1st Seder Weekly Divrei Torah
A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

PARSHAS HACHODESH – ALL ABOUT THE MOON

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

It almost seems as if Klal Yisrael has an infatuation with the moon. First there is the celebration of Rosh Chodesh, the new moon, which by the way, happens to be a very special Yom Tov for women. Then there is Rosh Chodesh Bentching – a prayer for our welfare in anticipation of the upcoming Rosh Chodesh. Then there is Kiddush Levana – a prayer recited at night when the moon has waxed sufficiently to shed its light on the earth.

It doesn't stop there. There is Adar, the month which was overturned from anguish to joy. Halacha dictates that Adar is a fortuitous month for pursuing litigation with a gentile, due to the awesome victory of the Jews over their enemies in the month of Adar. And there is the sad month of Av. And don't forget Chodesh Ha'aviv – the Month of Springtime and our historical exodus from Mitzrayim. We don't just observe the dates of fortune or misfortune, we observe the entire month of each event. Each month has its own specific characteristics which define its identity and make it predisposed to certain events. Thus it is not surprising to read in the Haggada, "Perhaps we should begin [reciting the Haggada] from Rosh Chodesh," since indeed the whole month is one of celebration.

Chazal tell us (Sukkah 29a) that Bnai Yisrael calculate their calendar by the moon and the gentile nations calculate by the sun. The sun is consistent in its appearance. Each day, each month and each year, we see the same sun - perhaps a little more to the south, a little more to the north, but it always looks the same. The moon, on the other hand, waxes in the first half of the month and wanes in the second half of the month.

The moon symbolizes the alternating situations of good fortune and adversity. The Jewish Nation may be afflicted, persecuted, or enslaved, but ultimately we are sure to wax and prosper again. This has been the case throughout our history and has been most evident in the past century with the awesome decimation of the Holocaust and our miraculous rebirth after the war. The other nations, however, may continue to shine for centuries like the brilliant sun, but they ultimately disintegrate when their time comes.

There is another nation that also determines their calendar by the moon – the nation of Yishmael. They also wax and wane. However, there is a major distinction between them and us. Our calendar calculates the months by the moon but intercalates them with the cycle of the sun. In that way we are able to combine the long term consistency of the sun with the capacity for renewal of the moon.

The Gemara in Rosh Hashana (11a) states, "In Nissan we were redeemed and in Nissan we will ultimately be redeemed." Nissan is a month of redemption - a month of physical and spiritual renewal. Just as nature begins to come alive and blossom, so too there is the opportunity for Bnai Yisrael to renew themselves in their relationship with Hashem. Just as over 3,000 years ago the month of Aviv - springtime - heralded our redemption, so each year the opportunity for redemption presents itself again. Perhaps if we too renew ourselves, this time it will happen.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

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

QUESTION: Is it מותר to blow up a balloon on שבת? If yes, can we tie a bow to secure it? Can we blow up a mattress for our guests?

ANSWER: The פוסקים say that one may not blow up a ball or balloon for the first time as it constitues תיקון מנא which is included in the מלאכה of בונה. It is similar to a pillow that is filled with feathers, which is אסור to fill for the first time on שבת. However, if it was filled before שבת and on שבת some of the feathers fell out, it is מותר to put those feathers back in. Refilling with the same feathers is not considered a תיקון מנא since it already was a usable pillow. The same is true with a ball or balloon. One may not fill it with air for the first time as that is a תיקון מנא. If it was once filled with air, then one may blow it up on שבת. Balloons are generally new and may not be blown up on שבת. Even if they were once blown up, some say that if the usual custom is to tie it after blowing it up, then it is אסור to blow up for the concern that one may tie a forbidden knot. A blow-up bed that was once blown up is allowed to be manually blown up if it was already inflated once before and there is no concern of making a knot since there is only a plug that keeps it inflated.

עי' סימן ש"מ סעי' ח' ומ"ב שם. עי' שמירת שבת כהלכתו החדש פרק ט"ז סעי' ז'

Weekly question: What are the "Second Coming" and the "New Testament?

(Answer from "EMAILIM BATORAH" on the back)

BOXED IN BY THREE TAXIS

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Eli, who lived in Eretz Yisroel, drove to shul one day. After davening, he came outside to return to his car and saw that his car was entirely boxed in. There was a taxi in front of his car parked very closely, another taxi behind his car parked even closer, and yet another taxi double-parked beside him. There was no way he could move his car.

