

Kehillah #30



THE PERTINENT PARASHA

Why Are We Mourning?

Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer | Rav of Kehillat Ohr Chadash, Ramot, Jerusalem

Mourning over the Destruction is unlike mourning over lost loved ones. Everyday mourning connects to our direct experience of loss. Our national mourning is different. It is more like a person whose parents died before his birth. We don't remember the Mikdash, yet we mourn its absence.

but what are we mourning? What is so missing from our world that justifies the sadness, the mourning, and the fasting?

The answer to this question is latent in the wording of the Ritva, among the great Rishonim of medieval Spain.

The Talmud (*Yoma* 54) relates that when the Temple was defiled by the hands of the destroyers, the *Cheruvim*, golden representations of male and female youth atop the Aron, were embraced in a demonstration of intimacy. Elsewhere, however, the Gemara (*Bava Basra* 99) explains that the *Cheruvim* represented the relationship between Hashem and His nation: when we did Hashem's bidding they would face each other, and when we strayed they would turn away from each other. How is it possible that at the very time of the Destruction the *Cheruvim* were found locked together in intimacy?

The Ritva resolves the contradiction by suggesting that the loving embrace

Yes, the Mikdash is absent, but what are we mourning? What is so missing from our world that justifies the sadness, the mourning, and the fasting?

For many centuries, there was no reason to raise the question of "what do we mourn?" The answer was plainly obvious. Today, however, the condition of the Jewish people is such that the question has become troubling. Yes, the Mikdash is absent,





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of the *Cheruvim* was a “miracle for the bad” (*nes lera’á*). Meaning, the embrace indicated that eternal covenant between Hashem and His people is no longer reflected in the reality of our world. With the Churban, the representation was terminated. As far as the eye can see, the knot was untied, the covenant broken.

At the time of the Destruction, when the *Cheruvim* ought to have reflected the distance between Hashem and His people, they were thus embraced in closeness and intimacy, as though to say: It’s over. It no longer matters. The departure of the Shechinah from the Mikdash and the people from the Land is the ending of the relationship.

His word, which would be heard from between the Cheruvim, continues to be absent. And that makes all the difference.

Even today, when things are good, we mourn over the relationship. We mourn over the anomalous situation – a millenia-long anomaly – in which our reality does not manifest the eternal and infinite love between Hashem and His people. We read Eicha, asking “how can it be?” and cry as we express

our refusal to simply accept the situation.

Jewish life today is thriving in many senses. We have Torah, Mitzvos, and Chessed, much like the Gemara states of the generation of the Second Temple destruction. We even have the Land – an amazing achievement that indicates great beginnings. But also like the generation of the Churban, whose lethal flaw was baseless hatred, we continue to suffer in the area of relationships – both with others and with Hashem. His word, which would be heard from between the *Cheruvim*, continues to be absent. And that makes all the difference.

Tisha Be’Av is a central day in the Jewish calendar. It is a day on which we focus on what we lack and yearn for its return. It is the saddest and hardest day of the year. But the sense of loss and yearning is essential. It defines the consciousness of our purpose, and spurs us to action. Paradoxically, the mourning itself fuels us with a wondrous vision. When we build our relationships with others and with Hashem, and when we build and strengthen the infrastructures enabling their flourishing on a national scale, we bring its realization closer.

May we speedily see the rebuilding of the Mikdash and the return of the Dvar Hashem.

Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Women's Yom Iyun Tisha B'Av 5783



Thursday, July 27, 2023

Join Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya for a meaningful Tisha B'Av program live via Zoom designed to deepen our understanding and capture the mood of this most tragic day.

**9:30-10:30am: Rebbetzin Ruthie Karlinsky, Rebbetzin Esther Shurin,
Yaffa Moskowitz**
Kinnot

10:45-11:45am: Rabbi Anthony Manning
"Tisha B'Av Again?! Did We Miss the Mashiach?"

12:00-1:00pm: Rabbi Jeffrey Bienenfeld
"Baseless Hatred: Then & Now: What Can We Do?"

