



ניצחון  
NITZACHON

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Adas Torah Journal of Torah Ideas

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Dedicated in memory of Mr. Sam Praw,  
שלום בן חנוך אליעזר ז"ל

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**Nitzachon**

*Adas Torah Journal of Torah Ideas*  
*Volume 7:2 Spring-Summer 5780*

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## Editors' Preface

על משכבי בלילות בקשתי את שאהבה נפשי, בקשתי ולא מצאתיו.  
*Upon my couch at night, I have sought the love of my life. I have sought him,  
but I have not found him. (Shir Hashirim 3:1)*

As we go to print, our shul and *beis medrash* are dark and quiet. This is what *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* wants from us, *v'ein lanu reshus l'harher acharav*. Now that there are so many parts of our *avoda* that we must do alone, we realize – if we hadn't already – what it means to serve Hashem as a community. Sometimes it is only when we can't find what we are looking for – *bikashtiv v'lo mitzasiv* – do we realize that – *bikashti es she'ahava nafshi* – what we are looking for is our soul's truest love.

Even without being within the actual *dalet amos* of our friends, our *kehilla* has been learning Torah together for years inside the pages of *Nitzachon*. And it is within the pages of *Nitzachon* that we will continue learning Torah together.

השיבנו ה' אליך ונשובה.

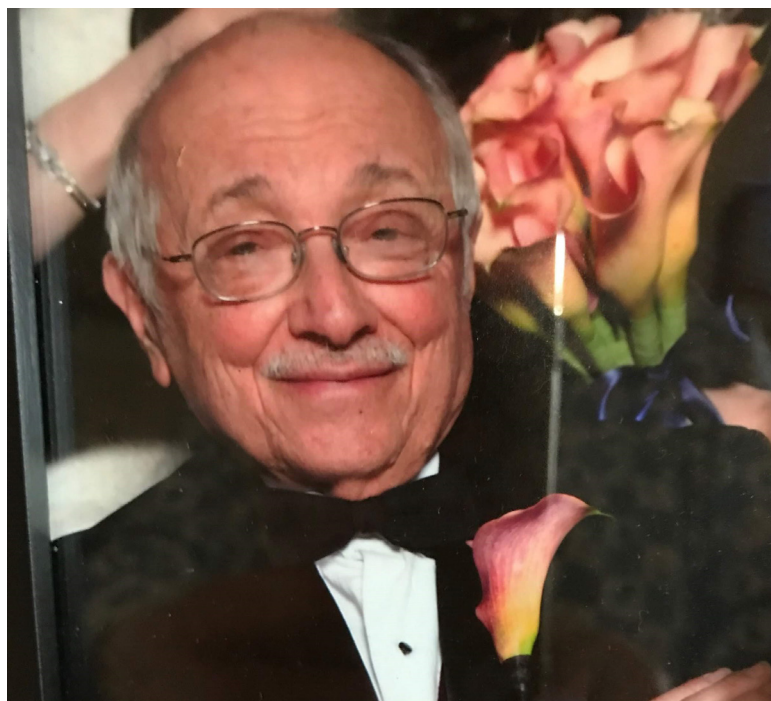
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The publication of this volume of *Nitzachon* coincides with the first *yahrtzeit* of Sam Praw z"l, whose impact on our *kehilla* is felt strongly through his many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who are beloved members of our shul. This volume of *Nitzachon* is dedicated by his family *l'ilui nishmaso* and contains articles from eleven of his children and grandchildren.

**Michael Kleinman**

**Yaakov Siegel**

**Yaakov Rich**



**This issue of Nitzachon is dedicated  
in the memory of my dear father Sam Praw**

שלום בן חנוך אליעזר ז"ל

My father loved *seforim* and respected their authors greatly, and he was a proponent and supporter of Jewish education his entire life. It is therefore a great tribute to my father that so many members of his family wrote articles in this edition. Every one of his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren received a Jewish education. These articles are the fruits of that labor in making sure that his family learned and knew how to learn Torah. He would have been proud and enjoyed reading these articles, and we hope you do as well.

**Henry and Leanne Praw**  
*Chag Sameach*

In honor of Adas Torah,  
the 13<sup>th</sup> issue of *Nitzachon*  
And the Torah it spreads.

With special thanks to  
Rabbi and Mrs. Revah.

Wishing everyone a  
healthy and safe  
*chag kasher v'sameach*



*Joey and Tracey Goldstein*  
*and Family*

In Memory of Our Dear Parents

**Sydney Kleinman**

שמואל בן יצחק ע"ה

On his 24<sup>nd</sup> yahrtzeit, 6 Nissan

**Ilse Kleinman**

חנה בת באנדאט ע"ה

On her 8<sup>th</sup> yahrtzeit, 3 Iyar

**Effie Gross**

אפרים בן אליהו ליב ע"ה

On his 19<sup>th</sup> yahrtzeit, 3 Nissan

In Memory of our beloved

**Dr. Ronald Kleinman**

ראובן ליב בן יצחק ע"ה

On his 21<sup>st</sup> yahrtzeit, 16 Tammuz

**Evie Kleinman**

חווה בת אברהם ע"ה

On her 5<sup>th</sup> yahrtzeit, 28 Nissan

May the inspiration from this journal  
be a *zechus* for their *neshamos*



*Lestey and Brian Kleinman*



Dedicated in Loving Memory of

**Jacob Siegel**

יעקב בן צבי הלוי

**Rose Siegel**

שרה ראסא בת רפאל

**Manfred Raphael Lehmann**

רב מנשה רפאל בן החבר ר' חיים ופייגא

**Sara Anne Lehmann**

שרה בת ר' יצחק משולם פייש וחיה חנה איידל

**Jamie Lehmann**

חיים מנחם בן ר' מנשה רפאל ושרה



*Yitzchok and Barbara Lehmann*

*Siegel and Family*



# ראש וראשון



Rabbi Dovid Revah  
Rabbi Dovi Saltz



# Where Are You Running?

RABBI DOVID REVAH



**T**his past January, I was given the *zechus* to say the momentous words of *Hadran Alecha Talmud Bavli*, may we return to you, Talmud Bavli, on behalf of the hundreds of *mesaymei haShas* at the Los Angeles Siyum Hashas.

The *hadran* we read is a combination of *tefilla* and *hoda'a*. We daven that we should be granted the time and energy to continue to learn and be able to be *mesayem* additional *masechtos*, and that we should find meaning and enjoyment in our learning Torah.

Then we give *hoda'a*, we express appreciation to Hashem for granting us the privilege of learning His Torah. We say:

מודים אנחנו לפניך ה' אלק' ששמת חלקנו מיושבי בית המדרש, ולא שמת חלקנו מיושבי קרנות.

We thank Hashem for enabling us to be among the *yoshvei Beis Hamedrash* and not among the *yoshvei keranos*. *Yoshvei keranos* literally means people who lounge on street corners, who are idle and do nothing.

I would like you to picture in your mind for a moment a *yoshev keranos*. I imagine it is a person who wakes up late in the morning, has his coffee, his shower, goes to a café for breakfast and then perhaps puts in a few hours of work, and spends the rest of the day in meaningless activities.

But let us read how the *hadran* describes the *yoshvei keranos*. The *hadran* compares and contrasts the *yoshvei keranos* with the *yoshvei Beis Hamedrash*.

שאנו משכימים והם משכימים. אנו רצים והם רצים. אנו עמלים והם עמלים.

We both start our day very early.

We both have very busy days, rushing to get everything done.

We are both very hard workers.

So the *yoshvei keranos* the *hadran* is referring to is a person who gets up at 6 am, commutes an hour on the 405 and puts in a hard day's work, coming home exhausted.

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Rabbi Dovid Revah, the *Rav* and *Mara D'asra* of Adas Torah,  
has led our *Kehilla* since 2005.

While it's true, unfortunately, that he may not spend any time in the *Beis Hamedrash*, why call him a *yoshev keranos*, an idle person?

The Ohr Hachaim Hakodosh says that we should consider what this person does with his time off. How does he spend his Sunday morning, his Shabbos afternoon? What does he do when he has some down-time at work? He relaxes, he kills time; he is idle. For that he is called a *yoshev keranos*, because he demonstrates that left to his own devices, he would be doing this all day.

The Ohr Hachaim says that the *yoshev Beis Hamedrash* is also someone who spends a long day at work. However, he makes time in the morning or evening to come into the *Beis Hamedrash*. On Sunday mornings he has a *sefer*, on his way to work he listens to a *shiur*, and when he has a spare fifteen minutes, he opens a *sefer*. Although he spends a large part of his day at work or at home, he is called a *yoshev bais hamedrash* because he demonstrates that this is what is important to him, and if he would have more time, he would be in the *Beis Hamedrash* longer.

The words of the *hadran* continue:

אנו עמלים ומקבלים שכר והם עמלים ואינם מקבלים שכר.

For 95% of the day, the *yoshev Beis Hamedrash* and the *yoshev keranos* are doing the same thing; they work, eat, and parent. But the Ohr Hachaim explains *anu ameilim umekablim sechar*, we receive reward not just for the hour a day we spend in the *Beis Hamedrash*, but for the entire day's work, because our work is facilitating the time we spend learning Torah.

They both have an hour-long commute and a full day of work. But the *yoshev keranos* will receive reward for any of it, while the *yoshev Beis Hamedrash* will receive reward for all of it, because it is a *hechsher mitzva* that enables his being a *yoshev Beis Hamedrash*.

Rabbeinu Yona, in his *Iggeres Hateshuva*, writes that we should buy *sefarim* and make them easily accessible, so that when we have spare time during the day we can use them productively for learning Torah, and we won't be a *yoshev keranos*. Rabbeinu Yona was writing at a time when *sefarim* were difficult to obtain. To translate his words into today's world, it would mean we should have a *kevius*, a schedule of something that we have committed to learn every day. That way, we always have what to learn and we will always be looking for the extra time to complete the day's *limmud*.

We should look at the *lomdei Daf Yomi* as an inspiration. For seven years, no matter how busy their day was, no matter how late they went to sleep the night before, they remained committed to learning the day's *daf*.

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On Pesach two years ago, there was a flight from Newark to Los Angeles which was delayed on the runway. The pilot walked down the aisle to check on the passengers, and while everyone else had their iPad or laptop out, he found one person learning *gemara*. Rav Michel Chill was travelling to Los Angeles for his great grandson's *pidyon haben* and was learning the day's *blatt*. The pilot noticed that Rav Michel was learning Daf Yomi and said, "I also learn Daf Yomi; please come into the cockpit during the delay and we will learn the *daf* together."

Henry Praw, one of the *mesaymei haShas*, told me that five hundred of the *blatt* that he learned were done on a plane!

Who brings their *gemara* on a plane? The *lomdei* Daf Yomi. They always have something to learn, to catch up on, or to review, and are always looking for the extra time in which to do it. If we commit to a daily *limmud*, whether it is Daf Yomi, a *chazara* program where we have what to review each day, or *halacha yomi*, we will always have what to learn and will always be looking for the extra time to learn it. We can always have a *sefer* with us, and if we commit to it, over time, we may train ourselves to pull out our *sefer* as instinctively as we pull out a phone in our spare time. We will then become a true *yoshev Beis Hamedrash*.





# The Gift of Sinai: The Gift of Freedom

RABBI DOVI SALTZ



Imagine arriving home and finding an oversized box at your front door wrapped in beautiful gift wrap and a large bow on top. You would certainly be excited to open the box and see what lies inside. However, you would most likely proceed with caution because a beautiful box is not necessarily an indication of a beautiful gift. Perhaps the gift is something which isn't practical and will serve you little use. Perhaps the oversized box is simply the wrapping and packaging of an unimpressive item inside. There is also the possibility that a cruel prank is being played on you to get you excited over something very different than the reality of the content of the box. If, however you notice that the sender was none other than your own father, most of these concerns would dissipate. Certainly, your father knows what is valuable and useful for you, and is obviously not looking to get a good laugh at your expense. He is definitely expressing his deep love and concern for you with the gift, and as such, there is an added excitement in opening the wrapping and beholding the gift. However, even under these circumstances it is only natural for there to be an element of hesitation. Your father, with all of his best interests and deep desire to shower you with love, is limited with financial realities, and chances are that the gift is not quite as grand as the outer trappings make it appear to be. If, however your father is none other than His Majesty the King, you certainly have nothing at all to fear. Your Father Who adores you, cares for you, and loves you beyond belief is expressing that in His gift, and there is nothing standing in His way of successfully doing so.

On Shavuot the Jewish people were given a gift by the Almighty at the foot of *Har Sinai*. It was with great celebration and fanfare. It was an event that would never again be repeated in history, when all rules of nature were suspended and nature itself stood still so as not to interrupt and interfere with this sublime occurrence. What is

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Rabbi Dovi Saltz is a *Rosh Chabura* in the Mesivta of Greater Los Angeles. He is also the *Rosh Chabura* of Adas Torah's *Vidibarta Bam* program and is the director of Zichron Menachem. Rabbi Saltz has been a member of Adas Torah since 2015.

the true nature of this gift? After all of the packaging of the event are taken off, what were we left with?

כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם תורתִי אל תעזובו.

*I have given you a precious commodity; be certain not to forsake My Torah.*  
(Mishlei 4:2)

The Master of the Universe, Who possesses all of the goodness in the world and loves the Jewish peoples beyond description, tells us that out of His great love and deep concern for our nation, He's given us a uniquely precious commodity, begging us not to forsake it. Certainly, our appetites should be whet with a desire to learn more about His precious gift and do what we can to behold it.

The Torah is our living instruction manual for life, containing the exact details of how to navigate every step of our existence in a most practical way. But there is another element to it, and that is the study of Torah. We know that Torah study is listed in the *beraisa* we say each morning as being *k'neged kulam*, the most significant of all of the Torah's *mitzvos*. We know that in-depth study of Torah is our nation's hallmark, overwhelming and completely consuming the greatest minds of our people to the point where they lost touch with their physical existence.<sup>1</sup> The study of Torah is so precious that a special blessing is required to thank Hashem and recognize this most incredible gift.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the ages, a successful Jew wasn't defined by a financial status or by attaining a high political position. The greatest complement one could ever receive was to be called a *talmid chacham*, and it was he who was at the height of society. But the study of Torah is not the exclusive privilege of those belonging to this part of society; the Torah is the national treasure of our people, and every Jew is entitled and expected to take advantage of this gift.

Yet the reality of making the Torah study part of our lives is so challenging due to our myriad responsibilities and never-ending family and community involvements. When we finally manage to settle ourselves in front of our *gemara* or *sefer*, we feel our eyelids drooping as if they are filled with lead. Even if the above-mentioned struggles don't resonate with all, certainly we all recognize that the actual process of Torah

1 See the *gemara* in *Shabbos* 88a that records the story of Rava who studied Torah with such intensity that his fingers were crushed under his feet and were flowing blood while he remained oblivious to it.

2 See the Gri"z on the Rambam *Hilchos Brachos* quoting his father, Rav Chaim Brisker, that the *bracha* made before the study of Torah is not on the fulfillment of the mitzva to engage in Torah study, but rather as a necessary introduction to the study itself.

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study is a uniquely rigorous process. One must expend immense energy and focus to properly comprehend its words and teachings. Whether in keeping track of a detailed back and forth, or analyzing and unknitting the true depths of a complex concept, it is a real mental workout. Regardless of our practical involvement in this process, we certainly recognize that this is the true nature of Torah study, and when we aren't toiling with our learning, we can easily feel that it isn't the real thing.

Why does it have to be so difficult? We often wonder to ourselves, am I the only one that struggles with my learning, or are there others like me? Is it even worth the struggle if after it is all done I walk away with a hazy feeling and only a partial understanding at best? The answer to these questions is a true appreciation of the sublime nature of Torah study.

Wisdom in its conventional sense is the collection and compilation of information. This comes in many forms and variations; it can be the collection of facts, theories, equations, and natures, and more. The ability to appreciate and utilize this information on a practical or theoretical level will vary based on the comprehension and intellect of the learner. However, the learner's essence and being will remain unchanged. For the most part it could be said simply inserting the information into his brain via a flash drive would save him a great deal of effort while ending up in the same place. There is a well-known anecdote of a university professor of morality that was found having a less-than-moral and rather inappropriate involvement with one of his female students. When he was questioned about his contradictory behavior he responded by saying, "If I were a professor of trigonometry, would it be expected of me to become a triangle?" This is the sum total of wisdom when it's nothing more than an intellectual pursuit in understanding the concepts of the world.

Torah wisdom, however, is of a completely different nature. The Torah is the wisdom of the Almighty, through which we connect with Him on the deepest level. When a Jew is involved in Torah study, he becomes divinely inspired, and his very essence is elevated and renewed. This can be immediately noticed when one interacts with a prominent Torah personality or a serious Torah student. Rather than being stuck up, haughty, and untouchable, we find the opposite to be true; the greater the personality, the more unassuming and humble he is. To illustrate; the elderly Rav Shach, venerable Rosh Yeshiva of the famed Ponevezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, was approached by a family who were in desperate need of assistance. Their mother had passed away and their father, who until then was a vibrant, energetic man, had become a virtual vegetable, refusing to leave his home or have any form of social interaction. The children were at a loss of how to help their father, and they came to the Rosh

Yeshiva for advice. He asked them for their address and told them to leave the rest up to him. The next day Rav Shach made his way to the man's home, and when there was no response to his knocking, he let himself in and sat next to the hunched and almost lifeless figure. Rav Shach began by making a proposal; he said "I am a teacher of young single boys who don't have any comprehension of marriage and certainly don't appreciate the depths and enormity of losing a spouse. When my wife passed a few years back, my home was filled with students who came to offer their condolences, but truth be told I hardly recovered from my loss because my students had no understanding of what I was going through and couldn't possibly grieve with me. With your permission I would like to make the following suggestion; I will share with you a story about my wife and you will share with me a story of yours. I will be able to share in your pain and help you carry your burden, while you will do the same for me. Perhaps being partners will enable us to overcome our traumatic losses and forge a positive future." And so, the man began a therapeutic grieving process with none other than the *Gadol Hador* as his therapist. Each day Rav Shach would come and they would spend time together, sharing stories about their respective lives. Suffice it to say it wasn't long before the man was out of his house and once again an active and productive member of society. It's simply mind-boggling to think that Rav Shach, who was busy shouldering the issues of an entire nation, made one lone individual, a stranger no less, his issue, caring for him with wisdom, patience, and love.

Where does this come from? How does the study of Torah impact us in such a profound way? Rav Yeruchem Levovitz, famed Mashgiach of the Mir Yeshiva, said that it is specifically the toil and struggle in Torah which is impactful and uplifting. All of the wondrous things enumerated by *Chazal* of the Torah student are unique to one who toils and exerts himself in its study. It is through the process of breaking ones' self for its sake and going beyond one's natural comfort level that creates the bond with the Torah, ultimately creating an attachment to the Giver of the Torah, the Almighty Himself. As such, he assumes divine character traits and becomes elevated, affecting interactions with family and friends, honesty and integrity in business, and joy and satisfaction with life itself.

Toil in Torah can be done in many ways, and as such, any person who is involved in any way can expect to be elevated to the greatest heights attainable by man. For some, creating a *kevius*, a fixed and firm commitment, is a mighty struggle, and conquering this struggle makes one an *amal baTorah*, one who toils in Torah. We have all heard countless testimonies from the wives of the *lomdei Daf Hayomi* how their husbands' lives were completely changed for the better the moment they

committed themselves. For others the commitment itself isn't a challenge, but they struggle with other things, like comprehension, retention, focus and patience, which are absolute requirements for Torah study. Whatever your struggle is, know that the benefit is something which cannot be gotten any other way. It is specifically this grueling process that will attach yourself to the Giver of the Torah on the deepest levels and result in your becoming an elevated and Godly being.

The *mishna* teaches:

כל המקבל עליו עול תורה מעבירין ממנו עול מלכות ועול דרך ארץ.

*One who accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah is freed from the yokes and burdens of society. (Avos 3:6)*

Rav Yerucham explains that man, by virtue of his nature, must toil in something, and Hashem gives him the option to choose the area in which he will toil. As such, inasmuch as we accept upon ourselves to toil in Torah, we will be freed from the need to have other yokes and all of nature's burdens.

Each individual is given the option to choose the nature of the burden he will carry. Mundane or sublime, will it simply be a personal struggle or will it be the catalyst through which he will make the world a better place? To bear a burden is an unavoidable part of the human condition. Perhaps what follows is that one can choose the nature of his Torah burden as well. Will he constantly struggle to create a true and steady commitment to his learning, or will he be freed of that struggle and move on to the next level of toiling. Inasmuch as he accepts upon himself that higher form of toiling, he will naturally be freed from his base struggles, and will find it to be an absolute pleasure to commit himself to his learning. To toil is a necessity, but we can choose the nature of it.

I would like to conclude by suggesting a distinct form of *ameilus baTorah* that, while freeing us from many of our natural burdens, will also grant us a feeling of being spiritually wealthy, and that is *chazara*, constant review. How often does it happen that a person will be engaged in self-pity and think to himself, after all the time that I've spent learning, what am I taking home? If only I had a better memory or greater retention skills, I would feel so much more accomplished! The truth is that no *talmid chacham* ever attributed his Torah wealth to great memories or other such inborn qualities; they constantly worked on reviewing and reinforcing what they learned so that they wouldn't need to rely on their memories. Rav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor, the great Rav of Kovno who was considered the chief halachic authority of his day, once commented that he merited ongoing *siyata dishmaya*, Heavenly assistance; all

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the halacha questions that came his way happened to be on what he had just reviewed that very day! What does that tell about his *chazara* habits!

So many people have been inspired by the recent *Siyum Hashas* to join the *Daf Hayomi* and travel through all of *Shas*. It is a remarkable journey for those who are privileged to be a part of it and I hope that someday I too will be one of them. However, for one's ultimate growth in Torah, one can't simply travel through Torah, but one must acquire it as well. This can be done in a very practical way by choosing a small part of Torah to master and own as a result of constant and excessive review. It can be a small *masechta*, one *perek*, or even one *daf* of *gemara*. The amount is not important; the point is to become wealthy and absolutely fluent in a portion of the Torah. To be able to know it, understand it, share it, and be tested on it. That is true wealth. By committing yourself to become wealthy in Torah you will be accepting the yoke of Torah in a truly profound way and will have *siyata dishmaya* to find the strength and capability to follow through.

May we have the merit to stand as one people, accepting upon ourselves to be the kingdom of priests and the holy nation that we are intended to be, and may we all be crowned with the most exquisite and glorious crown attainable by man, the *Kesser Torah*.

# Pesach



Rabbi Donny Kellerman

Rabbi Aryeh Markman

Stephen Kirschenbaum

Ariella Azizi

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Mimi Amsalem and Renina Lifshitz

Ruthie Kellerman

Stevie Herbst

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Robert Millman





# Can one be *Yotzei Zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim* with *Az Yashir*?

RABBI DONNY KELLERMAN



On Pesach we have a mitzva of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, telling the story of how the Jews were miraculously taken out of Egypt by Hashem. We fulfill this mitzva by reciting the *haggada* the night of Pesach. However, as the *haggada* itself mentions, we also have an obligation of *Zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim* every day.<sup>1</sup> We fulfill this obligation through our recital of the third *parsha* of *Krias Shma* (the paragraph of “*Va’yomer*”) and the paragraph of *Emes V’yatziv* which both reference Hashem taking us out of *Mitzrayim*.

However, reciting the *parsha* of *Va’yomer* is not the only way to fulfill this mitzva. The *gemara* in *Brachos* 13b says that if one said a *halacha* that mentions *Yetzias Mitzrayim* in it, he is *yotzei*. Based on this *gemara*, the Magen Avraham writes (67:1) that one can certainly be *yotzei* by saying *Shiras Hayam*, which we say during *davening* in *Az Yashir*, as it describes the incredible miracle of *Krias Yam Suf*.

Other *poskim* disagree with this ruling of the Magen Avraham. The Chasam Sofer explains that the mitzva of *Zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim* is derived from the *pasuk* which states *lema’an tizkor es yom tzei’scha m’Eretz Mitzrayim*. We must specifically have a *zechira* of the day we left Egypt. As we know, the Jews left *Mitzrayim* on the first day of Pesach, and the sea split on the seventh day of Pesach. Therefore, one cannot be *yotzei* the mitzva by reciting *Shiras Hayam* which only describes miracles which occurred a week after the Jews left Egypt. The *Mishna Brura* agrees and rules against the *Magen Avraham*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the differences between these two *mitzvos*.

<sup>2</sup> Rav Akiva Eiger also agrees with his son-in-law, the Chasam Sofer.

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To answer the Chasam Sofer's question on the Magen Avraham, many *sefarim* explain that *Krias Yam Suf* was the completion of the Jews' escape from Egypt. It was only then that they saw their former masters killed. Only then could they truly feel complete joy and recite *shira*. Therefore, mentioning *Krias Yam Suf* should be tantamount to mentioning *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. However, it seems that even if this important insight into *Krias Yam Suf* is correct, it still does not answer the Chasam Sofer's question that the obligation is to mention the day the Jews left the land of Egypt. This day, inarguably, was on the 15th of Nissan. Even if this Exodus was not truly complete until a week later when Hashem split the sea and killed the Egyptians, they still left the land of Egypt on the 15th. Therefore, one should not be *yotzei* the mitzva of *Zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim* with *Shiras Hayam*.

Let us now take a detour and discuss another contentious comment of the Magen Avraham. Each year, we read *Parshas Zachor* on the Shabbos before Purim. This account of Amalek's attack on the Jews and the commandment to wipe them out is from the end of *Parshas Ki Seitzei*. Here too, the Magen Avraham discusses a valid alternative to the method of *zechira*, that if one missed hearing *Parshas Zachor* in shul on Shabbos, one can be *yotzei* with the *kria* of Purim morning, which is about the war with Amalek, from *Parshas Beshalach*. However, the Mishna Brura (685:16) argues with the Magen Avraham here as well. The Mishna Brura points out that key aspects of what we are commanded to mention are missing from *Parshas Beshalach*. In *Ki Seitzei* we are commanded not to forget how Amalek attacked us, and to convey it to our children. The evil actions of Amalek we are commanded to transmit are not fully described in *Beshalach*. Therefore, concludes the Mishna Brura, one cannot fulfill the commandment of *Zechiras Amalek* with the reading on Purim morning from *Beshalach*.

In two instances the Magen Avraham rules that one can fulfill a mitzva of *zechira* through an alternative recitation. In both instances he is challenged by *poskim* who contend that those alternatives do not properly contain all the elements of what must be mentioned to fulfill the mitzva.

