

Yitro
Mishnayot

מסכת שבת

Hello again! This week we have reached Mishna Gimmel, Perek Bet in Messechet Shabbat. Having spoken at length about oils and other fuels one may use for lighting the Shabbat candles, we now will discuss wicks made of different sorts of folded cloth. Very practical!

If one took a piece of cloth and folded it like one would twist a wick, but didn't singe it to make it easier to light, Rabbi Eliezer holds it can become *tameh* and may not be used to light with. Rabbi Akivah disagrees and says it can not become *tameh*.

This argument depends on a few details in the laws of *tumah*. Firstly, clothes or garments can become *tameh*. Normally, when one turns it into a wick it loses its status as clothing and is no longer susceptible to *tumah*. This is because a garment must be

an item in which one can put things. For example, you put your feet in your socks or your body in your shirt. Once it is a wick, it is no longer a receptacle, merely a twisted stick of cloth. However, if one merely folded, without singing, it can return to its original status as clothing and as such has made no permanent change.

Rabbi Eliezer holds that since it is just a piece of folded clothing, it still counts as such and can become *tameh*.

Rabbi Akivah holds that even if mere unfolding will return the item to a receptacle, it is still not usable as a receptacle currently and is therefore not able to become *tameh*.

Shabbat Shalom

'Parasha Digest – Yitro'

ראשון: Yitro (Moshe's father-in-law) comes with Moshe's wife and 2 children to the Midbar, so they can join Moshe and the rest of Bnei Yisrael. Yitro thanks Hashem for what he did to the Mitzriyim.

שני: Yitro suggests that Moshe should appoint other judges to deal with less demanding cases and that these judges should be wise and righteous, therefore Moshe will have more time to spread Torah.

שלישי: Moshe accepts Yitro's suggestion and Yitro went back to his homeland.

רביעי: Bnei Yisrael camp at the foot of Har Sinai and Hashem gives Moshe a message for Bnei Yisrael

חמישי: Bnei Yisrael say that they will do all that Hashem tells them to do. Moshe is instructed to tell Bnei Yisrael to immerse themselves and their

clothes in a mikveh and to remain apart from their spouses for 3 days. Also Har Sinai was to be fenced off. On the 3rd day there was thunder and lightning and the sound of the Shofar was very powerful; Bnei Yisrael then assembled at the foot of the mountain.

ששי: Hashem summoned Moshe and instructed him to re-emphasize the command against anyone ascending Har Sinai. Hashem then gives the Aseret Hadibrot to Bnei Yisrael.

שביעי: After Matan Torah, Bnei Yisrael were scared of Hashem and they asked Moshe to be their representative. Moshe reassures the people and tells them not to be afraid. The prohibition of making graven images is given as is the mitzvah of making a Mizbeach. We are also forbidden to walk up steps to a Mizbeach as it is deemed immodest.

Riddle for the Week
 I use lots of names, and the left over one comes at the beginning.
 Who am I?
 (Answer in next week's Living Torah)
 Answer To Last Week's Riddle:
Q: Bitter not sweet, Then sticky, a treat! What happened?
A: The incident in Marah where bitter water was made sweet by a stick



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The Lessons We Learn

"Now I know that Hashem is greater than all gods, for in the very matter in which (the Egyptians) had conspired against them!" (18:11)"

Rashi explains that Yitro was hinting to the fact that he had experimented with other religions. After experiencing every form of idolatry, he was now thoroughly convinced that Hashem was superior to any other form of G-d. He derived proof of Hashem's Omnipotence from the fact that when He had punished the Egyptians, He had punished them Middah k'neged Middah, measure for measure, for what they had conspired to do to the Jews. Pharaoh had planned to drown the young Jewish males in the Nile River. Hashem arranged for Pharaoh's final punishment to be executed by the Red Sea. Hashem punishes and rewards in accordance with the rule of Middah k'neged Middah, We do not always perceive this, but upon careful introspection, we will notice that this principle is always in effect.

There is an important lesson to be derived from this Passuk. Harav Yitzchak Ausband, (shlita), notes that Hashem performs miracles; He alters the course of nature, just to teach man a lesson. After all, the splitting of the Red Sea was no ordinary miracle.

Hashem made a condition at Ma'aseh Bereishit, **By Mickey Lewin**

that one day He would change the course of nature and split the Red Sea. If the sole purpose was to kill the Egyptians, He certainly could have employed other methods. It is not as if Hashem had never before punished a large segment of people. He slaughtered the Egyptian firstborns; he destroyed Sancherev's army. He did not have to drown the Egyptians through a miraculous effort on His part.

