

This week's Mishna is Mishna Vav in Perek Bet Mesechet Shabbat which is slightly gruesome and totally uncheerful.

Having been talking about the candles of Shabbat, we now cite something related.

The Mishna says, there are three reasons for which a woman may come to harm during childbirth. (It does not seem to imply that these are the only causes, merely that these are commonly the cause.)

The first reason can be if a woman is not particular with laws of Taharat Hamishpacha.

Secondly, one who neglects to take 'Challah'. When baking large quantities of dough, the baker must separate a small chunk and give it to a Kohen. The quantity is specific and these days, we dispose of it without a Kohen. For the Halachot, ask a Rabbi or find one of the many books written on the subject.

However, the Mishna says that failure to be careful

in this Halacha can lead to difficulty in childbirth. The last cause of harm during childbirth is if the lady was not careful regarding laws of candle lighting on a Friday-night.

This case is the whole reason for citing this here. The reason that Mishna mentions this in conjunction with childbirth is that it is a time of risk and peril for the pregnant lady. Whilst one may be protected at a normal time, the extra protection needed at a time of trouble may be withdrawn for the three things in the Mishna. Therefore, the Gemara says that this Mishna applies equally in any time of risk.

The Mishna is addressed mostly to women as all of these things have a connection with women.

Next week, we will attempt to finish Perek Bet! Not so long before we make a siyyum on the whole of Mesechet Shabbat! Well... fine, maybe we are not so close yet, but progress none the less.

Shabbat Shalom

'Parasha Digest – Ki Tisah

ראשון: Bnei Yisrael are commanded to give half a shekel for a census and to help with the building of the Mishkan. The making of the Kiyor (The copper washstand) is described. The ingredients of the Ketoret (incense) are listed. Betzallel is designated as the main architect of the Mishkan. The mitzvah of Shabbat is given.

שני: The story of the Golden calf is told. The Bnei Yisrael miscalculate when Moshe is meant to come down from Har Sinai and make a golden calf. Moshe comes down the next morning, smashes the Luchot Habrit and assembles Shevet Levi who help kill 3000 people. Moshe asks Hashem to forgive Bnei Yisrael.

שלישי: Moshe asks Hashem to remain close to Bnei Yisrael, even after their sins.

רביעי: Hashem agrees to Moshe's request. Then Moshe asks to see the full glory of Hashem, but Hashem only shows him his back.

חמישי: Hashem commands Moshe to carve new Luchot (Tablets). Moshe takes the Luchot up Har Sinai and Hashem tells Moshe the 13 Middot Rachamim (Attributes of Mercy).

שישי: Hashem gives Moshe a promise that he will only be with Bnei Yisrael and no other nation. He also promises to drive out the current inhabitants of Eretz Canaan. Idolatry is commanded to be destroyed in Eretz Canaan and Bnei Yisrael should not make any peace treaties with the inhabitants there. The 3 Chaggim are listed with the mitzvot of not eating Chametz on Pesach, to make Kadosh all newborn male humans and cattle and not to cook meat with milk.

שביעי: Moshe comes down from Har Sinai with the 2nd set of Luchot beams of light were coming off his face. Moshe teaches the Bnei Yisrael the Torah that he learnt while on Har Sinai.



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The Luchos: The Marriage Document

"It happened as he drew near the camp and saw the calf and the dances that Moshe's anger flared up and he threw the tablets from his hands and he broke them at the foot of the mountain"
 (Shemos 32:19)

The question is asked by this episode of the golden calf as to why Moshe broke the luchos. He seemed to have lost his temper and smashed the luchos out of anger; despite the sin of the people, is this the way a leader should act? Rashi justifies Moshe's actions by bringing a gemora in Shabbos (87a) which says that since a heretic may not partake in the korban pesach which is one of the mitzvos, surely a nation of heretics can not receive the Torah.

The Midrash gives an interesting idea. Moshe realised the sin which had been committed by the Bnei Yisroel would face judgement from Hashem. Moshe therefore broke the luchos in the defence of the Bnei Yisroel as he could now protest that since the Bnei Yisroel had not physically received the laws then perhaps they don't apply.

Another explanation is based on the Midrash that the letters of the luchos departed when Moshe saw the sin. This made them suddenly very heavy so Moshe could no longer carry them. Alternatively, as Rashbam says, Moshe became weak upon seeing the levels to which the Bnei Yisroel had sunk and he could no longer carry the luchos. Nevertheless, the question remains, why did Moshe only break the luchos when he saw the sin? Was the warning from Hashem (32:8) not enough?