Perhaps we can explain their disagreement as follows. The *poskim* who disagree with the Magen Avraham hold that in order to fulfil a commandment of *zechira*, you must express every detail of what must be remembered. Therefore, *Krias Yam Suf* is not a valid replacement for mentioning the day of leaving *Mitzrayim* and *Parshas Beshalach* cannot substitute for *Parshas Ki Seitzei* in fulfilling *Zechiras Amalek* since each do not contain every aspect of what must be remembered. The Magen

Avraham, on the other hand, holds that even when there is an obligation to mention something verbally, so long as that verbal recitation discusses an aspect of what one is supposed to remember, it is sufficient since it conjures the entirety of what one must remember in their mind. Therefore, even though *Shiras Hayam* only discusses *Krias Yam Suf* and does not sufficiently contain the details necessary for the mitzva of *Zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim*, it is enough since, as we explained above, it is the culmination of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and allows one to sufficiently remember the event. Similarly, the *kria* of *Parshas Beshalach*, which only mentions the war with Amalek, is enough since it leads to recalling the entirety of the event.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this is how the Magen Avraham understands the requirement of *zechira*.<sup>4</sup>

I would like to conclude with a prayer that the Torah learnt and the *mitzvos* kept by myself, my family, and all of my many aunts, uncles, siblings and cousins be a *zechus* for the *neshama* of my grandfather, *mori v'zekeini* Shalom ben Chanoch Eliezer a"h, who passed away right before Pesach 5779. I recall a story my grandfather's sister, Frieda Newman, once told me. When the small Praw family, parents and two children, came to America after Kristallnacht, they needed to buy items for Pesach. My great-grandmother, Sara, bought a large set of pots. The pots were much larger than necessary for a small family of four, so Frieda asked her mother why she didn't purchase a smaller and cheaper set. Sara answered that even though we are few in number now, we will soon be many. Her *bitachon* in Hashem that He would take care of the family and allow it to thrive so long as they remained true to their *mesora* was transferred to her son, who had the *zechus* to see his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren continue the *mesora* he sacrificed so much for.

3 After struggling with this article's questions, I saw in *Teshuvos Eretz Tzvi* 77 a similar idea in the name of the Rash MiShantz:

“דמי שלומד מס' מגילה מקיים מצות זכירת מעשה עמלק, הנה דאע"ג דאין נזכר שם במקום שלומד מעשה עמלק, רק כיון שהמס' נוסדה על מעשה המן מזרע עמלק ימ"ש, חשוב כזכירת מעשה עמלק וכו'.”

4 Among the problems with this approach is insufficient proof for this novel approach to a mitzva of *zechira*. However, *basi rak l'orer*.



# Cliffnotes to the *Haggada*

RABBI ARYEH MARKMAN



**P**esach night is about freedom, but freedom is much misunderstood. The freedom to serve God and nothing else! Through the fifteen steps of the haggada.

## ***Kadesh***

By making *kiddush* we thereby separate ourselves from the rest of the world. You are separating yourself out as unique. There has been no one like you and there never will be anyone like you. You are needed now in this generation. God doesn't make anything extra. *Mitzrayim* is boundaries, tonight there are none. Tonight you are exploring your reason for being and you are on a jailbreak escape towards it. What is it?

## ***Urchatz***

We wash our hands to arouse curiosity in the children and in ourselves. Are we still curious with this world, or bored until the next notification hits our mobile devices? Be fascinated with living. Tonight I am going to pretend I am holy. I will wash my hands before I eat even a vegetable, just like they used to do in the days of yore. I am not that holy yet, because I am not making a bracha. But later on I will! Tonight I have the freedom to be whoever I want to be.

## ***Karpas***

Having vegetables on your table used to be a sign of wealth. But even so, I dip the vegetable in salt-water to symbolize that there are those with less than me. We are so blessed in so many ways. Take stock of your blessings. As we have learned lately, you cannot take *anything* for granted.

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*Thank you to Rabbi Avraham Twerski, Rabbi Berel Wein, and Rabbi Shraga Simmons for their insights.*

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### ***Yachatz***

A wise and disciplined person puts the best aside for the future. The ultimate freedom is to be able to envision the future and actually achieve it. Though the future very often is like the *afikoman*. It's currently "hidden" from us, and we may have to "pay" more for it than we previously imagined.

### ***Maggid***

It's such a blessing to be able to tell over our family's history and pass it down to subsequent generations. Many Holocaust survivors have no family pictures. But as a people and a nation we have the most well-defined past and most certain destiny. Because we understand where we came from, we know where we are going, which puts us miles ahead of the world. No wonder for us it's the year 5780 but for the rest of the world its only 2020.

### ***Rachtza***

By this point in the evening we have spoken out the *haggada* for maybe two hours. We are famished. But we cannot become enslaved to the forthcoming meal. So we wash our hands of our animalistic impulses and distance ourselves from making this into just another dinner. We are in control. Freedom is the ability to live by my mind, rather than my stomach. Rabbi Berel Wein offered the following thought. After Maggid we have so much gratitude to Hashem. Before we didn't wash our hands before eating, but now because we are so holy, imbued by the Seder in the service of God, that our washing of the hands requires a blessing.

### ***Motzi***

Man has the unique ability to take the material world and convert it into the spiritual. And at the same time we are still, in effect, receiving manna from Heaven. Take a moment before you make the *bracha* on the *matza*. We say, "He, Who brings forth bread from the ground". That is like saying, "He who brings forth computers from steel, glass, silica, sand, iron ore, gold, bauxite and a lot of other stuff." We can transform this world from raw materials via technology into infinite products. In your hand you are holding a miracle that we can take for granted. If a Jew doesn't know where his food originates, he can't eat it!

### ***Matza***

At this point we have come to the moment when we finally can have the first bite of *matza*. *Matza* is Pesach in its perfection. Not a drop of *chometz* in sight. It does not

take an enormous force to create spiritual destruction. Any bit of physical indulgence can corrupt a pristine spiritual state. As Rabbi Avraham Twerski writes, “A single drop of alcohol can quickly undo years of a recovering alcoholic’s life.” Tonight I am in quarantine from *chometz*, and may that *avoda* take me out of all my other quarantines!

### **Marror**

Just as we say, “*Baruch Dayan HaEmes*,” so too during the Seder we make a blessing on bitterness itself. Our national memory is filled with bitter suffering, and yet because of it, not in spite of it, we Jews continue to build, create and prosper. We must appreciate the living miracle that the timeless existence of the Jews throughout every age demonstrates to the world.

### **Korech**

The sandwich of unity. The entirety of the Pesach experience in one mouthful. We try to cement it back together as a whole with the *charoses*. For in the merit of unity we were redeemed and, in that merit, we shall be redeemed once more. And who better than Hillel to remind us.

### **Shulchan Orech**

There is no meal eaten with more gusto, appetite and relish than the Seder meal. Not only does the *sueda* resurrect my depleted physical state, but I have also found that it minimizes hours of endless Seder-prolonging *divrei Torah* from my family and guests. I am able to say in the most sincere way, “That’s a fascinating idea. Let’s discuss it over the brisket.” Funny how the particular subject never seems to rear its head again once the food is served.

### **Tzafun**

We don’t eat the *afikoman* to satiate our appetite but purely as a spiritual pursuit. It tastes like the memory of our Seder and it will linger long after the experience is over. It is pure soul food. I try, with difficulty, to contemplate my true self while simultaneously and miraculously, stuffing it down in two minutes.

### **Barech**

In *Shir Hama’alos* we say that when the Redemption comes we will be like dreamers. As with Joseph and Jacob, whose dreams were not fulfilled in exact detail, so too the Final Redemption will not follow a perfect script. So much is unknown. Rather it’s our job to anticipate the *Mashiach* today and not be discouraged by current events

### **Hallel**

There's a dispute in the *mishna* if the Seder requires four or five cups of wine. So we pour the cup of Eliyahu, as he will appear at the beginning of the Final Redemption and will resolve all the disputes including this one. Eliyahu heralds great beginnings, so he appears at every *bris*. And he heralds great hope, so he is present at every Seder. By this stage in the Seder, you should see yourself filled with this selfsame optimism of what is to come.

### **Nirtza**

We express our gratitude for the opportunity of the Seder. We did it! We have to learn to celebrate our small victories along the road of life and not always wait for the Big Goal to be achieved. Come next year may we be in Jerusalem, all together, eating a *korban pesach*. For even if I cannot participate in such an endeavor right now, at least after tonight I understand even deeper the purpose of the Jewish people and the role Hashem wants me to play. What a gift!



# Can I use Glass for both Meat and Milk or *Chometz* and Pesach?

STEPHEN KIRSCHENBAUM



There is considerable incongruence within the observant community as to whether glass utensils may be “*kashered*” (made *halachically* usable after it was forbidden) and whether they may be used for both milk and meat. We will survey the many approaches regarding these issues, emphasize the difference between Sefardim and Ashkenazim in this regard, and attempt to outline the *halachic* consensus. The relevant issues as it pertains to corelle dishes will be discussed as well.

## Talmudic Sources

The *Talmud Bavli* does not contain sources which definitively declare the *halachic* status of glass with regards to *kashering*. However, there are sources from which the commentaries infer the *gemara*’s position. How these sources are to be assessed and what inferences are to be drawn is a matter of deliberation among the commentaries.

In *Shabbos* 15b, the *gemara* states that *Chazal* declared that glass can become impure. The basis for this pronouncement is that glass’s material composition is similar to pottery, since glass is produced from sand. The Torah rules that pottery may become ritually impure, and because of their similar composition, *Chazal* assigned glass the same *halachic* status.

Conversely, the *gemara* in *Avoda Zara* 75b states that glass utensils which were once owned by a non-Jew must be dipped (“*toveled*”) in a *mikva* prior to use with food. This rabbinic decree is rooted in the Torah’s<sup>1</sup> requirement that metal utensils

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<sup>1</sup> There is a debate whether the requirement to immerse metal utensils acquired from a non-Jew in a *mikva* is of Biblical or Rabbinic origin. The consensus is that it is of Biblical origin; see *Taz*, Y”D 120:16, *Biur HaGra*, Y”D 120:36, and *Aruch HaShulchan* Y”D 120:4. *Yalkut Yosef*, Y”D 120:1, states “it appears from Maran Rav Yosef Karo that he believes it is of Biblical origin.”

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once owned by a non-Jew must be *toveled* in a *mikva*. Here, the *gemara* compares glass to metal; like metal, glass can be repaired after it breaks.<sup>2</sup>

The Meiri in *Shabbos* 15b explains that these two passages in the *gemara* do not contradict each other. Both metal and pottery are viable analogs for glass, and the *gemara* chooses the analog which leads to a stringent ruling in each of these cases.

The third source is *Avos d'Rabbi Nassan* 41:6, which states that “glass utensils do not absorb or exude.” According to this statement, it would appear that glass cannot be placed into any of the *halachic* categories, since it is qualitatively different than earthenware and metal.

### **Rishonim**

Four categories of approaches emerge in the *rishonim* concerning our issue.<sup>3</sup> Tosafos,<sup>4</sup> Ra'avya<sup>5</sup> and Ran,<sup>6</sup> are among the *rishonim* who rule that glass utensils are smooth and nonporous.<sup>7</sup> Rashba states that glass does not absorb even if hot food or drink is placed in it.<sup>8</sup> These authorities base their ruling on empirical evidence (“*hachush me'id*”) and on the passage in *Avos d'Rabbi Nassan* which explicitly states that glass utensils do not absorb. Accordingly, these authorities rule that one is not required to *kasher* glass that came into contact with non-kosher food and that glass utensils may be used for both milk and meat, even for cooking.

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2 Rashi notes that the repairing process is identical, since both metal and glass are melted down and fashioned. Rav David Zvi Hoffman, *Teshuvos Melamed Leho'il* 2:49, suggests that this decree pertains exclusively to glass and not to all utensils which may be repaired by melting. This suggestion seems to have been adopted by the *halachic* community, as evidenced by the fact that most observant Jews do not immerse plastic utensils acquired from non-Jews in a *mikva*. See *Teshuvos Tzitz Eliezer*, 7:37 and 8:26, *Teshuvos Chelkas Yaakov* 2:163, and *Teshuvos Yabia Omer* 6, Y”D 68. Even Rav Yitzchak Yaakov Weisz, *Teshuvos Minchas Yitzchak* 3:76-78, who rules that plastic utensils must be immersed, takes Rav Hoffman’s suggestion into consideration and rules that one should not recite a blessing when immersing plastic utensils.

3 For a summary of these opinions, see Rav Gedalia Felder, *Yesodei Yeshurun* 6:166-168. Rav Felder and Rav Ovadia Yosef, *Teshuvos Yehave Da'as* 1:6, each write that the majority of *rishonim* subscribe to the view that glass utensils do not absorb.

4 *Avoda Zara* 33b s.v. *Koonya*.

5 Chapter 464.

6 *Pesachim* 9a in the pages of the Rif.

7 A precedent for this ruling from the *Bavli* is the statement in *Pesachim* 74b that “the heart is smooth and does not absorb.” We see that the *Bavli* believes that some objects do not absorb. See, however, Tosafos s.v. *Shani*.

8 *Teshuvos*, number 233.

The second category includes Rabbeinu Yechiel from Paris<sup>9</sup> and Semag<sup>10</sup> who adopt an entirely different approach. They rule that *Chazal* assigned glass utensils the status of earthenware utensils.<sup>11</sup> This comparison is asserted generally and is not limited to the issue of ritual impurity. Just as earthenware cannot be *kashered*,<sup>12</sup> so too, glass utensils cannot be *kashered*, and certainly may not be used for both meat and milk. In generalizing the comparison between glass and earthenware in *Shabbos* 15b, these authorities contradict the position of *Avos d'Rabbi Nassan* which defines glass as non-absorbent. One may resolve this problem in a number of ways. First, they might consider the passages in *Avos d'Rabbi Nassan* as *aggadic* and not *halachically* binding.<sup>13</sup> Second, perhaps *Avos d'Rabbi Nassan* simply states a property of glass but does not draw any *halachic* implications from it.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, this passage is part of a list of phenomena which are characterized in this chapter of *Avos d'Rabbi Nassan* in general terms, without reference of any *halachic* implications.

Alternatively, since glass does not absorb, the Torah ruled that glass cannot become impure and never requires *kashering*; however, *Chazal* declared that since its composition is similar to earthenware, it can become ritually impure and can never be *kashered*.<sup>15</sup>

The question remains, though, why these authorities chose to follow the *gemara's* comparison of glass to earthenware in *Shabbos* 15b over the comparison of glass to metal in *Avoda Zara* 75b. The answer might be that the comparison to earthenware is more compelling since it relates to the fundamental nature of glass – its composition – rather than to the more incidental issue of how it may be repaired.

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9 Cited in Mordechai, *Pesachim*, 3:574.

10 Cited in *Terumas HaDeshen*, no. 132.

11 *Shabbos* 15b.

12 *Pesachim* 30b based on *Vayikra* 6:2.

13 For a discussion of whether *aggadic* statements are *halachically* binding, see *Talmud Yerushalmi Peah* 2:4 and *Pischei Teshuva*, EH 119:5.

14 See *Biur HaGra* 451:2 and *Teshuvos Minchas Yitzchak* 1:86 for alternative explanations of *Avos d'Rabbi Nassan*.

15 According to the authorities even if one demonstrates that glass is nonporous, glass would still retain the *halachic* status of “earthenware” which may not be *kashered*. This is similar to the debate concerning porcelain which Rav Eliezer Waldenberg (*Teshuvos Tzitz Eliezer* 4:6) summarizes succinctly as follows: “Look at all the ink spilled in an attempt to rule that since porcelain is nonporous it need not be *kashered*. Nevertheless, the consensus of *halachic* authorities and the accepted practice among the observant community is to treat porcelain as earthenware which may not be *kashered*.” The fact that porcelain is nonporous is seen by most authorities as irrelevant.

The third set of opinions adopts the position of the *gemara* in *Avoda Zara* 75b and assigns glass to the *halachic* category of metal. Accordingly, these authorities consider glass to absorb food but also permit it to be *kashered*. Or Zarua<sup>16</sup> and Ritva in *Pesachim* 39b, citing the opinion of Ra'ah,<sup>17</sup> are among the proponents of this view. The Torah presents the laws of *kashering* and immersing utensils in the same verses;<sup>18</sup> therefore, it is reasonable to draw some parallels between the two processes. Just as *Chazal* assigned glass utensils the *halachic* status of metal in the context of immersing utensils, they did so in the context of *kashering* utensils as well.<sup>19</sup>

Rabbeinu Yona<sup>20</sup> presents a fourth approach. He concludes that it is uncertain whether glass utensils are assigned the status of earthenware or metal. Therefore, since the matter is in doubt, one must rule stringently that glass, like pottery, cannot be *kashered*.

### Shulchan Aruch - Pesach

Rav Yosef Karo<sup>21</sup> rules that a glass utensil does not absorb even if hot food was placed in it; his ruling follows the description of glass outlined in *Avos d'Rabbi Nassan*. The fact that this lenient ruling appears in his laws of Pesach is especially noteworthy in light of the overall tendency of *poskim* to rule more stringently regarding Pesach issues than in other *halachic* contexts. Pri Chadash, a premier Sefardic authority, echoes Rav Karo's view and writes, "it is correct, and this is our accepted practice." Sdei Chemed<sup>22</sup> and Rav Ovadia Yosef<sup>23</sup> write that the common practice among Sefardim is to follow Rav Karo's ruling even if hot food was placed in a glass utensil and even on Pesach.<sup>24</sup>

16 *Pesachim* no. 256

17 Ra'ah rules, however, that since glass may break when placed in boiling water, one may not *kasher* glass since it is too likely that one will not be able to *kasher* the glass properly. Ra'ah fears that one may believe that he has *kashered* glass properly when he in fact has not. Shaar HaTziyun (451:196) notes that most authorities have not adopted this position since one is required to *kasher* a utensil only at the temperature at which it absorbed forbidden food. Since one does not place glass in exceedingly hot water, one is not required to *kasher* glass in exceedingly hot water, especially with water that is so hot one would fear that the glass would break.

18 *Bamidbar* 31:22-23

19 For a discussion of the connection between the laws of *kashering* and immersion, see Ritva *Avoda Zara* 75b, *Teshuvos Chasam Sofer*, *Y"D* no. 2120, and Rav J. David Bleich, *Contemporary Halachic Problems*, II pp. 46-47.

20 *Issur V'Heter* 58:50.

21 *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* 451:26.

22 5:29

23 *Teshuvos Yehave Daas* 1:6.

24 Rav Shlomo Kluger (*Teshuvos Tuv Taam V'Daas* 3:2:25) and Maharam Shick (*Teshuvos Y"D* 141) write that

*Darchei Avoseinu*<sup>25</sup> confirms that this is the practice of Moroccan, Tunisian and Algerian Jews as well.<sup>26</sup>

Rama, on the other hand, comments on Rav Karo's ruling, "There are those who are strict and believe that glass utensils may not even be *kashered* and this is the custom in Germany and [Eastern European] lands." The Vilna Gaon,<sup>27</sup> Mishna Berura,<sup>28</sup> and Aruch HaShulchan<sup>29</sup> all explain that Rama is following the opinion of the *rishonim* who rule that glass utensils have the status of earthenware in the context of *kashering* as well as ritual impurity. Rav Ovadia Yosef,<sup>30</sup> though, adopts<sup>31</sup> the approach of Rav Yaakov Emden<sup>32</sup> who explains that Rama follows the opinion of Ra'ah cited by Ritva that in principle, glass, like metal, may be *kashered*, but in practice, we forbid it. Since glass is delicate, we may potentially not *kasher* it properly. For example, we may not heat the water sufficiently or we may not cover the entire utensil with boiling water. Ra'ah, therefore, rules that we may not *kasher* glass lest we believe we have *kashered* it properly when in fact we have not.

### **Rama - Prohibitions Other Than Passover**

Rama records his stringent ruling concerning glass (i.e. that it cannot be *kashered*) in the context of the laws of Pesach. Some authorities<sup>33</sup> believe that his ruling applies exclusively to Pesach, since we generally rule more stringently on Pesach-related issues as opposed to other areas of *halacha*. In fact, in the laws of non-kosher wine,

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Rav Karo's ruling does not apply if a glass utensil absorbed *hametz* via fire. Both *Sdei Chemed* and Rav Ovadia Yosef reject this interpretation of Rav Karo's ruling.

25 2:11

26 *Yalkut Yosef* (*Orach Chaim* 451:39) notes that some Sefardic communities outside of Israel (such as Iraqi Jews) adopt a strict approach in regard to usage of glass on Pesach. *Yalkut Yosef* rules that when they move to Israel, they may follow the ruling of Rav Karo, the *Mara D'asra* of *Eretz Yisrael*. One wonders what Rav Yosef would rule regarding Iraqi Jews who moved to Israel but later moved to North America, whether they should resume the strict practice their grandparents observed in Iraq.

27 *Biur HaGra* to *Orach Chaim* 451:50

28 451:154

29 451:50

30 *Teshuvos Yabia Omer* 4: *Y"D* 5:31 and *Teshuvos Yehave Da'as* 1:6.

31 Regarding Ashkenazic practice. Rav Yosef follows in the path of Rav Yehuda Leib Graubart (*Teshuvos Havalim Be'ni'imim* 4:6) in his ruling for Ashkenazim.

32 *Mor UKetzia* 451

33 *Knesses HaGedola*, *Y"D* 121; *Kehal Yehuda*, *Y"D* 121; and *Zera Emes* 2: *Y"D* 43.

Rav Karo<sup>34</sup> rules that glass utensils used for storing non-Jewish wine may be used to store kosher wine,<sup>35</sup> and Rama makes no comment. These authorities interpret Rama's silence as an indication of accord with the ruling that glass does not absorb in *halachic* contexts other than Pesach.

Magen Avraham<sup>36</sup> disagrees. He writes that Rama's silence in the context of the laws of wine should be understood as the exception, rather than the rule, since drinking non-Jewish wine is one of the less stringent Rabbinic prohibitions. Thus, in *kashrus* issues other than wine, Rama would rule that glass utensils cannot be *kashered*. This also appears to be the opinion of Taz.<sup>37</sup>

Pri Megadim<sup>38</sup> and Aruch HaShulchan<sup>39</sup> distinguish, in the context of the laws of Pesach, between utensils which have absorbed hot food and those which have absorbed only cold food. Biblically speaking, absorption takes place only with hot items; the food is then assumed to remain absorbed in the container for twenty-four hours. Pri Megadim and Aruch HaShulchan rule that one can be lenient regarding "cold absorption" in the case of glass, even regarding Pesach. According to this approach, one could argue Rama did not comment on Rav Karo's ruling in the laws of wine because Rav Karo is not speaking of glass that absorbed hot non-kosher food. However, Mishna Berura<sup>40</sup> rules regarding Pesach that one may not *kasher* glass even if it absorbed only cold non-kosher food, except for exceptional circumstances.<sup>41</sup>

### Contemporary *Poskim*

It is generally accepted that Sefardim follow Rav Karo's ruling that glass does not absorb even hot food and need not be *kashered*, even for Pesach. Similarly, it is generally accepted that Ashkenazim do not *kasher* glass for Pesach, except perhaps for extenuating circumstances. However, there is an active debate whether one may *kasher* glass utensils for use other than for Pesach. Rav Waldenberg cites Rav Yehuda Leib Zirelson who believes that the accepted practice is never to permit glass utensils

34 *Shulchan Aruch, Y"D* 135:8

35 After cleaning the glass utensils, of course. *Kashering*, though, is not needed.

36 451:49

37 *O"C* 87:2

38 *O"C, Mishbetzos* no. 30

39 *O"C* 451:50

40 451:156

41 Also see the distinction made by Aruch HaShulchan, *O"C* 451:50.

to be *kashered*.<sup>42</sup> This is also the opinion of Rav Shmuel Vosner.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, Rav Aharon Felder<sup>44</sup> cites Rav Moshe Feinstein, who accepts the opinion that glass utensils do not absorb even hot foods and need not be *kashered* for non-Pesach use.<sup>45</sup>

Many authorities, including Rav Waldenberg,<sup>46</sup> Rav Ovadia Yosef,<sup>47</sup> Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg,<sup>48</sup> and Rav Weisz,<sup>49</sup> adopt a compromise position regarding non-Pesach use. They rule that glass absorbs hot foods but may be *kashered*. This is not based on the *gemara*'s comparison of glass to metal. Rather, it is a compromise between the opinions which rule that glass may not be *kashered* and those who rule that glass need not be *kashered* because it does not absorb.

Rav Menachem Genack, Rabbinic Administrator of the Kashrus Division of the Orthodox Union, has stated that his organization inquired of Rav Moshe Feinstein whether one may wash glass utensils in a non-kosher dishwasher. Rav Feinstein ruled that one is permitted to do so.<sup>50</sup> When his organization posed this question to Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, however, Rav Soloveitchik ruled that it is forbidden to do so.<sup>51</sup>

Accordingly, it appears that the majority of the contemporary authorities rule for Ashkenazic Jews that glass considered to be porous even for non-Pesach use, but may be *kashered*. Rav Hershel Schachter rules that glass may be *kashered*; however, he requires it to be *kashered* three times.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, one should not use glass utensils for

42 Tzitz Eliezer 9:26.

43 Teshuvos Shevet HaLevi Y"D 1:43.

44 Oholei Yeshurun p. 87, n. 82.

45 A number of prominent *Rabbanim* have expressed their opinion to this author that common practice reflects this opinion (see Rav Shimon Eider, *Halachos of Pesach*, p. 139.)

46 Teshuvos Tzitz Eliezer 6:21.

47 Teshuvos Yechave Da'as 1:6 - regarding Ashkenazim.

48 Teshuvos Seridei Eish 2:36.

49 Teshuvos Minchas Yitzchak 1:86.

50 As was relayed to this author.

51 A similar question may be raised whether one may wash dairy glass utensils in a "meat" dishwasher and vice versa. The answer depends on how one resolves the issue of whether *halacha* regards glass as nonporous regarding non-Pesach issues.

