

# קולנו



# שמע

SHEMA KOLEINU: DIVREI TORAH FROM THE REBBEIM, TALMIDIM, AND FACULTY OF MTA

# SHAVUOS 5784

IN CELEBRATION OF A YEAR OF LIMUD HATORAH AT MTA



THE MARSHA STERN TALMUDICAL ACADEMY /  
Yeshiva University High School for Boys



# From The Editor's Desk



**Yaakov Feldman, '24**  
**Editor-In-Chief,**  
**Shema Koleinu**

**T**he Gemara in *Pesachim* (68b) relates that every year on Shavuos, Rav Yosef would have a special feast prepared, explaining that if not for the day on which the Torah was given, “*Kamah Yosef ika beshuka*” - “How many Yosefs are there in the market!” Rashi explains that Rav Yosef understood that he would simply be like everyone else in the marketplace, indistinguishable from the average person if not for what Torah had done to elevate him as a person and *Ben Torah*.

I heard an additional perspective on this story from one of my rebbeim, Rabbi Ezra Wiener. In *Sefer Bereishis*, when Rachel Imeinu gives birth to her first son, she names him Yosef, saying “*Yosef Hashem li bein acher* (30:24)” - “May Hashem add another son for me”, with the root word of the name Yosef being the verb *lehosif*, to add. In that vein, “*Kamah Yosef ika beshuka*” can be understood as “How many opportunities to be *mosif*, to add on, would there be in the market?” If not for the Torah that grounds me and focuses my priorities, to what extent would I constantly be shopping around and looking for more material wealth to add on to my life?

On Shavuos, we read *Megillas Rus*, perhaps the most well-known story of conversion in Tanach. Rus, despite her

mother-in-law’s initial discouragement, makes the choice to sacrifice a life of affluence in her father’s household to instead pursue a life of Judaism. Unlike her sister Orpah, who some understand turned back due to considering a full conversion to Judaism too difficult, Rus was willing to make the tough choice. As the daughter of the King of Moav, Rus was surely no stranger to luxury. She came from a life of *kamah yosefs* - countless additions, to cater to her every need and pamper her. However, like Rav Yosef, she understood the value of the Torah and exhibited the *mesirus nefesh* necessary to acquire it, meriting the likes of David Hamelech as her descendants.

With such a perspective in mind, this year, in addition to the usual Shavuos edition of Shema Koleinu, we have added a special section dedicated to the *masechta* that our Yeshiva had the privilege of learning this year, *Maseches Brachos*. How fitting it is for our yearly Shavuos edition to be combined with a special section featuring the fruits of many hours of *mesirus nefesh* for *Talmud Torah*, both in and out of Yeshiva! The articles contained within this publication, and all the *siyumim* being celebrated at our Seudas Preida, are the products of countless hours of learning *behasmada* at

night seder during the week and in local *batei midrashos* over the weekends, in addition to all the *sedarim* in Yeshiva during the day.

It is our hope that such *mesirus nefesh* for Torah can serve as a *zechus* for those who are literally being *moser nefesh* on behalf of *Klal Yisrael* every day on the front lines in *Eretz Yisrael*.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the amazing staff of Shema Koleinu who have been so devoted all year long despite busy senior schedules. Congratulations on making it to the last edition and thank you for all your hard work!

To our dedicated readers - we hope you have been able to gain positively from this publication over the course of the year. Thank you for your constant support and we hope you enjoy this final edition.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

