

PARSHAS BECHUKOSAI – SELF SERVICE

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

In Parshas Bechukosai the Torah relates the rewards that Hashem will bestow on Bnai Yisrael if they keep His Mitzvos. After a brief list of physical and material benefits, it says, "I will place My Mishkan in your midst and My Spirit will not reject you" (Vayikra 26:11). Rashi, following the literal translation of the words, translates it, "My Spirit will not be disgusted with you." The Ramban rejects this peshat, noting that it seems unnecessary to tell us that if we keep all the Mitzvos, Hashem will not despise us.

In defense of Rashi, Rav Shimon Schwab suggests a remarkable explanation. If we are keeping the Mitzvos for the sake of all these promised rewards, we are only doing everything for our own benefit and not really to serve Hashem. To apply a mashal to this type of relationship consider the following: Reuvain has no interest whatsoever in befriending Shimon and behaving as if he really loves him. He is only acting this way because Shimon is very wealthy, and Reuvain anticipates that this behavior will be very financially rewarding. When Shimon realizes this, he will certainly be very offended by such behavior.

Rav Schwab suggests that this idea demonstrates the great significance of Rashi's peshat. Hashem promises that even though He

knows our true motives and that we are really serving ourselves and not Him, He will not be repulsed by this. On the contrary, "He will place His Sanctuary in our midst and will be our G-d and we will be His people." Indeed Chazal (Pesachim 50b) tell us, "A person should engage in Torah and Mitzvos even shelo lishma – for ulterior motives, because from shelo lishma he will eventually come to doing the Mitzvos lishma."

Rav Chaim Volozhin (Ruach Chaim on Pirkei Avos 1:13) explains that the only way that we can get to lishma is through shelo lishma. Just as a master cannot demand of a servant to reach the top rung of a ladder without first placing his foot on the bottom rung, Hashem does not expect us to rise immediately to the very high level of lishma. On the other hand the servant cannot remain on the bottom rung forever. Step by cautious step, he must strive to reach the top. So it is with the process of rising from shelo lishma to lishma. Our initial steps will, of necessity, be shelo lishma, but we must continue up the ladder toward lishma.

Rashi in Maseches Rosh Hashana (4a) states that a Jewish person who does a Mitzvah for ulterior motives will not regret having done it, even if his intention was not fulfilled. This is

because deep down every Jew wants to do Mitzvos. The divorce document of a get can only be given with the consent of the husband. If a man is obligated to give his wife a get and refuses to do so, Bais Din may beat him until he states, "I am willing to give it." The Rambam in Hilchos Gittin (2:20) asks how we can consider such a statement uttered under total duress to imply consent. He answers, "Since he wants to be a Yisrael, therefore he really wants to perform all the Mitzvos...It is his yetzer hara which has gotten the best of him. When he is beaten until the point that his yetzer is weakened and he states, 'I want to do it,' he has indeed given the get voluntarily."

In every shelo lishma there is a latent lishma. This is why Chazal state that from the shelo lishma he will come to lishma. Thus Hashem is not only not disgusted with our Mitzvos which are done shelo lishma, He is pleased with them. However, as Rav Chaim explained we cannot remain on the bottom rung. So we must place our foot on the lowest rung with the intention to keep moving higher and higher, so that we can reach our own individual level of lishma, because the ultimate service of Hashem is not self-centered, but G-d-centered.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

Please contact R' Ungar (Ymunqar@gmail.com) with questions or comments



QUESTION: I was very hungry and by mistake I took a bite of a cookie without making a ברכה. After chewing but before swallowing I remembered that I didn't make a ברכה. What should I do at that moment? What if I didn't even start chewing yet? What if I already swallowed?

ANSWER: It is אסור to eat without a ברכה. One may also not make a ברכה with anything in the mouth. It is not permitted to waste food unless it is absolutely necessary. So, if possible if one by mistake took a bite, but it can be taken out, then it should be taken out. If it is a hard candy or the like and it is not disgusting to take it out, then you should take it out. If one already started chewing and it is disgusting to take it out, then one should move the food to the side of the mouth and then make the ברכה. If it is a liquid and it is not possible to move to the side, then one should spit it out and not drink without a ברכה. If one already swallowed the food without a ברכה and you do not have any more food, then it is too late to make a ברכה. Even if חס ושלום one ate without a ברכה one will still need to make a ברכה אחרונה the food eaten if a שיעור was eaten.

עי' סימן קע"ב סעי' א' וב' ומשנה ברורה ס"ק ב' וג'

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THE BRIDAL CHAIR COLLAPSE

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Elisheva was a wonderful young woman. She graduated from Bais Yaakov and seminary, and looked forward to finding the right shidduch and starting a family.

Very quickly, all of her friends got married and had children, but Elisheva unfortunately did not find her bashert yet. Finally, when she was 34 years old, to the great joy of her family and friends, Elisheva got engaged. She was very popular, and the joy of her engagement was overwhelming. Many people were eager to participate in the wedding celebration, so her parents rented a large wedding hall to accommodate the numerous guests. The hall included all the usual accoutrements, including the special bridal chair used in Jewish weddings.

At the wedding, hundreds of guests attended, with many coming over to wish Elisheva well, say "mazel tov," and give her their blessings. People kept hugging her and leaning on her chair, which gradually weakened under the weight.

In the midst of the celebration, surrounded by well-wishers, the beautiful bridal chair suddenly broke and collapsed, causing Elisheva to fall back to everyone's shock and horror. Thankfully, Elisheva was unharmed, though she felt embarrassed and shaken.