52 Rav Schachter requires this to accommodate the opinion of the Baal Ha'Ittur in *Sha'ar Hechsher HaBasar* that earthenware may be rendered *kashered* by placing it in boiling water three times. Although the Baal Ha'Ittur's opinion is not accepted as normative *halachic* practice, it is used as a consideration in rendering *halachic* opinions; see Aruch HaShulchan, Y"D 121:26-27; Teshuvos MeLameid LeHo'il 2:52; and Teshuvos Igros Moshe 3:26-29. Accordingly, Rav Schachter uses this opinion of the Baal Ha'Ittur as a consideration ("*Senif Lehakeil*") to rule that one may *kasher* glass.



both meat and milk if either type of food is hot.<sup>53</sup>

### Corelle Dishes

The Star-K website, reflecting the views of Rav Moshe Heinemann, rules that corelle dishes have the status of glass. This opens the possibility for Sefardic Jews to use corelle dishes for both meat and milk. Some Sefardic rabbanim believe that even Sefardim must be concerned for the possibility that corelle dishes have the status of *klei cheres* (earthenware), and thus, should not be used for both milk and meat. It also means that *hag'ala* may not be performed on these dishes. On the other hand, since the issue remains uncertain, *tevilas keilim* without a *bracha* is required for such *keilim*.

Indeed, Rav Moshe Feinstein, cited by his talmid, Rav Aharon Felder, adopts the position that corelle is regarded as *safeik cheres* and *safeik zechuchis*, uncertain as to whether it is earthenware or glass.<sup>54</sup> Rav Moshe is also cited as ruling that a corelle dish may be rendered kosher in case of great need, if it has not been used for a minimum of twenty-four hours. In such a scenario, only a rabbinic prohibition is involved, and so in a case of great need, one may invoke the principle of *safeik d'rabbanan l'hakeil*.

### Ashkenazim at Sefardic Homes for Pesach and Year Round

Most Sefardic Jews follow the ruling of Rav Yosef Karo that glass utensils are non-absorbent. They follow this ruling even regarding Pesach. Rav Ovadia Yosef says this rule is true even regarding Pyrex and Duralex. Ashkenazic Jews, however, do not *kasher* glass utensils for Pesach. The consensus view permits Ashkenazic Jews to *kasher* glass utensils for non-Pesach use. Ashkenazim may *kasher* Pyrex and Duralex for non-Pesach use and may *kasher* Pyrex and Duralex for Pesach if done three times, in accordance with the ruling of Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank.

Sefardic Jews who host Ashkenazic Jews for Pesach should not serve Ashkenazic Jews on glass utensils that were previously used for hot *chometz*. Similarly, Sefardic Jews should not use Pyrex and Duralex for both meat and milk if they host Ashkenazic Jews in their home.

<sup>53</sup> The *halachic* standard for determining whether something is hot is *yad soledes bo*, the temperature which causes one's hand to be withdrawn spontaneously for fear of being burnt. Contemporary equivalents range from 110 degrees to 120 degrees Fahrenheit (see Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, *Teshuvos Minchas Shlomo* 91:8, and Rav Shimon Eider, *Halachos of Shabbos* p.243 n.19).

<sup>54</sup> *Ohalei Yeshurun* 1:87.



# Rosh Chodesh: Reclaiming our Freedom

ARIELLA AZIZI



**T**he Jews watched with awe and disbelief as their centuries of oppression approached final closure. With the past few months came a display of God's miraculous redemption of the Jewish people. Beginning with the plague of blood, God had sent nine plagues, each one incrementally upturning the lives of their Egyptian tormentors. Now, after the plague of darkness, bordering the final plague, our narrative places a pause on the action-packed verses. At this point, Moshe and Aharon, as commanded by God, shift gears as they instruct the Jewish people regarding the mitzva of Rosh Chodesh.

This scene seems to be misplaced. It is an interruption amidst the redemptive momentum that was taking place. The Jews were on their way to freedom, having experienced one plague after another, each undermining Egyptian authority. Therefore, it seems strange that the text breaks the flow of the plagues to inform us of a new mitzva. However, although seemingly unfitting, this scene was not simply a "commercial break" amidst the suspense of the time. Rather, there lies a deeper rational explanation for this seemingly untimely interruption in the text. Why would Hashem stop a nation of slaves in the midst of their redemptive process to command them in the mitzva of Rosh Chodesh? Why was there such urgency regarding this mitzva that it had to be delivered specifically while the Jewish people were still in Egypt?

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg cites Rav Chaim Cohen who shares a novel perspective with regards to the mitzva of Rosh Chodesh. Rav Chaim Cohen explains that the mitzva of Rosh Chodesh contains the essence of human freedom. In prescribing a celebration of a new cycle of time, God sought to alleviate the Jewish people of

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their slave mentality, instead, replacing it with the belief that they have the power to control the expenditure of their time. As the Sforno explains,

מכאן ואילך יהיו החדשים שלכם, לעשות בהם כרצונכם, אבל בימי השעבוד לא  
היו ימיכם שלכם, אבל היו לעבודת אחרים ורצונם, לפיכך ראשון הוא לכם לחדשי  
השנה. כי בו התחיל מציאותכם הבחירי.

*From now on these months will be yours to do with as you like. This is by way of contrast to the years when you were enslaved when you had no control over your time or timetable at all. While you were enslaved, your days, hours, minutes even, were always at the beck and call of your taskmasters. (Seforno Shmos 12:2. Text and translation from Sefaria.org)*

A slave is not only controlled by his master physically, but also mentally. Interestingly, the Hebrew word for Egypt, *Mitzrayim*, bears the same letters as the Hebrew word for straits, *meitzarim*. Thus, the term for our physical redemption from Egypt, *yetzias Mitzrayim*, may be re-read to reveal the deeper psychological redemption that took place, a *yetzia* from our personal *meitzarim*. Thus, in redeeming His nation, Hashem felt it necessary to stop in the midst of the redemptive process to explain the essence of freedom; the ability to transcend one's perceived limits and take control of one's life, physically and psychologically.

Rosh Chodesh empowers us to grab hold of our lives and rise above our nature. We are encouraged to be active writers rather than passive participants in the narratives of our lives. As we know, according to Newton's first law of physics, an object in motion will remain in motion unless interceded by another force. Rosh Chodesh is that force. Instead of passively falling into routine, we are called upon to stop, reflect, and seek a deeper reality. A reality that lies beyond the physical appearance of our lives. Rav Chaim Cohen, citing the Sfas Emes, articulates this idea in stating,

עיקר המשמעות העמוקה של ראש חודש היא ללמד אותנו שעם ישראל יכול לצאת  
מגבולות העולם, ולהתחדש.

*The essential meaning of Rosh Chodesh teaches us that the Jewish people have the ability to step out from nature's limits and to renew themselves.*

As Jews, we are taught that every day has potential for growth, for the opportunity to surpass our limitations. This idea is further hinted to by the verse instructing our observance of Rosh Chodesh. As Rav Chaim Cohen elaborates, the pasuk of "*Hachodesh Hazeh Lachem*" may also be read "*Hachidush Hazeh Lachem*." Namely, this seemingly mundane celebration of the new month is not just to mark

time. Rather, we have embedded in our calendars a monthly call for a spiritual reawakening, a time of renewal. This is our checkpoint, so to speak, where we assess how we have been living our lives. Do we feel bound by our life circumstances? Do we sacrifice our infinite potential for the limitation of comfort? Can we conceive the idea of change and development in our personal lives? If not, how can we break free from the suffocating routine that we have constructed for ourselves?

To resolve these questions, we will turn to a perplexing statement of the *Koheles Rabba*. The *midrash* in 1:2 states that when one grows old, he is likened to a monkey. What occurs in old age that causes one to be likened to a monkey?

To answer this question, we must note that an “old” person is not characterized by age, but rather by attitude. It is possible to be young despite being old in years and, vice versa as well. The basic characterization of someone who is “old” in attitude is the inability to function on a setting other than autopilot. Everyone operates on autopilot sometimes, and this is good, for Hashem created us with this capacity for a constructive purpose. However, when one comes to lose manual control, living his entire life on autopilot, he becomes a poseur, a slave to an image. For at this point, such a person has forfeited the capacity of autonomous decision, instead electing to be like the monkey who merely mimics others. Thus, the “old” person who we speak of is he who imitates who he was yesterday, falling into decisions submissively without analyzing and contemplating his decisions. Such a situation is ultimately destructive, for without constant renewal and reevaluation, one lives a stale life, a robotic reality of lost potential and neglected free will. True freedom, as promoted by Rosh Chodesh, is the ability to remain forever young. And not in a physical sense. Keep your wrinkles and gray hairs as long as you don’t lose what really matters: your choice. Redeem yourself from the mire of the image you preserve and instead, liberate yourself to choose anew every day.<sup>1</sup>

If we are to claim to be created in the image of God, we must act accordingly. For just as God renews and revives creation every day, so must we mirror His actions, awakening ourselves to renew our attitudes, to renew our behavior, and to re-assess our reality. In this way, we completely transform every day to the extent that, although we may be doing the same physical actions every day, we are not living the same 365 days a year. For, in this reality of growth and renewal, every day contains a unique opportunity that has never before existed and can never be replicated thereafter. Every day becomes transformed as we recreate ourselves daily. The ‘I’ who existed

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<sup>1</sup> Ideas derived from a speech by Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson.

yesterday does not exist in an identical form today. Through the acknowledgment of the tremendous opportunity for incredible growth and development that Rosh Chodesh offers, we can truly rise above and access our highest potential selves.

Beyond the call to rise above and recreate our individual selves, the lessons of Rosh Chodesh also extend to our need to assess and adjust our service of Hashem. The value of renewal is apparent in *Sefer Devarim*, where the most commonly used word is '*hayom*,' today. This is indicative of the call for every Jew to revitalize their service of Hashem. We must awaken every morning and view ourselves as if the *mitzvos* were bestowed upon us today. This fresh perspective enlivens us to relate to God with a newfound passion and depth as we express our deepest enthusiasm for the *mitzvos*.

Another unique factor regarding Rosh Chodesh is its reference to the concept of *emuna*. It would seem appropriate for the celebration of the moon to occur when the moon can be appreciated to its greatest degree in its complete luminescence. However, this is not so. Instead, we celebrate Rosh Chodesh when the moon appears to be missing. This reality bears symbolic weight to the idea of *emuna*, where we rejoice even when our desired *yeshua* is not clearly apparent. We know that Hashem is with us even when we cannot see Him. Regardless of our present circumstances, we trust that Hashem is caring for us, that there is no one other than Him who can serve to our benefit or detriment. With this awareness, we are released from the pervasive anxieties that surround us as we stand in optimistic anticipation for the future. By celebrating the new moon, we stand witness to the fact that Hashem has our best interests in mind and that our salvation is impending, even if we cannot physically see it.

In sharing what true freedom looks like, it was imperative that Moshe and Aharon expressed these ideas while the Jewish people were still technically enslaved, so that they would be able to remember their state of bondage and contrast it with their freedom. For as we know, one can only know light when he has known darkness. The Pesach *haggada* states

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים.

In every generation, and as the Alter Rebbe adds, *every day*, one must view himself as if he has personally left Egypt. We must not feel shackled by who we were yesterday, but rather, we must allow every waking moment to offer us the opportunity of redevelopment and growth. Thus it behooves those of us who have seen both the dark and the light, reactive living as contrasted by proactive living, to grab hold of our lives and continually reassess who we are and where we are headed.

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# Pesach, Tisha B'av and *Shema*

HENRY PRAW



**T**he entire history of the Jews is a rollercoaster of ups and downs, we fall but we always get back up. Our faith is tested, some falter, but as a nation we persevere. We survive because we know that Hashem loves us and that even the bad that befalls us is for our good. But how do we inculcate that into each generation? How does an entire nation know that both the good and bad that Hashem does to us, as individuals and as a nation, are all part of His plan?

The *gemara* in *Nedarim* (32a) says that the Jews went down to Egypt because Avraham Avinu sinned when Hashem promised him the land of Israel for his offspring, and he turned to God and asked “how will I know?” *Chazal* view this lack of faith as the cause of the Egyptian bondage. The Ba'al Haturim specifically finds the allusion to the four hundred years of slavery in the words *bama eida*.

Tisha B'av was also caused by a lack of faith in Hashem. The *gemara* in *Taanis* (29b) says as it relates to *Bnei Yisrael* weeping when they heard the reports from the *meraglim*: “Rabba said that Rabbi Yochanan said: That night was the night of the Ninth of Av. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them: You wept needlessly that night, and I will therefore establish for you a true tragedy over which there will be weeping in future generations.”

On Pesach we read in the *haggada*:

שלא אחד בלבד עמד עלינו ללותנו, אלא שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו ללותנו,  
והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מידם.

*It is not [only] one [person or nation] that has stood [against] us to destroy us, but rather in each generation, they stand [against] us to destroy us, but the Holy One, blessed be He, rescues us from their hand.*

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On Pesach night we don't just talk about the bondage and slavery from Egypt, we express the reality that in every generation we are persecuted and in every generation Hashem saves us. The *halacha* is that we are supposed to view ourselves as if we ourselves went out of Egypt, because just as they were saved, we, even in our generation, should be aware that we are constantly being saved. We are supposed to learn and contemplate our constant redemption.

On Tisha B'av we also do not just recall an event that happened to us centuries ago. *Chazal* tell us that in every generation the *Beis Hamikdash* is not rebuilt, it is as if it was destroyed in that generation. The tenor of the day is one of contemplation, not just of historical losses, but of our current situation.

Pesach is one of the three *regalim*, holidays, when we refrain from work on the first and last day (two days outside of Israel) and the middle days are *moadim*, appointed days, where work is also limited.

Tisha B'av is also called a *mo'ed*, as we see from the pasuk

קרא עלי מועד לשבר בחורי.

*He summoned a mo'ed (a set time) to crush my young men (me).* (Eicha 1:15)

Tisha B'av's categorization as a *mo'ed* is established in *halacha*. The *Shulchan Aruch* (O"C 559:4) rules that based on this, Tachanun is not recited on Tish B'Av.

On Pesach we don't eat *chometz*, which is anything that contains yeast. *Chazal* (*Brachos* 17a) teach us that yeast (*se'or*) is symbolic of the *yetzer hara* that incites us to not follow Hashem. By removing this from our diets we elevate ourselves to try to remove the *yetzer* that induces us to rebel against Hashem.

On Tisha B'av we give up eating to lessen our animalistic spirit (*yetzer hara*) in order to allow our true nature to come out.

On Pesach we have a delightful meal full of multiple courses and curious rituals to excite us. We invite guests, including Eliyahu, to our table.

On Tisha B'av we prepare for the fast with a meal of plain bread and ashes. We sit in silence; we don't even greet our friends.

On Pesach we celebrate the freedom that Hashem gave us when He took us out of Egypt by acting like free people, such as reclining when we eat.

On Tisha B'av we sit on the floor, to acknowledge our loss and humble ourselves.

These two holidays serve to sear into our collective memory through rituals and discussion our collective joy of being close to our Creator, and the sadness and tragedy of being removed from Him. Each generation of Jews for millennia have

observed these holidays and taught these lessons to our children. Pesach and Tisha B'av are two sides of the same lesson, that Hashem rules the world. He will save us when we need saving, and punish us, not out of anger but out of love, so that we can learn and emerge stronger.

There is a third element in ensuring the transmission of these ideas from generation to generation, and that is in the daily recitation of the *Shema* prayer.

שמע ישראל ה' אלוהינו ה' אחד.

This very statement contains within it the two aspects of Hashem, "*Adnus*" is the merciful aspects of Hashem, and *Elokim* is the strict attributes of justice. Every day we are supposed to train ourselves in the knowledge that good comes from following what Hashem wants for us, and disaster from straying.

והיה אם שמע תשמעו אל מצותי אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם היום לאהבה את ה' אלקיכם ולעבדו בכל לבבכם ובכל נפשכם. ונתתי מטר ארצכם בעתו יורה ומלקוש ואספת דגנך ותירשך ויצהרך. ונתתי עשב בשדך לבהמתך ואכלת ושבעת. השמרו לכם פן יפתה לבבכם וסרתם ועבדתם אלקים אחרים והשתחוויתם להם. וחרה אף ה' בכם ועצר את השמים ולא יהיה מטר והאדמה לא תתן את יבולה ואבדתם מהרה מעל הארץ הטבה אשר ה' נתן לכם.

*If, then, you obey the commandments that I enjoin upon you this day, loving your God and serving [God] with all your heart and soul, I will grant the rain for your land in season, the early rain and the late. You shall gather in your new grain and wine and oil, I will also provide grass in the fields for your cattle--and thus you shall eat your fill. Take care not to be lured away to serve other gods and bow to them. For God's anger will flare up against you, shutting up the skies so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its produce; and you will soon perish from the good land that God is assigning to you.*

Chazal tell us that the path of learning is not the same for each person.

חנוך לנער על פי דרכו.

*Teach each child according to his needs.* (Mishlei 22:6)

Modern scientific studies have shown that experiential and inquiry based learning can dramatically increase retention. There are definitely those that can read a passage and make it part of who they are, they can read *Shema* on a daily basis and make it part of them. But we also need experiences to teach us. Some people only really retain what they learn from doing. And even among those who learn from their



experiences, there are those who are moved by positive experiences, while others learn most from harsh realities. Pesach is our yearly positive reinforcement that Hashem is with us, that when we are following the correct *derech*, *bracha* will come. Tisha B'av is the reminder of what happens when we don't follow, when we don't have *emuna*, and the Shema is the daily reminder of these truths.

In Parshas Yisro, when introducing the Torah, it says:

כה תאמר לבית יעקב ותגיד לבני ישראל.

*Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel.*

(Shemos 19:3)

The Ohr Hachaim explains that while there is only one Torah, it had to be expressed in two ways so that it could be understood. It needed the soft tone of the commandments for those who come to Hashem through love, and it needed the harsh words for those who come to Hashem through fear. He adds that both are needed because if we only come to Hashem with love, we will come to sin because we will make light of the commandments; if we only come with fear we will never see the beauty or feel the love that is reflected back. This is the lesson of Pesach, where we were redeemed and saved by *Avinu She'bashamayim* (our Father in Heaven) and the lesson of Tisha B'av, when the *Melech* (the King) punished his subjects.

Our tradition tells us that while Pesach celebrates leaving *Mitzrayim*, the *yeshua* from our current *galus* will come on Tisha B'av, as the *Mashiach* will be born on that day. The seeds of our *geula* are intertwined in understanding the lessons of both holidays. *Chazal* knew this, so they set the calendar so that Pesach and Tisha B'av always fall on the same day of the week.

My father loved Pesach. When we all sat together around the seder table you could feel the *naches* he got from having generations of his descendants sitting together learning the lessons of the seder together. My father merited to have a family dedicated to Torah and Hashem because he understood the lessons of both Pesach and Tisha B'av. My father was born in Nazi Germany, during the rise of Hitler (*yemach shemo*) but he had his own personal *yeshua* when his family was able to escape and come to America. Every Pesach he would relate the story of their personal salvation from the Nazis, and remind us that while in every generation they rise up against us, Hashem is always there ushering in the next chapter in the story of the Jews. A man of faith believes that it is always for the good. Tisha B'av may be a sad day, but my father always saw it as the day of great potential, the day the *Mashiach* could be born, and also his birthday, as my father was born on the 25th of July 1928, Tisha B'av.



# Poppy's Stories

LOUIS MICHELSON



The Pesach Seder is not just about the Exodus from Egypt, it is about telling the story of our Exodus from Egypt. In fact, story-telling is such an important part of the seder, that the *haggada* is packed with laws about how to tell the story. The first law begins with “Had the Almighty not redeemed our forefathers from Egypt,” that in every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he personally left Egypt. We are to personally view ourselves as slaves, not just our forefathers.

The second law is expressed in “Even if we were all wise, all of us understanding, all of us knowing the Torah, it is a mitzva to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt.” This is true even if we already know the details.

The third law is, “Everyone who discusses the Exodus from Egypt at length is praiseworthy.” This commandment has no limits. For example, the story about Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, and the sages in Bnei Brak illustrates that their *sippur Yezias Mitzrayim* lasted all night long until their students came and told them: “Our masters! The time has come for reciting the morning *Shema!*”

The fourth law, “the Torah addressed itself to four sons: one who is wise, one who is wicked, one who is simple, and one who does not know how to ask.” *Sippur Yezias Mitzrayim* needs to be tailored to the understanding of each child. Finally, the mitzva of *sippur* must be when the matza and bitter herbs are sitting before us.

Our tradition focuses so strongly on story-telling, because telling the story conveys information to the listeners and helps connect them with our roots, our heritage.

Sam Praw *a”h*, also known as Poppy in our family, would tell stories from his childhood in Essen, Germany. These stories became very familiar to everyone in the family because they were told by Poppy many times. Even though one of the stories began during Succos, it continued and lead to Poppy’s family’s exodus from Germany in 1939. These three stories recount events that lead up to the narrow and miraculous escape from Germany.

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The first story started on a night of chol-hamoed Succos in Essen, Germany. The children of the synagogue would gather in the *sukka*. This included Poppy, who was 11 years old, and his younger sister Freida Praw Newman, who was 9. The *sukka* was full of children eagerly surrounding the rabbi of their shul who would ask questions to the children. A correct answer was rewarded with candies. Everyone looked forward to this *sukka* event with the rabbi.

While this fun event was happening, rocks began to fall through the *s'chach* into the *sukka*. The Nazi roughnecks knew that Jews were gathering in the *sukka* in the evening so they threw rocks into the *sukka* to disrupt the event and hurt Jews. This rock-throwing had never happened before. The rabbi calmly told the children to go home. The rabbi felt that it was best for the children to go home to be safe.

No one knew what this meant. They knew that the Nazis were making trouble. But afterwards, there was calm. In hindsight, the rocks falling into the *sukka* was a warning of what was about to happen.

The second story started a little more than a month later on November 9, 1939. That night was *Kristallnacht*, or night of the broken glass. It was a pogrom against Jews in Germany, including against the Jews in Essen.

That night, the Nazis broke down the door of the Praw home. Poppy and Frieda knew what to do. They ran and hid in a large toy chest. The Nazis beat Poppy's father ("Pa") on the head with an iron bar and he was injured with a severe concussion. Poppy explained that because Jews could not go to the hospitals, Pa had to be seen by a doctor at the home of a friend who was an English teacher. When Ma took Pa to the doctor, Poppy and Frieda were sent temporarily to the home of another Jewish family who were not hurt during *Kristallnacht*.

Poppy's third story explains the miracle of securing visas to leave Germany. Roughly a year earlier, Pa had visited the United States embassy to obtain a visa. At that time only one visa was offered to Pa when he completed the application. However, Pa's application for the visa was never completed. After *Kristallnacht*, President Roosevelt announced that there were to be 10,000 additional visas given to Jewish people who wanted to leave Germany and emigrate to the United States.

Poppy's mother, Ma, travelled by a train from Essen to Stuttgart, where the American embassy was located. There was a big mob of Jewish people trying to enter the embassy. Ma saw the embassy official, who had earlier offered one visa to Pa, about to enter the embassy. Ma immediately approached the embassy official and held onto his shoulder and would not let go. The official recognized Ma and he allowed her to follow him into the American embassy.

Once inside, the official was sympathetic to Ma's situation and asked her how many visas she needed. Ma told him that she needed four, for Pa, Ma, Poppy and Frieda. Ma asked for visas to be handed to her. The official told her that the proper protocol required that the visas to be delivered by mail to her home. The visas were sent to their home address. The problem was that their home was destroyed and they did not live there anymore and the Nazis were watching who entered the apartment. The solution was that Ma paid a neighbor to retrieve their mail. Once they received the visas, this marked the next stage of their departure from Germany.

The primary reason that Poppy told the story was to make the story believable and understandable. Poppy generally was not an overly emotional person. He would stand at the head of the table and just start telling the story. The entire family would gather for the second seder at Poppy and Grama's table, including his sister Frieda and her husband Kivie Newman. Each year that he would tell the story, the family got a little bigger, with new sons-in-law, daughters-in-law and grandchildren, and eventually great-grandchildren.

Poppy would make a point of mentioning that their family that left Germany was only four people. He would express his gratitude that he was now telling his stories not only to children, but also to grandchildren and great-grandchildren. His personal story of exodus from Germany mirrored the Exodus from Egypt of our forefathers. Viewing ourselves as leaving Egypt was much more credible and believable when Poppy recounted his experiences in leaving Essen. We knew his stories and it was an essential part of who he was and who we are today.

Poppy repeated his stories each year. In the *haggada* it states that "For not one alone has risen to destroy us, but in every generation they rise against us to destroy us; and the Holy One, blessed be He, saves us from their hand!" He wanted us to know that we may lead comfortable lives, but he was telling us by his story that this statement was personally true. In his generation the evil Nazis rose to destroy the Jewish people and the Holy One, blessed be He, saved Pa, Ma, Poppy and Frieda from their hand.

He would continue and express his appreciation for the saving in his generation. He would speak with emotion that there were only four in the family when they left Germany. And then he would then smile and say how wonderful to have a Pesach seder with everyone who was with him; from his sister and her family, to his children and their families and also to the in-laws and their extended families. May his memory continue to be a blessing for all of us.



# Telling Stories: *B'Chol Dor Va'Dor*

MIMI AMSALEM AND RENINA LIFSHITZ



**T**elling a captivating story takes talent and a genuine understanding of the human condition. When a story is told with a flourishing description and a clear picture of the emotional state of the reader, it tends to burrow itself deep into the subconscious of the listener, never to be forgotten. We participate in the Pesach *seder* year after year with the same *haggada* and the same story, but does it penetrate our subconscious? When we read the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, do we each feel as though we were a broken, hopeless slave in Egypt only to be miraculously redeemed by the Hand of Hashem? As beautiful as the words and traditions of the *haggada* are, it can be quite challenging to honestly say that we each feel the freedom by the time we reach *chad gadya*. And yet, we are told in the *haggada*:

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים.

*In each generation we must look at ourselves as though we personally had been redeemed from Egypt.*

How are we obligated to fulfill the mitzva of feeling as though we were taken out of Egypt? How can we be commanded to feel something we didn't experience in our lifetime?

And this *pasuk* poses another question to ponder: why me? One needs to feel as though they were personally taken out of Egypt. I could perhaps understand why *Klal Yisrael* needs to feel redeemed as a people, but what is it about the individual that is so important to the experience of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*?

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch begins to tackle our questions in his commentary

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*We would like to thank Rebbetzin Revah for helping us collect sources for this article.*

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on the first of the Ten Commandments.<sup>1</sup> The first of the Ten Commandments is “I am Hashem, Your God, Who took you out of Egypt out of the land of slavery.” It is pretty remarkable that the very first commandment that we are given as a nation is to believe in Hashem because He took us out of Egypt. Why is our redemption from Egypt used as reference for believing in Hashem? Why doesn’t the commandment read: “I am Hashem, Your God, who created the world”? Rav Hirsch explains that the Exodus taught us that what happens to the Jewish people is all by the hand of Hashem; that He is directly involved in our daily lives. The personal connection is what this statement of Jewish faith means to stress. Hashem took me, the individual, out of Egypt, and is still involved in every inch of my daily existence.