# SHAVUOS 5784

## IN CELEBRATION OF MTA'S ANNUAL SIYUM AND SEUDAS PREIDA

### *Where It All Began: Insights on the Yom Tov of Shavuos*

- 3** **Eating Dairy on Shavuos**  
Rabbi Michael Taubes, '76
- 6** **Torah: The Perceptible and the  
Imperceptible World**  
Rabbi Mordechai Brownstein
- 9** **Megillas Rus: A Powerful Message for  
our Current Crisis**  
Rabbi Avraham Shulman, '90
- 10** **Ta'amei HaMikra: Beyond a Melody**  
Elie Beer, '24 and Yaakov Feldman, '24
- 11** **Eat, Drink, and Be Merry!?**  
Noah Segelnick, '24
- 12** **3 Is Not 1. Or Is It?**  
Dovid Winston, '24
- 13** **Why Na'aseh Before Nishmah?**  
Shragi Lermer, '27
- 14** **The Juice of Bikkurim**  
Noam Sheffey, '25
- 15** **The Everlasting Kabbalas HaTorah**  
Binyamin Goldfeder, '26

### *Where It All Begins: Insights on Maseches Brachos*

- 17** **Being Students of Avraham**  
Rabbi Shimon Schenker
- 18** **Duality in Kavanas HaTefillah**  
Rabbi Daniel Konigsberg, '05
- 19** **The Missing Nun in Ashrei**  
Rabbi Shimon Kerner, '77
- 19** **Learner or Earner?**  
Naftali Frankel, '24
- 21** **Mantra, Mitzvah, or Milestone:  
Exploring the Nature and Purpose  
of Birkas haTorah**  
Elisha Price, '23
- 25** **Kavanah and Hafsakah: Birkas  
Hamazon vs Tefillah**  
Daniel Farkas, '25 and Akiva Fox, '25
- 26** **The Interplay of Chovah and Tashlumin  
in Maariv of Motzei Shabbos**  
Natan Burg, '25
- 27** **The Damage Has Been Done:  
Drinking Straight Oil**  
Moshe Lieberman, '24
- 28** **Can You Say Shema For Me?**  
Yehuda Tannenbaum, '26

**THE 5784 SHAVUOS EDITION OF  
SHEMA KOLEINU IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY**

**MR. AND MRS. YAAKOV AND SARI  
SHEINFELD AND FAMILY**

IN HONOR OF THE TIRELESS DEDICATION OF  
THE REBBEIM, TEACHERS, AND STAFF OF MTA

**BRONZE**

**MR. AND MRS. MARK  
AND NIVA MARMER**

IN MEMORY OF ELI AND ESTHER PERETZ

**BRONZE**

# Where It All Began:

## Insights on the Yom Tov of Shavuos



Rabbi Michael  
Taubes, '76

Rosh Yeshiva,  
YUHSB and RIETS

### Eating Dairy on Shavuos

Unlike all our other *Yamim Tovim*, the holiday of Shavuos is unique in that outside the *Beis HaMikdash*, no specific *mitzvos* are assigned to it. Over the years, however, various customs have developed in *Klal Yisrael* which are in fact particular to this special *Yom Tov*. In discussing some of the details relating to Shavuos, the Rema (*Orach Chaim* 494:3) writes that it is customary in some places to eat dairy products on the first day of *Yom Tov*. He then suggests that the reason for this

custom may be connected to the reason for the practice of setting aside two cooked food items on the night of *Pesach* as part of the *Seder* table, which is done, as noted by the Gemara in *Pesachim* (114b), and codified by the Rambam (*Hilchos Chametz U' Matzah* 8:1) and the *Shulchan Aruch* (*ibid.* 473:4), in order to commemorate the two *korbanos* brought in the afternoon of *Erev Pesach* (the fourteenth of *Nissan*) in advance of the *Seder*, namely, the *Korban Pesach* and the *Korban Chagigah*. The *Shulchan Aruch* there notes that the two items customarily used for this commemoration on *Pesach* are a piece of meat and an egg. Similarly regarding Shavuos, the Rema quoted above explains that the custom to have a dairy meal relates to a commemoration of that which was offered in connection with this *Yom Tov*, namely, the *korban* known as the *Shtei HaLechem*, the Two Loaves offering, as elaborated upon by the *Magen Avraham* (*ibid.* 494:7) and the *Machatzis HaShekel* (*ibid.* No. 7). Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Shu"t Igros Moshe Orach Chaim* 1:160) discusses this idea of establishing a commemoration for holiday *korbanos*, and he also explains why no

formal requirement was established by *Chazal* for Shavuos, as one was for *Pesach*, but he writes that it is certainly proper to observe this as a custom.