1:15-2:15pm: Rabbi Yitzchak Shurin
"Tisha B'Av: The Dawn of a New Mourning"

Register for the Links to Zoom & Recordings
www.darchenoam.org/9AV

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This Yom Iyun is dedicated in memory of Max & Belle Karlinsky z"l.



MEKOM AVODA

Workplace Ethics & Halacha

Surfeit

Rabbi Asher Meir | Torah and Policy Researcher

Our parsha opens with the backdrop for Moshe's oration; the Torah tells us that it was near "Di Zahav". Rashi explains that the Di Zahav is not mentioned as a place name, but rather because of its meaning, "enough gold" or "much gold". This was meant as a gentle reproof for the sin of the Golden Calf, "which they made because of the great amount of gold that was given to them".

The Gemara (*Berachos* 32a) gives another side of the story: Moshe uses the same incident to diminish the culpability of the people for the calf: "Master of the world, it is because of the silver and gold with which you glutted them that they made the calf".

The Torah clearly acknowledges that when it comes to wealth, more is not always better. The challenge of wealth is equally evident in the passage in *Mishlei* (30:7-9), where Shlomo HaMelech requests Hashem to give him "neither poverty nor riches". "Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my G-d."

Chazal also make this message

clear in a number of places. For example, the Mishna (*Kiddushin* 48b) mentions that if a man betrothes a woman on the condition that he is poor, but he is actually well-off, then the betrothal is void, as we consider her insistence valid. (*Shulchan Aruch Even Ha'ezer* 38:24.) The Yerushalmi (*Kiddushin* 2:2) gives the reason that the bride is worried that a rich husband will be too proud (some versions), or that managing a wealthy household is too burdensome (other versions).

Another well-known Gemara (*Yoma* 35b) describes the critical importance of Torah study for every man, regardless of his circumstances. One "trial" which might be used to excuse laxness in Torah study is that a rich person is preoccupied with supervising his assets. It is true that Chazal urge a landowner to tour his estate at least once a day (*Chullin* 105a), but that doesn't mean that a person who has many estates is obligated to exhaust himself in touring them, at the expense of establishing fixed times for Torah study. (The Shelah points out a wealthy person who supports Torah students is particularly likely





MEKOM AVODA Workplace Ethics & Halacha

to make the excuse that a few minutes of his time at work enables a Torah scholar to devote a full day or week to learning; even so, says the Shelah, fixed times for his own learning must take precedence. Shavuos, Ner Mitzvah.)

Yet another example: the Gemara (*Berachos* 60a) points out that the requirement to make a blessing on finding a valuable object is not at all obvious; sometimes such a find can attract attention and enemies.

Shlomo HaMelech teaches us that

every person has a general level of material well-being which best enables him to serve Hashem. This level is clearly very different for different people; when Shlomo asked Hashem not to give him riches, he didn't mean that the King of Israel should be a pauper; this request was suited to his own position and disposition. The important thing is to acknowledge that more is not always better, and to know that sometimes affording ourselves, or our children, too much luxury can be a difficult and unnecessary trial.



PARASHA AND PARNASSAH

Beis Hamikdash and Our Parnassah

Rabbi Tzvi Broker | Career Coach and Director of Pilzno Work Inspired

One of the well-known segulas for Parnasa is saying Birkas Hamazon with proper intention. It's therefore not surprising that Birkas Hamazon itself contains various requests for success in our Parnasa. But where are these requests within the text of Birkas Hamazon? Besides for the extra supplications at the end of Birkas Hamazon we may have expected to find these requests in the first and second brachos.

The first bracha, established by

Moshe and expressing appreciation for the Mann, describes how Hashem provides sustenance for all. The second bracha, established by Yehoshua, speaks about Eretz Yisrael, the land that we rely upon for our sustenance.

Yet, the requests for Parnasa are not found in both of these blessings but instead are found in the blessing about rebuilding Yerushalayim.

Nourish us, sustain us, feed us, and provide us with plenty.... please do





PARASHA AND PARNASSAH

not make us dependent upon the gifts of mortal men nor upon their loans, but only upon Your full, open, holy, and generous hand, that we may never be shamed or disgraced.

