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Tiferes Shlomo on the Parsha

על פי ה' פקד אותם ביד משה איש איש על עבודתו ועל משאו

"As directed by Hashem, they were appointed by Moshe, each man to his service and his burden"

In our Davening we ask Hashem to "place into our hearts to love and fear Your name".

The commentaries question the appropriateness and efficacy these requests, based on the Talmudic dictum that "everything is in the hands of Heaven, except for the fear of Heaven". This means that matters pertaining to our service of Hashem are not granted to us and can only be achieved through our own efforts.

The Tiferes Shlomo answers this question based on the teaching of our sages that Hashem says to us "make for me an opening the size of the point of a needle and I make for you an opening the size of the doorway of the Temple Ulam".

When we put in our effort to serve Hashem, even though our human capabilities are limited, Hashem rewards us far beyond the level of effort that we put in.

So while we have a personal obligation to attain fear of Heaven, in these prayers we are asking Hashem to elevate us beyond the limits of where our own efforts will take us. This additional blessing comes through the Tzaddikim.

This message can be read into the Pasuk from our Parsha. The word פקד also means a command, referring to the Mitzvos. These were commanded to us by the word of Hashem.

Through the יד משה - "the hand of Moshe", each person (איש איש) can be elevated "above" their service (על עבודתו) i.e. to be rewarded with a G-dly revelation and Divine assistance that transcends what we would receive through our Avodah alone.

Making up in the Mundane

This past week we celebrated the Yomtov of Shavuos, which commemorates the Giving of the Torah on Har Sinai. In Jewish thought, the Yomim Tovim are not just a remembrance of past events. As each Yomtov comes, we personally re-experience all of the revelations and experiences that were manifest the first time around. And so, we too re-experienced the Giving of the Torah this week.

Even though Shavuos is a one-day Yomtov (which in Chutz Laaretz is observed for two days), the influence and impact of Shavuos is supposed to continue as we carry the inspiration and recommitment to the Torah into the year ahead.

When a person went to the Beis Hamikdash for the Shalosh Regalim, they had to bring certain private Korbanos. If they did not bring these Korbanos on the first day of Pesach or Sukkos, they could make up for it by offering them during the remaining days of the festival. This 'making-up' is called Tashlumin.

Even though Shavuos is only a one day Festival, the sages derive that like on Pesach, one could perform Tashlumin and bring the Korbanos for an entire week, concluding on the 12th of Sivan.

For this reason, many communities have the custom of not saying Tachanun up-and-to and including the 12th day of Sivan, as these are the days of Tashlumin for the Yomtov of Shavuos.

However, there is a major difference between the days of Tashlumin for Pesach and Sukkos and those of Shavuos. The Korbanos of Pesach and Sukkos that are brought during the days of Tashlumin, are still brought on days that are part of the Yomtov itself. In contrast, the days of Tashlumin for Shavuos are regular mundane weekdays.

In Torah Ohr, the Alter Rebbe explains that Pesach and Sukkos are seven-day festivals (plus Shemini Atzeres) because they relate to the seven Divine Sefiros. Shavuos is only one day because it is connected to a level of G-dliness that is beyond the divisibility of the seven Sefiros. The Kabbalists refer to this as the Sefira of Kesser.

The spiritual make-up of the soul parallels the spiritual cosmos. This is one interpretation of the Pasuk that Man is made in the Image of G-d.

In the soul, the counterpart of the seven Sefiros are the conscious levels of the soul, specifically our emotional drives, which according to Kabbalah, take seven primary forms.

The dimension of the soul that corresponds to the Sefira of Kesser, is not the attributes through which we express our souls, but rather the very essence of the soul. The essence of the soul is referred to as the Yechidah, which means oneness. This reflects the indivisible oneness that the soul has with Hashem.

Based on the paradigm above, Shavuos is a one-day Festival because on this day, the essence of the soul is manifest. In this regards, Shavuos is like Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, which are also one-day Festivals, being days where the essence of the soul and our connection to Hashem are revealed.

This difference also explains why Pesach and Sukkos have specific, unique Mitzvos. Mitzvos represent an external connection to Hashem that is created through something that we do. Shavuos has no specific Mitzvos, because it represents the essential, all-encompassing bond of the essence of the soul with Hashem. This connection is not about doing something, it just is.

When we serve Hashem with only the conscious dimensions of the soul represented by the seven Sefiros, our service will be limited. The influence of this type of service is limited to that which is already conducive and naturally receptive to holiness. This is like the Korbanos of Pesach and Sukkos that could only be brought at a time which is also holy.

The power of the Yechidah which is revealed on Shavuos, is that when we are connected on this level, we can go into the most mundane parts of our lives and our world, and transform them to become holy.

The Frierdike Rebbe relates that the Tzemach Tzedek once asked the Alter Rebbe why Shavuos is celebrated for 7 days up until the 12th of Sivan. The Alter Rebbe answered with an analogy of a group of merchants who travelled to a fair that lasted for two days. At the end of the fair they would return home. But before departing, they would linger for a few days as they packaged and secured their merchandise, to ensure that nothing would be lost or damaged on the long journey home.

On Shavuos, we all experienced the revelation of Matan Torah. As we acquired the Torah, we experienced the revelation of Anochi - Hashem's essence, and the revelation of our Yechidah.

We now need to secure our 'merchandise', to firmly internalise these revelations, so that they will last through our travels and trials in the year ahead.