This special Shavuos offering, as its name suggests, included two loaves of bread which were baked from the season's new harvest of wheat, as described in the Torah (*Vayikra* 23:16-21). The details of this offering are further described in the Gemara in *Menachos* (83b-84a), and are codified by the Rambam (*Hilchos Temidin U' Musafin* 8:1-21). Since the Yerushalmi in *Pesachim* (6:4, 43a) indicates that one should not have the same bread on the table when eating meat that one has had on the table when eating dairy, and presumably, vice versa (even though the bread itself, of course, is *pareve*), a ruling quoted by the *Tur* (*Yoreh Deah* 91) and codified by the *Shulchan Aruch* (*ibid.* No. 4), it becomes necessary, when eating both a dairy meal and a meat meal, to have two separate loaves of bread, one for each meal, as described by the *Aruch HaShulchan* (*ibid.* No. 15), who asserts that this is the widespread practice. The *Magen Avraham* (*Orach Chaim* *ibid.* No. 8) also asserts that it is forbidden to use

# **MORE THAN JUST A BOOK STORE** AT MAAYAN JUDAICA

*Your Source for Everything Jewish*



## **MAAYAN JUDAICA**

YOUR SOURCE FOR EVERYTHING JEWISH

WE ARE DEDICATED TO DIVERSE NEEDS, AND OFFER ITEMS FOR SHABBAT, HOLIDAYS, GIFTS, AND ART, ALONG WITH SPECIALIZED SERVICES LIKE SHATNEZ TESTING, GENIZAH, CUSTOM EMBROIDERY, AND SO MUCH MORE.

**177 W ENGLEWOOD AVE. TEANECK NJ**

**PHONE: 1 (201) 530-7588 - VISIT: [MAAYANJUDAICA.COM](http://MAAYANJUDAICA.COM)**

**EMAIL: [SALES@MAAYANJUDAICA.COM](mailto:SALES@MAAYANJUDAICA.COM)**

the same bread to eat with both meat and dairy, as does the *Mishnah Berurah* (*ibid.* No. 14). Consequently, the Rema goes on to explain that if one will eat a dairy meal on Shavuos in addition to the regular meat meal appropriate for every *Yom Tov*, one will have to have a total of two separate loaves on the table. Since one's table today, in a certain sense, takes the place of the *mizbeiach* in the *Beis HaMikdash*, as noted by the Gemara in *Brachos* (55a), among other places, by bringing two loaves to the table on Shavuos it is as if one is bringing two loaves to the *mizbeiach*, and he is thereby commemorating the *Shtei HaLechem* offering.

The aforementioned *Machatzis HaShekel* spells this out clearly, as does the *Mishnah Berurah* cited above; the *Magen Avraham* (*ibid.* No. 9) writes that the bread must thus be made specifically out of wheat, as were the *Shtei HaLechem* loaves, according to the instructions of the Torah (*Vayikra* *ibid.* 17), and the *Kaf HaChaim* (*ibid.* No. 66) adds that the *Gematria* (the numerical value) of the Hebrew word for wheat (*chittah*) which is 22 hints at the 22 Hebrew letters used to write the Torah, the giving of which we of course celebrate on Shavuos. This is thus one source for the custom to have a dairy meal on Shavuos, and it is clearly intended to be eaten *in addition to* a meat meal; the general requirement to eat meat on *Yom Tov* is recorded by the Rambam (*Hilchos Yom Tov* 6:17-18), among others, is elaborated upon by the *Yam Shel Shlomo* in *Beitzah* (2:5), and is codified by the *Magen Avraham* (*Orach Chaim* 529:3). The *Darkei Teshuvah* (*Yoreh Deah* *ibid.* No. 19) discusses this custom to eat dairy products on Shavuos at some length, and he too indicates that one must also eat meat on Shavuos, citing, among other sources, a Mishnah and a Gemara in *Chullin* (83a) which implies that most people eat a lot of meat on Shavuos, and he concludes that the proper practice is to eat a meat meal on the night of Shavuos and then both a dairy meal and a meat meal during the day of Shavuos.

