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In Search of the Leader for our Times

When Moshe was told to prepare for his passing, he did not turn his attention to his own personal needs. He did not go and spend time with his family and share his parting instructions and he did not go to make sure that his personal affairs were in order. Moshe's only thought was for the wellbeing of the Jewish people.

Who would succeed him as their leader and take care of them when he was no longer there?

Moshe turned to Hashem, addressing Him with a unique description, "G-d of the spirits of all flesh", and asks "appoint a man over the community… so that they not be like a flock without a shepherd...". They will need a leader who "will go out before them and who will come in before them, who will bring them out and will bring them back in".

Moshe understood that each generation is different and has their own unique needs. The leader must be one who is fitting for that generation.

The generation which witnessed Matan Torah were a דור דעה, a generation that craved spirituality and wisdom. For them, Moshe was the ideal leader. But the generation that was poised to enter Eretz Yisrael were a new generation, one which did not physically experience Matan Torah. They would face different challenges as they conquer and build a country and would then face the struggles of working the land and earning a living. They required a leader who would be able to lead them as they need. (Sifsei Kohen).

The leader of the Jewish people needs take care of their physical needs. This includes leading them out to battle and bringing them security and protection from their enemies without. They must also be able to govern the country internally and create a functioning society. (Seforno, Malbim).

But as the leader of a people with a spiritual purpose, he must also protect their souls; strengthening their connection and commitment to Torah and Avodas Hashem. (Chida, Kli Yakar).

Perhaps this is hinted to in Moshe addressing Hashem with the title G-d of the spirits of all flesh, alluding to the leader's responsibility to look after matter of both flesh and spirit.

Above all, Moshe understood that the biggest challenge that would face any leader of the Jewish people, would be their diverse natures. The Midrash on this passage famously states, that just as their faces do not resemble one another, so too their perspectives and natures. Perhaps this was the wisdom behind the famous comment made by Israeli Prime Minister, Gold Meir to US President Richard Nixon; ""You are the president of 150 million Americans; I am the prime minister of 6 million prime ministers".

Rashi explains that this was Moshe's hint in addressing Hashem as the G-d of spirits, in plural. Just as Hashem understands the unique "spirit" of each individual, he should appoint a leader who will be able to "tolerate" each one according to their individual character. Even the most capable leader cannot satisfy or cater to the views of each individual. But they must be able to "tolerate" them; to understand them, respect them and accept that there are different views.

The Netziv explains that the differences in our "spirits", which he interprets as our desires, arise because each person is driven by their own material needs and interests - our "flesh". Each person has their own personal agendas that they pursue. To lead them, the leader must be completely selfless and altruistic, leading without any personal agendas.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev writes that the most important quality for a leader of Klal Yisrael is to be able to judge them favourably and stand up for them, even when they do not act in accordance with Hashem's will. The leader needs to be empathetic and understand the struggles that people face. They are not "bad" or rebellious, but merely struggling with their human limitations and life challenges. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak himself personified this trait, earning him the title "defender of the Jewish people".

In his work Shem Mishmuel, Rabbi Shmuel Bornstein of Sochatchov, writes that the ultimate responsibility of the leader of the Jewish people is to bring unity, and mend the rifts and discord between them, that stem from their different "spirits" and perspectives.

Israel is facing a new election cycle and we are as diverse as ever. Each segment of society and indeed each individual, has their own perspectives, outlooks and priorities. Tragically, these differences have created divisiveness and conflict.

Any leader who is elected will need to address the security needs as we continue to face our enemies on multiple fronts. Internally, they will need to govern the country in a functioning and thriving manner. And as a Jewish country, they will need to protect and strengthen its Jewish nature.

But the truly successful leader will be one who can bring tolerance and unity. They will need to see and believe in the goodness of each individual, not only when things are going well, but even in our darker moments. And they must help us to see it in each other. To do this, they will need to rise above their own personal agendas and inspire us to do the same.

Like Moshe, we must put aside our personal needs and interests, and unite behind one common thought, the collective wellbeing of the Jewish people.

Chassidus on the Parsha

Parshas Pinchas introduces the Musaf offerings.

On Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh and Yomim Tovim, a Korban Musaf was brought. Musaf means additional, because it was offered in addition to the daily Tamid. The Musaf varied in the number and type of animals offered, depending on the day.

The Musaf was brought only after the morning Tamid had been completed. This is related to a Talmudic principle that when one has the option to perform an action that is more frequent and one which comes less frequently, precedence is given to that which is more frequent.