After the wedding, the hall owner spoke to Elisheva's father. He said, "I'm sure you won't form an investigatory committee to determine who broke the chair, but I expect to be paid for its replacement."

Elisheva's father responded, "I was going to bring that up. I feel it's your responsibility that the chair broke. It caused us great embarrassment, and you should give us a reduction on the wedding cost because of this incident. I certainly shouldn't be obligated to pay for it. It should be the person who broke the chair or the last person who leaned on it."

They agreed to bring this question to a Rav. What do you think? Should the hall owner compensate Elisheva's father for the broken chair? Should Elisheva's father pay for the replacement? Or should it be the person who broke the chair or the last person who leaned on it? What do you think?

Regarding last week's question about taking the limousine to the hospital, Rabbi Zilberstein (Upiryu Matok Devarim, page 87) writes that one is not allowed to break Shabbos just to save money. In this case, because he has a car available to pick him up, he is not allowed to call another car that is not a limousine just because it will save money. Regarding the question of breaking Shabbos to avoid the embarrassment of riding in a limousine to the hospital, Rabbi Zilberstein further writes (ibid, page 90, a different case than the limousine story) that, generally speaking, one is not allowed to break Shabbos to avoid embarrassment, even when someone is in labor.

"THE ENTIRE BANK STAFF WAS CLAMORING FOR A BRACHAH"

It was an ordinary workday at an Israeli bank, characterized by sullen clerks, rare smiles, and begrudging service. Among them was a clerk adorned with the trappings of secular life: tattoos on her arm, vampire-like fingernails, a wristband bearing a '70s pop buzzword, and a T-shirt advocating for the release of hostages at any cost.

After completing his business, Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, (brother of the Rosh Yeshiva Rav Aharon Feldman) on a whim, asked the imperious clerk if she would like a brachah. Her dark demeanor brightened immediately. "A brachah? Yes, by all means!" she exclaimed. In Rabbi Feldman's words, "In keeping with the rabbinic dictum "Al tehi birchas hedyot kallah b'einecha - Do not make light of the blessings of ordinary people," I blessed her and her family with long life, good health, joy, and satisfaction in all her endeavors." She was genuinely moved and thanked him profusely. The clerk nearby, having overheard their exchange, called out, "Me too! Please give me a brachah also." Rabbi Feldman

obliged, offering her a similar blessing. She, too, was overjoyed. Soon, voices from further desks chimed in: "How about me?" Before long, the entire bank staff was clamoring for a brachah.

What was striking was that although none of the staff appeared to be identifiably religious, no one wanted to miss the chance of receiving the blessing of an elderly rabbi. This made Rabbi Feldman ponder. A simple wish would have been forgotten quickly, but the same sentiments within the framework of a brachah carried much more weight. A wish expresses one person's hopes for another, but a brachah introduces a transcendent element, perhaps even a touch of Divine involvement. "I wish you well" is a fine sentiment, but "may you be blessed" is on an entirely different level.

The clerks, though not articulating it, seemed to intuitively grasp this distinction. They weren't merely asking for good wishes; they were reaching for something beyond ordinary

understanding, something intangible from the non-material world. They sensed that an elderly rabbi might bring that extra, undefinable component into their lives.

One thing was clear: there is no such thing as a vacuous Jewish soul. This soul is constantly in search of meaning and fulfillment; it does not reject God and all that He represents. It longs for more, not less, spirituality. Perhaps the root cause of the secular-religious divide is that the religious community has yet to find the formula to bridge this gap.

As Rabbi Feldman walked out the door, he noticed a rare phenomenon: the frowns had disappeared, and some of the clerks were actually smiling. For those few moments, the atmosphere in the bank had changed radically.

(Based on Rabbi Feldman's first-person account in Mishpacha Magazine. Reprinted with permission from Table Talk.)

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First Seder Weekly Schedule

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
6:20 AM – 6:50 M, Th 6:55 Tu, W, F	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)
9:20 AM – 9:55 AM	Mishnah Terumos (R' Chesky Weiss)	Mishnah Terumos (R' Chesky Weiss)	Mishnah Terumos (R' Chesky Weiss)	Mishnah Terumos (R' Chesky Weiss)	Parsha HaShevuah (R' Yehoshua Levy)
10:00 AM – 10:40 AM	Gemara Bava Basra (R' Daniel Boltuch)	Gemara Bava Basra (R' Daniel Boltuch)	Gemara Bava Basra (R' Daniel Boltuch)	Gemara Bava Basra (R' Daniel Boltuch)	Gemara Bava Basra (R' Daniel Boltuch)
10:45 AM – 11:15 AM	Dirshu Mishna Berurah (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Mishna Berurah (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Mishna Berurah (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Mishna Berurah (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Mishna Berurah (R' Uri Greenspan)
11:15 AM – 11:50 PM	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)
12:00 PM – 12:40 PM	Practical Timely Halacha (R' Mordechai Shain)	The Life and Torah of our Leaders (R' David Gross)	Biar Tefilla (R' Yoel Zeffren)	Seter Tehillim (R' Uri Greenspan)	Pele Yoetz followed by Shemiras Haloshon from the Chofetz Chaim Hashkafa - Parsha (R' Uri Greenspan)
12:45 PM – 1:15 PM	Navi Shirur (R' Baruch Lichtenstein)	Pele Yoetz followed by Shemiras Haloshon from the Chofetz Chaim Hashkafa - Parsha (R' Uri Greenspan)	Navi Shirur (R' Baruch Lichtenstein)	Pele Yoetz followed by Shemiras Haloshon from the Chofetz Chaim Hashkafa - Parsha (R' Uri Greenspan)	

Good Shabbos!

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more information