It is interesting to note that the aforementioned Rema indicates that the custom is to eat a dairy meal and then a meat meal, in that specific order; this presumably is based on the fact that if one were to eat the meat meal first, one would have to wait for a long time before eating the dairy meal, as discussed by a later Gemara in *Chullin* (105a), and codified by the Rambam (*Hilchos Ma'achalos Asuros* 9:28) and by the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Deah* *ibid.* No.1; see also *Shach* No. 8, *Taz* No. 2 and *Darkei Teshuvah* No. 6). The *Magen Avraham* (*Orach Chaim* 494:6), while accepting the custom to eat a dairy meal on Shavuos, also cautions one to be careful not to come to violate any prohibitions (relating to eating meat and dairy) by observing this custom. The *Chok Yaakov* (*ibid.* No. 11), however, quotes from the *Kol Bo* (end of No. 106) that there are those who eat dairy products at a Shavuos meal (following a meat meal) without waiting for the normal amount of time which one usually waits after eating meat before eating dairy, noting that they rely on a certain leniency which is not usually accepted, because they want to observe this custom of eating dairy on Shavuos. He also quotes one authority who suggests a reason to allow one to eat dairy and meat products (separately) at the very same meal on Shavuos, but he himself concludes that one should not follow these lenient views, adding that the consensus of the *Poskim* is that even on Shavuos one must follow the same stringencies regarding meat and dairy that one always follows.

The *Be'er Heitev* (*ibid.* No. 8) also quotes this leniency from the *Kol Bo* which allows not waiting as long between meat and dairy on Shavuos as one normally does, but he concludes that it is preferable to specifically eat a dairy meal first and then have a meat meal, noting that following this order actually hints at the fact that the Jews were given the Torah, which obviously is commemorated on Shavuos, because it demonstrates that we now have certain fixed laws which must be observed. The *Pri Megadim* (*Eishel Avraham* *ibid.*

No. 6) rules that one should not allow on Shavuos anything that is not allowed all year long, and one must rather wait the full amount of time after eating meat before eating dairy; he forcefully asserts elsewhere (*Mishbetzos Zahav* *ibid.* No. 1) that one must do everything regarding meat and milk on Shavuos that one always does, and that if one does otherwise, the negative result of his conduct outweighs the positive result of obeying this custom on Shavuos. He concludes that particularly nowadays, when we are in *galus* and still awaiting redemption, it is better to be stricter about these matters. This view is quoted as well by the *Mishnah Berurah* (*ibid.* No. 14) and the *Kaf HaChaim* (*ibid.* No. 65), and the *Aruch HaShulchan* (*ibid.* No. 5) also rules that one can not be lenient on Shavuos in these matters.

It should be pointed out that there are numerous other reasons suggested as to why this custom to eat dairy products on Shavuos is observed, and according to these reasons, which do not focus on the *Shtei HaLechem* offering, there is really no need to have a whole extra meal on Shavuos with another loaf of bread, and it is sufficient simply to eat something dairy at some point during the day, which is the idea favored by the aforementioned *Darkei Teshuvah* (*ibid.*, end of No. 19). For example, the *Magen Avraham* (*ibid.* No. 6) quotes from the Zohar that the seven weeks leading up to Shavuos are comparable to the seven day purification period for a woman who has had a discharge of blood, and, as the Gemara in *Bechoros* (6b) indicates, there is a kind of biological connection between blood and milk, which represent, according to Kabbalah, the attributes of judgement and mercy respectively. By eating dairy products on Shavuos, then, we are thus drawing attention to the purification process of the Jewish people and the advent of Hashem's attribute of mercy, as the *Aruch HaShulchan* cited just above explains a greater length. The *Chok Yaakov* (*ibid.* No. 9) quotes from the *Kol Bo* (No. 52), as does the *Kaf HaChaim* (*ibid.* No. 60), that there is a custom to eat