Rav Yehuda HaLevi, in the *Kuzari*, further expounds upon this concept. Just as every nation has its traditions, so too we were born Jewish and therefore we have our own traditions. The basis of our religion is based on the *mesora* of the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, but what differentiates our *mesora* from other religions is the basis of the chain of communication. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link and if the very first link in the chain is weak, then the rest of the chain is not very stable. Unlike other religions, whose first link of their “*mesora*” begins with the revelation of one individual, our entire nation witnessed the *Kriyas Yam Suf* and *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

The very first link in our chain is irrefutable and substantially noted as a moment of strength in numbers. The chain that follows, however, shows the power of the one. Our *mesora* has been able to maintain its strength throughout the turbulent history of the Jewish people because each individual is tasked with passing down the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, of continuing to connect each link of the chain.

The Torah says:

למען תספר באזני בןך ובן בןך.

*Tell it to the ears of your children and grandchildren.*

Some *mefarshim* ask on this *pasuk*, if the father is telling his son, why does the grandfather need to tell the grandchild? Hasn’t the father taken care of it? Additionally, why does it specifically mention that the story be told in the ears of the children? The answer is that the grandfather does not need to tell the grandchild anything. The grandfather needs to tell his son in a way that the son will be compelled to tell it over to the grandson, his offspring. The father must be the link in the chain between the grandfather and grandson. If the father is not interested in giving it over to his child,

<sup>1</sup> As heard in Rav Zev Leff’s shiur “Fulfilling *B’Chol Dor Vador*.”

then the grandfather has failed. Parents must find a way to tell the story of our *mesora* in a way that is fit for the child, so that the child will grow up and want to share the beauty with his children. In order to adequately fulfill the mitzva, real emotion and feeling needs to be interlaced in the *mesora* so that it is no longer simply a story, but a link in the chain of Jewish continuity.

Each member of the Jewish family has a unique position and responsibility to uphold within this chain. R'Hirsch makes a beautiful observation in the beginning of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* regarding the *korban pesach*. In *parshas Bo*, the word “*bayis*” is repeated over and over again in reference to the preparation of the *korban pesach* as well as the miracle of Hashem passing over the homes of the Jewish people and striking down the Egyptians. Of course we know that this miracle is the namesake of our holiday (Pesach), and yet aside from that, it is noteworthy to mention the homes. The transformation of the Jewish people from *avdei* Pharaoh to *avdei* Hashem started in each family's individual home. Hashem's first priority was establishing Jewish homes, because simply creating a state is not enough. In order to properly imbue each member of *Klal Yisrael* with a taste and love of Judaism, it has to stem from the home. The *seder* table provides this same idea. We don't commemorate the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* with a parade or show of pageantry, but rather we sit around a table with family members and tell over the story of the formation of our nation. Each member of the family has a role to play and a story to tell and uphold, and Hashem cares and loves each member deeply and individually.

Our grandfather, Sam Praw ז"ל, known as Poppy to his grandchildren, was truly one who appreciated the individual. Poppy loved people. Whether he was speaking with his rabbi about the *drasha*, chatting with a salesperson in Home Depot, or having a deep conversation with one of his many children and grandchildren, Poppy was more than happy to listen and learn. No one's story was uninteresting to our grandfather, but he was not just a passive participant. Poppy was an avid reader and consumer of news, culture and Torah, and he had a remarkable way of connecting what he learned and sharing it with others. Our grandfather always had an article for me to read that regarded whatever our interests were at that moment, be it an American Girl Doll magazine at age nine or a Wall Street Journal article in our twenties. The manner in which he shared was always one of curiosity and care; a sincere desire to bridge the gap between himself and his children and grandchildren. He showed his children and grandchildren the manner in which to create links in the chain of Jewish continuity: with sincerity. Poppy was not soft spoken; he had opinions and was lively and fun to be around. He cultivated an open and rich cultural environment in his

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home that welcomed discussion of different perspectives and ideas. It is very fitting to connect my grandfather with Pesach because the Pesach *seder* was an integral holiday in the PRAW family legacy. It was of the utmost importance to Poppy that he hosted a *seder* every year in his home with his children and grandchildren, no matter how many extensions the table warranted. Sitting at the table each year, he would lead us by example at the head of the table and encourage every member of the family to be an active participant by going around and having each member of the family read a portion from the *haggada* and share *divrei Torah*. Neither age nor fluency in the language was relevant; everyone took a turn and had an opportunity to share their voice. It was Poppy's hope that each member of our family left the *seder* feeling empowered and valued. This is the effect of actively linking the chain. Poppy has left a lasting impression on each member of our family that we hold onto, on Pesach as well as every day in the year. We as individuals have a voice, but one that must be shared with others with compassion and curiosity.

The feeling of redemption is a bridge between slavery and freedom. As members of *Klal Yisrael*, we are obligated to see how important and valuable we are as individuals and use our time on earth to feel the freedom Hashem has given us by being part of *Klal Yisrael*. We are obligated to feel grateful for the blessings we are given and take an active role in our lives to positively link the chain of Jewish *mesora*. May we all merit to take these ideas to heart and succeed in internalizing the message of *b'chol dor va'dor*.



# V'Higadeta L'Vincha: Sustaining Jewish Continuity

RUTHIE KELLERMAN



**M**y grandmother was not one to mince words. “I am not afraid to die”, she announced to me one day shortly before she was taken from this world, after enduring a long illness. “If you look at all my peers, I am the only one that can eat in all of my grandchildren’s homes... I didn’t break the chain... not me”.

With this pronouncement, Sara Praw z”l, my paternal grandmother, stated clearly the mission statement of her life: the sacred responsibility to be a strong link in the eternal chain of Jewish continuity and Torah observance.

As a survivor of Nazi terror, enduring the death of multiple beloved family members and friends, it was of vital importance to her to perpetuate the *mesora*, and to see to it that her children and grandchildren followed in her path.

We are about to celebrate the *chag* of Pesach, the holiday when we commemorate our Exodus from Egypt and the forging of an eternal bond with our God who redeemed us. One of the hallmarks of this holiday is the Pesach *seder*, where we gather as a family, year after year, to retell the story of our shared history.

והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא.

*And you shall tell your son on that day.* (Shemos 13:8)

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, in his commentary on the *haggada*, discusses God’s role in establishing the primacy of the Jewish home.

First, by commanding us on *Shabbos HaGadol*, stating:

דברו אל כל עדת ישראל לאמר בעשר לחדש הזה ויקחו להם איש שיהיה לבית אבית.  
שהיה לבית.

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Ruthie Kellerman is daughter of Sam Praw z”l and is a mother and grandmother of beloved members of Adas Torah.

*Speak to the entire assembly of Israel, saying; On the tenth of this month they shall take for themselves, each man, a lamb for a father's house, a lamb/kid for each household. (Shemos 12:3)*

Each head of household took a lamb into his private domain. With this act, every Jew began to recognize himself as a free man, thus forging a link in a family chain stretching back to the past, and setting the roadmap for the future of the family unit. For the first time, each member of *Bnei Yisrael* was called upon to count himself, and each soul to whom he was connected, as he formed the beginnings of a united and free family.

Then, through the commandment:

ולקחו מן-הדם ונתנו על שתי המזוזות ועל המשקוף על הבתים אשר יאכלו אתו בהם.  
*They shall take some of its blood and place it on the two doorposts and on the lintel upon the houses where they will eat it. (Shemos 12:7)*

When we took the blood from the paschal lamb and put it on the two doorposts and lintel, we forever sanctified the “Jewish home” as the foundation upon which we formed ourselves into a nation. Our everlasting Torah values, those of “freedom, justice, compassion, family ties, communal and national spirit, dedication, trust and obedience,” have been and continue to be values planted and cultivated in the soil of the Jewish family home. The *kedusha* bestowed upon the home, via the blood of the *korban pesach*, has remained with us throughout our long history and is the true source of our immortality.

And so, it is with great significance that just as we came together as a family to eat the *korban pesach*, we gather at the *seder* together as a family, year after year, to retell the same story. It is within the context of the home that our legacy is transmitted to the next generation.

Every family member is counted, and every child is made to feel important, significant and essential to our story. Each child is encouraged to participate, ask questions and be included. Every child is a vital link.

Grandparents, parents and children (and for the fortunate ones, great-grandparents) all sitting together, giving thanks to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* for delivering all of us from bondage into freedom. Each generation forges a bond with those who came before and with those who are destined to become the future, each retelling the same narrative with the same vigor and hope for ultimate salvation.

How powerful is the experience of hearing first hand from your father, and

your father's father, the stories of their trials, tribulations and enduring faith! At the *seder* table as we sit together, we retell all, sugarcoating nothing about the past. Our children are exposed to all the bitterness, the *marror*, experienced by our forefathers. They are told of all the tears that have been shed and the blood that has been spilled.

שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותנו.

*In every single generation they rise up against us to destroy us.*

And yet we are here, we have survived and succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. We have returned to our Land, *Artzeinu Hakedosha*, marveling as she gives forth sweet fruit after lying fallow for more than two thousand years. We have been privileged to witness a resurgence of Torah study and Torah observance unparalleled for millennia.

והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מידם.

*And the Holy One, blessed be He, delivers us from their hand.*

Gathered around the table, we share our history, infusing our children and grandchildren with the power and strength of our *emuna*. With God's help, we pray that they continue on the path that has been so lovingly laid out before them, as they strive to ultimately reach our promised destiny.

ונודה לך שיר חדש על גאולתנו ועל פדות נפשנו.

*And we shall thank You with a new song for our redemption and for the deliverance of our souls.*

לשנה הבאה בירושלים.

*Next year may we be in Yerushalyim!*

Dedicated in remembrance of my dear father, Sam Praw z"l.

May the memory of his smile, good cheer, and perennial optimism, coupled with his great love for the Jewish people, and the Land of Israel, reverberate and thrive in the hearts of his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



# Writing Your Own Story at the Seder

STEVIE HERBST



I have always marveled at what a Pesach *seder* does. Families young and old gather from near and far to retell our “origin story.” Children’s hands shoot up like rocket ships at the table to share what they’ve learned, and those fortunate enough to have grandparents and great-grandparents hear stories of a not-so-distant past, with often hauntingly similar themes. Every year, whether it’s in the middle of an esoteric discussion about the nature of Hashem or smiling in ecstasy from some other-worldly brisket, I find a moment when I say to myself, “this is exactly what Hashem intended.” For at least one night, Jews from all walks of life are connected.

But how did we get here?

“Israel is waste, bare of seed,” reads an inscription attributed by archeologists to the Ancient Egyptian King Merneptah on a granite stele erected by King Amenhotep III. I imagine that the irony is not lost on any of us, given how powerful the ancient Egyptians remain today.

Mark Twain’s “Concerning The Jews,” from *Harper’s Magazine*, March, 1898, captures the question of Jewish resilience more eloquently than I ever could state:

*The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no*

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*infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?*

To answer Mr. Twain, I think we can look to a central tenet of Pesach: *V'higadeta*. The word “*haggada*,” is based on the Torah’s command:

והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים.  
*And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, Because of this, the Lord did [this] for me when I went out of Egypt.”* (Shemos 13:8).

There are two separate *mitzvos* when it comes to remembering *Yetzias Mitzrayim*: remembering (*zechira*) and telling (*sippur*). We will deal with the *sippur*.

Rambam (*Sefer HaMitzvos Aseh* #157, *Hilchos Chometz U'Matza* 7) lists *sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* as its own commandment. In the *Sefer HaMitzvos*, he claims that this mitzva is based on the *pasuk* of “And you shall tell it to your sons (*V'higadeta l'vincha*) on that day” (*Shemos* 13:8), while in the *Yad HaChazaka* he lists both that verse and the verse of “Remember (*zachor*) the day that you left Egypt.” (*Shemos* 13:3).

The nature of the mitzva of *sippur* is to make it contemporary, to focus on how we take the values and ideals of our tradition and history and project them into the way we conduct ourselves today and tomorrow. As part of the *haggada* story, the so-called “*Rasha*” the wicked son, says “*Ma ha'avoda hazos lachem*.” The paradox of the language contrasting the *Rasha*’s language of “*lachem*” to the Torah’s language of “*li*” is central to Pesach theme of *V'higadeta*.

A Pesach *seder* that focuses on the “*li*” helps give context to the story and connects us all to Hashem, our communal history, and our family. The *seder*, with its customs designed to pique the curiosity of children, is a lesson in intergenerational communication. The paragon of pedagogical practice is where we sing, question, talk, eat and drink; and, most of all, we move fluidly from the past to the present to the future all in one discussion. The Torah is laying out the blueprints for building a nation that will last beyond the centuries of previous empires and is sharing with the world one of our not so subtle secrets, education.

The *mishna* in *Pesachim* 116a states that a son should ask the four questions of the *Ma Nishtana*. If he is not wise enough yet, “the father should teach him” how to ask the four questions. The *gemara* cites a *beraisa* which says that the son should ask, and if he is not yet capable, then the wife should ask. If one is not married, then he should ask the four questions to himself. The *mishna* and *beraisa* seem to contradict

each other. The *mishna* says that if the son is unable to ask, then the father should teach him. The *beraisa*, though, says that if the son is unable to ask, then the wife or the father himself asks. Why does the *beraisa* not say that the father should try to teach his son how to ask, as the *mishna* says?

The Hagahos Maharsham explains that when the *mishna* says “his father should teach him” (“*aviv melamdo*”), it does not mean that the father should teach the son how to ask the four questions. Rather, it means that the father should teach the son the answers, and that the father himself should ask the questions. *V’higadeta sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

The *gemara* continues that according to Raban Gamliel, in order to fulfill *V’higadeta*, one must also relate to the reason for the *korban pesach* (“Because the Holy One, blessed be He, passed over the houses in Egypt”), the reason for the matza (“Because the dough did not have time to become leavened”), and the reason for the *marror* (“Because the Egyptians embittered the lives of the Jews in Egypt”). This helps to provide a reason as to why one must say “this matza” and “this *marror*.” “This” is the language of the verse, “*ba’Avur Zeh*/this is because.”

ולמען תספר באזני בנך ובן־בנך... וידעתם כִּי־אני ה'.

*And so that you should tell into the ears of your children and grandchildren... and you will [all] know that I am your God.”* (Shemos 10:2).

The verse does not say, “And the person will know that I am your God.” It is written in an inclusionary form, “And you will [all] know.” Rav Chaim Soloveitchik notes that the specific commandment of *sippur* must ideally be done with others (Rabbeinu Manoach even encourages a person who would otherwise be alone to try to find other people to have *seder* with so that he may fulfill this aspect). The prospect of not fulfilling the mitzva of *sippur* without engaging in a dialogue with others illustrates the religious and cultural value we place on *V’higadeta*.

The *Maggid* section of the *haggada* is a basic fulfillment of *sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*. It satisfies the *halachic* requirements, but does so in the most general way possible. This guides us to the view that the *haggada* is not only the central point of our *seder*, but it is the focal point from which we may depart into much greater discussion. The *haggada* should serve not as the central point of our *seder*, but as the basic point of departure for much greater discussion. Therefore, while we can fulfill our obligation by reciting only what is contained in the text, we must strive to go beyond that and personify the *sippur* into “*li*”.

Through these points we are continuously highlighting the need to engage in

discourse about the *sippur* of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* on an individualized level. The *sippur* serves as a point in which we can engage multiple generations at once on different levels. The *seder*, albeit a religious experience, is a time during which we are focused on what goes beyond the page. The embodiment and personification of the concept of “*li*” is the way we engage our future families for generations to come. This truly drives home the message that the lessons from our history, while they may repeat, aren’t forgotten.



# K'neged Arba'a Banim

SIMCHA AND SHOSHANA FELDMAN



Growing up in a house of four boys, the *arba'a banim* was always a highlight of our Pesach *seder*. Without fail every year, we'd spend time in this section of *maggid*. In our younger years, we'd jokingly tease and taunt each other for who was best fit to read the part of the *Rasha*. Luckily, being the youngest, it was never even a question that I would be dubbed the *she'eino yodeyah lish'ol*. Admittedly, not much has changed as we've all gotten married and welcomed our wives to the table.

As we grew up, the excerpts of the *arba'a banim* generated greater conversation. We dove further into what lessons could be learned from the sons, not only from the questions each son asked but also from the respective responses each received.

Our father, being the ever present educator, was bothered by the *haggada's* response to the *Rasha* of '*hakheh es shinav*,' and always encouraged us to look deeper into what was really happening. As we aged through different life experiences, we'd challenge the notion of '*hakheh es shinav*' and what the *haggada* really meant – a literal slap in the face or something more nuanced.

The questions of each of the *arba'a banim* are sourced from different *pesukim* in *Parshas Va'era*. The questions in the *haggada* function as a representation for one of the main *mitzvos* of the night: *V'higadeta L'vincha*, the central idea of passing down the history of the Jewish people from one generation to the next. Frequently, when scholars suggest why the *haggada* is compiled in the order and structure that it is, the oft-quoted response is "so the children will ask." This concept of encouraging our children to ask questions is what makes the Jewish people so different from other nations of the world; our continued focus on engaging with the next generation.

The *haggada* takes the *pesukim* apart and rearranges them into responses for

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the respective questions from the *arba'a banim*. The division to four fits nicely with the theme of four throughout the evening; i.e., the four cups and the four questions. However, as many of us were taught, we are meant to look for the fifth sequential item, the fours turn into fives. The four cups turn into five with the extra cup of Eliyahu which is a hint to the fifth element of redemption (*v'heveisi*). The four questions turn into five, as cited in the *mishna* in *Pesachim* (10:4) "Why on all other nights do we eat meat roasted, stewed or boiled, but on this night only roasted?" This question is a reference to the *korban pesach* that would have been eaten at the *seder*.

If the other fours are turning into fives, what or where is the reference to the fifth son?

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin<sup>1</sup> references an idea of the Lubavitcher Rebbe as it relates to the *arba'a banim*. He discusses the concept that there are really five sons. Who and where is the fifth son? The Lubavitcher Rebbe says the fifth son is the one that isn't mentioned in the *haggada* because he doesn't show up to the *seder*. At least the other four know where to be on the night of the fifteenth of Nisan!

Taking into account the fifth son, what are we to learn from the sequence of the *pesukim*?

To understand this question, it is important to take a deeper look at the four sons mentioned in the *haggada*. The four sons are typically translated as follows:

- *Chacham* – The Wise Son;
- *Rasha* – The Wicked Son;
- *Tam* – The Simple Son; and,
- *She'eino yodeyah lish'ol* - The Son who doesn't even understand enough to ask.

Rabbi Allen Schwartz<sup>2</sup> points out that the *haggada* seemingly judges three of the brothers based on their intellect (wise, simple, doesn't understand) and one based on his morality (wicked). Why would that be the case? What separates the *Rasha* from the other children that he isn't defined based on his intellect, like his brothers, but rather based on his actions?

While we consider that, let us revisit the definition of *Tam*. If we look at the *Tanach*, *tam* should be understood as 'pure' rather than 'simple.' Yaakov is *ish tam*

1 "The Passover Haggadah" (KTAV publishing, pages 56 - 61)

2 *The Four Sons Haggadah*, Mosaica Press, pages 38 - 41

*yoshev ohalim*. Far be it from us to call Yaakov simple!<sup>3</sup>

If we adopt this definition for *Tam*, we then have an even split between intellect and morality and translate the *haggada* as follows:

- *Chacham* – The Wise Son;
- *Rasha* – The Wicked Son;
- *Tam* – The Pure Son; and,
- *She'eino yodeyah lish'ol* - The Son who doesn't even understand enough to ask.

Going back to the responses in the *haggada*, we can see that each one is adjusted based on the categorization of the individual son. The *Chacham* receives a detailed class on the intricacies of the evening while the *She'eino yodeyah lish'ol* is given a lesson in the fundamentals of Pesach. The *Rasha* is shown sharpness while the *Tam* is reaffirmed that all of our actions are for *Avinu Shebashamim*.

How does the *haggada* answer the fifth son? The son that doesn't even bother to show up? There is no answer to provide if no question is asked or need is presented (as is the case for the *She'eino yodeyah lish'ol*). Life teaches us that the opposite of wicked is not pure and the opposite of hate is not love. Rather, the opposite of hate is indifference. The fifth son is neither wicked nor pure; he is simply indifferent and therefore disengaged.

One interpretation we have explored at my family's *seder* is that the *haggada* is not speaking to the *arba'a banim* as separate children, but rather responding to multiple facets of a single personality based on the individual's displayed intellect and morality (*derech erez*). The fifth facet, disengagement, would be an aspect of a person who wouldn't be asking a question at all. This person chooses to be disconnected. The only answer, the only path forward, is to continue to tell over the *maggid*, the rest of the Pesach story. The *haggada* chooses to show that disengaged person what the *seder* is all about in a hope to provide the spark to engage him to approach the *seder* the next year and perhaps ask a question.

This year will mark the first *yahrtzeit* of our grandfather Shalom ben Chanoch Eliezer, "Poppy." *Seder* night with Poppy was a time for *V'higadeta L'vincha* engagement and connection to the next generation. As the leader of the *seder* night, where Poppy was blessed to see that all of his descendants fought for the best seat at the table, everyone knew the night was one to ask questions but also one filled

<sup>3</sup> This definition is consistent with Rabbeinu Tam's interpretation as well as that of the Vilna Gaon.

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with stories and reflections. As one is meant to experience the *seder* night as if they individually left Egypt themselves, Poppy would always quietly talk about his family's World War II stories in Germany, beginning with *Kristallnacht*.

History has shown some Holocaust survivors take on the disengaged personality of the fifth son. It is understandable that someone who had experienced the turmoil of Europe in World War II could simply walk away from the faith. Poppy was lucky that his family was able to emigrate to America. It would have been easy to take a new path and reinvent himself – to take on the character trait of the fifth son. However, that was not Poppy. While he was a great many things, disengaged from *Yiddishkeit* was never one of them. His stories continued to blossom, from his bar mitzva through supporting a growing Jewish community in Los Angeles. Throughout it all, Poppy always focused on the next generation. Poppy made sure that his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren had opportunities to receive a Torah education, inclusive of textual study and *derech erez*.

One of the highlights of gathering in Los Angeles for Pesach was joining with the Prax extended family for *seder* on the second night of Pesach at Poppy and Grama's table. Over the years, the table grew longer and more chairs were added to accommodate the married-in grandchildren and the great grandchildren. Poppy would run the *seder*, providing an opportunity to each and every participant to read from the *haggada* and share a *dvar Torah* in whatever format they were comfortable. Poppy could take pride that there were older grandchildren who could contribute on the level of the *Chacham*. However, it was the younger ones that always caught his attention. A great-granddaughter of only 3 ½ years old requesting time to share what had been learned was cause for Poppy to quickly and lovingly hush the crowd of over forty attendees so that the twinkle in the child's eye could contribute to the transmission of our tradition to the next generation. That was Poppy, passionate about Torah and engaged with the Jewish future.

*Yehi Zichro Baruch.*

# Hand Me My Life<sup>1</sup>

ROBERT MILLMAN



It was the middle of 1944. Europe was in chaos. The Nazis were exterminating Jews wherever they lived. Yaakov Chonesh, age 11 and his sister Chani, age 8, had survived – miraculously. Their parents had been taken and murdered in the town roundup two years prior, with hundreds of other Jewish men and women. During the roundup, Yaakov and Chani had managed to escape death by hiding in a hidden cellar in the basement of their home. In the years since the roundup, Yaakov understood that he alone was responsible for the health and safety of his sister.

As a young boy in cheder, Yaakov had studied the mitzva of *kibbud av v'eim*, but now he no longer had parents. He had assumed a parental role himself with respect to his younger sister. To honor his father's and mother's memory, he was determined to survive the war and Nazi horrors and see to it that his sister survived as well.

There was one family of non-Jews who lived next door to the Chonesh family. Ever since the death of their parents, their neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Oskar Render, had sheltered Yaakov and Chani at great peril. One of the ways in which they did so was to “assume ownership” over the Chonesh home and pretend to be Nazis themselves. Mr. Render would attend Nazi rallies, meetings and get-togethers all as a ruse in an effort to be accepted and left alone and never suspected of hiding or harboring two Jewish children.

As fate would have it, Chani had been careless. One day, she had ventured out into a nearby market in an effort to simply get some fresh air and breathe in the smells and sounds of spring, only to be discovered by an SS officer, Randolph Dolan.

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<sup>1</sup> This story was told on TorahAnytime.com by Rabbi Leoor Dahan. Fictitious names have been added and the story embellished by this author.

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Dolan had known the Chonesh family from years of business dealings with Chani's father. He immediately recognized who she was. He grabbed Chani, kicking and screaming, and placed her into his car and took her to Gestapo headquarters.

Later that day, Yaakov heard the terrible news and decided, in the saintly memory of his parents, to do all that he could to try to save her. His reasoning was simple. Were he not to do it and survive the war, he would live with the guilt of not having made the effort to save his sister. Even if it meant placing his own life in danger, he had no choice but to try to rescue her.

Yaakov, at great risk, marched to the Gestapo headquarters. He acted like a berserk young man, pretending to be without full mind and demanding the return of his sister. The SS officers immediately began to mock Yaakov and pushed him to the ground time and time again. Yaakov simply kept screaming and demanding that his sister be returned to him.

The head of Gestapo headquarters heard the commotion from his office and entered the room with the lower level SS officers and Yaakov, and demanded to know what was going on. The SS officers explained to their commander what was taking place.

"Jew!" shouted the commander, "how dare you come into our offices and demand anything from us. You are going to die and so will your sister. You will remain alive and so will your sister only if you can grow hair on the palm of your hand."

Yaakov uncovered the palm of his right hand. In plain sight for all to see was a patch of coarse dark hair. The commander visibly shocked, thought he was seeing a demon or much worse. He ordered Yaakov and his sister out of the building with the threat that if they were seen again, they would be shot on sight.

What nobody understood was that as a young boy, Yaakov had burned his hand badly. The doctors had taken skin grafts from the back of his head and unfortunately, a patch of thick hair regularly grew on his right palm. For years he had lived with the embarrassment and humiliation of his friends making fun of him on a regular basis. He often complained about his condition and wished it would go away – but it never did. Now, at this moment, on being freed from the clutches of the Nazis, Yaakov understood God's plan for him.

It was nothing short of a miracle. Yaakov was more committed than ever to surviving the war along with his sister.

