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A Travel Structure for Life

Chassidus on the Parsha

ובחנות המשכן יקימו אותו הלוים
"When the Mishkan would camp, the Leviim would erect it".

The Mishkan is referred to as the Ohel Moed, the tent of meeting. Hashem describes the purpose of the Mishkan as ונועדתי שמה לבני ישראל " will meet there with Bnei Yisroel". The word ונועדתי describes a union and connection between Hashem and the Jewish people. When rearranged, it spells נודעתי, that Hashem will be "known" to Jewish people.

When Bnei Yisrael travelled, the Mishkan was erected by the tribe of Levi. The three Levite families, Gershon, Kehos and Merari each allude to a spiritual service that is required to establish the Mishkan of connection in our spiritual lives.

Gershon comes from the terminology גרש, to banish. The first step in our spiritual reboot is to banish the negativity from within us. We have to arouse our inner strength to rule over our Yetzer Hara - כובש את יצרו and stop our wrongful actions.

The second stage is Merari. Merari is related to the idea of מרירות, a sense of bitterness and contrition for our wrongdoing. This comes through realising the impact of our actions and how they create a barrier which obstructs us from relating to Hashem and experiencing our essential bond.

After these two stages, we come to Kehos. Kehos is related to the term to be gathered, as in the verse ולא יקהת עמים, "and the nations will be gathered to Him". This describes our reunion as we recollect our heart and soul to be gathered to Hashem once more.

Kehos is also related to the term קיוה which describes a sourness. קהת represents the transformation from the sourness into a pleasant taste. This alludes to Teshuvah, which is the gathering to Hashem which comes from a place of distance.

The Haftorah for the first day of Shavuos is the prophesy of Yechezkel known as the Merkava. It describes the Divine Throne and the celestial angels that surrounded it. We read this as the Haftorah because at Matan Torah, the Heavens opened and Bnei Yisroel were able to see the Merkava.

The Midrash Rabbah records that the angels surrounded the Kisei Hakovod in "Degalim", four camps of angels. On seeing this, Bnei Yisrael became jealous and wanted to emulate the array of their heavenly counterparts in their own camp.

Parshas Bamidbar describes the layout of the Jewish camp in great detail. At the centre of the camp stood the Mishkan, which is referred to as the Machane Shechina, the camp of the Divine Presence. The Mishkan was surrounded on its four sides by the Machane Leviya, the camp of the Leviim and Kohanim. The third camp was the Machane Yisrael. The 12 tribes were divided into four Degalim, which camped around the four sides of the Machane Leviya. Each Degel comprised 3 tribes and was named after its leading tribe.

The arrangement of the Degalim has great mystical significance. The Mishkan at the centre represents the Divine Throne, the resting place of the Shechina. The Degalim of the angels were grouped around the four Archangels who embody the primary sefiros.

The camp of Michael, the angel of Chessed (kindness) stands at the south. In mystical thought, the south is associated with the right hand which is for "drawing close". Gavriel to the north is the angel of Gevurah (discipline), which is associated with the left side. Uriel, the angel of light, represents the sefira of Tiferes (beauty). The camp of Uriel was on the east, the "forward" direction from which the sun rises. Refael emanates from the final sefirah - Malchus. They were situated on the west (behind).

In his commentary, the Kli Yakar explains that the 4 Degalim represent four qualities that people pursue in life; wisdom, middos tovos, strength and wealth. These are the four qualities that a Novi must possess, as our sages teach "the Shechina only rests upon one who is wise, strong, wealthy and humble." Humility is the most important middah, and from it, all of the other middos tovos ensue.

The first camp to travel was the eastern Degel, which represents Torah (wisdom). This was the camp of Yehuda, from whom the Nesiim of each generation descend. They were joined by Yissachar, a tribe of scholars from which many members of the Sanhedrin descended. Through supporting Yissachar's Torah study, Zevulun is considered equal in status to the scholars of Yissachar and form part of this camp.

For this reason, unlike the other shevatim, the Torah does not use the word ועליו when referring to Zevulun, since this may wrongfully suggest that Zevulun was considered secondary to the other tribes in his Degel.