<<

Why would the request for Parnasa specifically be found in a blessing that focuses on the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash?

When we consider what's lacking in our lives as a result of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash and decreased revelation of Hashem in this world we naturally would list things such as Torah, prophecy and Yiras Shamayim.

Yet the *Mishna* (9:12) teaches that this was not all that was impacted

רשב"ג אומר: העיד ר' יהושע מיום שחרב בהימ"ק אין יום שאין בו קללה ולא ירד הטל לב־רעה וניטל טעם הפירות ר' יוסי אומר אף ניטל שומן הפירות."

Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel said: Rebbe Yehoshua testified that from the day the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed there hasn't been a day that hasn't been cursed and dew of blessing has not fallen and the taste of fruits have been diminished.

The message of the *Mishna* is that the lack of divine revelation results in the loss of the quality of materialism (*gashmius*) as well.

Chazal in other places (see *Yerushalmi* Peah 7:3) give accounts of Amoraim

who lived in the period after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. They lamented how the quality of the produce of Eretz Yisrael in their later years of life paled in comparison to the quality of the produce of Eretz Yisrael in their earlier years of life, that was closer to the time of the Beis Hamikdash. **As time passed from the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash the quality of materialism continuously decreased.**

We can now understand why it's specifically within the blessing of the building of the Beis HaMikdash that we make our requests for Parnasa. We are meant to recognize that the impact of reduced divine revelation in this world is felt across all levels of existence, even in our materialism. Each Tisha B'av we look for ways to connect with a feeling of a lack in our lives without having the Beis Hamikdash, and it can sometimes be a challenge.

Remembering the connection between Beis HaMikdash and material blessings, We can use the opportunity to consider a time when we may have experienced financial challenges, or think about people we know who are facing such challenges. We can then channel these uncomfortable feelings into a yearning for a time when we will experience collectively as a nation but also as individuals, both the spiritual and material abundance that Hashem wants to give us.



Rav Menachem Ziemba: How to Rectify the Sin of the Spies

Rabbi Dov Loketch | Rabbi of Agudas Yisrael Mogen Avraham, Detroit

In the run-up to Tisha Be'Av, we take a break from our regular series of biographical material in favor of a related Torah idea noted by Rabbi Loketch in his biographical sketch of Rav Menachem Ziemba. B'ezras Hashem, will we return to regular biographies in next week's issue.

In telling the story of the Sin of the Spies, the Torah makes a point of informing us that “the days were those of ripening grapes” – the spies were sent to scout the land when the first grapes in Eretz Yisrael ripened (*Bamidbar* 13:20). The Arizal taught that the Torah conveys this information to allude to us that the mitzvah of bikurim – bringing the first ripened fruits to the Beis HaMikdash – serves as a rectification of the Sin of the Spies.

The *Mishnayos* (*Bikurim*, Ch.3) describes in great detail the pomp and circumstance that would accompany the bikurim procession, as the pilgrims carried their first fruits through the streets of Jerusalem on their way to the Beis HaMikdash. There was music and festivity, and the excited shopkeepers of Jerusalem would close their stores to welcome and greet the farmers. The exuberance of bikurim, the Arizal explained, served to counteract the people's rejection of Eretz Yisrael at the

time of the Sin of the Spies. Our ancestors sinned by showing disdain for the land Hashem wanted to give us, and we rectify this grievous sin by joyously celebrating the land's produce, thanking and praising Hashem for the precious gift of Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Menachel Ziemba, the wondrous Torah leader who was killed in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, brilliantly explained on this basis the *Mishnah's* description (*Bikurim* 3:1) of how a farmer designates his first fruits as *bikurim*. “A person goes down to his field and sees the first fig that ripened, the first cluster [of grapes] that ripened, or the first pomegranate that ripened, and ties it with a string.”