Rabbi Twerski brings the Midrash which says that Moshe wanted to teach the Bnei Yisroel a lesson that no matter how trustworthy the witness, even

Hashem, two witnesses are required to give testimony. Therefore, it was only when Moshe, acting as a second witness, saw the sin did he actually believe it.

After this point, the Torah relates that Moshe punished those who worshipped the calf without witnesses or a warning by grinding the gold of the calf and adding it to water and then force feeding the concoction to them. If they were guilty the water was poisonous, if not, it would pass through them normally. This form of justice is similar to that of the sotah, the woman suspected of adultery. The other sinners were killed by the sword or by plague. The question is asked, why was the form of justice chosen similar to that of the sotah?

The answer fits in with why Moshe broke the luchos. Many times throughout Tanach, the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish People is compared to that of a husband and wife. The Midrash brings a parable of the newly married man who heard rumours that his wife was unfaithful. In order to ensure that the wife, if accused, would be judged as a single woman rather than a married one, for which the punishment is lighter, the marriage document was torn up. Here too, Moshe effectively tore up the marriage document, the luchos, in the hope that the sin of the Bnei Yisroel would seem lighter. Nevertheless, by the punishment, the Bnei Yisroel are still considered to be under contract with Hashem so their punishment is the same as that of the sotah; just as she is suspected of being unfaithful to her husband and is given the water of the sotah, so too, the people who were suspected of worshipping the idol but not witnessed doing so are punished in the same way.

By Ari Levy.

A Tzaddik's Repentance

One winter morning, two of Rav Saadia Gaon's pupils happened to be walking in the mountains when they heard a strange sound on the other side of a hill. When they approached the summit they saw, to their great surprise, their teacher sitting on the snow-covered ground, weeping, praying and engaging in other acts of penitence. What could a *tzaddik* (perfectly righteous person) such as their teacher possibly need to repent for? Could he have committed some sin, G-d forbid? They hurriedly departed from that place. But later that day, they could no longer restrain themselves and asked their teacher what the scene they had witnessed had been about.

"I do that every day," he said to them. "Every day I repent and plead with G-d to forgive my shortcomings and failings in my service of Him."
"Your failings?" they asked. "Of what failings does the Gaon speak?"

"Let me tell you a story," said Rabbi Saadia. "Something that happened to me a while ago."
"At one point in my life I decided that all the honour and attention I was receiving from everyone around me was interfering with my service of the Creator. G-d must be served with joy, and without complete humility, joy is impossible. So I decided that I would spend several months in a place where no one recognized me."

"I dressed in simple garments and began my self-imposed exile, wandering from town to town. One night I was in a small inn run by an old Jew. He was a very kind and simple man, and we spoke for a while before I went to sleep. Early the next morning, after I had prayed *shacharit*, I bade him farewell and was again on my way.

"What I didn't know was that several of my pupils had been searching for me, and several hours after I left the inn they appeared, hot on my trail. 'Did you see Rabbi Saadia Gaon?' they asked him, 'We have reason to believe that he was here.'

"Saadia Gaon?' replied the bewildered old Jew.

'What would the great Rav Saadia be doing in a place like mine? Rav Saadia Gaon in my inn? No... I'm sure that you are very mistaken! There was no Rav Saadia Gaon here!'

"But when the young men described me to him and explained about my exile and 'disguise', the old Jew grabbed his head and cried: 'Oy! Rav Saadia! Rav Saadia was here! You are right! Oy, Oy!' and he ran outside, jumped into his wagon and began urging his horse to go as fast as possible in the direction I had taken.

"After a short time he caught up to me, jumped from his carriage and fell at my feet weeping: 'Please forgive me, Rav Saadia. Please forgive me; I didn't know that it was you!'

"I made him stand up and brush himself off, and then said to him: 'But my dear friend, you treated me very well, you were very kind and hospitable. Why are you so sorry? You have nothing to apologize for.'

"No, no, Rabbi,' he replied, 'If I would have known who you are, I would have served you *completely* differently!'

"Suddenly I realized that this man was teaching me a very important lesson in the service of G-d, and that the purpose of my exile had been fulfilled. I thanked and blessed him and returned home.

"Since then, every evening when I say the prayer before sleeping I go over in my mind how I served G-d that day. Then I think of that old innkeeper, and say to myself: 'Oy! If I had known the same amount about G-d's greatness at the beginning of the day as what I know now, I would have served Him completely differently!'

"And that is what I was repenting for this morning."