The Weekly Halacha Analysis

Taking Medication on Shabbos

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One of the Rabbinic prohibitions on Shabbos is the prohibition on acts of Refuah. This includes medical treatments, other types of healing and the use of medication. Chaza"l forbade acts of Refuah on Shabbos because of a concern that it may lead to the Torah prohibition of crushing or grinding herbs, which was a standard in making medications at the time[1].

Whilst this concern does not apply to most medications today which are bought is ready-made tablet or liquid form, Rabbinic Gezeiros remain in force even if the reason behind them is no longer applicable. Further even today there are a variety of natural remedies are still made in this fashion[2].

The scope of this Gezeira can apply to all forms of healing treatments including; medications, ointments, massage and compresses. This article will focus specifically on the taking of oral medication.

In cases of Pikuach Nefesh, life-threatening situations or illness, the laws of Shabbos are overridden. Medication may be obtained however necessary and taken without question. This is true even in possible or doubtful (*safek*) life-threatening situations.

If not medicating now will potentially lead to a life-threatening situation later (e.g. risk of spreading infection), all treatments are also permitted as above.

What about non-life-threatening conditions?

Incapacitating Illness

Chaza"l did not apply their Gezeira for someone who is in the category of חולה שאין בו סכנה[3] . This is defined as an incapacitating illness that affects the entire body and the sufferer would normally have to go lie down. Weakness of the entire body is also included. Severe pain even when localised which would necessitate lying down likewise falls into this category.

Even if the person remains active but would in normal circumstances go and lie down they are considered a חולה שאין בו סכנה. Examples would include; Migraine headache, severe cramps or severe muscular pain.

Generally, the Shulchan Aruch rules that treatments for a חולה שאין בו סכנה must be done either by a non-Jew or with a *Shinui*[4]. Rav Moshe Feinstien applies this requirement of employing a *Shinui* even when taking medication. However based on the Alter Rebbe a Shinui is not required when taking oral medication[5]. If medication is not available, one may send a non-Jew to travel to acquire it being that this too is only Rabbinically forbidden.

Ailments

A person who has pain which is localised and not so intense as to weaken the entire body, or if they suffer from מיחוש בעלמא (discomfort or ailment) may not take medication. This is where Chaza"l applied their Gezeira. Examples would include a runny nose, headache or stomach ache, stiff neck, muscle pain, hay-fever.

Note: If the pain or ailment is significant enough then it can fall under the category of חולה שאין בו סכנה and medication will be permitted as above.

Whether one's condition is classified as חולה שאין בו סכנה or מיחוש בעלמא is personal and subjective and will very from person to person. One need not be overly-strict in assessing their condition.

Children are always considered in the category of חולה שאין בו סכנה and medication may be taken even for minor ailments. Many Poskim apply this leniency only up to the age of 3. Others extend it until the age of 6 or 9.

A woman within 30 days of childbirth is also automatically considered in the category of חולה שאין בו סכנה and medication may be taken as necessary.

Other

When medication is permitted and for when it is prohibited, there is no difference between liquid medication or tablet or capsule form.

If necessary, pills may be cut or crushed. This is because the medication has been previously crushed and אין טוחן אחר טוחן. Care must still be used when removing the pills from their packaging so as not to tear writing. No Torah prohibition may be violated unless in case of Pikuach Nefesh.

Vitamins and Sleeping Pills

There is much discussion in Poskim whether vitamins fall under the Gezeira against Refuah on Shabbos or not. Rav Moshe Feinstein maintains that since their use is not to heal but rather to increase or enhance nutrients, they are not subject to the Gezeira[6] unless taken specifically for healing. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach argues and classifies vitamins as medication[7]. One can be lenient with children especially since the tablets are flavoured and can be eaten as a "candy".

Sleeping Pills:

Tzitz Eliezer[8] considers sleeping pills to be a Refuah for a medical condition. This view is also held by Rav Moshe Feinstein[9]. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach maintains that since they do not actually treat any illness, they are not subject to the Gezeira. If a person suffers greatly from insomnia to the extent that they would be categorised as a חולה שאין בו סכנה all authorities would permit their use. The same argument would apply to diet pills.

Oral contraceptives (being used with the permission of a competent Rav) may be taken on Shabbos.

Ongoing Treatment

If a condition requires ongoing medicating and treatment began on a weekday, some Poskim permit the continuing on Shabbos[10]. Many Poskim take a stricter approach and do not allow this for a מיחוש בעלמא[11].

A Practical Tip

Medication or pills may be mixed into food or drink before Shabbos and then taken on Shabbos in all cases even for a מיחוש בעלמא. This is because it is not recognisable as being done for the purpose of Refuah[12] but rather looks like eating or drinking.

1. Shabbos 53b. Shulchan Aruch OC 328:1
2. There is a minority view that the Gezeira no longer applies today. See Ketzos Hashulchan. This is used as another factor to rule more leniently in certain cases.
3. OC 328:17
4. ibid
5. Shulchan Aruch Harav 328:19
6. OC 3:54
7. Shulchan Shlomo 328:1
8. 9:17:2:40
9. See Ketzos Hashulchan who is lenient based also on the fact that nowadays household medication would not lead to crushing.
10. Rav Shlomo Kluger, Chazon Ish and Rav Elyashiv
11. Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasa in the name of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Moshe Feinstein and Tzitz Eliezer
12. Ketzos Hashulchan 338:30 and Shulchan Shlomo 328:36