Survive they did, living in forests and connecting with a group of partisans. At

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war's end, Yaakov and Chani were both blessed to make it to the shores of the United States, where Yaakov became a successful businessman and significant *ba'al tzedaka*. He and his sister only recently passed away. Although nearly bald at the time of his passing, the patch of dark hair on his palm had continued to grow throughout Yaakov's lifetime – and it had saved the life of Yaakov and his sister. Yaakov had been able to honor the life and memory of his parents throughout his life and he was forever thankful to *Hakadosh Borchu Hu* for giving him and his sister the gift of life.

One can never fully understand the complicated tapestry of life. So many events take place, seemingly unconnected and unrelated, never to be revealed during our lifetimes. Yaakov Chonesh was blessed to understand why it was that his hand had been so badly burned as a child. But, all too often, we are without an understanding as to why our everyday lives and those of others unfold as they do. Life presents challenges and *nisyanos*, and what is our response during difficult times? We are only left with our sincere and heartfelt prayers to *Hakadosh Borchu Hu* to get us through difficult times.

We are clearly living in extraordinary times. Technology is in control of our lives. The secular world around us is one without values or limits. Civility has disappeared. Profanity laces the airwaves and regularly is spewed from the mouths of our most senior politicians in both political parties. Common sense and decency are lacking. Human life is not valued. Marriage is no longer sanctified. Everything is acceptable. All modes of conduct, dress and behavior is tolerated.

*Baruch Hashem*, we as Jews have Torah ideals and *halachos* to govern our lives. As we approach Pesach, and the story of our freedom from slavery and bondage in Egypt and forty-nine days later celebrate Matan Torah, may our *tefillos* and *mitzvos* hasten the coming of *Mashiach Tzidkeinu*.





# Shavuos



Zach Praw

Adiv Pachter



# Shavuos: Holiday of Personal Growth

ZACH PRAW



**O**f the *Shalosh Regalim*, Shavuos is the most ambiguous. Pesach is the holiday that celebrates the emancipation of the Jews from Egypt, commemorated with the telling over of the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* in the form of the seder, eating matza and drinking the *arba kosos*. Sukkos is the time when we reflect on the *nissim* that Hashem has done for us and the love He has shown us, by leaving the comfort of our houses and living in the *sukka* for a week and shaking the *arba minim*. Shavuos, however, does not have any of that. The Torah tells us that fifty days after the offering of the *korban omer*, the *shte halechem* is brought and that day is a holiday. That is the source for Shavuos, and that is all the Torah tells us about it. There are no specific *mitzvos* on Shavuos, no specific date, and in *parshas moadim* in *parshas Emor* it is not even given a name. The only information the Torah gives us about Shavuos is that it is fifty days after the *korban omer* on the second day of Pesach, that there is an *issur malacha* that day and *b'zman Beis Hamikdash* we brought the *korban* of the *Shte Halechem*.

In the *mussaf* of Shavuos we call it “*Zman Masan Toraseinu*,” the time of the giving of the Torah. This refers to the *gemara* in *Shabbos* 88a that says that Shavuos coincides with when Hashem gave the Torah to *Bnei Yisrael*. If Shavuos is really the anniversary of the giving of the Torah, it begs multiple questions. Firstly, the *gemara* in *Shabbos* goes back and forth trying to prove which day the Torah was given on. It takes as a given that it was given on Shabbos, which would work out that the Torah was actually given on the seventh of Sivan, not the sixth when we celebrate Shavuos. Additionally, if Shavuos was about celebrating the giving of the Torah, why is there no specific date? Why was it made dependent on the giving of the *korban omer*?

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Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains that Shavuot falls out a day before the anniversary of the giving of the Torah on purpose. He explains that Shavuot is not a celebration of Hashem giving us the Torah, but rather a celebration of our journey in becoming capable of accepting it. It is about celebrating our Torah, the amount we have acquired, and how we have grown because of it. If Shavuot was about commemorating the anniversary of getting the Torah, it should be like Yom Kippur, when we spend the whole day fasting, davening and learning, *kulo la'Hashem*. Although we do have a *minhag* to stay up all night learning, that is not the main focus of the holiday, it is mainly just a day of *simcha*. This is demonstrated by the lack of *mitzvos*, as Hashem is giving us a day to just reflect and celebrate our personal growth from the Torah. The lack of a specific date shows that the giving of the Torah wasn't a special day by itself but rather a representation of the culmination of our journey in leaving *Mitzrayim*. The spectacle of Hashem speaking directly to *Bnei Yisrael*, and thus revealing Himself, was to prove to us that we were ready to accept the Torah, but it only had any significance because we said "*naase v'nishma*." Hashem gave us the Torah to learn from it, not to just place it on a pedestal and admire from afar. Shavuot is the holiday of our personal acceptance and fulfillment of the Torah.

How does the dependency on the *korban omer* fit with this explanation? The *korban omer* is really just the first in a two-step process concluding with the *shtei halechem* on Shavuot. The *omer* was brought on the second day of Pesach from the first harvest of barley flower, a grain used for animal fodder, that allowed the eating of *chadash* for personal use. Fifty days later the *shtei halechem*, two loaves made from wheat flour, a human food, were brought, allowing *chadash* to be used in the *Beis Hamikdash*. These *korbanos* are symbolic of the spiritual journey *Bnei Yisrael* took leading up to the receiving of the Torah. The *omer*, made of animal food, represents the state of the Jews when they left *Mitzrayim*. They were on the lowest of low levels of *tumah*. They then spent the next forty nine days working on themselves, fixing themselves until they arrived at *Har Sinai*, where they reached the highest possible level of *kedusha* for a human to reach, represented by the two loaves of bread of the *shtei halechem*. This also explains why we call it "Shavuot," which refers to the seven weeks of counting from Pesach. It is the representation of the culmination of our growth from a place of *tumah* to being ready to accept the Torah. That accomplishment is one that is worthy of making a holiday.

We recently celebrated the *Daf Yomi Siyum HaShas*, in which tens of thousands of Jews around the world said the *Hadran*. As part of that *tefilla*, we thank Hashem

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for separating us from the *goyim* and letting us serve Him. One of the ways we say we are different is:

אנו עמלים והם עמלים אנו עמלים ומקבלים שכר והם עמלים ואינם מקבלים שכר.  
*We toil, and they toil. We toil and get reward and they toil, and they do not receive reward.*

Why is this mentioned at a *siyum*? The same concept can be applied here. We do not make a *siyum* simply because you finished something. The *siyum* is a recognition of all of the work that went into completing it. Learning *gemara* is not as simple as just reading the words on the page; it takes time and effort. It forces you to think about it at all hours of the day even when you are doing other things, and changes who you are. You are celebrating the hard work and effort that went into your learning and enabled you to keep going. The same is true of Shavuos. We are celebrating and honoring the hard work and devotion that we put into our relationship with Hashem and how we got to where we now are.



# Expressions of Love and the Torah: Like a Wife and a Sister

ADIV PACHTER



The Ahavas Shalom, Rav Menachem Mendel of Kosov, discusses *ahavas* Torah and comments on an episode in *parshas Toldos* to hone in on a specific lesson. When Yitzchak Avinu settled in Gerar, he told the people of the land that Rivka was his sister, not his wife. The Torah says that “it came to pass as his days there lengthened” and Avimelech realized that Rivka was indeed Yitzhak’s wife. After Yitzchak explained that he feared for his life, Avimelech warned the people, saying that whoever bothers this couple will be put to death.

The Ahavas Shalom explains that through Yitzchak’s relationship to Rivka, we can learn about his connection to Torah. He notes that the letters of Rivka also spell *kirva* which hints to Torah; as the *pasuk* in *Devarim* 30:14 says “*Ki karov eliecha hadavar.*”

Furthermore, he points out that at times the Torah is referred to as a “wife” and at times as a “sister.” The *pasuk* in *Mishlei* 31:10 makes reference to a wife; “*Eishes chayil mi yimtza...*” The *pasuk* in *Mishlei* 7:4 makes reference to a sister; “*Emor lachochma achosi at...*”

Each form has its own special characteristics and benefits. The love that one has for a wife is much deeper than the love one has for a sister. As such, references to *isha* are considered connections in the realm of *mochin de’gadlus*, while references to *achos* refer to connection in the realm of *mochin de’katnus*.

When Yitzchak originally came to *Eretz Plishtim*, he was not able to learn Torah *b’mochin de’gadlus*. Rather he was limited to *mochin de’katnus*. Therefore, when the people asked him who Rivka was and he replied that she was his sister, the Torah is telling us that he was *b’mochin de’katnus*. The *Plishtim* were full of *tuma*. Had Yitzchak revealed that he loved the Torah in the realm of *mochin de’gadlus* (i.e. like an *isha*), the

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*Sitra Achara* would have detected this, been jealous and killed him. So he disguised his love for the Torah and portrayed that he was *b'mochin de'katnus* (i.e. *achos*).

However, as time passed, and he became more respected in the eyes of Avimelech, he had *yishuv hadaas* and was able to freely express his love for Torah with *mochin de'gadlus*. In doing so, he was *mesaken* all of the days that he was in *mochin de'katnus*. We see this by the fact that the *pasuk* states that his days were lengthened; meaning, he rectified all of his days when he freely expressed his love for Torah *b'mochin de'gadlus*.

The Ahavas Shalom does note that the love of a wife, can in certain circumstances, cease to exist. On the other hand, the inherent bond that exists with a sister is not something that ever is broken as you can not undo familial ties which are intrinsic by nature. As such, we need to learn to internalize both of these different expressions of love when we relate to Torah. We need to have the deep love for Torah as one has with a wife but also make it an everlasting bond and connection as one has with a sister.

### **The Lesson of Rav Chanina And Bas Pharaoh: Extend Your Hand**

The *Midrash Rabba* on *Shir HaShirim* relates the following; Rav Chanina ben Dosa once saw the men of his city bringing *korbanos* to the Temple in Jerusalem. He said to himself: they are all bringing *korbanos* to Jerusalem, while I am bringing nothing?! He immediately went to the outskirts of his city and entered an abandoned ruin where he found a stone. He came out of the ruin and he carved, chiseled and painted the stone, transforming it into a beautiful piece of art. He then declared that he would bring this stone to Jerusalem and consecrate it for the upkeep of the Temple. He tried to find some workers to transport the stone to Jerusalem for him. They said that they would but that their price would be 100 gold coins. As Rav Chanina was very poor he did not have that sum of money, so those workers left. Hashem then sent five angels disguised in the form of human beings and they said to him that they would bring the stone to Jerusalem if he could pay them five *sela'im*, which was a small amount of money. But they made one condition: "provided that you place your hand on the stone with us." So, Rav Chanina put his hand on the stone with them and they were immediately found to be standing in Jerusalem. Rav Chanina tried to find them to pay them but they had disappeared. When Rav Chanina told this story to the Sanhedrin, they confirmed that those five people were angels sent by Hashem.

In the Artscroll commentary to the *Midrash*, the following explanation is brought:

*When a person faces an important but seemingly impossible task, he should not be discouraged from trying to perform it. It may be true that*



*in the natural order of things, his efforts will never bring him to his goal. But when he makes the effort and therefore displays his earnest desire to perform the good deed, Hashem may intervene, setting aside the laws of nature to make his holy ambition a reality. Rav Chanina's heart burned with a desire to bring a korban to Hashem. He was determined to show this desire by making whatever effort he could to bring the stone to Jerusalem. Even though he knew that he did not have any money, he nonetheless entered into negotiations with the porters... Even when Hashem sent him the angels to help him, they insisted that he lend a hand, because it was his efforts that empowered them to defy nature for his sake.*

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz, in his *Sichos Mussar*, says that we see this phenomenon in the Torah. When Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, she saw a basket among the reeds. She stretched out her arm and retrieved the basket. Rashi explains that the basket was out of reach but she extended her arm and it miraculously became long enough to grasp the basket. Why did she extend her arm in the first place when she clearly saw that there was nothing she could do? She knew that when there is a life to save, there is always something one can do. Any action that expresses one's eagerness to help may merit unexpected assistance from Above.

### **The First Mishna in Shas: Don't Give Up**

We know there is a mitzva to say *krias shema* every night and every morning. The first *mishna* in *shas* discusses the exact times for this mitzva. The *mishna* asks: What is the earliest time that we can fulfill the mitzva of *krias shema* at night?

The *mishna* answers: If a *kohen* was *tamei*, he needs to go to the *mikva*. *Teruma* can only be eaten by a *kohen* who is pure. When he goes home from the *mikva*, he can eat *teruma*. When is this? When the stars come out.

Instead of answering this question simply and directly and saying "From the time that the stars come out," the *mishna* instructs us to observe the *kohanim*. When they are permitted to eat *teruma*, that is when a Jew can say *krias shema*.

What is the connection between these two commandments? At first glance, they seem to be unrelated. How does the behavior of the *kohanim* relate to every Jew?

The holy books teach us that the worst thing in the world is to give up hope. The *yeitzer hara* wants to make us feel that we should give up if we are not perfect. Our Sages introduced the entire *mishna* and *gemara* with a lesson that refutes this.

The *kohen* was *tamei*. At the start of the evening he goes to the *mikva*. Even after he goes to the *mikva*, the *halacha* is that he is not allowed to eat the meat of a *korban*.

In order to do so, he needs to bring an offering; but this can only happen the next morning.

However, he has begun the process of becoming pure and he is allowed to eat *teruma* that night. The fact that he cannot eat the meat of a *korban* should not discourage him and stop him from the mitzva of eating *teruma*.

Every evening, we have the opportunity to say *shema*. The *yetzer hara* wants us to get us down and wants us to think that we are far from being great, holy people. It wants us to focus on the fact that there are things that we may not be able to correct until tomorrow.

But we should learn from the *kohen* and seize the opportunity to fulfill what we can, **now**, at this very moment in time.

# Machlokes L'shem Shamayim



Rabbi Yaakov Siegel

Yaakov Rich



# The Wisdom of Wearing Your *Yarmulka* to Work

RABBI YAAKOV SIEGEL



When a frum, *yarmulka*-wearing Jew walks into a non-frum work setting, such as a job interview, staff meeting, courtroom, client meeting, or networking event, he is likely to feel a mixture of emotions. On one hand he feels proud to be a frum Jew, proud to represent his values, tradition, and community. On the other hand – especially as the eyes of the people he is meeting repeatedly drift upwards towards his *yarmulka* – he feels like he is being viewed as an outsider, someone who is different and foreign. He feels like he is being judged based on whatever preconceptions this person has of Orthodox Jews, not based on his own merits.

In previous generations, Orthodox Jews regularly faced discrimination in the workplace, and Orthodox men often found that their chances of finding meaningful employment and career advancement were greatly enhanced if they did not wear a *yarmulka*. *B'chasdei Hashem*, in today's workplace – especially in uber-tolerant California – discrimination is much less common than in the past, and frum men can excel in nearly all professions and careers while proudly wearing their *yarmulkas*. Nonetheless, many serious *yirei shamayim* in various fields of employment and workplace environments, feel that their careers would benefit if they did not wear *yarmulkas* to work. In collaborative workplaces, they say, it's harder to be “one of the guys” when you're visibly so different. In sales, who knows what kind of anti-Semitic biases potential customers may hold? Could a courtroom lawyer be effective when the judge or jury might stare more at his *yarmulka* than listen to his words? Property managers might find their jobs much more contentious if tenants buy in to negative stereotypes about Jews and money. And sometimes, one's boss or employer simply doesn't want his employee to wear a *yarmulka*.

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Over the generations, many *gedolei haposkim* have permitted working without a *yarmulka* in these and other similar cases. But are these blanket *heterim* of “one does not need to wear his *yarmulka* to work,” or are there limitations? Can one make *brachos*, learn Torah, or think about Torah while his head is uncovered? And even if *halachically* one *could* take off his *yarmulka*, *should* he do so? Might it change how a person thinks about himself if he spends most of his day not wearing a *yarmulka*? Are there other benefits of wearing a *yarmulka* that would be lost if one works *b'gilui rosh*? With a thorough analysis of these question, we will show that in most situations, a frum man will be much better off – *halachically* and practically – if he wears his *yarmulka* to work, and that every frum man should at least give consideration to wearing it, even in the face of discomfort and possible career implications.

### How Real is the “Chiyuv” to Wear a Yarmulka

Before discussing the *chomer hachiyuv* – the seriousness of the obligation for a man to wear a *yarmulka*, let's start with the two reasons the *gemara* gives for a man to cover his head. One (*Kiddushin* 31a) is because of “*Shechina lima'ala meiroshi*,” that covering one's head is a sign of humility before God. The second (*Shabbos* 156b) is “*ki heichi diteihavu alach eimsa dishmaya*,” to remind a person to have *yiras shamayim*.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of the reason, the scope of any potential *heter* will obviously vary, if the obligation of *kisui harosh* is *d'oraisa*, *derabnan*, or simply a *midas chasidus*, a pious practice. This question is debated by the *rishonim* and *achronim*, and is based on how to understand two of the main *gemaras* that discuss *kisui harosh*. The first *gemara*, *Kiddushin* 31a says:

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: אסור לאדם שיהלך ארבע אמות בקומה זקופה. רב הונא בריה דרב יהושע לא מסגי ארבע אמות בגילוי הראש. אמר: שכינה למעלה מראשי.

1 We will quote the *gemara* in *Kiddushin* immediately below. The *gemara* in *Shabbos* is a fascinating story that is worthwhile to quote here in full:

אימיה דרב נחמן בר יצחק אמרי לה כלדאי בריך גנבא הוה. לא שבקתיה גלוי רישיה. אמרה ליה כסי רישך כי היכי דתיהוו עלך אימתא דשמיא ובעי רחמי. לא הוה ידע אמאי קאמרה ליה. יומא חד יתיב קא גריס תותי דיקלא נפל גלימא מעילויה רישיה. דלי עיניה חזא לדיקלא אלמיה יצריה סליק פסקיה לקיבורא בשיניה.

*The mother of Rav Nachman bar Yitzchok was told by a Chaldean astrologer that her son would be a thief. So she never let him uncover his head. She would tell him, “cover your head so that you’ll have yiras shamayim,” and she davened for him. But Rav Nachman bar Yitzchok never understood why she would say that to him. One day, he was sitting under a palm tree learning, and his turban fell off of his head. He looked up at the palm, his yetzer hara overpowered him, and he ripped off a bunch of dates with his teeth.*

While the Yiddish word *yarmulka* is actually just the Polish word *jarmulka* – a skullcap worn by priests – the word still hints to both reasons given by the *gemara*. “*Yarim Ka*” in Hebrew means to lift up God, and “*yare Malka*” in Aramaic means fear of the King.

*Rav Yehoshua ben Levi said: it is forbidden to walk with an (arrogant) upright posture... Rav Huna brei d'Rav Yehoshua would not walk four amos with his head uncovered. He said "the Shechina is above my head."*

Similarly, the *gemara* in *Shabbos* (118b), also quotes from Rav Huna brei d'Rav Yehoshua:

אמר רב הונא בריה דרב יהושע: תיתי לי דלא סגינא ארבע אמות בגילוי הראש.  
*Rav Huna Brei d'Rav Yehoshua said: I am deserving of reward because I do not walk four amos with my head uncovered.*

The Maharam Rotenberg (quoted in *Tashbetz Katan* 549 and *Kol Bo Hilchos Tefila* 11) says that these *gemaras* imply that covering one's head is only a *midas chasidus*, a practice of extra piety, and not an absolute obligation. The language of the *gemara* in *Kiddushin* is that *koma zikufa*, an upright posture, is "*asur*" whereas Rav Huna brei d'Rav Yehoshua "would not walk" with his head uncovered, which implies that although uncovering one's head is permitted, Rav Huna brei d'Rav Yehoshua was extra-pious. Similarly, in the *gemara* in *Shabbos*, he would not say "I am deserving of reward" if walking with one's head uncovered was strictly prohibited.<sup>2</sup>

The Shulchan Aruch (*O"C* 2:6) uses almost the exact words as the *gemara* in *Kidushin*:

אסור לילך בקומה זקופה ולא ילך ד' אמות בגילוי הראש.  
*It is forbidden to walk with an upright posture, and one should not walk four amos with his head uncovered.*

The Magen Avraham (91:3 quoting Rabbeinu Yerucham) says this means that it is a *midas chasidus* not to walk with one's head uncovered whether four *amos*, or less. This is the opinion of the majority of *poskim*.<sup>3</sup>

But it is important to note that even if the origin of wearing a *yarmulka* is a *midas chasidus*, that does not mean it's optional. Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe O"C* 4:2) says that since this *midas chasidus* is widely practiced, it becomes obligatory – like any *minhag*:

ולרוב השיטות הוי גילוי הראש אף לילך בשוק רק מדת חסידות אבל כזו שכל אדם צריך להתנהג. שלכן אף שכיון שכבר הנהיגו זה בכל ישראל לא גרע ממנהגי ישראל קדושים...

<sup>2</sup> The Rambam (*Hilchos Tefilla* 5:1 and 5:5, and *Moreh Nevuchim* 3:52) as understood by Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Yabia Omer* 9:1:1) also implies that covering one's head is a *midas chasidus*.

<sup>3</sup> If you like really long lists of *poskim*, see *Yabia Omer* (ibid.) and R' Ari Wasserman's *Otzar Hakipa* (pp. 58-107)

*According to most opinions, having one's head uncovered even when walking through the marketplace is only a midas chasidus, but nonetheless, everyone must follow this midas chasidus... And since this is the long standing practice amongst all Jews, it is no different than a minhag Yisrael [which is obligatory].*

So while wearing a *yarmulka* is obligatory, the obligation comes from the common practice of a *midas chasidus*, not a *chiyuv derabanan* or *de'oraisa*.

### **The Taz Says Wearing a Yarmulka is a Chiyuv De'oraisa**

The Taz (*O"C* 8:3) argues, and says wearing a *yarmulka* is a Torah obligation. He says (based on *Shu"t Mahari Bruna* 34) that there is actually an *issur de'oraisa* for one to have his head uncovered based on the prohibition of *chukas akum* – following in the ways of *ovdei avoda zara*:

ונראה לי שיש איסור גמור מטעם אחר, דהיינו כיון שחוק הוא עכשיו בין העכו"ם שעושין כן תמיד תיכף שיושבין פורקין מעליהם הכובע. ואם כן זה נכלל בכלל ובחוקותיהם לא תלכו, כ"ש בחוק זה שיש טעם דכיסוי הראש מורה על יראת שמים. *It appears to me that there is a genuine prohibition... since it is now a rule amongst ovdei kochavim that they always immediately take off their hats when they sit down. And if so, it is included in the prohibition of "don't follow their [ovdei kochavim's] way of their rules." And this certainly is the case for this specific rule of theirs, in that the whole purpose of [wearing a yarmulka] is to show one's fear of Hashem.*

While the Mishna Brura (2:11) does *pasken* like this Taz, many *poskim* (see the list quoted in *Yabia Omer* 9:1:4) say that even if the *halacha* would follow the Taz over the Magen Avraham, nowadays there would not be a prohibition of *chukas akum* to have one's head uncovered because it would not fit with the parameters of the *issur*.<sup>4</sup> Rav Moshe Feinstein, for example (*Igros Moshe Y"D* 4:11:3), points out that in America and Europe in his day and age (ours too), even non-Christians go

<sup>4</sup> The Beis Yosef and Darchei Moshe (*Y"D* 178:1) quote the Ran and Maharik that the *issur* of *chukas akum* only applies if a specific practice meets any of three qualifications:

1. The practice originates from an idolatry (e.g. crossing fingers, knocking on wood)
2. The practice appears to have no purpose at all, in which case we should be concerned that its origin is idolatrous. (e.g. carrying a rabbit's foot for good luck)
3. The practice has an aspect of promiscuity (e.g. Halloween costumes)

Nowadays, none of these apply to the non-Jewish practice of going bareheaded.



bareheaded, and people sit in their offices without hats because it is comfortable for them, not because of any religious or otherwise inappropriate reason.

It is therefore nearly unanimous amongst the *poskim* that while wearing a *yarmulka* is obligatory, the *chiyuv* is sourced in a *midas chasidus* and not an *isur de'oraisa*. This has significant ramifications when evaluating whether one can take off his *yarmulka* to help his *parnasa*.

### **When Taking Off Your Yarmulka Will Help Your Career**

Since nowadays, the obligation to wear a *yarmulka* originates from a *midas chasidus*, many *poskim*<sup>5</sup> permit a person to work with their head uncovered if it is needed for his *parnassa*. Most prominently, Rav Moshe Feinstein has three *teshuvos* in *Igros Moshe* (*O"C* 4:2, *C"M* 1:93, *Y"D* 4:11:3) in which he argues that since a person is not obligated to lose a large amount of his money, or spend more than a fifth of his income for a *mitzvas asei midioraisa* (Rema *O"C* 656:1), certainly he does not need to give up his job opportunity to wear a *yarmulka* which is only a *midas chasidus*.

But even if it is technically permitted to work bareheaded, there are many limitations and considerations that should be taken into account. In fact, as we will see from our discussion, it is actually somewhat rare that it makes sense for a frum *yarei shamayim* to *not* wear a *yarmulka* to work.

### **Limitation to the Heter: Only to Avoid Unemployment or Hefsed Meruba, Not for a Raise or Promotion**

While Rav Moshe permits working without a *yarmulka*, it is important to look closely at the language of his *heterim*, as they include tight limitations.

In a *teshuva* from 1974 (*O"C* 4:2) Rav Moshe addressed a person who lived in Denver, who felt that he would not be able to find a job if he insisted on wearing a *yarmulka*. Rav Moshe allowed him to take the job and not wear his *yarmulka*, but explains his *heter* as follows:

וודאי לא עדיף מעשה ממש דלהפסד גדול אינו מחוייב דאונס ממון הוא, ואונס לגבי

<sup>5</sup> See the list quoted in Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffman's *Milamed Lih'o'il* 2:56. In that *teshuva*, Rav Hoffman tells a fascinating story about how in Rav S.R. Hirsch's *beis hachinuch* (the *Realschule* in Frankfurt AM), Rav Hirsch instructed the students to wear *yarmulkas* only for *limudei kodesh* classes, but for the rest of their studies to go bareheaded. The first time Rav Hoffman – who taught in the *Realschule* for two and a half years – went to meet with Rav Hirsch at his house, he went wearing a hat. Rav Hirsch immediately told him to remove it, since in Frankfurt the custom was to remove one's hat when speaking with an important person, and if non-Jewish secular teachers would see Rav Hoffman with his head covered when speaking to Rav Hirsch, they might think Rav Hoffman was showing disrespect.