(Adapted from *chabad.org*)

Thought of the Week

'And I will speak of your testimonies before kings and I will not be ashamed.' (Tehillim 119:46)

Discussing matters of Torah instead of talking about grandeur and luxuries with his fellow monarchs would have caused David Hamelech considerable embarrassment. But having attained the truth, he had no interest in vain conversation, and felt no reason to be ashamed. (Mesillat Yesharim).

So often peer pressure will deter us or discourage us from acting in the manner we know at heart to be right. But as David Hamelech says, we must do what we know is correct and ignore those who blindly mock or scorn us for doing so.

A Burning Fury

"You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the day of Shabbat"

Regarding this Pasuk the Chatam Sofer emphasizes the necessity to prepare oneself spiritually in order to derive maximum spiritual benefit from Shabbat. Within the soul of every Jew burns a fire of love for Hashem and a desire to achieve closeness with Him. If we invest energy to fan that flame during the weekdays, so that it will burn strongly, we will not have to begin 'from scratch' on Shabbat. However, one who wastes his weekdays on foolishness, entering Shabbat unprepared will have to begin to ignite the flame – *kindle* a spiritual *fire* – on Shabbat. Therefore the Torah teaches us that "you shall not kindle fire...on the day of Shabbat". Don't wait until Shabbat to kindle your soul; keep it warm all week long, so that the flame can peak on Shabbat.

There are two traits that the Rambam (Hilchot Dei'ot) says that we should avoid enacting through something called Middah Benonit (sometimes called the golden mean, generally meant as the middle path – one of temperance; it is recommended for various *middot*) and warns against any moderation. He says that arrogance and anger should both be eliminated in an extreme and uncompromising fashion. He says that rage is a terrible trait and endorses a distancing from the path of Middah Benonit to the removal of any trace of anger or fury from within us.

He quotes various sources, one of which says that "he who expresses his anger it is as if he has done Avodah Zara." The comparison stems from the lack of any boundaries and the vulnerability which submission to anger both reflects and generates.

Namely by showing such utter lack of control, such inability to maintain or coordinate moral will and impose it on emotional torrent or emotional strain, the person has displayed or even created vulnerability for future temptation, the type of temptation that could even lead to idolatry. Because on the day when you succumb to your anger, the Yetzer Hara has overpowered you and that overpowering creates a mode of submission to the Yetzer Hara, submission to hormones, to emotional needs and to personal aggravation;

today's submission will precipitate, will facilitate tomorrow's vulnerability to other suggestions of the Yetzer Hara i.e. Avodah Zara.

The inability to condition oneself to restraint means that we will surely sin in the future. Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak says in Nedarim כב quoting a Pasuk in Mishlei that one who is constantly full of rage and anger is overwhelmed and suffused with sin. ("ובעל חמה רב־פשע" - *A man of wrath commits much transgression*" - 29:22)

The Gemara earlier on (כב.) says regarding one who is angry that it is as if the Shechinah is trivial to him and says that the moment of anger itself, the submission or expression of anger can only be conducted if there is a blurring or neglect of Hashem's presence.

The Shelah interprets *אש*, *fire*, as a reference to anger and strife. The Pasuk is telling us not to allow the fire of anger or strife to burn specifically on Shabbat. But this raises the question of surely this should be so every day of the week, we should be *Rodef Shalom* constantly and we should be avoiding anger wherever possible (as we saw above) – why is the prohibition against becoming angry especially relevant on Shabbat. According to Chazal the fire of Gehinam does not burn on Shabbat. One who gets angry causes Hashem to allow that fire to burn in him. If you are angry specifically on Shabbat you are explicitly demonstrating the blurring or neglect of Hashem's presence.

Shabbat is a time for peace, the Zekan Aharon quotes the Ramban who said that the Mussaf offering of Shabbat, unlike the other Mussaf offerings, does not include a *Korban Chatat* (a sin offering) because "for Shabbat and the nations of Israel are mates, and peace reigns between them". On Shabbat peace should reign between man and Hashem, demonstrated through peace between man and man.

'No *אש* may burn in any of your dwellings on Shabbat.'

And **Shabbat Shalom**.

Riddle for the Week

These won't make what you dig, even with two, But without this we might have all suffered from swine flu. Explain.

(Hint: Swine flu could be any sort of plague)

(Answer in next week's Living Torah)

Answer To Last Week's Riddle:

Q: Which 3 Gedolim passed away on a Shabbat?

A: Moshe Rabeinu, Dovid HaMelech and Yosef.