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

This Week's 1st Seder Bais Medrash has been dedicated in Memory of Avraham Moshe Ben Shalom a'h By his children, Yona and Mindy Zaslow

PARSHAS NASO – AN EYEWITNESS REACTS

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

This week's Parsha describes the procedure of *mei sotah* – the ritual water administered to a woman suspected of adultery. If a husband has sufficient grounds to suspect that his wife has been unfaithful, he may bring her to the Bais Hamikdash. If she confesses to having committed this sin, she must accept a divorce from her husband and her punishment will remain in the hands of Hashem. If she insists that she is innocent, she must drink the *mei sotah.* If she really did commit adultery, then upon consuming the water she will die a very unpleasant death.

Rashi cites the Gemara (Sotah 2b) which asks, "Why did the Torah place the laws of *nazir* right after the portion of *sotah?* To imply that one who sees the degradation of the unfaithful wife when she meets her terrible fate should become a *nazir,* thereby foreswearing the imbibing of wine." Rashi (ad. loc.) explains that too much wine is often a catalyst to promiscuity.

The Meforshim are perplexed: "Why, of all people, should the one who witnessed the grave consequences of sin have to take such extreme measures to avoid the temptation to sin?" Here are two different approaches.

The first approach maintains that this person is really not being singled out as needing any greater protection from falling prey to temptation than anyone else. The Torah is teaching us a very important lesson. There are times when we all experience remarkable inspiration and great spiritual arousal. However, these very special and meaningful emotions tend to dissipate very quickly. The way to concretize these strong feelings is to invest in a major decision and undertaking. One must make a resolution to accept a certain mode of behavior which will help to keep him in check. Therefore, the one who has taken the lesson of the *sotah* to heart should attempt to assure that this message remains with him by becoming a *nazir.*

There are two very common and practical examples of employing this concept. The first is the Yom Kippur experience. This phenomenal day uplifts us in almost a supernatural way and imbues us with many good intentions. But we all know how quickly these intentions can evaporate. What can we do? Make *kabbalos* – resolutions outlining the steps we will take to improve and thereby accomplish a lasting Teshuva. And write them down! (A word of caution: overly ambitious resolutions are generally doomed to failure and often lead to retrogression. So, we must be careful and judicious.)

The other example is when we slip up and do an *aveirah.* We must do Teshuva. But no matter how bad we feel and how much we regret our foolish actions, we must do something concrete. Teshuva requires a commitment, a practical resolution to prevent a repeat performance

However, there is another even deeper explanation of the Gemara in Sotah. According to this approach this person is indeed being singled out. Exposure to illicit behavior, even when it is framed in a very negative setting or when it is decried and disparaged, is still exposure. Thus, the person who witnessed the *sotah's* fate came face to face with someone who committed a very serious *aveirah.* He must therefore take action to make sure that it doesn't rub off on him.

The practical application of this might be literally before your eyes: television, internet and movies and even radio. Those who claim that these venues merely mirror the real world, are not living in the real world. The truth is that, to no small extent, the real world mirrors them. Indeed, this is the psychology of copycat crimes. Although most people are not inclined to copy a murder, there are plenty of *aveiros* and inappropriate things on these venues that many people do copy. Caveat emptor!

The message of the Gemara resonates on two levels. If you want an experience to endure, concretize it in a resolution. If you specifically don't want some sleazy event to strike a chord with you, then don't experience it to begin with. And if you already did, climb fast to higher ground.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

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

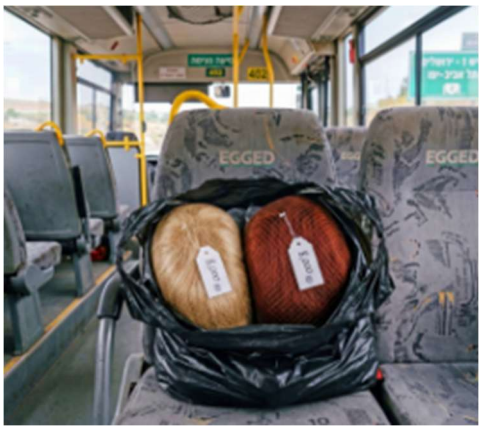
QUESTION: When I have a fan on, am I allowed to move it on שבת in any direction I want? What if I want to move the fan to face it away so it should not blow on me?

ANSWER: When it comes to the דינים of מוקצה one must know which particular מוקצה you're dealing with to know if and how it may be moved. One type of מוקצה is a כלי שמלאכתו לאיסור. A כלי that is used mainly for איסור like a hammer is a כלי שמלאכתו לאיסור. Another example is a screwdriver which is used mainly for screws. Some hold that any electrical appliance that works only through electricity is also considered a כלי שמלאכתו לאיסור. Others hold since the fan doesn't do any actual איסור it is a כלי שמלאכתו להיתר. According to the latter view a fan may be moved in any direction for any reason. Even according to the former view, a fan may also be moved. The rule of a כלי שמלאכתו לאיסור is that it may be moved לצורך גופו ומקומו, which means: If you need that כלי for a permitted use or if the כלי is in your way, you may use it or move it out of your way…if you need the כלי. If a fan is blowing on you in an annoying way, you are allowed to move it so that it won't blow on you. The air that is blowing is occupying your space and you may "move" the air away by facing the fan away from you.