honey and drink milk on *Shavuos* because the Torah is compared to honey and milk in a *posuk* in *Shir HaShirim* (4:11; see *Metzudas Dovid* there *d"h Nofes*), and the *Mishnah Berurah* (*ibid.* No. 11) quotes this as well; the *Pri Chodosh* (*ibid.* No. 1) also quotes this idea from the Kol Bo, while he himself cites a Gemara in *Taanis* (7a) which indicates that the Torah is compared to milk, among other things, and it is thus customary to eat milk products on the day on which we celebrate the giving of the Torah.

The *Mishnah Berurah* (*ibid.* No. 12) also quotes yet another explanation, suggesting that after the Jewish people accepted the Torah on *Har Sinai* and returned to their tents, they were able to eat immediately only dairy products, because preparing meat, now that they had been given all the laws relating to slaughtering and the other details of *Kashrus*, including the laws relating to what types of utensils to use, would require a lot of time and effort, so they decided that for that moment they would eat dairy, and this is what we commemorate. Rav Shlomo Zevin, in his *Sefer HaMoadim BeHalachah* in the section about *Shavuos* (Chapter 1, page 311, Note 41), adds that according to the Gemara in *Shabbos* (86b), the Torah was given on a *Shabbos*, in which case the people could not slaughter anything in order to have meat because slaughtering is a prohibited act on *Shabbos*; they therefore had to eat dairy products on that very first *Shavuos*, and we commemorate this fact by also eating dairy on *Shavuos*. In the actual text there, though, Rav Zevin also notes that one must eat meat as well because of the general requirement to eat meat on *Yom Tov*, as discussed above. The *Sefer HaToda'ah* (*Sivan/Chag HaShavuos*, page 280, *d"h lamah ochlin*), who quotes several of the aforementioned reasons for this custom to eat dairy on *Shavuos*, also cites an authority who suggests that prior to the giving of the Torah, the consumption of milk (and milk products) was forbidden altogether, because milk originates as a part of a living creature (“*Eiver Min HaChai*”), the consumption

of which was prohibited to all descendants of Noach (see *Sanhedrin* 56a-b and 59b; see also Rambam, *Hilchos Melachim* 9:1, 10-13). It was only when the Torah was given that milk became a permitted food item, as discussed by the Gemara in *Bechoros* mentioned above; we therefore eat dairy products on *Shavuos* to highlight this idea.

The *Midrash Shochar Tov* on *Tehillim* (8:2) records that when Moshe ascended to Heaven to receive the Torah, the *Malachim* tried to prevent him from taking it, implying that they would be able to better observe it, but Hashem responded by pointing out that when *Malachim* visited *Avraham Avinu*, they ate meat and dairy together, as the Torah implies (*Bereishis* 18:8), which is something every Jewish child knows is forbidden. When the *Malachim* had no response to this challenge to their position, Hashem gave Moshe the Torah. We thus indeed find that one of the *pesukim* which forbids the consumption of meat and dairy together (*Shemos* 34:26) is followed immediately by Hashem's commandment to Moshe concerning the Torah and the covenant at *Har Sinai*.

This idea is also found in the commentary of the *Da'as Zekeinim MiBa'alei HaTosafos* (*Bereishis ibid.*). Rav Moshe Shternbuch, in his *Sefer Moadim U'Zemanim* (Volume 4 No. 319), records and analyzes this story, and suggests that this may be another reason why we have both a meat meal and a dairy meal on *Shavuos*, namely, that our observance of the distinction between meat and dairy is precisely what silenced the *Malachim's* objection to our receiving the Torah. Rav Shternbuch also says that this may explain why the Gemara in *Pesachim* (68b) indicates that there is a particular requirement to eat food in general on *Shavuos*, above and beyond that which exists on every *Yom Tov*; one may suggest that we therefore specifically have an *extra* meal on *Shavuos*, which must be done if one is to have both meat and dairy, so as to fulfill this requirement.

