassembled (Shabbos 103b; Rashi, Shabbos 73a). Sometimes a board was mislabeled, requiring one to erase its numbering and re-mark it. Drawing a design also constitutes writing and is prohibited min haTorah on Shabbos (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 11:17), since the concept of Koseiv is to create a written form of communication. Mocheik means the removal of a communication. When the purpose of the erasing is to allow correct communication to be inscribed in its place, erasing creates a positive result and therefore incurs a Torah violation. Thus, erasing a whiteboard is prohibited min haTorah since the primary purpose in doing so is so that one can write anew on the board. (Some contend that this is prohibited only midrabbanan because the writing on the board is not permanent. This is a topic for a different time.) Erasing that does not create any direct positive benefit is prohibited only midrabbanan since it is

mekalkeil. It is questionable whether erasing because one wants the board to be clean is prohibited min haTorah or only miderrabanan. Tearing through a letter or through a design is also prohibited as Mocheik (see Magen Avraham 519:4), since one obliterates the lettering or design. However, since tearing through the lettering or design does not make the communication any clearer, this latter type of Mocheik is usually mekalkeil and involves only a rabbinic prohibition. Still, tearing lettering or a design on a package entails a rabbinic prohibition of Mocheik and must be avoided. However, to avoid any prohibition of Mocheik, it is adequate to tear in a way that one is not deliberately attempting to tear lettering. Cutting Him Down to Size Another melachah called Mechateich involves cutting items to a very precise size or shape. Mechateich was performed in the Mishkan when a hide was trimmed to a requisite size, and is also involved when cutting leather to make shoes or when cutting material for a pattern (see Rashi, Shabbos 73a). If a sugar packet includes markings to advise someone how to open it, does tearing it there violate Mechateich? Tearing, Korei'ah One of the 39 melachos of Shabbos is Korei'ah, tearing, which was incurred while weaving the Mishkan's elaborate tapestry. Artisans sometimes repair a curtain by tearing the woven material and then resewing or reweaving it (Shabbos 75a). Thus, tearing material on Shabbos as a step in manufacturing or repairing involves a Torah prohibition. Is opening packages prohibited because of tearing? Wine or Brine Understanding the melachah of Korei'ah presents us with many challenges and certainly requires an article of its own. In this article, I will simply note two cases mentioned in Talmudic sources that appear to involve tearing and yet do not violate the melachah of Korei'ah. In one instance, the Tosefta permits ripping a leather cover attached to a barrel of wine or brine (Tosefta Shabbos 17:9 and Beitzah 3:9). Also, there is a Gemara that implies that tearing a piece of papyrus on Yom Tov in order to grill food on it does not violate Korei'ah (Beitzah 32b). (The Gemara's word niyar means papyrus and not paper. Paper was unknown in the Mediterranean Basin and Western Asia at the time of the Gemara.) Why does neither of these cases involve the melachah of Korei'ah? Without going into all the discussion about this melachah, I will share two answers offered to this question: Some contend that the prohibition of Korei'ah applies only to woven material and therefore does not apply to paper or leather (Gra"z 340:17; Ketzos HaShulchan 145:4). This compares favorably with the source for the melachah of Korei'ah in the Mishkan, which was tearing cloth that required repair or resewing. Others maintain that Korei'ah applies only when both sides of the ripped item will subsequently be used (Biyur Halacha 340:13 s.v. ein shovrin). According to either of these approaches, no prohibition of Korei'ah is involved when tearing the leather cover off a barrel, either because one does not intend to use the cover or because leather is not woven, nor does it apply when tearing papyrus or paper to grill on it when one has no use for the part torn off. Similarly, one would not violate Korei'ah when opening the sugar and cream packets Daniel asked about, or the Sweeties' cereal box, or the package of disposable tableware. Nevertheless, there are other authorities who prohibit tearing any of these items on Shabbos (Pri Chodosh, Yoreh Deah 118:18). Did Shabbos's Coffee Need To Be Bitter? Now that we have mentioned many of the basic principles involved, let us discuss Daniel's question: Can one open small packets of sugar, sweetener and pareve "creamer" on Shabbos? We now know that several halachic issues must be analyzed carefully in order to resolve Daniel's question. 1. Is opening these packets equivalent either to creating or to destroying a vessel? 2. Is tearing the top of the packet comparable to creating a spout or opening? 3. Does this violate Mechateich, cutting to size, particularly since one usually opens these packages along a premarked dotted line? 4. Can there be any concern of erasing or tearing? Sugar Bags The authorities debate whether one may open a bag of sugar on Shabbos. Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasah prohibits opening such a bag because it is creating a new serviceable vessel and/or a neat opening. He permits access to the sugar only if one rips the bag in a way that destroys it and then empties the contents into a different container. On the other hand, Rav Moshe Feinstein contends that opening a bag of sugar is not deemed creating a new vessel (Shu"t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim

1:122). In his opinion, a sugar bag is considered a chosal ("peel"), which he defines as any packaging that is not reused for another product; once its product is used, everyone disposes of the chosal. As mentioned above, a chosal is considered to be a "peel" for its contents. Just as one may peel a fruit or vegetable without it being considered making or destroying a vessel, so, too, opening a chosal is not considered making or destroying a vessel. Single Serve Packets Regarding single-serve packets, many authorities feel that these are considered chosalos, since they are certainly not meant for reuse after the contents are emptied, and the small packets themselves are flimsy and do not lend themselves to any type of reuse. Those who are lenient feel that there is also no problem with Mechateich, even if one opens the packets along their perforations, since one is not interested in having a packet that has a specific shape or size. The line is there simply to facilitate opening the packet without spilling sugar all over the place. Erasing When opening these or any other types of packets, one must be careful to try to not tear any lettering or design, which would involve a rabbinic prohibition of Mocheik. Should one attempt not to tear the lettering or design, and it is possible to tear the package without destroying the lettering or design, one may tear open the package without violating the prohibition of Mocheik. If the lettering tore notwithstanding your efforts, you need not be concerned; Shabbos was not violated. Korei'ah In our above discussion, we noted that according to many authorities there is no concern of Korei'ah. However... Despite his conclusion that no Shabbos violations are involved in opening any packaging that is disposed of when its contents are finished, Rav Moshe concludes that one should always open these packages before Shabbos since people might misunderstand the laws and mistakenly open packaging that is prohibited (Shu"t Igros Moshe 1:122:10). Many other authorities quote similar positions (Kaf HaChayim 314:38; Minchas Shabbos 80:164:9; Minchas Yitzchak 4:82:38). However, if someone is making a sheva berachos or invited guests and finds, to his embarrassment, that he does not have enough food to serve, Rav Moshe permits having a gentile open the packages on Shabbos (Shu"t Igros Moshe 1:122; for a similar approach, see Shu"t Chelkas Yaakov 3:8). Presumably, having a gentile open them under these circumstances will significantly reduce the risk of future error. Other authorities are less concerned about the human error problem and permit opening such types of packets on Shabbos (Shulchan Shelomoh). Thus, the hotel that served Daniel these condiments in unopened, single-serve packages held that they could allow its guests to rely on these opinions. The Kleins' Cereal Box At this point, we can try to resolve the crisis at the Klein's breakfast table. May they open the new cereal box or may they not? Opening the box is presumably not creating a new vessel – the box existed before it was glued shut. Here the question is whether tearing the glue that seals the box violates Shabbos. One may not glue items together on Shabbos; therefore, ripping apart a glued item also violates Shabbos (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 10:11). Thus, some authorities contend that opening the cereal box is forbidden since one tears apart two sides that are glued together. The same problem is encountered when opening the bag inside the box. A differing position maintains that the prohibition of tearing apart a glued item applies only if one uses a strong permanent paste such as that used in binding, not the type used to close the top of the box (Nimla Tal, Melechtes Korei'ah #17). On the other hand, if we look at this box and the bag inside as chosalos whose entire purpose is to be a "peel" for the cereal, one may open them. It may be prohibited to make a neat opening, but this is not a major concern for five-year-old Yanki Klein, who is only interested in accessing his Sweeties and not about the condition of the bag. Again, one should try not to tear any lettering in the process. Also, many authorities still rule that one should avoid doing this on Shabbos since the laws are very complicated and people may err. I refer the Kleins to get halachic guidance on this issue from their posek. By the way, many packages are stuck together with very light glue. My wife mentioned that this is common practice for packages of ladies' socks and disposable tableware. Many authorities feel that opening this type of glue is not considered Korei'ah, and I refer the reader to his/her rav for halachic guidance. Sheva Berachos Flatware At this point, I would like to look at our last question: May one

open packages of disposable flatware on Shabbos? Opening this kind of packaging does not involve creating or destroying any vessel since the package never was and never becomes a vessel. There is also no problem of Mechateich for the same reasons mentioned above. Some authorities prohibit opening this package because of Korei'ah, and others contend that there is no heter to consider this a chosel, since the product is not edible. However, many authorities permit opening packages of napkins or disposables (see Shulchan Shelomoh 314:4:4; Orchos Shabbos 12:23 and footnote 37). Nicht am Shabbos Garet I presume that we are all aware that there is no magic formula, such as nicht am Shabbos garet, which permits doing anything on Shabbos that is otherwise prohibited. We can now understand well why, after writing a lengthy responsum on the subject, Rav Moshe Feinstein still concluded that one should not open these packages out of concern that people will violate the laws involved. Creating a beautiful Shabbos entails much planning and organization. It is worthwhile that one's preparation for Shabbos should include opening packages, perhaps even immediately when bringing the items home from the store before placing them on the shelf. Studying all the melachos of Shabbos helps us appreciate Shabbos more and get the maximum joy out of this special day.