מצות עשה, עיין בסימן תרנ"ו, שיותר מחומש אינו צריך לבזבז על מצוה... והשגת  
 משרה שהוא לפרנסתו הוא הפסד גדול יותר אף מחומש שאינו מחוייב  
*It is for sure no better than a biblical mitzvas asei, for which one is not  
 obligated to lose a lot of money in order to fulfill... see O"C 656:1, that  
 one never needs to spend more than a fifth of his assets on a mitzva ...  
 and getting this position which will be his livelihood is a considered  
 a great loss even more than a fifth, which he is not obligated to give up...*

In other words, there is no *heter* of "one does not need to wear his *yarmulka* to work." Rather one does not need to lose his job for his *yarmulka*, and he is allowed to agree not to wear a *yarmulka* in order to get a job, because not having a job would be a *hefsed meruba*.

In another *teshuva* in *Igros Moshe* (Y"D 4:11:3) Rav Moshe is even more clear about the limitations to this *heter*:

אם א"א להשיג משרה לפרנסתו אם ילך מכוסה ראשו, רשאי לקבל משרה זו  
***If it is impossible for him to find a position to make a living where he  
 can cover his head, he is allowed to accept this position.***

It's important to note that *hefsed meruba* only applies to losing money that you already have, **not** to losing out on an opportunity to make money that you do not yet have.<sup>6</sup> Rav Moshe is *michadesh* that being unemployed and missing out on getting a job is also considered *hefsed meruba*. So let's say a person get two job offers, and both would give him a *parnassa* that would allow him to appropriately support his family. The first offer is much better paying than the second, but for the first job, he cannot wear his *yarmulka*. Rav Moshe would hold that the person must take the job in which he can wear his *yarmulka*, even if the salary is more than 20% lower than the non-*yarmulka* job. Furthermore – and this is a critical point – one cannot work without a *yarmulka* just because he thinks it will help him get raises or promotions. *Hefsed meruba* only applies to losing money – and avoiding unemployment according to Rav Moshe. But it does not apply to missing out on a better paying job, or finding it harder to get promotions or raises because with the *yarmulka* he doesn't "fit in" as well.

Nonetheless, it does seem likely that Rav Moshe would agree that if a person would have to change to a less desirable field in order to get a job where he could wear a *yarmulka*, or if he would have to take a job that would be very upsetting to him – it

<sup>6</sup> See Shach in *Kitzur Bihanhagas Issur Viheter* following Y"D 242 - Par. 3.

would feel like a big loss<sup>7</sup> – he would be allowed to take the job in which he cannot wear his *yarmulka*.

Furthermore, for someone who has worked for many years without a *yarmulka*, it's possible that making a change and starting to wear a *yarmulka* could cause a *hefsed meruba*. Depending on the situation, making such a switch after many years might have the potential to alarm clients or concern co-workers, and could cause a financial loss in some cases.

### Limitations to the *Heter*: Only Where it Actually Makes a Difference

In another *teshuva* (*Igros Moshe C" M 1:93*) Rav Moshe places another important limitation on the *heter* of taking off one's *yarmulka* for work:

אבל ודאי רק במקום עבודתו שע"ז הם מקפידין יהיה רשאי אבל כשיצא לחדר אחר  
וכ"ש כשיצא לשוק יהיה אסור אף אם ילעיגו עליו כיון שלא יפסיד משרתו ועבודתו  
בשביל זה.

*But certainly, only in the place in his work that they forbid him to wear a yarmulka would he be permitted to take it off. But when he goes to a different room, and certainly when he goes out into the marketplace it would be forbidden, even if they would make fun of him because of it, since he's not going to lose his job because of it.*

So if a person's boss says I don't want you to wear a *yarmulka* in the office or on the sales floor, in many circumstances, he would be allowed to take his *yarmulka* off when he's in the office or on the sales floor. But on lunch breaks, and certainly on his commute, he would need to keep his head covered. Similarly, for a property manager who won't be able to do his job if his tenants dislike Jews, Rav Moshe would allow him to take off his *yarmulka* when he meets with tenants, but he must wear his *yarmulka* or a hat when he's at the corporate offices. And as we mentioned before, not wearing a *yarmulka* simply to "be less different" or "fit in better", and be in a better position to get a raise or promotion, would not be permitted.<sup>8</sup>

7 In defining *hefsed merubah*, the Pischei Teshuva (*Y" D 31:2*) quotes Rav Eliyahu Margolies (18<sup>th</sup> century Rav of Bilgoraj, Poland) in *Tshuvos Har Hakarmel* (*Y" D 15*):

דאין לזה דבר קצוב כלל והכל לפי ראות עיני המורה ולפי העת והזמן ולפי האדם שההפסד הוא שלו אם לגביה הוא הפסד מרובה  
מקרי הפסד מרובה.

*There is no fixed amount as to what is hefsed meruba. It follows what the posek sees, based on the time and the person who has the loss – if to him it feels like a big loss, then it is called hefsed meruba.*

8 It is possible that in some collaborative workplaces, if a person sometimes wears a *yarmulka* and sometimes doesn't, he might be viewed as an "unstable" person which might jeopardize his continued employment. If such

### It's Still *Assur* to Make *Brachos* and Say *Divrei Torah* without a *Yarmulka*

Even if one is allowed to sit at his desk or walk around the office without his *yarmulka*, making *brachos*, saying Hashem's name, or saying *divrei Torah* is still not allowed. As the *achronim* explain, if walking without one's head covered is a sign of disrespect to Hashem, all the more so saying Hashem's name with one's head uncovered. And while *Shulchan Aruch* might have said that not walking with one's head uncovered might come from a *midas chasidus*, he clearly implies that saying Hashem's name with one's head uncovered is *me'ikar hadin* – an absolute *isur*.

The origin of this *halacha* is *Maseches Sofrim* (14:15) which quotes two opinions if one is allowed to say Hashem's name with his head uncovered. Most *rishonim* (for example *Or Zarua* 2:43 and *Rabbeinu Yerucham* 7:148:4)<sup>9</sup> *pasken* that it is *asur*, and this is the way the *Shulchan Aruch* *paskens* in *Hilchos Brachos* (*O"C* 206:3):

ולא יברך ערום עד שיכסה ערותו... ואפילו אם אינו ערום אם לבו רואה את הערוה  
או שראשו מגולה אסור לברך.

*He may not make brachos while naked... and even if he is not naked, if his heart sees his nakedness or if his head is uncovered, it is prohibited to say brachos.*

Rav Ovadia Yosef points out that regarding walking with one's head uncovered, the *Shulchan Aruch* says (*O"C* 2:6) "*vilu yelech arba amos* – he should not walk four *amos*," but regarding saying *brachos*, the *Shulchan Aruch* says (206:3) "*assur livarech* – it is forbidden to say a *bracha*," clearly indicating that saying *brachos* or davening without a *yarmulka* would be *me'ikar hadin*, an absolute prohibition.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, Rav Moshe Feinstein, (*Igros Moshe* 6:40:13) says that when it comes to *tefilla*, wearing a *yarmulka* is actually a Torah obligation. Previously, we quoted the *Taz* that says that having one's head covered is a Torah prohibition because of *chukos akum* – following in the ways of *avoda zara*. Rav Moshe had said that nowadays, in America, non-Jews sit at their desks with their heads uncovered for comfort, not religious reasons. But for Christian men, praying without a head covering is a religious

a condition exists, it would be permitted for him not to wear his *yarmulka*. However, excellent job performance and a superior work ethic can usually dispel any teammates' concerns about their star co-worker being unstable.

<sup>9</sup> There is a lot of debate as to the opinions of the *Rambam* and *Terumas Hadeshen*. See *Yabia Omer* (6:15) and *R' Ari Wasserman's Otzar Hakipa* (2:12:7 and 2:12:10 at length).

<sup>10</sup> The *Gra* (*O"C* 8:6) disagrees and says that even for saying Hashem's name, wearing a *yarmulka* is a *midas chasidus*. Most *poskim* do not accept the *Gra's* approach (see *Shu"t Krach Shel Romi* 1 and *Sdei Chemed*, Chapter on *Batei Kneses* 8)

obligation.<sup>11</sup> Rav Moshe says that since davening without a head covering an *issur de'oraisa*, if one realized after he davened that by mistake his head was uncovered, he has to daven again because his *tefilla* was a *to'eva*, an abomination. While Rav Moshe does not mention *brachos* in this *teshuva*, since Christian men uncover their head even for prayers outside of church – such as prayers before meals and prayers at funerals – it should follow that Rav Moshe would also hold that covering one's head when making *brachos* is an absolute requirement, and perhaps even a Torah obligation - and not just a *midas chasidus*.<sup>12</sup>

*Halacha lima'aseh*, the Mishna Brura says that if one's head is uncovered, he is forbidden to learn Torah or say a *bracha*, unless he covers his head. If he has no *yarmulka* or hat available, he quotes the Bach in 91:5:1 who says one may not use their hand as a covering, but instead must use their shirt sleeve (or any other garment) as their head covering.<sup>13</sup>

Regarding learning Torah, Rav Yisrael Wetzl, the *rav* and *Av Beis Din* of pre-war Budapest, writes in *Shu"t Divrei Yisrael* (1:17), that even though one is technically not allowed to learn Torah with his head uncovered, someone who is stuck for most of the day with his head uncovered – like a soldier who is not allowed to wear a *yarmulka* at his post – may read or think *divrei Torah*, but he should not say them out loud. The same rule should apply to someone who cannot wear his *yarmulka* at work. He could read and think about *divrei Torah*, but should not say any out loud.<sup>14</sup>

One final relevant point, regarding saying “thank God” or “God willing” in

11 In 1 *Corinthians* (11:4-9), Paul states: “Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.”

12 *Halichos Shlomo* (*Tefila* 2:16) quotes that Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach held that if one accidentally davened or said a *bracha* with his head uncovered, he does not need to repeat the *tefilla* or *bracha*, but it only cites as the source “the writings of his students” and offers no reasoning for this ruling.

13 The Mishna Brura does mention that there are some who allow using your hand in a *sha'as had'chak*, but he does not prefer that approach.

14 Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Yabia Omer* 9:1) does not specifically address learning Torah from a *sefer* without saying the words out loud, but he does discuss just thinking about words of Torah. He quotes Rav Meir Vaknin, the Sfardi Chief Rabbi of Tiveria from 1953-1975 (also the Rabbi of the Halabi community in Brooklyn from 1914-1920) in *Shu"t Vayomer Meir* saying that since *hirhur kidibur dami*, it is asur to think about *divrei Torah* with one's head uncovered. Rav Ovadia strongly disagrees, since the *gemara* says (*Shabbos* 150a) that one is allowed to think about *divrei Torah* even if he is completely naked.

English. Rav Chaim Binyamin Fontrimoli (rav and *dayan* in Izmir, Turkey d.1873) in *Sefer Petach Had'vir* (1:91) rules that there is no difference between saying Hashem's name in Hebrew with one's head uncovered, or saying it in English – both are forbidden. Rav Moshe Feinstein, however, disagrees. Rav Moshe wrote a *teshuva* (O"C 2:25) in 1963 about whether Jewish children in a public school who are not wearing *yarmulkas* are allowed to say "God" in English. Rav Moshe *paskens* that since the *Maseches Sofrim* and Shulchan Aruch quote two opinions about whether one is allowed to say Hashem's name in Hebrew with his head uncovered (even though the Shulchan Aruch does *pasken* that it's prohibited), and since the Vilna Gaon *paskens* that even Hashem's name in Hebrew is only a *midas chasidus*, therefore "*vadai ein lihachmir kish'e'i efshar* – you surely do not need to be strict if it is impossible." So while it is not ideal, it does seem like if one does not wear a *yarmulka* to work, there may be grounds for him to be allowed to say "thank God" and "God willing."

The bottom line regarding *brachos* and learning Torah is that even one who is permitted not to wear his *yarmulka* for reasons of *parnasa*, still:

1. Cannot say *brachos* unless he covers his head with his sleeve or another garment.
2. Cannot say words of Torah out loud, but there is a *heter* for him to read or think of *divrei Torah*.
3. If someone asks him how is doing, it is preferable not to say "thank God" or "God willing", but there may be grounds to permit it based on Rav Moshe's *teshuva*.

So if one is at a business lunch without his *yarmulka*, it is easy to imagine that he will have a great temptation not to make a *bracha* if it means covering his head with his shirt sleeve. And if with Hashem's help he has the courage to do so, it easy to imagine that it will be hard for him to have *kavana*.

Additionally, it should give a *yarei shamayim* pause if he has to go his entire workday without saying any words of Torah, and if he needs *heterim* to read *divrei Torah* or to simply say out loud "thank God."

### **Mar'is Ayin and Arousing Suspicion**

Another issued raised by the *poskim* is that since a *yarmulka* has become a clear identifier of an Orthodox Jew, being seen in public without a *yarmulka* could be *maris ayin*, the Rabbinic prohibition of appearing like you are doing an *aveira*. Rav Ovadia Yosef, in a lengthy *teshuva* (*Yabia Omer* 9:1) in which he proves that the prohibition of going bareheaded is only a *midas chasidus*, ends with the following conclusion:

ונראה שבזמנינו שדרך החפשים ללכת בגילוי הראש, דרך פריקת עול תורה ומצות,



בודאי שכל מי שהוא ירא שמים צריך להזהר לכסות ראשו כשהולך ברשות הרבים, שיהיה היכר בין עובד אלקים לאשר לא עבדו. ויש בזה יותר ממדת חסידות, והכיפה שעל ראשו של אדם דתי היא לסמל ולמופת, שהוא שייך למחנה הדתי, ומורא שמים עליו. ומי שהולך בגילוי הראש, אדרבה יש בו משום מראית העין, שיחשדוהו שהוא אדם חפשי פורק עול מלכות שמים מעליו, וכבר נאמר בתורה והייתם נקיים מה' ומישראל.

*But it appears that in our days, since the non-observant Jews walk around bareheaded in a manner that displays their disinterest in Torah and mitzvos, certainly anyone who is a yarei shamayim should be careful to cover his head when he walks in public so that there is a differentiation between those who serve Hashem (yirei shamayim) and those who do not (the other Jews who do not cover their heads). And therefore, **it is more than a midas chasidus** because a yarmulka on an Orthodox Jew's head is an identifying badge that he is part of the Orthodox community. **And someone who goes bareheaded, just the opposite – there is maris ayin, that people will suspect that he has removed the ol malchus shamayim from upon him, and it already says in the Torah (Bamidbar 32:22), “you shall appear clean to both Hashem and Yisrael.”***

One of the main reasons for the *issur* of *maris ayin* – appearing like you're doing an *aveira* – is that one should not do anything that arouses suspicion about himself (Rashi in *Shabbos* 64b and *Avoda Zara* 12a).<sup>15</sup> Imagine if there's a Jew you know from shul, who every time you see him, he is wearing a *yarmulka*, davening with *kavana*, learning seriously, but on one occasion you bump into him right outside of his office downtown, and he's not wearing a *yarmulka*. It is possible that the thought will cross your mind, “I guess he's not as frum in the office as he is in shul.” While surely that thought is totally wrong, it nonetheless is that *chashad* – suspicion – that the *issur* of *maris ayin* is in place to prevent. Rav Ovadia is saying, therefore, that even though the *halachos* of *yarmulkas* should allow one to take off his *yarmulka* for *parnasa*, the *halachos* of *maris ayin* – the obligation to avoid any suspicion – would require one to keep it on.

That said, the potential *maris ayin* of not wearing a *yarmulka* varies community by community. In places where it is much more widespread for frum men to work without a *yarmulka*, it is less likely for there to be any *chashad*, and in such communities

<sup>15</sup> Rashi in *Krisis* 21b gives an additional reason for *maris ayin* that the observer will come to think that the *issur* is in fact permitted.

there are more cases in which working without a *yarmulka* would not violate the *issur* of *maris ayin*.

### Don't Become One of The Boys

As we mentioned previously, two of the main attractions of not wearing a *yarmulka* in the workplace are avoiding the discomfort of sticking out and making it easier to fit in. So much of one's ability to advance within a company comes from building friendships and close relationships with one's teammates and superiors, and from fitting in with the corporate culture. Even the distance that comes from keeping kosher, not working on Shabbos, and sending your kids to schools with unpronounceable names, is dwarfed by the always-there-in-your-face *yarmulka* which could be viewed as screaming "I am not at all like you!" And as an entry ticket price for fitting in, taking off one's *yarmulka* is a bargain – it is only a *midas chasidus* or a *derabanan* of *maris ayin*, compared with, let's say, kosher which carries numerous *issurei de'oraisa*.

But "fitting in" is a double-edged sword, and the edge facing inward is far more dangerous. Rav Moshe Stern, the Debrecziner Rov writes in his *teshuva* about taking off one's *yarmulka* for work (*Shu"t Be'er Moshe* 8:40):

בשום אופן אינני מסכים וממני לא יצא הוראה להתיר שיקבל משרה זו שיהיה מוכרח לישב כל היום יום אחר יום שבוע אחר שבוע חודש אחר חודש בגילוי הראש. שבודאי ובודאי עם הסביבה שבה נמצא כולם דומים להם יפעלו עליו לרעה וילך מדחי אל דחי עד שיפול ח"ו נגד רצונו (מעיקרא) בבאר שחת.

*I would never allow a person to accept a position for which he will have to sit the whole day, day after day, week after week, month after month, with his head uncovered. Because for sure in the environment he is in where he finds himself looking like everyone around him, will impact him negatively. And he will slip again and again until he will fall against his (original) will.*

While the Debrecziner's *teshuva* might be worded a bit harshly, it is worthwhile to realize that for many men who transition from the yeshiva to the workplace, the constant surrounding environment of people's behavior that in many ways is inconsistent with Torah values does pull on a person. And it pulls relentlessly, and it pulls endlessly. Depending on the dynamics of a person's workplace, it might be worthwhile to consider erecting more barriers rather than removing those already imposed by *minhag Yisrael*.

And the *yarmulka* is an especially valuable tool in maintaining one's separation. A frum man working in a non-frum environment has to maintain two separate



identities, an *eved* Hashem, and an *eved* to his boss. While the boss doesn't need to know which one is primary, it is critically important for the *oved* Hashem himself to know, and the constantly visible *yarmulka* is an extraordinarily impactful reminder.<sup>16</sup>

### Missed Opportunities for Kiddush Hashem

Finally, every Orthodox Jew in a non-Orthodox workplace wants to make a *Kiddush Hashem*. Everyone tries all day for their actions and words to be honest, pleasant, and exemplary – as the *Yerushalmi* (*Bava Metzia* 8a) says:

בעי הוה שמעון בן שטח משמע בריך אלההון דיהודאי מאגר כל הדין עלמא.  
*Rav Shimon ben Shetach would rather hear non-Jews say, "Blessed is the God of the Jews" than receive all the money in the world.*

And when one succeeds at making such a *Kiddush Hashem*, he surely won't want anyone to forget that he's a frum Jew.

### Bottom Line for Working Without Your Yarmulka – it's Not Often that You Would Need to, Rare that You Would be Allowed to, and Even Rarer that it Makes Sense to

The workplace of today – especially in California – is more diverse, accommodating, and tolerant than ever before. People are comfortable wearing clothing, headwear, and accessories of all types, without a second thought. In most cases, there would be very little negative ramifications to a person wearing a *yarmulka*. Nonetheless, one who feels that his career will be otherwise hindered, may be technically permitted to remove his *yarmulka*, but in many cases the halachic limitations will either prevent him from removing his *yarmulka*, or will simply make it not worth it. To review the limitations:

1. One can only take off his *yarmulka* to prevent a significant financial loss, unemployment, or serious underemployment. Missing out on profit or career growth opportunities is not sufficient, and the discomfort of not "fitting in" is

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<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the Rashi in *Chumash* that is scariest and saddest for working *b'nai Torah* is found in *Parshas Va'eschanan* (4:28 *d"h va'aveditem*). Moshe Rabbeinu describes all the punishments that will befall the Jews in *galus* if they do not follow the *mitzvos*, and one of them is "*va'avditem sham elohim ma'asei adam*" - you will worship there foreign man-made gods. Rashi is bothered by the obvious question, idol worship is a crime, not a punishment. Rashi answers, "*kishe'atem ovdim leloheihem, k'ilu ovdim lahem*." The punishment is that you will be forced to work for non-Jews, and if you work for them, inevitably you will serve their gods. The desire to please one's boss and colleagues is so great that inevitably, there is severe risk that one will absorb and mimic – even subtly – their values and practices.

certainly not sufficient.

2. One is only allowed to take off his *yarmulka* at the times and in the places where it will actually cause a financial loss.
3. When making a *bracha*, one must cover his head with his shirt sleeve or another garment.
4. One may not say words of Torah out loud with his head uncovered.
5. If people who see this person without a *yarmulka* will suspect that he's not as observant at work as he is in shul, he may not take off his *yarmulka* because of *maris ayin*.

Even in situations that make *halachic* sense for a person to take off his *yarmulka*, it still might not be a smart religious strategy. For many people, a *yarmulka* provides a constant in-your-face reminder that they are a frum Jew first, and everything else second. This is a powerful barrier that protects from the immersive influences of their workplace that over time could, *chas v'shalom*, drag on their inspiration and commitment to Torah and *mitzvos*.

As the *gemara* said, wearing a *yarmulka* gives a person more *yiras shamayim*. And these days, who can't use some extra *yiras shamayim*?

# On *Kippas* and Careers: A Response to Rabbi Yaakov Siegel

YAAKOV RICH



**T**he *kippa* – or *yarmulka* in Yiddish – has become for men in Jewish communities worldwide a symbol of their Judaism, to the point that an observant Jewish man feels weird or uncomfortable without one. At the same time, it often makes the wearer stand out, even in scenarios where he would rather blend in. Today in America, most people are probably familiar with the fact that wearing a *kippa* classifies one as a Jew, whether they know anything else about Jews or not. And while observant Jews are typically proud of their identity, and take pride in their observance of Torah and *mitzvos*, nonetheless this is not always a statement that one wants to be wearing on their sleeve, or on their head.

In the Jewish community in America, it has been not unusual for some men, even those otherwise scrupulously observant of Torah and *mitzvos*, to remove their *kippa* in their work environment. Rabbi Yaakov Siegel has written a great article laying out his thoughts on this topic, and has once again invited me to counter his arguments with my own. In his article, he makes several independent points, so what I'd like to do in this article is quickly summarize a few of the points made by Rabbi Siegel, and then explain why I would disagree or object to his reasoning.

## **Not Wearing a *Kippa* Because of *Hefsed***

In his article, Rabbi Siegel concludes that taking off one's *kippa* at work is *halachically* restricted to unusual cases<sup>1</sup> in which one would be unemployed or severely underemployed otherwise. This conclusion follows from a *teshuva* of Rav Moshe

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1 By this I mean unusual for today, in California in 2020. It may be that in the 1970's, when Rav Moshe was writing the *teshuva* in question below, such a case was not all that unusual.

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Feinstein (*O" C 4:2*) in which the *shoel's* potential employer required him to remove his *kippa* at work. Rav Moshe was lenient and allowed removing it, but Rabbi Siegel's argument is that the *teshuva* implies that under less serious circumstances, Rav Moshe would be *machmir* and would not allow one to remove their *yarmulka*.

What I want to make clear is that at a base level, the type of argument that Rabbi Siegel is making is a difficult one. The fact that a lenient ruling was given under a certain set of circumstances does not prove that a stringent ruling should be given under a less serious set of circumstances. If Rabbi Siegel wants to make the argument that Rav Moshe would be stringent in less serious cases, *alav hara'aya* – the ball is in his court to prove that this is the case.

Rabbi Siegel attempts to prove his position from the fact that Rav Moshe makes a comparison in his *teshuva* to a *mitzvas aseh*, the fulfillment of which we already know *halachically* only requires the loss of up to twenty percent of one's wealth. Rav Moshe claims that wearing a *yarmulka*, being only a *midas chasidus* – a much lower level than a *mitzvas aseh* – certainly should not require more than this. Additionally, Rav Moshe writes, he considers the lack of employment to be a greater *hefsed* than even twenty percent of the average person's wealth. Therefore, he concludes:

אם א"א להשיג משרה לפרנסתו אם ילך מכוסה ראשו, רשאי לקבל משרה זו.  
*If he is unable to find employment with a head-covering, he is permitted to accept this job [which he will work without a head covering.]*

With this, as Rabbi Siegel notes, Rav Moshe limits his *heter* to the case at hand in his *teshuva*, in which the job-seeker would be required to work without a *yarmulka* and cannot find another job where he would be able to. However, Rav Moshe never addresses a case where the lack of *kippa*-wearing is for any other purpose. Therefore, I fail to see how Rav Moshe's implication here is that he would necessarily be stringent in any other case.

To summarize this point: Rav Moshe in his *teshuva* deals with a case of a mandated *gilui rosh* by one's employer and essentially responds by making a two-fold *kal vachomer*: (1) wearing a *kippa* is no stronger than a *mitzvas aseh* which is trumped by *hefsed meruba*; and (2) lack of employment is even worse than financial loss which we know is considered *hefsed meruba*. Therefore, it is permitted in this case. What about *gilui rosh* for less than *hefsed meruba* – just minor *hefsed*? That is something which Rav Moshe does not address, since it doesn't fall into the *kal vachomer* that he made, and as far as I can tell, the response to such a case cannot be determined from this *teshuva*. It is very possible that one can remove their *kippa* even for *hefsed*

which would not be considered by anyone to be *hefsed meruba*, and the absence of an explicit *heter* by Rav Moshe to do so does not mean that it is forbidden.

### Is There an Obligation to Wear a Kippa?

Let's momentarily put aside the issue of *davening* or saying *brachos* bare-headed. Can one walk around and do their day-to-day activities without a *yarmulka*? Although the *gemara* indicates that covering one's head is a good thing, it never specifies any obligation to do so; in fact, it indicates more of an obligation to stoop in one's posture than to cover one's head.

As Rabbi Siegel has shown, the *poskim* have mostly classified covering one's head as a "*middas chasidus*," a pious measure, whatever the reason may be. What it seems to come down to is *minhag*, the custom of the community. Most Jewish communities in the past centuries have collectively decided that this *middas chasidus* is one that men are encouraged to observe (as opposed to women). Rabbi Siegel seems to take it as a given that this makes *kisui harosh* a "*minhag Yisrael*" and therefore an obligation, a *chiyuv*.

