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

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ROSH HASHANA – SEIZE THE MOMENT

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

Rosh Hashana is also referred to as the Yom Hadin, the Day of Judgement. It is the day when Hashem examines the deeds of all flesh and issues a verdict for each person. Rav Shlomo Wolbe cites the Gemara in Rosh Hashana (16b) which asserts that Hashem does not judge a person based on what he will do in the future. This principle is derived from the incident when Avraham sent Hagar and Yishmael into the wilderness. When they ran out of water, Yishmael lay hovering between life and death. At that point the Torah says, "And G-d heard the voice of the lad in his present state." Although the angels protested that Yishmael should not be spared since his nation would later afflict the descendants of Avraham, Hashem focused only on "his present state." In that state he deserved to live.

However Rav Wolbe cites a remarkable chiddush of the Talmud Yerushalmi referenced by Rabbeinu Chananel (ad. loc.). The Yerushalmi quotes a different pasuk regarding the criteria of Hashem's judgment – a pasuk in Iyov (8,6): "If you are pure and upright." The Yerushalmi notes that it does not state "if you were pure and upright," but "if you are [now] pure and upright."

How can a judgment be determined by looking at the present and ignoring the past? Rav Wolbe explains that the theme of our avodah on Rosh Hashana is Malchios – accepting Hashem's Kingship. We declare Him our King when we blow the Shofar. We focus on His Kingship in Mussaf by reciting ten verses of Malchios. This is not merely lip service. This is the means by which we submit ourselves to His sovereignty and to His will. Feeling truly humbled by our shortcomings, we stand before Hashem in total submission. We are not thinking about our sordid past and we are not preoccupied with our fate for the coming year. We are frozen in the present. Frozen in a day when we have come closer to Hashem. Focused on a day when all our actions should be expressive of our submission to His will. If we truly feel it and mean it, we can set the stage for the coming year.

However, I believe this approach still needs further explanation. Why does the judgment of Rosh Hashana place so much emphasis on the present as opposed to the past? To answer this we must first understand why Rosh Hashana is on the first day of the new year. If the purpose of the judgment of Rosh Hashana was merely to issue a verdict based on our deeds of the preceding year, the appropriate day for this procedure should be the last day of the year, since the focus is entirely on the past. However, Hashem chose the day of the creation of Man as the Yom Hadin – the first day of human existence and thus the first day of the year. This is because the focus of the verdict is on the prospects for the coming year. Just as Hashem decided to create Adam and Eve (who had no past record) on Rosh Hashana, He decides each Rosh Hashana who will be re-created and how they should be re-created. The focus is on the future; the past is merely a factor to be considered. (While this does not replace Teshuva, it paves the road for it and even helps to begin the process.)

It is for this reason that so much of the outcome of this Day of Judgment depends on how we react to the day. If we sincerely proclaim and accept Hashem's Kingship and sovereignty, if our behavior on that day truly reflects that submission, then Hashem may have very good reason to reinvest in us for the coming year.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

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

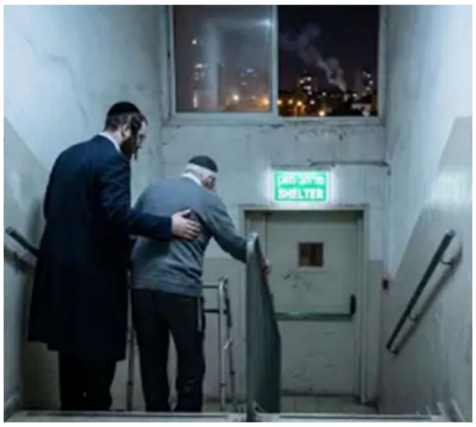
QUESTION: May I use a can of whipped cream on שבת or יום טוב?

ANSWER: On שבת you should not and on יום טוב it is okay. The issue is מוליד/creating a new thing. Inside the can it is a liquid and when you squirt it out it becomes a foam. For the same reason one should refrain from using foam soap or purell on שבת. (There are those that permit it, so in a שעת הדחק it is okay to use them) There are two forms of making something new. If you make a totally new thing that wasn't here before that is worse and it is אסור even on יום טוב like striking a match which creates a fire from scratch. However, if you are only changing the form of something, then on שבת it may not be done, while on יום טוב it is מותר. So, for example, whipped cream is only changing the form and is מותר on יום טוב. Making ice cubes which is questionable on שבת may be done on יום טוב. Warming up a pan of meat in which the congealed gravy will melt is not okay on שבת but okay on יום טוב.

עי' סימן ש"כ סעי' ט' ומ"ב ס"ק ל"ג. יש שמחמירין אפי' ביום טוב במוליד אפילו רק לצורה אחרת אבל רבו המתירין ובתוכם שש"כ פרק י"ב הערה ל"א בשם רש"ז אוירבעך, קיצור הלכות יום טוב מר' פאזען סי' י' אות ח'. שבט הלוי חי"א סי' צ'. ר' אלישב באשרי האיש הלכות יום טוב פרק ג' אות מ"ט.

HELP THE DISABLED NEIGHBOR?