The Tamid was brought every single day of the year whereas the Musaf was only brought on specific special days.

The Musaf represents the novel and occasional. The Tamid represents the ordinary, regular and mundane.

That which is unique always seems more special and exciting. In our relationships we celebrate special events and milestones. Spiritually, we view Shabbos and Yomtov as the ultimate spiritual experience.

The message of the order of the Tamid and the Musaf is that whilst the novel brings a heightened excitement, it is the simple day-in day-out actions that is the bedrock of our relationship with Hashem and with others.

The Musaf-moments are only supplemental. They can never replace the primary building blocks of consistent and dependable daily moments of connection.

The Weekly Halacha Analysis

Tying the Sefer Torah on Shabbos

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

Background Principles

Tying and untying knots are both forbidden Melachos on Shabbos. Halacha distinguishes between knots which are forbidden *Mideoraisa* and *Miderabanan* and which knots are permissible *Lechatchila*. For the purpose of simplicity, the distinction is as follows[1];

To be Biblically forbidden to tie or untie, the knot must be tied with the intention that it will remain in place for ever i.e. there is no intention to untie the knot at any future point in time. This is referred to as a קשר של קיימא, a permanent knot. According to some authorities, the knot must also be a professional knot to constitute an *Issur Deoraisa*.

A knot that one intends to untie within 24 hours and is also a non-professional knot, may be tied and untied on Shabbos *Lechatchila*.

If the knot is professional, even if one intends to untie it within 24 hours, it is Rabbinically forbidden to tie or untie on Shabbos. Similarly, a non-professional knot which is tied with the intention to untie it at a certain point of time in the future (after 24 hours), such a knot in Rabbinically forbidden to tie or untie on Shabbos.

The Status of Different Types of Knots

A single knot is not considered a knot at all[2] as it will not hold. One may tie or untie such a knot on Shabbos *Lechatchila*.

A double knot is considered a knot. It is possible that because it is tight, it is considered to be a professional knot and is Rabbinically forbidden to tie even if one plans to open it within 24 hours[3].

A bow is also not considered a knot[4] and may be tied and untied without any concern. The Alter Rebbe[5] and also the Mishna Berura rules that one may also tie a bow on top of a bow (double bow) even though it will hold tightly[6].

However, if the bow is tied on top of a knot (e.g. how we tie shoelaces), this is considered a knot[7]. However it is not considered to be a professional knot as it is not tight[8]. Therefore, if this type of knot is intended to be untied within 24 hours, it is permissible to tie and untie on Shabbos *Lechatchila* (this is why one may untie and tie shoelaces on Shabbos). If it was tied to last for longer than 1 day but will be untied at some point in the future, it is Rabbinically forbidden to tie or untie.

It is possible that if one ties a single knot and then does something else to secure it (i.e. not necessarily a bow), this too would be forbidden like a bow[9]. Therefore one should not wind a string around something and secure it by tying a single knot and tucking the ends of the string back through underneath the windings. Doing so may even be considered like a double knot which can't even be tied for less than 24 hours[10].

There is a minority view that a bow on top of a knot is also not considered a knot and would be permissible in all circumstances[11].

Tying for a Mitzvah

The Shulchan Aruch[12] rules that a knot which is only Rabbinically forbidden may be tied (and untied) on Shabbos for the need of a Mitzvah.

This is derived from the final Mishna in Mesechta Shabbos[13] which describes an incident that took place one Shabbos in the days of Rabbi Tzadok's father where… they tied an earthenware vessel with a reed-grass to know if there was a hand-breadth size opening in a certain barrel (to determine a law concerning *Tumas Ohel*).

The Mishna concludes that from this episode we learn that we can tie knots on Shabbos. The Gemara qualifies that this is only permissible for the needs of a Mitzvah. Rashi[14] qualifies that one may only tie a Rabbinically forbidden knot[15].

This is brought as Halacha in Shulchan Aruch[16]. This allowance refers to both types of Rabbinically forbidden knots – both a professional knot that will be untied within 24 hours or a non-professional knot that will be untied at a point in the future1[17].

The Magen Avraham[18] qualifies that this allowance for the sake of a Mitzvah only applies if one cannot achieve the outcome in any other permissible way. If other options are possible, why should we do something that would be otherwise Rabbinically forbidden[19]?