Hashem acts only for a reason, to carry out a purpose. Here, it was to teach them and the world, a lesson: that he acts through Middah k'neged Middah. You attempted to destroy the Jewish People using the medium of water. You will perish through the medium of water. A punishment is necessary. Understanding why and for what one is being punished are equally significant.

People must be imbued with the awareness that Divine Providence governs the world. The greatest manifestation of Hashgacha, is through the principle of measure for measure. If one does not clearly see that retribution parallel's one's actions, both in a negative and positive sense, he can always err and say, "It just happened," without realizing that nothing "just happens" by coincidence.

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Dancing With G-d

It was the autumn of 1944 at Auschwitz, and Hungarian Jews had arrived in massive numbers. The furnaces worked overtime as the inmates were sped to their inexorable fate. Everything about the camp seemed so surreal—the perpetual fog cover of smoke and ash, the barren landscape of barbed wire and slime—that it served to mirror the prisoners' own profound sense of displacement and disorientation. Everything had happened so fast: being crammed into the cattle cars that had disgorged them at Auschwitz; the quick, merciless dismemberment of families as spouses, children, parents and siblings were torn apart from one another during the selections; being dispassionately stripped of the clothing and personal belongings that made them human, and the freezing-cold showers and assembly-line delousing that had followed. In the course of only minutes, the new inmates had lost everything they owned, everything they loved.

But there were those remnants, those few who still cared about observing the Jewish holidays; among them were fifty religious boys who had just been selected for the gas chamber, despite being young and healthy, and were now being herded into a bathhouse, ostensibly to take "showers." It was late enough in concentration camp history that the boys knew the truth. Gas would pour through the pipes, not water. It was a ruse that the Nazis used to disarm the inmates, to ensure their cooperation. But these spiritual heroes made a conscious decision not to give in to them, choosing defiance instead.

Amid the tumult in the bathhouse, one boy sprang up and shouted: "Brothers! Today is the holiday of Simchat Torah, when the Jewish world rejoices, having concluded the reading of the Torah over the past year, followed directly with the commencement of the new cycle of the Torah reading. During our short lives, we have tried to uphold the Torah to the best of our ability, and now we have one last chance to do so. Before we die, let us celebrate Simchat Torah one last time.

"We do not possess anything anymore," the boy continued. "We have nothing. We do not have clothes to cover us, nor a *sefer Torah* (Torah scroll) with which

to dance. So let us dance with G-d Himself—who is surely here among us—before we return our souls to Him."

And so they did. The floor trembled under fifty pairs of dancing feet, the walls shook with the force of their voices. The boys pierced the heavens with their song: "*Ashreinu mah tov chelkeinu u'mah nayim goraleinu umah yafah yerushateinu...*" (How fortunate are we and how wonderful is our portion and how beautiful is our heritage.)

The Nazi guards stood outside, perplexed as to the source of the joyous celebrations and to why the deadly gas had not yet started spreading throughout the chamber.

The commandant, called to the scene, unbolted the door to the chamber and pulled out the first boy he found. "What's going on? Why are you singing and dancing?" he demanded.

"Because leaving a world where Nazi beasts reign is cause for celebration," the boy sneered. "And because we are overjoyed at the prospect of reuniting with our beloved parents, whom you murdered so viciously."

The commandant was enraged. He was used to hearing desperate cries and prayers being emitted from within the menacing chamber, but never had he encountered singing and dancing! The sheer insolence of these boys! He decided he would punish their audacity by making them suffer a long slow death. He ordered the boys to be moved from the gas chamber to a holding block, where they would stay the night before being tortured individually the next day.

However, the next day, a more senior Nazi official arrived at the camp, searching for healthy boys to work at a nearby labour camp. He came across the fifty imprisoned youths, and deciding they were suitable for the job, had them transported out of Auschwitz to their new workplace. It has been reported by survivors that all fifty of these boys survived the Holocaust.

Story adapted from "Small Miracles of the Holocaust: Extraordinary Coincidences of Faith, Hope and Survival"

Thought of the Week

"It's not how much or how little you have that makes you great or small, but how much or how little you are with what you have."

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch

The true worth of our possessions and talents is determined by what we do with them, not their market value. Unless used in the right way, they are pointless, regardless of quantity, and do not add anything to the owner. Therefore, a poor or unintelligent person can eclipse the richest or most intelligent person, if he just uses the little he has to the maximum.

Accepting the Torah: Command or Choice?