עי' סימן ש"ח סעי' ג'. עי' ספר טלטולי שבת בשם ר' שלמה זלמן אוירבעך שמותר לנטות המאוור כשאינה רוצה האויר, שחשיב צורך מקומו.

THE MYSTERY BAG

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner



Dovid was standing at a bus stop in Yerushalayim, waiting for a bus to Bnei Brak. While he was waiting, another man, Mr. Schwartz, approached him and asked, "Excuse me, are you going to Bnei Brak?"

Dovid replied, "Yes, I am."

Mr. Schwartz then asked, "Could you please bring a small package for me?"

Dovid answered, "Okay, sure. I'm happy to help."

Mr. Schwartz handed him a small black plastic bag and said, "Great. When you get there, I'll call you, and I'll have somebody pick up the bag in Bnei Brak."

So Dovid gave Mr. Schwartz his phone number, and he and his wife boarded the bus.

As they got closer to Bnei Brak, Dovid's wife suddenly began feeling very ill. She urgently needed to lie down. So as soon as the bus stopped, at the first possible stop, Dovid and his wife quickly got off and rushed home. In the confusion and haste, Dovid accidentally left the small black bag on the bus.

A little while later, Mr. Schwartz called. "Hi, this is the man you met in Yerushalayim. Thank you so much for bringing the package. Can someone pick it up?"

Dovid responded, "Oh no. I feel terrible. My wife was sick, and in the rush to get off the bus, I accidentally left the bag behind."

Mr. Schwartz exclaimed, "Oh no, that's terrible."

Dovid asked, "Why? What was in it?"

Mr. Schwartz replied, "There were two sheitels in the bag. Each sheitel was worth 8,000 shekels —about $2,000. Altogether, the bag contained 16,000 shekels' worth of merchandise that I was supposed to deliver to a relative in Bnei Brak."

Dovid felt awful. He said, "I feel terrible about what happened, but I hope you don't think I'm responsible for such a huge loss. I had no idea what was in the bag. Honestly, I thought it was a danish or maybe a shirt. Had I known it contained something so valuable, I would have been much more careful, or I might not have agreed to take it at all. You should have told me how valuable it was. And besides, my wife was sick. We had to rush off the bus. It was practically an *ones*, an unavoidable circumstance."

On the other hand, Dovid had accepted responsibility for the package. Halachically, he may have had the status of a shomer chinam, an unpaid guardian. And leaving the bag on the bus could potentially be considered negligence, not merely an unavoidable accident.

So the two men discussed the matter respectfully and agreed that whatever the Rav decided, they would accept. The question was brought before Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein: Was Dovid liable for the 16,000-shekel loss of the two sheitels? On one hand, he had accepted responsibility for the package and may have been negligent in leaving it behind. On the other hand, perhaps the owner had an obligation to disclose how valuable the contents were. And perhaps the fact that Dovid's wife became ill rendered the situation an *ones*, potentially exempting him from liability. That was the question presented before Rav Zilberstein.

Regarding last week's question about the person who directed the plumbers to the wrong person's house, Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein (C'C Bava Kama Page 612) answered that the person who directed them was obligated to pay for the bathtub installation.

HE SAID HE IS MY FRIEND!

Rav Elimelech Biderman recalls how Rav Yaakov Galinsky once received a letter from the Chazon Ish. The Chazon Ish addressed the letter, "With respect to my friend."

Rav Yaakov used to say that when he passed away, he wanted them to place this letter into his grave.

The reason was that when he would face the ultimate Judgment, he would know that he had a friend there with him. What better riend to have than the Chazon Ish?

Rav Elimelech continues: One day, I met Rav Yaakov, and he informed me that he was retracting his original request. He no longer wanted the letter from the Chazon Ish to be placed into his grave. I was perplexed! What could have happened to change his mind? Clearly, my reaction was noticed by Rav Yaakov, so he alleviated my concern.

Rav Yaakov explained that the reason for this change was that while davening, he noticed that it states, Yedidim he'evarta, "The beloved ones were brought across," referring to the Jews who crossed the Yam Suf. This is recited during the Shirah before Shemoneh Esrei of Shacharis.

"In essence the verse is saying that every Jew is a beloved friend of Hashem's. There is no need to announce that you are a friend of the Chazon Ish!"

There is much to be gained from this short story. We should never become despondent; remember that every one of us can be comforted by realizing that Hashem is our "beloved friend."

From Experience Greatness by Rabbi Moshe Hubner. Reprinted With Permission from Table Talk.

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GOOD SHABBOS!