Even for the purpose of a Mitzvah, one may not tie a knot if it will be left indefinitely, even if it is an unprofessional knot[20] as this is Biblically forbidden according to opinions. Even if one intends to untie the knot after Shabbos, if there is a concern that one may later decide to leave in place, it is not permissible for the purpose of a Mitzvah[21].

Tying the Sefer Torah

Tying the Sefer Torah is considered to be for the purpose of a Mitzvah and if required, one may tie it with a Rabbinically forbidden knot. There is no concern that the knot will be left indefinitely as the Sefer Torah will be used at a future point[22].

Based on the Magen Avraham's ruling, if there is a completely permissible alternative, one should not tie the Sefer Torah with a knot. One should rather use a gartel for the Sefer Torah which uses Velcro or buckle-type clicks.

But where there is no alternative, the Shaalah arises whether one may tie it with a knot and if yes, how this knot should be tied. The question is not only relevant for Gelilah on Shabbos. It also applies when tying the Sefer Torah on a weekday as this knot would have to be untied on Shabbos.

This question is also relevant in those Kehillos who follow the ancient custom amongst Germanic-Ashkenazi Jews to tie the Sefer Torah with a long sash called a Wimpel. The Wimpel needs to be tied to secure it in place.

If the Sefer Torah being tied at Shachris will be used at Mincha as well, one may tie a non-professional knot even *Lechatchila* as it will be untied within 24 hours.

If one is tying the gartel at Mincha of Shabbos or if the Torah will not be used again within 24 hours e.g. when tying a Torah on Thursday morning that will be used on Shabbos, the following applies;

Tying a bow on top of a knot (shoelace knot) is otherwise Rabbinically forbidden and it is preferable not tie the gartel in this manner[23] if avoidable. For example, if one could wrap the sash tightly a number of times around the Sefer Torah in a secure manner, this would be preferable as it does not involve any knots. One may even wrap the gartel around the Torah and then thread the loose ends back under the windings to secure it.

However, if this will not hold the gartel securely, it is permissible to tie.

Ketzos Hashulchan[24] writes that tying a knot with a bow may be preferable since Some gartels may not be long enough to wrap them enough times to be secure. He also suggests that merely wrapping the gartel around the Torah without tying it, may be disrespectful to the Sefer Torah. Therefore (in the absence of a Velcro alternative) one can tie the Sefer Torah with a gartel, using a knot and bow on top.

1. Based on Tur and Shulchan Aruch 317 and Shulchan Aruch Harav 317 1-2
2. Shulchan Aruch Harav 317:3
3. Ram"o 317:1 and Shulchan Aruch Harav 317:2
4. Shulchan Aruch 317:5
5. Shulchan Aruch Harav 651:6
6. 317:29. See Ta"z 317:7 quoting Mordechai
7. Ta"z 317:7 and Magen Avraham 317:15
8. ibid
9. See Avnei Nezer OC 179 who explains that the reason that it is forbidden to tie a bow on top of a single knot is because the bow holds the single knot in place and makes it last. See Mishna Berura 651:11 who writes that one may not bind a Lulav on Yomtov by tying a single knot and then wrapping the remaining ends to hold the knot in place.
10. See Divrei Nechemiah Hosafos on OC 651.
11. Ram"o 317:3. The Vilna Gaon explains that this is permissible because a single knot in not a knot (and a bow is not a knot).
12. 317:1
13. 157a
14. ד"ה וקושרין 157a
15. The Acharonim (See Avnei Nezer OC 182) question why one is allowed to violate a Rabbinic law for the sake of a Mitzvah. The general rule is that on Shabbos one may only a 'double Rabbinic' act may be performed for the sake of a Mitzvah שבות דשבות במקום מצוה.For an in depth and novel explanation see Likkutei Sichos Volume 14 Parshas Vaeschanan.
16. 317:1
17. Magen Avraham 317:2
18. ibid
19. Shulchan Aruch Harav 317:4 and Mishna Berura 317:11
20. Ketzos Hashulchan 123:9 based on Shulchan Aruch Harav 651:6 concerning a Lulav where one does not untie the knot after Sukkos ends
21. Pri Megadim Eshel Avraham 317:6 and 20 concerning tying a knot in Tzitzis
22. Ketzos Hashulchan 123:9
23. Minchas Shabbos 80:155, Nimukei Orach Chaim quoting his father the Darkei Teshuvah, Minchas Yitzchak 8:19, Maharshag 1:60
24. 123:9