The second Degel, made up of Reuven, Shimon and Gad, represents middos tovos. Reuven, who admitted his wrongdoing when he "moved his father's bed" embodied the trait of humility and teshuvah. Shimon's descendants were devoted teachers of young children and Gad was praised by Moshe with the trait of generosity in performing Tzedakah.

The third Degel is the quality of strength. Moshe likened Yosef to an ox, who would gore with its two horns, an allusion to his sons; Efraim and Menashe. Binyomin was likened to a wolf which tears its prey.

The final Degel to travel was the Degel Machane Dan. Naftali and Asher who were part of this Degel, were blessed by both Moshe and Yaakov with wealth. Dan too possessed great wealth.

Just as the Divine Presence could only rest on a Novi who possessed all of these qualities, and all four camps of the angels were required to elevate Hashem's Throne, we need to need to utilise all of these qualities in our personal Avodas Hashem. The order in which the camp of Israel travelled teaches us the hierarchy of these qualities, guiding us on which are more important for us to pursue.

The first Degel to travel in our lives should be the Degel of Torah, the pursuit of Torah study and acquisition of wisdom. This represents our investment in spiritual growth. This should be followed closely by the second camp, the pursuit of middos tovos.

The remaining camps represent the physical aspects of our lives, our strength (physical wellbeing) and our wealth. These are also integral parts of making our lives a Throne for Hashem. We do this by using our physicality Lshem Shamayim. We need to look after our health and take care of our bodies, so that we can be healthy to serve Hashem and we must use our material wealth for Tzedaka and Mitzvos.

But these pursuits should only travel after we have set the path with our spiritual compass of Torah and middos tovos. Only after investing in our spirituality which gives us meaning, direction and purpose, can we ensure that our involvements in the material aspects of our lives will be Lshem Shamayim and take their place in Throne that we make for Hashem.

The Weekly Halacha Analysis

Eating Meat after Cheese and Dairy

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

According to the Gemara, one is only required to wait after eating meat before eating dairy. If one ate cheese, one is allowed to eat meat immediately and they are not required to wait[1]. Nonetheless, there is a stringency which is brought in the Shulchan Aruch that even after eating cheese there is basis to wait.

The earliest source for this stringency found in Poskim is the Mahara"m Rotenburg. In a Teshuvah[2] he writes that when he was young he would mock those who were stringent. However, once he checked and found cheese stuck between his teeth. From then on, he himself would be machmir.

Darkei Moshe quotes the Issur V'heter[3] that after eating soft cheeses that have not been aged for 6 months and other dairy products one may eat meat immediately. After eating hard cheeses, even though *min hadin* one may eat meat straight away, it is appropriate to be stringent.

The main source for the stringency is the Zohar[4]. The Beis Yosef[5] quotes the Zohar which teaches that one who eats meat and milk at the same meal or the same time arouses unholy Dinim. The Zohar writes about the great spiritual harm that this causes, including that one who has a child on the day that they eat meat and milk at the same meal, the child will have a soul from the Sitra Achara.

Generally, when there is a dispute between the Talmudic and Kabbalistic sources, the Halacha follows the Gemara. Nonetheless, the Vilna Gaon[6] explains that this stringency is not considered to be arguing with the Gemara, because we are being stricter than the Gemara, just as some Amoraim would wait 24 hours between meat and milk.

The Shach[7] records the Maharsha"l[8] who strongly protested those who were Machmir. He considered this like heresy as it is going against the Gemara. However the Shach concludes that this is not necessarily so.

Eating chicken after dairy

The Mahara"m wrote that one only needs to be stringent with meat and not with chicken. The rationale is possibly because chicken is only Rabbinically considered as meat. Therefore one does not need to be so stringent after eating cheese, because some are lenient and permit even meat. However, the Beis Yosef[9] based on the Zohar writes that the stringency applies to eating chicken as well. He asserts that if the Mahara"m had seen the Zohar, he would also have been machmir on chicken. The Pri Chadash[10] however understands that the Zohar was specifically speaking about meat and not chicken.