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner



Sadly, people living in Eretz Yisroel have become all too familiar with the terrifying sound of an air-raid siren. When the warning sounds, every second matters. Families rush to their mamad, or bomb shelter, hoping to reach safety before the rockets arrive. Avi lived in an apartment building in the south, an area that had experienced frequent rocket attacks. His next-door neighbor had a serious physical disability and could not make his way down the building's stairs without assistance. One day, the neighbor approached Avi with a request. "If there is ever an air-raid siren, would you please help me get downstairs to the bomb shelter? I simply cannot get there by myself." "Of course," Avi replied. "I'll be happy to help you."

The day came when the sirens began to wail. Instead of immediately running for shelter, Avi hurried next door. He helped his neighbor out of the apartment and began slowly guiding him down the stairs. But Avi quickly realized how frightening the situation really was. On his own, Avi could reach the shelter in perhaps twenty seconds. Helping his neighbor, however, was a completely different matter. Step by step they made their way downstairs. One minute passed. Then another. Avi could hear explosions in the distance. Every boom reminded him that he was still standing in an exposed stairwell instead of safely inside the bomb shelter. It took nearly five minutes before they finally reached safety.

Avi began thinking about what he should do the next time the siren sounded. Of course he wanted to help his neighbor. How could he simply run to safety while knowing that the man next door would be trapped in his apartment with no way to reach the shelter? But Avi was frightened.

"Normally, I can be inside the shelter in twenty seconds," he thought. "When I help my neighbor, I am outside for five minutes while rockets may be falling around us. Am I required to place myself in that danger?" Avi wondered whether the principle of chayecha kodmin, your own life takes precedence, might apply. Chazal discuss a famous case in which two people are traveling through the desert and there is only enough water for one of them to survive. The Torah teaches that a person is not required to sacrifice his own life in order to save another. Perhaps, Avi wondered, the same principle applied here. By helping his neighbor, he was remaining outside the shelter far longer and exposing himself to additional danger. On the other hand, what would happen if Avi did not help? His neighbor might have no way at all to reach the bomb shelter. When the sirens sounded, Avi would run downstairs to safety while the man next door remained helplessly inside his apartment.

The question was presented to Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein: Is Avi obligated to help his disabled neighbor reach the bomb shelter, even though doing so means that instead of reaching safety in seconds, he must remain exposed for several frightening minutes? Or does the principle of chayecha kodmin allow him to protect himself first when helping another person would increase the danger to his own life? What do you think? See Chashukei Chemed Nedarim Page 753

Regarding the question of the "fake forgiveness," Rav Zilberstein (C"C Nedarim 704) ruled that it was not a valid mechilah. This case is different from what Aharon HaKohen did. Aharon actually brought the two parties closer together, until they met and genuinely reconciled. Here, however, Dovid only forgave Chaim because he believed that Chaim was deeply remorseful. At the same time, Rav Zilberstein cautioned that Eli must proceed carefully so as not to make the machlokes even worse. Eli should approach Chaim and tell him the truth that Dovid forgave you only because he thought you begged for it. He should then advise Chaim to approach Dovid directly and ask for a complete mechila, not just a begrudging one. From Dovid's perspective, it will seem as though Chaim is asking for mechilah a second time. But in reality, from Chaim's perspective, this will be the first time he is genuinely asking for forgiveness. This would be permissible.

THE MYSTERIOUS GUARD

A distinguished young Torah scholar, a great talmid chacham and a man of exceptional yiras Shamayim, once related the following story to us:

"For many years, I have been learning in the 'Kollel Chatzos' at Kever Rochel, beginning at midnight and continuing until after Shacharis, which we daven at vasikin. One night, some time ago, I drove to Kever Rochel at midnight to learn as usual. When I arrived, however, the guard at the main entrance refused to allow me in. He told me that entry to Kever Rochel was not permitted. I asked him,

'How long will it be closed?' 'The entire night,' the guard replied. With no other choice, I turned around and drove home."When I arrived home, I discovered my daughter, who was then a kallah preparing for her wedding, in a terrifying condition. Her face had swollen badly and she could no longer breathe. She had apparently eaten something without realizing that she was allergic to it. She was completely unable to catch her breath and was already at death's door, Heaven forbid. I immediately called Hatzalah. They rushed her to the hospital, where, baruch Hashem, her life was saved.

"The following day, I came to understand two extraordinary things. First, I saw the incredible extent of the Hashgachah. I asked my friends and fellow members of the kollel where they had been the previous night. They had no idea what I was talking about. Everything had been completely normal! The gate had opened as usual, everyone had entered Kever Rochel, and they had learned there just as they did every other night. It suddenly became clear to me that this particular guard had been an emissary sent from Shamayim to save our daughter. My wife had been home, but my daughter, who could no longer breathe, was incapable of calling out even to the other members of the household for help. It was only because I walked into the house at exactly the right moment, at the very last possible moment, that I discovered her in that condition. Had I returned home later, there may have been no one there to save her at precisely the moment she needed it.

"Second, I learned that what I had thought was some 'chutzpadik' guard blocking me for no reason was actually HaShem's Hand protecting my daughter. Everything in my life is guided by Him.

As told by Rav Meilech Biderman; Reprinted with permission from Table Talk.

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- ***The First Seder Daf Hashavua Chabura which meets every Sunday morning at 7:45 AM and Tuesday evening at 8:30 PM, and is now learning Nazir. This is a great time to join!***

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Good Shabbos. K'siva V'chasima Tova.