When Moshe asked permission to marry his daughter Tziphora, Yitro agreed, on the condition that their first born son would be a priest to Avodah Zarah (idolatry). The Medrash says that Moshe accepted this condition. But what I wanted to focus on was another difficulty in the Medrash: The Medrash says that Yitro demanded that condition -- that his grandson be dedicated to Avodah Zara -- after Yitro himself had already given up on Avodah Zara. It is taught that Yitro was a great man of truth. He travelled throughout the world searching for the truth by experimenting with all types of Avodah Zara. He finally determined that it was all nothing. He relinquished his priesthood and renounced Avodah Zara. Yet, according to this Medrash, even after this point in Yitro's life, he still demanded that his grandson should become an idolater. This is an amazing point! If someone is a man of truth, who "tried it all out," and determined that it was false, then how can he come back and ask that his grandson should be an idolater? It does not make any sense!

The Mir Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Chaim Shmulevitz zt"l, says that Yitro was indeed a truth seeker, but he made a big mistake. Yitro believed that the proper method for arriving at the truth was through the process that **he** had used to arrive at the truth. He reasoned "I did not discover the truth as a result of someone forcing it down my throat. I chose the truth. I travelled around and tasted everything and came to the conclusion through my own free will and my own convictions that Judaism is the true religion. Certainly I know that G-d is true, but I want my grandson to have that same beautiful experience of tasting things and seeing other possibilities. If in the end he too chooses Judaism, that would be wonderful. But I do not want him brought up in a house of Judaism, which would preclude him from **choosing** Judaism -- since it would be forced upon him. G-d forbid we do not want him to be forced. We want him to pick it of his own free will."

This means that Yitro was *l'havdil elef havdolot* - the kind of person that refused to take anything for granted. He had to experiment and do his own thing. So even though Yitro had personally found the truth, he wanted his grandson to find the truth by himself, just as he himself had done.

This, says the Mir Rosh Yeshiva, goes against what Judaism is all about. A basic fact of Judaism is that we are servants of Hashem. The highest level that a Jew can reach is not that he does Mitzvot out of his own free will, but that he does Mitzvot because he realizes that this is what Hashem wills. He realizes that Hashem is the Master and he is the servant. "I do Mitzvot, not necessarily because I **want** to do them, but because I **have** to do them." Judaism is about being a *metzuveh v'oseh* (one who is commanded and therefore observes). We do not do Mitzvot because they **seem** right, they **seem** ethical, or they **seem** moral. We do Mitzvot because we **know** and accept that they are G-d's commandments.

This concept can be further emphasized as follows: The verse states concerning the Ten Commandments "And G-d commanded **All** these things saying (Shemot 20:1)." Rashi cites a Medrash on the meaning of the expression "**All** these things": At first Hashem said all Ten Commandments simultaneously (something which is impossible for a human being to hear or to comprehend). After saying them all at once, Hashem repeated each one individually.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, ztl, asked about this sequence of events. What was the purpose of saying all Ten Commandments at once if no one could understand them in that fashion?

Rav Soloveitchik answered that almost everyone realizes that "I am the L-rd Your G-d" and "Thou shall not take the Name of the L-rd in vain" must be Divine commandments. We accept them as Divine decrees. However, some people do not consider commandments such as "Thou shall not murder" to be Divine in origin. We think we understand the rationale behind "Thou shall not commit adultery". Commandments such as "Thou shall not steal" seem self-explanatory and self-evident. Are they not obvious? What kind of society can we have if murder and adultery are allowed? Do we need a G-d to tell me that? Clearly, any society cannot survive without "Lo Tignov".

Rav Soloveitchik explained that it was necessary for Hashem to say all Ten Commandments simultaneously, so that we would know that the G-d who tells us "Don't take My Name in vain" -- which might not seem logical to us -- is the same G-d who tells us "Do not murder" -- which might seem obvious. Hashem is telling us that the reason why we must observe "Do not murder" is not because we do not think it is right and not because we do not think it is moral, but because I (Hashem) say that it is wrong. The differences between a Divine "Thou shall not murder" and a societal "Thou shall not murder" are the issues that we confront today. In a societal "Thou shall not murder" abortions can become permissible, euthanasia can become permissible, and children that are not born normally can be murdered. All of those things are permitted by our society's "Thou shall not murder". Therefore, Hashem says, not only are the 5 commandments (relating to matters between man and G-d) from Me, but all 10 commandments are from Me. We must know we must listen to the Torah, not because we think so, not because we have tried other things and Torah seems to make the most sense and not because it is morally compelling. We must listen to the commandments of the Torah for one and only one reason: Because Hashem instructed us to do so and we are his servants.

This was Yitro's mistake. Although this was the way that Yitro discovered Judaism, this was not the proper path to prescribe for his grandson. In the final analysis, we do not have to keep the Torah because we want; we have to keep because we are told to.

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