It turned out there was a taxi office right near the shul, so Eli went into the office and spoke politely to the person at the counter. "My car is boxed in. Could you please move the taxis?"

The man in the office was sitting with several other drivers. They were smoking, drinking coffee, and eating breakfast. The man responded casually, "Well, please don't disturb us in the middle of our breakfast. When we're finished, we'll do what you want."

Eli waited a bit longer, but he remained stuck, and he had important errands to attend to. So he had an idea. He took out his phone, stepped aside, and called the taxi dispatch. "I'd like to order a taxi ride from here to a location that's about a half-hour away. Please come as soon as possible."

Then he called again, requesting another taxi to another distant location, also about a half-hour trip. And he called yet again for a third ride, each one far enough away to entice the drivers to leave their breakfast. Eli wasn't sure exactly which taxis would respond, but he hoped this strategy would free his car. Soon enough, Eli saw two of the taxis pull away, enabling him to finally move his car.

Obviously, the drivers cared more about earning a substantial fare than finishing breakfast. Eli felt satisfied, relieved that he'd found a clever way out. But as he drove home, he began to feel uneasy. Was his approach appropriate? According to the Torah, was he allowed to call taxis he didn't genuinely need? Did he have to pay them for their time and effort? On one hand, he never actually used the taxis, so perhaps he shouldn't have to pay. But on the other hand, he had caused the drivers to waste their time, use fuel, and possibly lose other legitimate fares. Did he now have an obligation to return to the taxi office and offer payment to cover their losses? Yet he argued with himself—they had unfairly blocked him in; what else was he supposed to do? Eli brought this question to Rav Zilberstein. What do you think? See Chashukei Chemed Bava Kama Page 193

Regarding last week's question about the employee who failed to notice that the checks were post-dated: Rabbi Zilberstein (Chashukei Chemed Bava Kama Page 192) explained that if the employee's primary job was to deposit checks, he would be considered negligent for not noticing the post-date and would be obligated to pay the fines. However, if this was not his main responsibility—if his primary role in the store was something else and depositing checks was merely an additional task he was asked to perform—then the employee would not be held responsible for the error.

HE TOOK OFF HIS COAT

R' Yisrael Besser told over the following beautiful story:

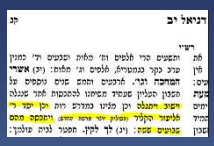
At my son's chasunah, there was a moment that illustrated what it means to "be there." Rav Naftali Jaeger, the Rosh Yeshiva of Sh'or Yoshuv, graced the simcha with his presence. Like all great talmidei chachamim, the Rosh Yeshiva exuded nobility, aristocratic in bearing and conduct. He came in, he danced, he wished well, and then he asked me where my father — in whose zechus he had likely come — was. My father seemed to have slipped out, and I couldn't find him.

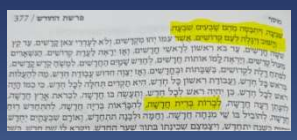
One of my relatives walked the Rosh Yeshiva out, all the while looking for my father, whom he couldn't find. As they reached the door of the hall, he spotted my father and told the Rosh Yeshiva.

As this relative hurried to call my father, the Rosh Yeshiva asked him to wait a moment. Rav Naftali took off his coat, placed it on the side, and then went forward to share his mazel tov wishes. He took off his coat. The small actions of a talmid chacham are heavy in significance. If he were going to wish mazel tov, to participate in the simcha of another, he would not do so while in his coat — which denotes that, even if the body is there, the spirit is already back on the Van Wyck Expressway — but the opposite. It symbolized that Rav Naftali was not simply fulfilling an obligation or preparing to rush away. By shedding his coat, he communicated clearly and unmistakably: "I am fully here. Not just physically, but with all of my heart and soul. My spirit is not elsewhere, not halfway out the door. Your joy, at this moment, is my entire focus." Reprinted with permission from Table Talk.

Answer to this week's question: In the סילוק לפ' החדש, The קליר refers to Moshiach's arrival as " ויתכסה מהם שבעים שבעה (*ששה)"- a period of seven times a seven-year cycle משיח will be covered. Rashi [דניאל (12:12)] explains that after מלך המשיח will reveal himself, he will go back into hiding for forty-five years and then reveal himself again - a "*second coming*". The פיוט continues and enumerates all the new occurrences that will happen after Moshiach's arrival. One of them will be "לכרות ברית חדשה". Hashem will make a "*new testament*" with all the animals and humans not to harm each other.

Rashi has the גירסא (6)





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Good Shabbos!