Significantly, the *Mishnah* mentions three of the Seven Species that require bikurim: figs, grapes, and pomegranates – the three fruits brought by the spies to show the people. Rav Ziemba explained that these three fruits are emphasized because it was through these fruits





BIOGRAPHY & LEGACY

that the Ten Spies disparaged Eretz Yisrael and convinced the rest of the nation to reject the Land of Israel. And it is especially through these fruits that we reverse this grave sin and show our love and affection for the special land that Hashem has given us.

We might add that this might also explain a halacha noted by Rashi (*Devarim* 26:5) regarding mikra bikurim, the proclamation that the farmer would make upon bringing his first fruits to the Beis HaMikdash. This proclamation briefly recounts the history of the Egyptian bondage and the Exodus, giving praise to Hashem for lifting us from the depths of slavery and oppression and bringing us to Eretz Yisrael where we can till the Land and enjoy its luscious produce.

The Torah introduces the instruction of mikra bikurim with the words “you shall declare and you shall say.” Rashi explains that the “declaration” indicates how this proclamation must be made in a loud voice. In light of the Arizal’s

teaching, we might explain that this requirement corresponds to Bnei Yisrael’s panicked reaction to the scouts’ report about the land: “The congregation all raised their voices, and the nation cried that night” (*Bamidbar* 14:1).

To rectify the loud cries of unwarranted fear and anguish at the time of the Sin of the Spies, the farmer brings his fruits to the Beis HaMikdash and loudly gives praise to Hashem, emphatically expressing gratitude for the great gift of the Land.

Moreover, the word ve’anita also means “you shall answer.” The bikurim proclamation is our eternal response to the spies, who spoke disdainfully about the Land. We “answer” them every year by bringing the Land’s produce, the same produce that the spies had ridiculed, and giving praise to Hashem for the beautiful Land with which He has blessed us.

Our loud, resonating response to the negative report of the spies is mikra bikurim, expressing our joy and excitement over our cherished homeland.



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Advocating for the Teacher

Rebbetzin Ilana Cowland

Relationships Coach and author of *The Moderately Anxious Everybody*



This topic has long bothered me. Probably since I first heard about it in seminary. I remember (unlike most of the other things I learned, but that's because it bothered me so much) one of my wisest teachers saying that it's so important to advocate for teachers. She always did it, no matter what, and it once almost cost her one of her kids.

She didn't elaborate on what that meant. Did it affect her child's mood, mental health, or frumkeit? I can't tell you. But it struck me that – while I really trusted her opinion so if she said it's a good idea to support teachers then it probably is – the cost of a whole child seemed a bit expensive.

I've struggled with this idea and have drawn some conclusions. It's not a closed topic in my mind, so feel free to let me know if you have anything to add.

Firstly, choose the school most likely to reduce the chances of this happening. The more the home and the school align, the better.

Next, be willing to apply my teacher's rule much, much more often than you think. It's okay that teachers make mistakes. And if it's not okay

in an ideal world, it's going to happen anyway, so don't expect it not to. Most of the mistakes that teachers make will go over the kids' heads unless we turn them into issues. If every mistake is treated with outrage, your child will learn to disrespect their teachers, which will cause you more problems than the mistake itself.

Should you find yourself truly outraged for good reason, then try to keep this out of your child's view and go back to the teacher, adult to adult. However, before you accuse the poor teacher of your child's tale, make sure to clarify the whole story first. Most of the time, the report you heard was

If every mistake is treated with outrage, your child will learn to disrespect their teachers, which will cause you more problems than the mistake itself.

incensed but not always true. It's also a bad idea to demonstrate outrage. You, the adult, may have an idea of when to use it, but your child probably doesn't yet.



If you're very smart, you may be able to solve the issue without the child even knowing you're horrified. If the child has learned something in halacha or even hashkafa that you consider false or extreme, you might calmly arm them with a source that they take back to the teacher so that the teacher can explain how the two positions work together. Once the teacher has clocked that they've been caught by the parent, you'll find them responding much more reasonably.

(A very senior rebbe once told me that a rebbe explained to the children that material yarmulkes are better than knitted ones because yiras shamayim can escape through the stitching. You can't make this stuff up. He controlled his outrage and told his child to ask, why then do Toldos Aharon wear knitted yarmulkes? The teacher unsurprisingly backtracked on his comment). As is age appropriate, it's good chinuch for a child to know that there are multiple ways to understand the world.