Some Poskim write that after eating milk one need not wait before eating a *Tavshil Shel Basar* – Parev food that had been cooked with meat[11].

Two stringencies

The Ram"o in Shulchan Aruch records the stringent opinion in the following words; There are those who are stringent even when eating meat after cheese and this is what we follow that if the cheese is hard, we do not eat even chicken after it just as we do with regards to eating cheese after meat. There are those who are lenient and one need not protest, as long as they rinse and clean their mouths and wash their hands. However it is preferable to be stringent.

The Ram"o is actually referring to 2 separate stringencies. The first stringency is that of the Zohar and it applies after eating any cheese, whether hard or soft. It also applies to other dairy products.

When the Ram"o writes that this is what we follow if the cheese is hard, this is a stringency which has halachic basis. (The Aruch Hashulchan writes that there is only one stringency and that the Zohar too was referring to hard cheese).

Chochmas Adam explains that since the stringency of hard cheeses is *min hadin*, it applies even to eating chicken afterwards and also to eating a *Tavshil shel basar*.

When the Ram"o concludes that it is preferable to be stringent, he is referring to the second stringency on hard cheeses and not to the stricter position of the Zohar[12].

Hard cheeses

The Rishonim provide 2 reasons why one has to wait after eating meat before eating milk. One is because meat gets stuck between one's teeth. The other reason is that meat (because of its fattiness) leaves a taste residue.

The Poskim write that the same 2 concerns apply to hard cheeses. The Ta"z[13] writes that aged cheeses are fatty and they also leave a taste residue. Other Acharonim[14] write that it is because hard cheese becomes stuck between one's teeth just like meat.

What cheeses?

The earliest sources[15] write that the stringency applies to cheeses that have been aged for 6 months or longer. This is recorded by the Shach[16].

Because the Ta"Z is concerned about the taste residue from fatty cheeses, he writes that Gevina Metulaas, cheese that has developed worms (such as Casu Marzu) within it due to aging, is also subject to this stringency.

Cooked cheese

Yad Yehuda rules that aged cheeses that have been cooked, fried or otherwise melted, are no longer subject to the stringency of hard cheeses. The rationale is that the cheese has now soften and there is no longer a concern of it becoming stuck between one's teeth. Others argue with this leniency because the concern of the Ta"z of a fatty residue still remains even after the cheese has been melted.

How long?

The Pri Chadash[17] writes that whilst after eating meat we wait 6 hours before eating milk, after eating hard cheese one need only wait one hour. Perhaps this is because there are those who are lenient completely and also because waiting 6 hours after meat for Ashkenazim is also a stringency.

However most Poskim rule that the amount of time one needs to wait after eating hard cheeses is the same amount as the time one needs to wait after eating meat. Therefore since it is widely accepted even for Ashkenazim to wait 6 hours after meat, the same applies after hard cheeses.

Ben Ish Chai[18] records that the minhag in Yerushalaim was not to wait at all after eating cheese, even if the cheese was hard. Presumably this follows the opinion of the Mechaber Shulchan Aruch. However, in Bagdad the custom was to wait 6 hours after cheese that had been aged 6 months and for cheeses that were aged for less than 6 months, they would wait 1 hour for each month that the cheese had been aged.

The Ariza"l is recorded to have followed the Zohar very strictly. After eating even light dairy foods in the morning, he would not eat meat until the evening.

1. Chullin 105a
2. Shu"t 615 quoted in Mordechai Chullin Siman 687
3. Klal 40
4. Parshas Mishpatim 125a
5. OC 173
6. Biur Hagr"a 89:11
7. YD 89:17
8. Yam Shel Shlomo 25:6
9. OC 173
10. See Sifsei Daas 89:16
11. Badei Hashulchan
12. Chochmas Adam, Aruch Hashulchan and Mishna Berura OC 494:16 who writes that on Shavuos after eating dairy one need not wait unless they ate hard cheese.
13. YD 89:4. This is also the understanding of the Aruch Hashulchan
14. Pri Chadash, Yad Yehuda, Darkei Moshe based on Mahara"m
15. Isur V'heter ibid
16. YD 89:15
17. 89:6
18. Parshas Shelach