While I think that *minhagim* are extremely important and one is generally obligated to follow the practices of their community, I think Rabbi Siegel is too quick to accept that *kisui harosh* in general is a *chiyuv*. At the very least, I would argue that such a statement is not so straightforward. There are some *minhagim* that are at one extreme, such as women waiting *shiva nekiim* on even *tipas dam k'chardal*, which the *gemara* testifies that women collectively accepted; these have become so ingrained in *halacha* that a finding a *heter* to violate them would be extremely unlikely in any case. But then there are less extreme cases, like *yom tov sheni* in *Chutz La'aretz*, where occasional *heterim* can be found in certain circumstances to violate *yom tov* on those days; and the mourning practices observed between Shiva Asar B'Tamuz and Tisha B'Av, about which one can find *poskim* who are *matir* violations for even minor discomfort. It seems that *minhagim* exist on somewhat of a spectrum with regard to how seriously their observance is taken and how extreme the circumstances must be to allow one to violate them. Therefore, although this might be merely a semantic issue, I think it would be a mistake to lump *minhagim* as *chiyuvim* together with *mitzvos derabanan* and *de'oraisa*, which may have more well-developed rules on the considerations necessary for their transgression.

In addition, *minhagim* can often differ in different places and in different times, and it is important for members of particular communities to follow their own customs. Indeed, the *mishna* in *Pesachim* 4:1 records that some communities had the

custom to refrain from work before *chatzos* on Erev Pesach while others did not; and it stresses the importance of each community to follow its practice. From the language of the *gemara*, we can infer that the custom of most Jews in the time of the *amoraim* in *Bavel* was in fact not to cover their heads.<sup>2</sup> To offer a more recent example, we know that in the Orthodox community in Germany before World War II, it was common for many Jews to only wear a *kippa* when *davening*, learning Torah, and eating.<sup>3</sup> I think that an argument can be made that in many Orthodox communities in America, especially in the generation or two after the war, the custom of the community was not to cover their heads in the workplace, and that would be considered the accepted *minhag* of the community.

In summary, I would expect a *halachic* authority dealing with a question of *gilui rosh* to recognize that it is a question of *minhag*, community custom. One would need to place this custom on the spectrum of *minhagim* to determine how serious its violation is and what circumstances justify it. At the same time, they would need to determine if its practice in all scenarios is really the accepted *minhag* in their particular community. Only then would the *halachic* authority be able to decide what amount of *hefsed* – financial or otherwise – would justify the lack of a *yarmulka*.

### Why Do People Not Cover Their Heads At Work?

As we've discussed, the violation of a *minhag* can often be justified when faced with a *hefsed*. In the first section we noted that the *hefsed* might not need to be a *hefsed meruba* as is usually necessary to push off a *mitzvas aseh*, since this is just a *middas chasidus* which has become the *minhag*. Additionally, we've also discussed how, depending on the level of seriousness of the *minhag* in our community, the level of *hefsed* required to violate it might differ.

Over the last couple of months, I've talked to a few people about when and why they might not wear their *kippa* at work. I have not encountered a single person whose employer required them not to wear it or who felt that they would lose their

2 Many *poskim* make this inference from Rav Huna's comment in the *gemara* (*Shabbos* 118b) that he is "deserving of reward" because he has always kept his head covered. This implies that this action is more than what was usual for the average person. Rav Ovadia Yosef (*Shu"t Yabia Omer* 6:15) infers that people in the times of the *amoraim* did not necessarily cover their heads even for saying *brachos*; this is based on the *gemara* in *Brachos* about how people would cover their head upon reciting the bracha of "*oter Yisrael b'sifara*", which implies that all the *brachos* previously mentioned in the *gemara* that people would say before that were said bare-headed. (We will discuss *davening* and saying *brachos* in another section below.)

3 See the *teshuvah* of Rav David Tzvi Hoffmann (quoted by Rabbi Siegel in note 5; *Melamed L'Hoil* 2:56). See also the comments of Prof. Mordechai Breuer (quoted by Prof. Shapiro on the Seforim Blog, 6/11/2007).

job (or would be unable to attain one) if they wore it. In general there seem to be two main reasons why people don't wear their *kippa* in the workplace. The first is simply the discomfort of standing out. For the same reason that someone wouldn't cut their hair in a mohawk, or get an ostentatious tattoo on their face, or wear strange-looking clothes in general, or even drive an out-of-the-ordinary vehicle – they also wouldn't wear a *yarmulka* on their head; because then they become “that guy” – “the guy who wears a skullcap”, or “the Jewish guy”. To some people (especially to the post-war generation, in my experience), that can be uncomfortable, and that discomfort can be classified as a *hefsed*.<sup>4</sup>

The other main reason that people typically won't wear their *kippa* is because of *Chillul Hashem*. There are some professions, like a criminal defense attorney, HR manager or a health inspector, that require doing things which inevitably others will dislike. The nature of people, unfortunately, is that they generalize and stereotype. It's very possible, and sometimes unavoidable, that there will be clients, or employees, or third parties that will take offense at the actions of this *frum* person, and it will be this person's Jewish identity that will be associated with it in their mind. Because of this, a person in such a profession might feel wary of wearing their *kippa* on the job in case they inadvertently cause unintentional (and unjustified) antisemitism. While *Chillul Hashem* in a scenario like this might not be considered a personal *hefsed*, certainly it can often be an important factor in justifying the violation of a *minhag* like *kisui harosh*.

A common thread I've found when talking to people about this is that even those who don't wear a *kippa* at work – either regularly or just in some cases – will tell you that their Jewish identity is no secret to the people they work closely with. Their colleagues know, for example, that they only eat kosher, or that they don't come to work on Jewish holidays, or even might see them wearing a *kippa* when they eat their lunch. There are so many barriers for a *frum* individual to “being one of the guys”, as Rabbi Siegel puts it – kosher being probably the most prominent – that the *kippa* likely doesn't play the most important role in that consideration.

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4 As Rabbi Siegel noted, emotional *hefsed* is just as relevant as a financial one. He agrees, for example, that if someone would have to take a job in a less desirable field – one which might be upsetting to them – in order to wear their *yarmulka* on the job, then such a thing could be considered *hefsed meruba*.

We have argued, though, that even a limited *hefsed* might be enough to permit uncovering one's head. Therefore, even a smaller amount of emotional discomfort like we're describing above could be sufficient, and certainly each individual (and each career) is different in this regard, and this should be ascertained on a case-by-case basis rather than as a blanket ruling. If wearing a *kippa* would deter or limit a person from interacting and networking to promote their career, in a field which relies on that type of interaction, this could result in long-term financial loss as well as a loss of emotional well-being.



### What About Saying Brachos?

One final point I wanted to raise is the issue of saying *shem Hashem* with one's head uncovered. This applies most practically to saying *brachos* prior to eating or after using the restroom. Rabbi Siegel concludes that one may not say *brachos* without his *yarmulka* unless he covers his head with his sleeve, and might not even be able to say "thank God" or "God willing" while his head is uncovered. Based on this, Rabbi Siegel suggests that it should give one pause to go to work bare-headed if they will have to work around these issues.

Firstly, most men who work without a *kippa* will usually carry their *kippa* with them in their pocket or close at hand. It is not a huge deal in most settings to simply place a *kippa* on one's head for a few moments to say a *bracha* or to *daven mincha*, and then return to business. However, if this comes up in the presence of others, say, having coffee with other people and wanting to recite a *shehakol* before drinking, such a solution could be uncomfortable or worse – and the sleeve alternative might not mitigate the discomfort. While of course the ideal would be to put on a *kippa* in all scenarios, I think that there is room to be *matir* saying a *bracha* without a *kippa*.

*Halachically*, as Rabbi Siegel notes, this originates from a difference of opinion found in *Maseches Sofrim* regarding saying *krias shema* without a head covering, and it seems that the *rishonim* are split on this issue. According to the Beis Yosef, the only reason that the Tur recommends covering one's head during *tefilla* is because Rabbeinu Yerucham writes that it is forbidden to make a *bracha* without a head covering, and it is this same comment of Rabbeinu Yerucham which prompts the Shulchan Aruch to canonize this *halacha* in *Hilchos Brachos* even where the Tur is silent. But besides for the fact that Rabbeinu Yerucham himself is a bit unclear, and it's not clear as well what his source is, there are still many opinions to rely on to make a *bracha* without a head covering.<sup>5</sup> And I think that there is a reasonable argument to

<sup>5</sup> There are several surveys and lists of the *poskim* on this matter, as Rabbi Siegel has already cited in his article. But I think it is worth mentioning the uncertainty involved in this Rabbeinu Yerucham which appears to be the source at the crux of the rulings in the Shulchan Aruch.

The comment appears (*Toldos Adam* 16:7) in a discussion of the *gemara* in *Brachos* (51a) which lists ten things that are appropriate when reciting *birchas hamazon* over a *kos shel bracha*; one of those things is "ituf", upon which the *gemara* elaborates as follows:

עיטוף רב פפא מעטף ויתב רב אסי פריס סודרא על רישיה.

"Ituf:" Rav Papa would wrap himself and sit [to recite birchas hamazon]. Rav Asi would place a covering on his head.

Some *rishonim*, like the Rosh, take Rav Asi's practice as the accepted understanding; the Rosh writes:

וכל הנך רגילין האידנא אף בפריסת סודר שלא יברך בגילוי הראש...

All of these [ten things mentioned in the *gemara*] are common today, even the head-covering in order not to say the blessing with his head uncovered...



be made that one can rely – at least at times – on the lenient opinions.

The fact is that if we really fully accepted the *halachic* position that it is obligatory to cover one's head during prayer, this obligation would apply equally to women, married or not. And while there are some Sefardic communities whose unmarried women and girls cover their heads for *davening* and making *brachos*, in most Ashkenazic communities today, including our own, this is not practiced.<sup>6</sup> The most natural justification for this is that unmarried women in our community rely on those *poskim* who hold that *davening* with *kisui harosh* is not an obligation, but rather a *middas chasidus*, and their *minhag* has become not to practice this *middas chasidus*.<sup>7</sup> Men, on the other hand, who have already accepted the widespread *minhag*

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This is repeated as well by the Tur (O" C 183). It's unclear, though, what the Rosh means by that last statement. Does he mean that people cover their heads for *birchas hamazon* (*al hakos*) because it's inappropriate to recite *birchas hamazon* bare-headed? Or does he mean that the reason for covering heads during *birchas hamazon* is because it's inappropriate **in general** to be bare-headed when making any *brachos*?

Rabbeinu Yerucham's comment is similar to that of the Rosh, but harsher:

וגם עטוף שנותן סודר על ראשו שאסור לברך בגילוי הראש.

*Also ituf – that he should place a covering on his head, as it is forbidden to make the blessing with his head uncovered.*

The same question that we asked about the Rosh applies to Rabbeinu Yerucham. Does he mean it's *assur* to make *brachos* in general, or just *birchas hamazon*? And if he means that it is forbidden to make *brachos* in general bare-headed, why would the *gemara* list it as something specific to *birchas hamazon*? This latter question is asked by the Beis Yosef (O" C 183:3), who as a result rejects Rabbeinu Yerucham's reason and concludes that the *ituf* really means adding an additional covering to one's existing hat. (See also Darkei Moshe and Perisha there. The Shulchan Aruch in that *siman* thus omits any mention of head coverings for *birchas hamazon*.) However, nonetheless, the Beis Yosef elsewhere (in *Hilchos Tefilla* and *Hilchos Brachos*) still uses this Rabbeinu Yerucham as the primary source for the very ruling that *brachos* in general are obligated to be made with a head covering. [See also *Maadanei Yom Tov* to the Rosh (*Brachos* 7:35), and *Machazik Bracha* (O" C 2).]

In addition to all of the above, there is some disagreement as well in regard to whether *ituf* is even necessary for *birchas hamazon* in the *maskanas hagemara*. Rabbi Yochanan is quoted there as saying that only four of the ten things are really necessary, and although the *rishonim* debate how many and which he meant to exclude, most agree that *ituf* was not to be included by Rabbi Yochanan, although it seems that Rabbeinu Yerucham disagrees. The fact of the matter is that this opinion of *assur l'varech b'gilui harosh* was codified by the Shulchan Aruch at least as a *yesh omrim* (and in *Hilchos Brachos* without any prefixing), but when determining when a *heter* can be made by appealing to one side of a *machlokes rishonim*, it's worth considering the respective force of each position, and I think it's possible that the weakness inherent in this quote of Rabbeinu Yerucham can be a relevant factor.

6 See *Shut Yaskil Avdi* (Vol. 7; p. 289), and see *Shut Ish Matzliach*, in which Rav Mazuz is very forceful regarding the obligation of women in the Tunisian community, even young girls, to cover their heads when they daven and when they study Torah. Rav Ovadia Yosef (in *Shut Yabia Omer* 6:15) acknowledges that women ideally should cover their heads when *davening* or saying *brachos*, but also recognizes that this is not the common practice even of many Sefardic communities.

7 This follows Rav Ovadia Yosef (see above note) who bases the practice of many women not to cover their heads when *davening* on the many *rishonim* and *achronim* who deny an obligation in *kisui harosh* for *tefilla* and

of covering their heads throughout the day, also accept the *minhag* of covering their heads during *tefillos* and *brachos* as well in accordance with the more stringent opinions.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, from the fact that our communities rely on the *meikilim* for a large percentage of its members (unmarried women), this shows that in practice we consider it a *middas chasidus* that men have collectively accepted, much the same as the *middas chasidus* of wearing a *kippa* in general. That which we argued earlier, then, that there may be considerations that allow one to not wear their *yarmulka* at work due to discomfort or *Chillul Hashem* or other forms of *hefsed*, would apply in our community just as much to making *brachos* and to *davening*.

And finally, regarding Rav Moshe's *teshuva* that praying bare-headed should be considered *Chukas Hagoyim* and thus *assur mide'oraisa*, I'd like to make three points: (1) This practice of the Roman Catholic Church is out of date as of the Church's 1983 Code of Canon Law, so Rav Moshe's *teshuva* would no longer apply.<sup>9</sup> (2) Even if it

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*brachos*. Rav Eliezer Melamed also seems to follow this approach (*Revivim*; August 8, 2003).

Rav Eliezer Waldenberg, however, (in *Shu"t Tzitz Eliezer* 12:13) attempts to find another justification, based on a comment of the Chasam Sofer that the practice of women became not to cover their heads for *tefilla* at a time when *ovdei avoda zara* (presumably Christians) made it their practice for women to cover their heads. (See below, note 9)

8 With regard to married women, who are generally obligated to cover their hair anyway based on the laws of *tznius*, many *poskim* maintain that their heads should be covered when making *brachos* or learning Torah (especially reciting *pesukim*). However, some are lenient in this respect. (See *Tefilla K'Hilchasa* 7:31; and note 74 where he quotes a verbal ruling from Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach.)

9 To elaborate further on this, the laws and practices of the Roman Catholic Church – which comprises the largest segment of the American population out of all Christian denominations – were canonized in 1917 in the Code of Canon Law (also known as the Pio-Benedictine Code). That canon includes the following:

*Men, in a church or outside a church, while they are assisting at sacred rites, shall be bare-headed, unless the approved mores of the people or peculiar circumstances of things determine otherwise; women, however, shall have a covered head and be modestly dressed, especially when they approach the table of the Lord.*

This was practiced by members of the Church for a long time, but eventually – at least as far as the women were concerned – became less and less popular. In the 1970's, a judgement was issued by the Church that abrogated the practice of women being required to cover their heads.

In 1983, a new Code of Canon Law (known as the Johano-Pauline Code) was issued which stated that everything in the 1917 Code was to be abrogated unless specifically reiterated in the new Code. In the 1983 Code, however, nothing is mentioned about covering or uncovering heads in the Church service. The fact that women are no longer required to wear anything on their heads (and presumably the same applies to men uncovering their heads) was confirmed in 2011 in a letter by Cardinal Raymond Burke (when he was the Prefect of the Apostolic Signatura).

It is very possible that what Rav Moshe was referring to in his *teshuva* was that which the Catholic Church required men to have their heads uncovered during the service, which when he wrote the *teshuva* was still one of

wasn't out of date, if we followed this approach, that would make it equally an issue of *Chukas Hagoyim* for women to cover their heads during prayer, which I've not found anyone to claim.<sup>10</sup> (3) I cannot think of another case where it is an issue of *Chukas Hagoyim* to **not do something**, and I find Rav Moshe's argument inherently to be a stretch in a case where the man is not wearing anything on his head to begin with.<sup>11</sup>

### Saying "God" in English

As I mentioned above, Rabbi Siegel concludes that it is preferable not to say "God" in English while bare-headed, such as using phrases like "thank God" or "God willing", but that there "may be grounds to permit it" based on another *teshuva* of Rav Moshe Feinstein. This is, in my opinion, an understatement.

Rav Moshe's *heter* in that *teshuva* is based primarily on the Shach's opinion in *Yoreh Deah* (179:11), that the *shem Hashem* in other languages (like "God") is not *halachically* regarded as the *shem Hashem*, which we regularly rely on when it comes to the name "God" written down. Only to add extra force to his *heter* does he mention that this is all the more so for **saying** the name "God" bare-headed, for which there is anyway a *machlokes rishonim*, and therefore more reason to be *meikil*.

Based on Rav Moshe's *teshuva*, and the position of the Shach in general, I would conclude – like Rav Moshe does – that "*ein l'hakpid kol kach*" – one should not be too concerned about saying "thank God" while not wearing their *kippa*. And if one is able to be *machmir* and cover their heads, of course that's a nice practice.

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the laws in effect, and only several years later was it officially repealed. In truth, though, one will find that many Catholic men -especially the older or more traditional – still follow this practice of specifically having their heads uncovered in Church even though it is no longer in the official code (and the same is true for women who still practice the custom of wearing hats to Church); some feel that there is even a moral obligation involved based on Biblical sources. But arguably, there is somewhat of an implication in Rav Moshe's *teshuva* that he is referring to an official law of the Christians, and at the very least I think that it cannot be proven that Rav Moshe would say the same today.

10 See, however, the *Tzitz Eliezer* (cited above in note 7) who theorizes that this may be why the custom became for Jewish women (in many communities) to not cover their heads for prayer. He does not say, though, that even today doing so would be an issue of *Chukas Akum*.

11 Interestingly, Rav Moshe wrote an earlier *teshuva* (O"C 4:40:13) in 1963 in which he discusses a prayer which was said in American public schools (we will examine this *teshuva* further in the next section). One of his conclusions there is that the children who say this prayer – even though he explicitly notes that many do not wear *yarmulkas* – fulfill the *mitzva de'oraisa* of *tefilla*. This seems to be a direct contradiction to his 1979 *teshuva* that one is not *yotze* without a *kippa* even *bedi'eved*. (It is possible, though, that Rav Moshe only later learned about the rule in the Catholic church for men to pray bare-headed.)

In addition, there are other *poskim* – even those who lived in Christian societies – who explicitly say that one is *yotze bedi'eved* if they made a *bracha* bare-headed. (See, for example, *Aruch Hashulchan* O"C 206:6)

## Conclusion

Over the course of this article, we've shown that it can often be reasonable for some people not to wear their *yarmulka* in their work setting. Common reasons which can often be acceptable are: (1) there is a concern of causing possible *Chillul Hashem*, and (2) one doesn't want to stand out in the workplace, or worse – be judged based on someone's preconceived biases.

Whether one wears his *kippa* to work or not is a decision to be made depending on one's unique circumstances, such as what type of job he has, how emotionally comfortable he is doing so, and what the custom of his wider community is. We have shown that there is plenty of room to be lenient in this matter even in a more typical case today. Since covering one's head is a *minhag*, there are cases where it can be overridden by considerations even less than *hefsed meruba*, and it can be argued that the *minhag* in many American communities is not necessarily to cover one's head in the workplace to begin with.<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, we've shown that if one does not wear their *kippa* in their work environment, it is not necessarily a given that he would have to cover his head any time he wishes to make a *bracha*, as there is much room to be lenient here as well. And certainly he wouldn't have to refrain from saying "thank God" or other similar phrases with his head uncovered.

All that said, I don't think that everyone should be going to work with their heads uncovered. There are many people in our community who – *baruch Hashem* – maintain successful careers in which there is no concern that arises from wearing a *kippa*, and they are perfectly comfortable with wearing it where they work. We are lucky that we live in a time and a place where our Jewish identity does not have to be hidden and it can be acknowledged and expressed, and even appreciated. And if one is able to be *mekadesh Shem Shamayim* in the process, *harei zeh meshubach*.

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12 Given the argument that it's perfectly acceptable to not cover one's head in the workplace, I don't see any reason why such a thing should be considered *maris ayin*, as Rabbi Siegel suggests in his article. It's not as if there is a justification for the person's actions which cannot be understood by the bystander; the person is clearly at work or in a work-related setting. Personally, I have seen several people in their work settings – whom I know otherwise from the community – who were not wearing their *kippa*, but I cannot imagine having thought, "I guess this person is not as observant at work."

# Halacha and Machshava



Evan Silver

Eli Snyder

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# A Case for Daf Yomi

EVAN SILVER



**W**ith our busy schedule and so much Torah to learn, it is imperative to develop a learning seder that maximizes our use of time. The modern era has, in some ways, made our lives more complicated and busier than ever before, but at the same time, technology has made Torah more readily available. The combination of these factors has changed people's learning. Daf Yomi in particular has grown in popularity due to these advances, providing an excellent opportunity to ensure daily learning within a busy schedule.

## The Need to Learn of all Shas

The main focus of most yeshivas is learning *b'iyun* (in depth). This teaches the students how to learn for the future but, unfortunately, many graduate yeshivas without *bekius* (vast knowledge)<sup>1</sup> in *gemara* and often without knowing many practical *halachos*. Rav Moshe writes that while there is an important obligation to learn *b'iyun*, there is also a mitzva to learn *bekius* and Daf Yomi can help achieve this goal<sup>2</sup>. The *gemara* compares someone who has vast knowledge in Torah to *Har Sinai*, and someone who has in-depth knowledge to one who uproots mountains. The question is then asked as to

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<sup>1</sup> *Bekius* is based on the term *baki*, to become an expert. The word is generally used to convey a style of learning which results in broad knowledge of Torah. This is how the term is used in this article.

<sup>2</sup> *Igros Moshe Y"D* 4:36:10 and *Y"D* 2:110

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This article is in memory of my grandfather, Ovadia ben Tzvi Yitzchok, who was *zoche* to be *misayim Shas* through Daf Yomi and whose first *yahrzeit* falls out around the publication of this journal. While I will hopefully argue a strong case for Daf Yomi, this might not apply to everyone equally and everyone needs to figure out the learning *seder* that fits them best, ideally in consultation with a Rav. Even though there have been numerous articles written on this topic recently, I wanted to write on this topic based on the positive experience I had with Daf Yomi, both individually and through my grandfather. It is my hope and intention that this article will encourage others to participate in Daf Yomi as well.

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which is preferable, to which the answer is to be like *Har Sinai*.<sup>3</sup> With knowledge in only one area, one might fail to consider *halachic* issues from a different area. For example, *Hilchos Shabbos* is a subject that is commonly studied and reviewed (as it should be) due to its complexity. However, solely focusing on *Hilchos Shabbos* could lead us to error. One could find a way within the laws of Shabbos to have a non-Jew plug in a crock pot (which, under most circumstances, is forbidden anyway), but, at the same time, transgress the laws of a completely unrelated issue, *bishul akum* (food cooked by a non-Jew). While learning *b'iyun* trains the *halachic* mind and fulfills the mitzva to learn Torah for the sake of learning, we also need to learn *bekius* in order to follow the commandments. It is important to have exposure to all areas of *halacha* even if all the details are not remembered. Having just a cursory knowledge of the broad topics helps to at least know when to ask a Rav a question.

Some may think that with the ability to search the internet for anything in an instant, there is less of a need to learn *Kol Hatorah Kula*.<sup>4</sup> I would argue the opposite is true. It is even more imperative to have a well-rounded background in Torah than ever before. Unfortunately having access to so much knowledge at our fingertips can work to our detriment. Anyone can find a minority obscure source for almost anything, like women wearing tefillin. Without having the context of having learned all of Torah, and understanding all the opinions, there is danger in wide access to such opinions. More and more each day, we are seeing the negative results of technology and the access it has given people to information. Whereas in the past a typical layman might not have been exposed to so many views, with the vast dissemination of information, especially when written by people who claim to be Torah observant, we must know how to filter and put in context the various views. Rabbi Elazar teaches us to be diligent in Torah to know how to answer an *apikores* (heretic).<sup>5</sup> In some cases, that might mean knowing Tanach well, but when the attacks on Torah Judaism are coming from those well versed in Talmud, we too need to be well versed, or at least familiar with all the broad concepts, in Talmud.

### Benefits of Daf Yomi

Learning at such a quick pace presents a challenge with remembering all the learning.

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<sup>3</sup> *Horayos* 14a

<sup>4</sup> It is obviously impossible to learn everything ever written. I am using *Kol Hatorah Kula* to refer to the oral and written law by studying all of Tanach and Talmud at the very least.

<sup>5</sup> *Pirkei Avos* 2:14



However, even if knowledge of the material is lost, the benefits of daily learning are not. There are many experiences in life in which we do not remember, but still have a transformative impact. The skill to read is taught even though the specific sentences in which it was taught might be forgotten and the benefits of exercise are achieved even without remembering the details of all the workouts. Learning Torah daily leads to spiritual growth, even without specific memory of the details. The broad topics which are often remembered will assist in other learning and observance of *mitzvos*. It is still important to remember as much as possible, as the *gemara* in *Menachos* 99b says that it is a transgression to forget one's learning. This does not mean that forgetting anything from Daf Yomi would be a sin. The transgression requires some sort of intention, like not reviewing out of laziness.<sup>6</sup> If Daf Yomi is important and something constantly on the mind and reviewed, it will be remembered. Fortunately, there are many resources like apps and emails to make reviewing convenient. The Torah gives us advice on remembering learning as we are told to “*v'dibarta bam*” (speak them)<sup>7</sup> “and it should be in your mouth and hearts.”<sup>8</sup> When everyone is learning the same thing, there is ample opportunity to discuss one's learning, leading to more conversation about Torah and its values and embodying the *gemara* in *Sukka* 56b that “*tov l'tzadik tov l'shcheino*,” (good to the righteous, good for his neighbor). Fear of forgetting is not a reason not to start Daf Yomi, as one will find they remember more than anticipated and the growth that remains is invaluable.

Daily learning leads to a constant Torah outlook that will improve all areas of life, to which there were numerous testimonies at the various *Siyum Hashas* celebrations. Torah learning subdues the evil inclination,<sup>9</sup> as well as providing inspiration and leading one to Teshuva.<sup>10</sup> We say after Torah reading, “*Eitz chayim hi l'machazikim ba v'tomche'ah me'ushar*,” “[The Torah] is a tree of life to those who grasp to it and whoever holds on to it is happy.” (*Mishlei* 3:18) Torah benefits all those who practice and learn it. As no one is perfect and can perform all the *mitzvos* perfectly, a religious Jew must always be looking to grow. Through learning more, one is thus encouraged and enabled to grow more, and Daf Yomi is an excellent step in this process. When a person spends time learning Torah at any level, there is an internal shift that takes

<sup>6</sup> *Shulchan Aruch Harav Talmud Torah* 2:4

<sup>7</sup> *Devarim* 6:7

<sup>8</sup> *Shemos* 13:9 and *Devarim* 30:14

<sup>9</sup> *Berachos* 5a

<sup>10</sup> *Sharei Teshuva* 2:10

place. Torah helps a person put the proper perspective on life in general, by learning to focus on the important things like family, community, and ways that we can contribute to society. Ultimately, the combination of daily learning and finishing Shas makes us not only better Jews, but better people as well.