The Lost Art of Respectful Disagreement

In fact, there may even be an argument to say that in today's world of micro- aggressions, triggers,

safe spaces, cancel culture, and the like, the lost art of respectful disagreement needs to be demonstrated. But it does have to be respectful. Your child should not feel at the end of the event that his dad is a hero and his rebbe is a fool. This is tricky when what the teacher said was indeed foolish. The trick is to convey that the disapproval is

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over what was said, not about who said it.

Sometimes, a teacher's comment or behavior can be used as a springboard for building resilience. One of my kid's teachers was a bit of a bully. I was very proud of my daughter when, on being asked how school was, she responded that her teacher was having a tough day again. Her ability to have compassion for her teacher's humanity and her faults protected her from the impact that the





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behavior might have had on her.

And one more thing to defend the teachers. Sometimes kids need to be told to suck it up even if the teacher was a bit stricter than you would have liked. The punishment was a tiny weeny bit affair. They didn't phrase things exactly in line with the class's preference. Have some humility, have some respect. Cut the teacher a little slack, and bow your head. Life isn't always going to be exactly just. But having respect is important anyway. We do well to teach our kids that.

OK, I've finished defending the advocacy. Here comes the however.

HOWEVER...

There might be times, chas veshalom, where the impact of

the teacher's behavior is just too damaging. (No, not when they give your little darling an 84 when she should have gotten an 87.) When a teacher's words or behavior actually risk deeply hurting your child, then the stakes have changed. You don't want your child ever to feel brutalized at school, and you don't want your child ever to feel that no one from home stepped into his corner to protect him.

We do have to advocate for our teachers, but there may be times when we just can't afford it. A child has to know that home is a place of safety even when school doesn't feel that way. A child has to know that they can turn to their parents when they are really struggling.



STORIES THAT INSPIRE

Stories for Shabbos Chazon

Rabbi Shmuel Kimche

Mashgiach Ruachni at Netzach Yisrael Elementary School, Ramat Beit Shemesh

We all have many thoughts as this time of year comes around – mainly about the unity of the Jewish People, which is the essence for us in our generation.

I thought of including a few of my favorite stories that I think are relevant for this time of year. Please feel free to discuss with the family how they are connected and



STORIES THAT INSPIRE

relevant.

IYH - This should be the last Tisha Be'Av we experience in Galus. Leshana Haba'ah BiYerushalayim HaBenuya!

Punctured Bottle

The story is told of a captain in the American army, who in the 'War Against Terror' found himself leading a unit of soldiers in the deserts of Afghanistan. The year was 2002, and this war was in the wake of the Terrorist attack on 9/11.

As he leads his soldiers, at the distance of about two days walk from their base - the soldiers are tense and unsure. Suddenly, without warning, a terror unit ambushes them... and when the terrible battle was over and silence takes over again - only the Captain of the unit and one private remains.

Quietly, they recognize each other, and a few hours later, under the cover of dark, they join together to start a sad long walk back to base. Both are exhausted, and both realize that this walk is going to be a fight for life and survival. They begin...

After an hour of walking, the

private stops for a drink. He puts his water bottle to his mouth, and lets out a cry 'My water bottle has been punctured!' as he holds up his bottle which had been pierced by the bullets of the enemy. The captain looks at him, and takes out his own bottle, and takes a short but satisfying sip.... The private turns to his commander and asks - 'please give me some of your water - I am so thirsty!', but the captain simply puts his bottle back into his backpack, and ignores the plea...

A few hours later, so thirsty for a drop, the private turns to the commander and demands 'I need some water - I am dying here!' the commander says 'Out here in the desert, it is each man for himself!'.... Anger builds up in the heart of the private, and through clenched teeth he says 'Just you wait until we get back to base! I am going to get you thrown into jail!!! You are not rationing the resources!!!!...'

Silence reigned for the rest of the long hike. Anger and Indifference.

About two hours from base, they find themselves literally crawling slowly - out of energy - and they are picked up by an American patrol. Both the captain and the private take a full week to recover, and slowly regain strength. One day, the General of the base, walks into the captain's





STORIES THAT INSPIRE

hospital room and asks him 'Captain, is it true what the private told me? That you were walking back, and that his water bottle was punctured, and you refused to give him from yours....? That is not like you at all?'"

The captain motioned for the nurse to bring his knapsack to the bed... Out of the knapsack, the captain pulls out his own water-bottle. "We had just fought the toughest battle. We were both lucky to survive. Look at my water-bottle. It was also pierced by a bullet!!!! I knew that the only way in which the private would survive, is with the anger that would fuel him not to give up! Every time he was thirsty, I pretended to drink from my empty bottle! I knew that that would make him so angry that he would keep walking! We both managed on zero water!"

HKBH too went into Galus when we did. He is waiting to bring us home. But the journey has been long - and while we keep asking for a little water, the 'Captain' knows that we need to keep walking. "Al Mei Menuchos Yenahalein"i... - He walks me along the waters (yet doesn't allow me to drink) ... "Shivtecha Umishantecha Heima Yenachamuni" - as Reb Chaim MiVolozhin teaches us that the passuk is thanking Hashem, that also the stick, ends up being the source of comfort.

The Rock (a mashal):

An artist spent two years standing on a cliff-edge painting the most life-like painting of the Alps. Day and night, for two years, he sat and stood, painted and scratched - until his life's masterpiece was completed! An immense beautiful picture stood there overlooking the alps. What a simcha!

He decided to invite his closest friend to admire with him the nuances and likeness of the painting.

His friend arrives, and together they are admiring the painting. At a certain point, the artist starts gazing at his painting, and almost trance-like starts walking backwards to see a wider perspective of the picture.

To his horror - the friend looks on and sees that his-friend-the-artist is edging closer and closer to the precipice as he walks step after step backwards!!!! He shouts "STOP! LOOK BEHIND YOU! CAREFUL!!!" but to no avail. The artist is too deep into his reverie!!!

The friend has no choice. He takes a rock and throws it hard.... At the picture!!! The canvas tears, the artist is shocked out of his dream-world and is crazed with fright and anger... "WHAT IS THIS??? WHAT DID YOU JUST DO????!!!"...



STORIES THAT INSPIRE

The friend simply answers: 'Look behind you!'

As the artist looks behind, he sees that the distance between himself and certain death is only a few centimeters....

Hishlich Chamaso Al Eitzim VeAvanim. The destruction of the Bayis, and the challenges - save Klal Yisrael.

(R Shimshon Pinkus)

A Reason to Cry (a mashal)

A young seven-year-old girl enters her father's study. She sees a paper on the desk, and decides that this would be a great opportunity to draw a picture for her father. She spends a while drawing a wonderful picture and leaves it on the desk.

A few minutes later, her younger 5-year-old brother comes in, and sees the paper on the desk. He decides to make a paper airplane and fly it around the room.

As he is playing with it, his sister walks back into the study, and watches in horror as her picture is being thrown around the room - and as she comes into the room - the paper airplane makes a nose-dive right into... the flames of the hearth! She starts crying - as does the boy - and soon enough the mother comes in.

"What paper are you talking about? The one on the desk!??? Please don't tell me that you drew a picture on that paper!! It was a promissory note for this winter's money!!! Without it, we are going to be frozen!"

As the mother sits down to cry - in walks the father!

"What paper did you get a promissory note on? The one on the desk? That was the Title Deed of our home!!!! What are we going to do???!"

4 people are sitting on the floor and crying.

One for a paper airplane - loss of fun.

One for the drawing - loss of showing accomplishments.

One for the winter money - loss of heating for the month.

One for the house.

Same Paper. Same day. Different meanings depending on understanding of connection to Klal Yisrael and Jewish History.

Why do YOU want the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash?

(The Dubno maggid, 150 years ago)

IYH - may this Shabbos Chazon be the last. May we together see the Nechama this year!