### **The Importance of a Daily Learning Seder**

The *gemara* in *Shabbos* 31a says that after 120 years we are all asked six questions, one of which is did we set time to learn Torah. This can be achieved in a variety of ways, such as having a set time to learn or set goal of what to learn, each with its own advantages. Having a set content goal for each day provides something to learn during spare time. A program like Daf Yomi, that everyone is doing together, ensures that there are no days off for vacation or change in the schedule. Even when tired or on vacation, you must continue the daily commitment or fall behind. This also creates a unity where, when traveling, we can walk into any Daf Yomi shiur in the world and be learning the same thing or to talk to any fellow Jew doing Daf Yomi about the *sugya* of the day. This culminates with the great *zchus* of being *misayim* with *Klal Yisrael* at the end of the seven-year cycle which is a true *b'rov am hadras melech* (in multitudes there is glorification of the King).

Another question we are asked in Heaven is whether we were occupied in procreation. This is not simply about about having kids but also about properly raising kids through being *mechanech* (educating) the next generation. Sending children to Jewish school is not enough. *Chinuch* begins at home, and parents must lead by example. It would be hypocritical of parents to send a child to a school that teaches the importance of Torah and *mitzvos*, and then fail at home to make learning a priority through a daily commitment or take a lackadaisical approach to other *mitzvos* such as daily minyan. Taking time out of a busy schedule to learn Daf Yomi is an excellent way to teach children the importance of learning Torah. Speaking from experience, watching my grandfather learning Daf Yomi on vacation taught me the importance of Torah and that there are no vacations from learning.

Learning cannot just be a weekly commitment, but rather needs to be a daily priority. The *Yerushalmi* in *Nedarim* tells us that the most important pasuk of the Torah is

את הכבש אחד תעשה בבקר ואת הכבש השני תעשה בין הערבים:  
*You shall offer one lamb in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer  
 at twilight. (Bamidbar 28:4)*

There is something important about consistency. It is relatively easy to go to shul once a year, but it takes real commitment and consistency to go every day, even when feeling tired or busy. One of the most impressive records in baseball is Cal Ripken Jr's 2,632 consecutive games played. What's interesting is that the record is often considered greater or more unbreakable than the one for most total games played, total hits, total homeruns or even consecutive hits. This record is impressive nonetheless due to the uniqueness to the consistency. Not only is this constancy itself important, but it pushes us through the challenges. We all have *nisyanos* (tests), like when we feel we are too tired to go back out for late *maariv*, too busy to finish the day's *daf*, or traveling and want to eat something questionable, but it's the consistency that pushes us through it. It is the times like these when we pass the challenges that defines our belief and commitment to Torah.

Another lesson from the daily sacrifice is that it is called *Tamid* (continuous) even though it is not continuous, but rather just brought twice a day. It is called continuous because it has a continuous effect of allowing the other sacrifices that day to be offered. This idea applies to Torah as well; one who learns in the morning and night creates a continuous effect of everything being done that day being for sake of Torah.<sup>11</sup> Really, we should be learning Torah all day, but Hashem understands that many of us need to go out and earn a livelihood. By filling our free moments with Torah, we demonstrate our true goal of learning Torah all day and Hashem rewards us commensurately. This is one explanation of the phrase recited when we are *misayim* (finish) a *mesechta*: "we work and they work, we work and receive reward and the work and do not receive reward".<sup>12</sup> In addition to filling our free time with Torah, we need to have *bitachon* (faith) that Hashem will provide and not overdue our *hishtadlus* (mundane work) by spending too much time away from learning.

### **There's Always Time for Daf Yomi**

With limited hours in the day, how much time should one spend on learning *bekius*, and is Daf Yomi the best use of time? It is important to be intellectually honest in determining if the time spent on Daf Yomi would be better used for other learning. Daf Yomi has grown, in part, by the ease of use, first with English translation of *gemara* and then with the availability of online *shiurim* right to our phones. This allows one to do Daf Yomi anytime, anywhere, such as in the car ride to work, while waiting for

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11 *Judaism Reclaimed* by Shmuel Phillips

12 Based on Rabbi Revah's speech at the LA *Siyum Hashas*

a client, between meetings, waiting for a patient, waiting on line, or even at the gym. Growing up, my father would often take his *tikkun* to work so he could review the *leining* between patients. The average commute time in America is 27 minutes each way, which comes to five hours a week that can be used to learn Torah.<sup>13</sup> Without the daily commitment of Daf Yomi, these times could easily turn into *bitul zman* (wasted time). The Chasam Sofer said he became a *talmid chacham* in five minutes, referring to all the periods of five minutes though the day that most people waste.<sup>14</sup> If we take all of those minutes during the day and use them towards a program like Daf Yomi, we too can become *talmidei chachamim*. In the secular world, there's a terrible expression "to kill time", whereas we see time as a gift from Hashem that we must use rather than find ways to "kill". Having a daily goal of learning ensures that whenever there is time to spare there is something to learn, without consideration. As we learn how to maximize our time for learning Torah, it influences other areas of our lives, enabling us to become more productive in all walks of life as well.

The *gemara* tells the story that the nations of the world will tell Hashem that everything they built was so the Jews can learn Torah, to which they are called fools.<sup>15</sup> The reason they are called fools and not liars, is that that they were correct in that that was the real reason those things were built, it just was not their motivation. Consequently, the printing press, internet, smartphones and apps were all created to make it easier for us to learn Torah. It would be squandering a smartphone to use it for work but not to learn Torah. On the same token, MetLife stadium was really built to host *siyum hashas* and not for sporting events. All this technology allows us to accomplish more in a given day, from being able to work remotely, to ordering almost anything instantly, to, most importantly, learning Torah with convenience.

The *Kodesh Hakedoshim* (Holy of Holies, inner most chamber) in the *Beis Hamikdash* measured only twenty by twenty *amos* and yet there were ten *amos* between the walls and the ark on all sides. This is one of the most complicated miracles to fathom, for we can picture what splitting a sea looks like (Hollywood recreated that), but how do we picture having a room and an ark where the numbers do not add up? The Ark did not take up any space from the room in which it was in. Similarly learning more Torah through Daf Yomi creates its own space in the day, without taking away from prior responsibilities. Simply, the learning takes place at

13 [www.indexmundi.com/facts/united-states/quick-facts/all-states/average-commute-time#map](http://www.indexmundi.com/facts/united-states/quick-facts/all-states/average-commute-time#map)

14 *A Shabbos Vort: A Collection of Thoughts, Stories and Parables on the Weekly Parashah* by Rabbi Yisrael Bronstein

15 *Avoda Zara* 2b and Artscroll footnote 16 *ibid*

times in the day that were previously wasted. On a more spiritual level we do not need to be overly concerned on how to find extra time to learn because “*Hakol biydei Shamayim chutz miyiras Shamayim*,” “Everything is in the hand of Heaven, except fear of Heaven”.<sup>16</sup> Annual income is determined by Hashem and not by the number of hours worked, so a little more time learning would not necessarily mean less income.<sup>17</sup>

Rabbi Salanter, when asked what to learn if someone only has fifteen minutes to learn, said to learn *mussar*, because then one would realize they have more time to learn. We all have time to learn more, it’s just that our commitment to Talmud Torah needs to be higher up on our priority list. There should be no mindset of not being able to learn, as the *gemara* teaches us “*yagasi v’lo matzasi al taamin*,” “if someone says I have tried but didn’t succeed, don’t believe him.”<sup>18</sup> One can always claim something is impossible or find an excuse. Similarly, it says in *Mishlei* that the lazy man doesn’t go to greet his Rebbi because there is a lion in the road. The Ramchal asks why he is called lazy, since of course he should not go if there is a lion. He answers that the lazy person will always find the lion in the road.<sup>19</sup> On the contrary, a committed Jew will succeed in fulfilling Torah and *mitzvos* even when they have every excuse in the book. With a little bit of thought and planning, anyone can make time for more learning.

## Conclusion

Daf Yomi provides an efficient way to ensure daily learning to complete *Shas*, while creating an amazing *achdus* in *Klal Yisrael*. Daf Yomi might not be ideal for someone learning full time in Yeshiva or a beginner, but is still important to have proper daily learning goals. For everyone else, the final question is when to start this endeavor. People often feel it may be better to wait for after retirement, the next *mesechta*, or the next cycle. The best time to start is right now, as it says in *Pirkei Avos* (1:14) “*v’im lo achshav, eimasai*,” “If not now when.” I look forward to being *misayim* with all of you on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Sivan 5787.

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16 *Nidda* 16b

17 This idea is supported in several places such as the lesson of the *manna* (Rashi *Shemos* 16:32) and in the *gemara Berachos* 35b

18 *Megilla* 6b

19 *Mesilas Yesharim* Chapter 9 commenting on *Mishlei* 26:13



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# How Do You Jew?

ELI SNYDER



**W**e all do things differently. How we brush our teeth, make (or don't make) our bed, or put on our shoes. How we walk, talk, and think. We are all different. What we think about when we daven, how we learn, how we speak about others, how we care about and for them. Different *minhagim*, different *mitzvos* we prefer to emphasize, different means to connect to the Almighty. It is strange though. Don't we have a Divine set of rules directly communicated from God to tell us exactly how to live our lives? Even if as flawed individuals we are not all able to meet this Platonic ideal for life practice, is it safe to assume there is an objectively "correct" way of life for which we should all strive?

In life and practice, it is apparent we are living with a fragmented Torah and the presence of *machlokes*, different *hashkafos*,<sup>1</sup> *minhagim*, and *chumros*. At what point in Jewish history did this fragmentation begin, and more importantly, why? A clear divide is apparent in the first *perek* of *Pirkei Avos*. Initially there is a clearly defined transmission; Moshe received the Torah from *Har Sinai* and passed it on to Yehoshua. Yehoshua to the *Zekeinim*, the *Zekeinim* to the *Neviim*, *Neviim* to the *Anshei K'neses HaGedola* and then to Shimon HaTzadik, followed by Antigones Ish Socho. Even when there are groups of people, there is still a linear *mesora*. Then we have the *Zugos*, the pairs. Yosi ben Yoezer and Yosi ben Yochanon. Yehoshua ben Perachya and Nitai HaArbeili. This goes on until we reach Hillel and Shamai. At this point, the *mishna* no longer explains who received from whom. The *mesora* is ostensibly too splintered. Beis Hillel and Beis Shammai are famous for their *machlokesim*. We have other "rivals" – Abbaye and Rava, Rav and Shmuel. But while we typically *paskin* in each situation according to just one opinion, it does not necessarily mean it is more "correct." The *gemara* in *Eruvin* 13b famously states that after three years of arguing

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<sup>1</sup> Or "*hashkafot*" – see what I mean?

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between Beis Hillel and Beis Shammai, a Heavenly voice proclaimed, “*Eilu v’eilu divrei Elokim chayim*,” “this one and this one are words of the Living God.”<sup>2</sup> So while we hold like Beis Hillel in most cases, they are not objectively more *correct*. This is a curious and somewhat counter-intuitive concept whose root must be explored.

While the transmission stayed steady from Moshe Rabbeinu for hundreds of years, the underlying fissions were already primed from the moment Moshe came down with the first set of *Luchos*.<sup>3</sup> Upon witnessing *Klal Yisrael* and the Golden Calf, Moshe smashed the *Luchos* on the ground, *literally* fragmenting the Torah. Moshe realized a unified Torah could not work for the Jews, and Hashem agreed. Rashi says:

לעיני כל ישראל. שנשאו לבו לשבר הלוחות לעיניהם שנאמר “ואשברם לעיניכם”  
 (דברים ט’) והסכימה דעת הקדוש ברוך הוא לדעתו, שנאמר “אשר שברת” (שמות  
 ל”ד) – ישר כחך ששברת:

*Moshe decided to break the Luchos in front of Bnei Yisrael’s eyes... and Hashem agreed with Moshe’s reasoning as the pasuk says, ‘That you broke’ – good job that you broke (the Luchos). (Rashi Devarim 34:12)*

Moshe is told in *Shemos* 34:1 to carve out two new *Luchos* like the first and to write on the new set the same thing as the first set he shattered. The Torah itself is the same but it has internal fissures modeled after the first set. There is potential for diversity, of different approaches, different ways to practice. The question remains, why must this be so?

To begin, one must first understand that to uncover the patterns of the Universe, one must be familiar with the patterns of the Torah. The Torah is the blueprint, the framework, the genetic code that preceded Creation and is on which Creation was and is built. As such, patterns in human history, in nature, in psychology all are projections of Torah concepts. Rebbe Yishmael famously lists Thirteen *Middos*, homiletical tools, that allow us to interpret the Written Torah. Among them is “*Klal Prat U’Klal*” and it is this mechanism at play in regard to our discussion. Initially there is the unified theme, the “correct” one, so to speak. Then that theme must be broken into its particulars, analyzed from all its angles, understood inside and out. Then once each piece is understood and rectified, we return to the “*Klal*” level, now

<sup>2</sup> See *Nitzachon* 3:1, “Beis Shammai, Beis Hillel and the loss of the Beis HaMikdash”

<sup>3</sup> Many of the concepts and sources presented in this article have been gleaned from shiurim given by Rav Amos Luban during my time at Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh. As such, the best ideas presented here are likely his, the other not as good ones you can probably blame on me.



with a much deeper understanding. For example, look at the history of medicine. In ancient and medieval times, the body was looked at holistically. Doctors were all general practitioners. As medical knowledge advanced, it became too unwieldy for one person to know the intricate details of every anatomical structure, every disease and how it affects different demographics. Hence the need for specialization. Individuals were tasked with intimate knowledge of just one specific element of the human condition. In modern times there are sub-specialties upon sub-specialties. However, there are risks involved in treating the different parts of the human body as separate islands. Specialists must keep in mind the holistic nature of the body when looking at the different facets. The *Klal* must be broken apart, but only with the eventual intent of reaching a more comprehensive and unified *Klal*.<sup>4</sup>

If we want to trace this fragmentation of the Torah even further back, we might say that this pattern began with the fragmentation of humanity itself. At some point on Day 6, there was just one human – Adam HaRishon. All of humanity was encapsulated in one soul. Man was created *B'Tzelem Elokim*, in the Image of God and included in that image (which of course is not physical) were the spiritual forces that created the Universe, both masculine and feminine. The *pasuk* in *Bereishis* (1:27) says, “*VaYivra Elokim es Adam B'Tzalmo, B'Tzelem Elokim b'rah oso, zachar u'nikeiva bara osam*” – and God created Adam in His Image, in the Image of God he Created Him, male and female He created Them.” In the second *perek*, Adam was created as an individual and then Chava was created out of his “*tzela*” – commonly translated as “rib” but better translated as “side.”<sup>5</sup> Initially, masculinity and femininity were created together in one person at one time and then that person was split, masculinity to be contained within Adam and femininity with Chava. Why? Because “*Lo tov heyos ha'adam l'vado* (2:18)” – It is not good for there to be just one person. Initially yes, humanity was created on a *klal* level, but then the process of “*prat*” began immediately. At this point, there was only one “Torah” so to speak, only one commandment – not to eat from the *Eitz HaDaas*. But with two people, even the same action can have a

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<sup>4</sup> *L'havdil*, we can argue this was the intent of the Founding Fathers when they designed the United States of America. In the name itself there is an implication of unity but also recognition of individual segments. Each state had its own identity; some were more agrarian, others more industrial, some more religious and others more secular, some more tolerant and others more monolithic, Red and Blue and Purple. The Founders recognized and appreciated this and to ensure that each state maintained its own entity and not get swallowed by the gross majority, they implemented means such as the Senate, the Electoral College and a limited Federal government to ensure that this diversity, while still united under common principles like Liberty and Freedom, would continue. Arguably, this is what gives the USA its unique power and influence in the world sphere.

<sup>5</sup> See *Berachos* 61a

different approach and motivation. Compare this to the *Chanukas HaBayis* in *Parshas Naso*. All the tribal leaders brought a completely identical gift upon the inauguration of the *Mishkan* and yet the Torah makes sure to list out each one individually. An identical act can still have separate motivations and intents.

The deeper sources explain that had Adam and Chava not eaten from the *Eitz HaDaas*, the world, created in an incomplete state, would have been fully rectified by that one action of abstention. Instead, that *tikkun*, that fix, was fragmented and it is upon each person, a different piece of Adam HaRishon's soul, to fix their specific piece of Adam's sin. The Torah too was fragmented on *Har Sinai* and it is upon each Jew to fix their personal fragment of the shattered Torah.<sup>6</sup> We all have our own destiny to discover and purpose to pursue.<sup>7</sup>

The question of what is the **most** objectively correct way to practice Judaism can therefore be understood as such. There is no objectively correct way to practice Judaism **on the collective level**. Only Adam HaRishon had the "correct" collective *hashkafa*, since he was the first and only collective individual, in a manner of speaking. If you imagine a target, Adam HaRishon's *hashkafa* is the only one to hit a true bulls-eye (had he succeeded). Every other group (of which there is much overlap) – be it Ashekenaz or Sefard, Yeshivish or Modern Orthodox, Dati Leumi or Chareidi, Chabad or Breslov etc. etc. is hitting somewhere on the target but not the direct middle. Let's be clear - there are religions and philosophies (and/or subsects thereof) that miss the target completely.<sup>8</sup> That is not part of this discussion. So while certain collectives might be hitting *closer* to the center, this is not as important as the other target we each must analyze, our personal one. There might not be an objectively correct way to practice on the **macro** level but there most certainly is on the **micro** level. That is why it is not productive to dwell too much on what is the **best** *hashkafa*. While one group might be closer to the center on the big target, it is more

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6 It has always been a curious and somewhat sad truth that the world Jewish population for millennia has fluctuated between 10 to 20 million people. Whether by external factors such as genocide and pogroms or internal factors like assimilation, our numbers are always kept in check – in huge contrast to the rapid growth of humanity as a whole. Perhaps the number of broken pieces of *Luchos* was indeed finite. Perhaps there is never more than ~20 million elements of Torah at a given time to be rectified. Something to think about.

7 See *Nitzachon* 2:2, "The Klippa of a Kippa: Addressing our Dress through the Custom of Costumes" and *Nitzachon* 5:1, "Who Am I"

8 As far as Judaism, it should be safe to say that a group that foundationally denies the *Ikarei Emuna*, fundamentals of faith, as formulated by different *rishonim* and *acharonim* (e.g. Rambam's Thirteen Principles as found in his Introduction to *Perek Chelek* in *Sanhedrin*) would be "missing the target." Similarly for world religions, they would need to adhere to the Seven Noachide Laws.

important on the cosmic level to find the group that accommodates to your **personal** target. That group will probably not be the exact right fit either but we need to daven somewhere.<sup>9</sup>

The pattern of “*Klal Prat U’Klal*” is fundamental to understanding all elements of life – in learning, medicine and science, in religious practice and in the overall state of humanity. As Jews, we must remember we are both fragments of Adam Harishon’s soul, and also that we each must keep a Torah that is our own fragment of the shattered *Luchos*. While it is important to build families and communities of likeminded individuals it is equally important to recognize that when individuals within your family or community are not as like-minded, that can very well be by design. By embracing our differences we can hopefully once again achieve a collectively integrated conscious, *Am Echad, B’Leiv Echad*.

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<sup>9</sup> It’s the old joke – a passing ship discovers an old Jew that has been stranded on a desert island for years. They notice there are three structures that he built and inquire what they are for. “The first one,” he says, “is my house and the second is my Shul.” “And the third?” inquired the Captain. “That’s my old Shul, I’ll never step foot in that place again!”



# *Techiyas Hameisim:* A Principle of Faith

AARON MICHELSON



Of all the Thirteen Principles of Faith listed by the Rambam, it is the last principle of *techiyas hamesim* that I find the most perplexing. The prior principles in the list focus on our faith in God and reflect on His various aspects: His Oneness, that He is non-corporeal, that there was nothing before Him, that it is only fitting to pray to Him, and so on, as well as touching on prophesy and the idea of reward and punishment. Without belaboring the point, while each in their own right requires deep thought, on some level I know how to approach them. Even *emuna* in the coming of *Mashiach* in the twelfth article is tangible to us in many ways.

These articles are built into the psyche of being Jewish and are ingrained in the actions and liturgy of daily life. Regardless if one is rich or poor, and has more or less time for free thought, it is the belief in these articles of faith that reach everyone irrespective of ability and education. The Rambam cautions us to reinforce faith and work on it over the course of our lives.

But this last one is a puzzle in many ways. How does it affect me to know there is going to be a resurrection? Is it supposed to make me wonder how things will work out, if I'm on this side of the veil or the other when the *Mashiach* comes and God decides it is time to bring about this event? Where does it show up in our education/psyche to have such an item on the list?

I will hope to work on the following questions in the next few pages. Although there will be sources discussed from the *mishna* and *gemara*, this essay is not intended as a scholarly article, but more of a discussion.

- What does the basic interpretation mean?
- Why is it on the list of principles of faith?
- What practical influence does it have on our daily lives?

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Lets revisit some source material and get very confused. The concept is written in the *mishna* and a few details are picked out from the *gemara*. The *mishna* in *Sanhedrin* 90a says:

ואלו שאין להם חלק לעולם הבא: האומר אין תחיית המתים מן התורה.  
 “And these will not receive a portion in the World To Come, one who says  
 techeiyas hameisim is not from the Torah....”

It may just be the Jewish comedian in me, but you’ve got to love God’s style on that one:

*Blasphemer:* “There isn’t going to be a resurrection!”

*God:* “Great, then I won’t resurrect you.”

*Blasphemer:* “!!!”

God lets them be right .... to each their own.

In elementary school we are taught that we will be resurrected and our souls will be reunited with our earthly bodies. We can piece together more details from discussions in the *gemara* concerning this topic. The *gemara* continues with various conversations of non-Jews and blasphemers who have questions about *techiyas hamesim*, such as the exchange between the Caesar and Rabban Gamliel (ibid 90b), in which the Caesar asks how dust can return to life, to which Rabban Gamliel answers that if God can create you from a little fluid, why not? Proofs are provided from the Torah, *Neviim* and *Kesuvim*, in drawn-out arguments with blasphemers.

After having experience with *gemara*, one tends to note patterns in the discussions. An important mitzva is deduced from *Tanach*, with verses quoted that enable us to elucidate the details. However, lessons on life and philosophy are usually brought from many sources, because important lessons tend to appear widely in *Tanach*. Where does an article of faith fall in this regard?

One gets the sense that irrespective of the arguments with blasphemers, it was very important to our great sages to provide proofs for the coming resurrection. Each searched with their wealth of knowledge for the kernels of resurrection and what it would mean. It was not enough that someone else had a proof; they needed to work out their own personal proofs and pass them on to the generations, as upwards of ten times similar questions and debates are rebuffed by the sages from different sources. That each felt such a drive to connect to the resurrection clearly influenced the Rambam when he compiled his list.

We can also learn more from the *mishna* about resurrection by examining who will not enter *Olam Haba*. This list should form some rough benchmark and what that can teach us about the event itself. The *mishna* lists three kings and four commoners.

Those on the list predominantly did something wicked, such as subverting Jews to idolatry (Gechazi), advocating wholesale murder of *kohanim* (Doeg) and so on. The *mishna* also lists other things that would cause one to forfeit their portion of *Olam Haba*, such as denying the Torah is from *shamayim*, and others. So at the very least we can glean that:

1. Our actions seem to determine our ability to qualify.

2. If you blaspheme the resurrection, or another core tenet of Judaism, you also don't seem to qualify. The case example is from *Melachim II* 7:1, where the courtier did not believe the prophecy of Elisha, leading to his death by stampede and cutting him off from seeing the fulfillment of the prophecy that he blasphemed.

From these two criteria one can draw a common thread, namely that reward and punishment are exact. What you blaspheme you can't have, when you don't have faith in prophesy you also can't pass muster. Because all prophesy is taken together, if you blaspheme one, you blaspheme them all. Thus the *gemara* establishes these two criteria (at least). It seems that we have to be fundamentally good Jews and have faith in prophecy. In return, we will be rewarded with resurrection and the world to come.

So we have thus learned a little bit about who does and does not "cut it." It has given us little taste that resurrection is not free, but a reward that has roots in faith in prophecy and reward and punishment for our sins in this world. At this point I think in at least a loose fashion we have tried to answer the basic interpretation, and after looking at some source material have an idea of its importance to the sages and its deep connection to reward and punishment. Perhaps now we can understand its place on the list of principles of faith.

Getting back to the question we asked earlier about what practical influence this has on our daily lives, I think we may have even also tendered an answer. The resurrection is an ultimate reward. Not just a prophecy, but something to be fulfilled by our actions in this world.

I would like to touch on the part that always makes me scratch my head. It is very hard to picture what life will be like after *techiyas hamesim*. Once resurrected, do we live forever in an "*Olam Haba*" here on the earthly plane? If so, the third *Beis Hamikdash* will be thus joined to this plane, and those in Heaven will be restored to this world because God's presence will be here, so there would not be anywhere else to go. This is a commonly held understanding of *techiyas hamesim*, usually ascribed to the Ramban and Ramchal. This view is very hard to visualize; how does it work with every person that ever lived being alive together forever? It's one thing to have relatives over for a *simcha*, but all relatives who have ever lived? Are they going to

help change diapers of the first-time lifers? (I imagine a senior citizen discount will be very odd.)

Maybe people would come back to life and get a second go-around to do a better job performing *mitzvos* than they did the first go-around. After that we would die and be re-united with God in a different non-earthly world. This is how the Rambam envisions *techiyas hamesim*. This approach is emotionally fulfilling, and it leaves the book open on the future. Yes, God will bring you back, but because it serves a purpose. It will be a joy, and it will be meaningful, an ultimate reward and punishment, an ultimate mercy. It leaves some heartache however, as not everyone will be reunited forever with their loved ones, but it leaves us with room to live life – at least the way we know life now.

I think about these questions now as I miss my grandfather, Sam Praw z"l, and long to be re-united with him. When we are together again, what will it be like and for how long? For now, all we can do is pray to God for *Mashiach* to come and to have *techiyas hamesim* very soon so we can find out the answer.