Good Shabbos



PARASHA HALACHA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

Bishul Akum

Josh and Tammy Kruger

The Story

"Hi Mom!" said Aryeh, holding the phone to his ear, "I just got home from school. My friend Koby came with me. Is it alright if he stays?"

"Sure!" replied Aryeh's mother. "Why don't you make a little snack to eat now before you start your homework?" she asked.

Aryeh laughed, "Actually that's one of the reasons I was calling! We'd like to make pizzas. I checked the freezer and we have the dough and some cheese in the fridge."

Aryeh's mom thought for a moment, "OK, that's fine. Please ask the babysitter, Miranda, to cook up some of the pizza sauce and you can make your own pizzas and add whichever toppings you'd like. Have fun but please clean up after yourselves."

Aryeh told Koby the good news. "Mom says that we can have the Pizza! Miranda is going to cook the pizza sauce."

"Sound great" said Koby. "Is it ok if I use your phone while you start getting things ready?"

"Sure," said Aryeh. "I'll be in the kitchen."

Koby quickly dialed. "Hello Mom? I'm at Aryeh's house. We're going to have pizza but I'm worried because the non-Jewish babysitter is going to cook the pizza sauce. Isn't that *bishul akum*?"

Discussion

Q: What does the term bishul akum mean?

A: "*Bishul*" means to cook. "*Akum*" stands for עובד כוכבים ומזלות ("*oved kochavim umazalot*"). Literally, this means one who prays to stars and believes in astrology. Nowadays, the term is applied to anyone who is not Jewish. So the term "Bishul Akum" means "Food cooked by someone who is not Jewish".

Q: Why is bishul akum a problem?

A: There are a number of reasons that have been given. One of them is a concern that if someone who is not Jewish cooks our food, then they may make a mistake and use an ingredient that is not kosher (*Or Zarua, Avodah Zarah, 192*).

Q: What is the connection between bishul akum and the parashah?

A: In parshas *Devarim* Moshe reminds Bnei Yisroel about the time that they traveled by the land of Edom. Hashem





PARASHA HALACHA FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE



instructed Moshe to buy food and water from the people of Edom and not to fight them (*Devarim 2:6*). It's a bit complicated, but the Chachamim learn from the pasuk that food that is cooked by a non-Jew cannot be eaten by a Jew. This is because the pasuk mentions both water and food. The Chachamim learned that the food bought from Edom would have to be similar to water that would be purchased from Edom. After water has been heated and cooled down it looks and tastes the same. So too, any food purchased from Edom would have to look and taste as if it was not heated and cooled by a fire. This meant that the food couldn't be cooked (*Avodah Zarah 37b*).

Q: If bishul akum is a problem, how come many kosher restaurants have non-Jewish Chefs?

A: The law is that a non-Jew cannot do all the cooking. As long as part of the cooking has been done by a Jew, then there is no problem. For Ashkenazim, if a Jew just lights the stove, then a non-Jew can do everything else (*Remo, Yoreh De'ah 113:7*).

Q: Is it a problem for Aryeh's babysitter to prepare the pizza sauce by herself?

A: There are certain situations where bishul akum is not a problem

(*Avodah Zarah 38a*, see Tosefos; *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah 113*):

1) If the cooked food could have been eaten raw, then bishul akum does not apply. The babysitter is making a pizza sauce with ingredients that could all be eaten raw, such as tomatoes.

2) The situation of a nanny is different than the classic situation of bishul akum. The babysitter is not inviting Jewish people to her home to cook food for them. She is being paid to work in the home, and is usually being told what to cook.

3) If the cooked food is not appropriate for serving at a meal for a king. Pizza is a very tasty food, but pizza and pizza sauce are certainly not appropriate for serving at a king's feast.

Back to Our Story

Koby returned to the kitchen and helped Aryeh and Miranda to prepare a delicious pizza. When it was ready, they took a moment to admire their creation.

"It's so good, it's fit for a king" Aryeh exclaimed.

"Hopefully not," said Koby with a smile.

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