There are also various other hints at this custom to eat dairy products on *Shavuos*. The *Shaloh*, for example (*Maseches Shevuos, Amod HaTorah, d"h Ashrei Ayin*), notes that two of the *pesukim* in the Torah from which we derive prohibitions concerning meat and dairy (*Shemos* 23:19 and 34:26), begin with a reference to *bikkurim*, the offering of the first fruits of one's harvest to Hashem, which may be brought starting on *Shavuos*, as indicated by the Mishnah in *Bikkurim* (1:3), among other places, and codified by the Rambam (*Hilchos Bikkurim* 2:6). The *Aruch HaShulchan* cited above points out that the Hebrew word for milk (“*chalav*”) is hinted at by the first letters of three words which introduce the Torah's presentation of the *Korban Mussaf* for *Shavuos* (*Bamidbar* 28:26), while the aforementioned *Sefer HaToda'ah*, who notes that the *Gematria* of this word is forty, the number of days Moshe spent on *Har Sinai*, as well as the *Sefer Ta'amei HaMinhagim* (*Inyanei Chag HaShavuos*, No. 622-625) bring additional sources which hint at the practice of eating dairy on *Shavuos*.



**Rabbi Mordechai  
Brownstein  
Instructor of English**

## Torah: The Perceptible and the Imperceptible World

In Kabbalistic works, one finds the division of items into “the perceptible” and “the imperceptible,” *nigleh* and *nistar*. One should not, however, perceive them as two totally separate worlds—one visible, the other invisible—although our impression is such due to the way we

experience the world: the surface which is tangible covers over the depths—the invisible, “beneath,” where the Earth’s treasures and uncommonly precious are stored. The most valuable items are below. The terrain is important as well; it is where we live. Such is the Earth’s structure, though the inside and outside are one entity; the surface forms the outer garment over the inner. Earth’s treasures, though, are hidden below. So is with Torah; its depths contain its wisdom, its treasures, and riches—its best is hidden under the surface. However, the surface is necessary for the young who cannot delve, but must walk on the outer garment, the more easily perceptible. How wonderful! This is proof of the Divine source of the Torah! Should one try to teach young children the works of Aristotle? Impossible!

Great minds study it with difficulty. He has deposited His thoughts in those words which certainly are a difficult study. How fantastic that the Divine Torah which is immeasurably great and deep, young children can enjoy learning it—wondrous! Everyone studies the same verse; Rabbi Akiva on his level understood and appreciated the very same verse that the medieval commentaries [Rashi, Ramban] were enthusiastic about as was the Vilna Gaon, as do young children. How can this be so? The point is: beneath the surface is a wealth of knowledge covered by an outer garment for those that cannot descend the depths. One understands Torah on one’s personal level. One delves as deep as possible for oneself. The Torah’s profound wisdom wears a garment for those that need its surface. Only the Omnipotent One is capable of producing such wonder. (*Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz z”l*, Poland, Da’as Chochma U’Mussar Publications, Brooklyn, NY, 1969. *Translation by Rabbi M. Brownstein*)

The event at Mount Sinai packaged and sealed eternity into the physical world, forming a duality of finite and infinite or the perceptible and imperceptible duality of Torah. The Torah was not proffered to us through an agent, Moshe Rabbeinu, but it was the Shechinah that descended

on Mount Sinai to present us with His law, creed, and historic responsibility—the journey of the Jew across the centuries of civilization until the end of time. The scene was violent; lightning and thunder filled the eyes and ears. One would expect nothing less when the high-intensity spirituality, the Shechinah, touched the mundane. The Holy One raised the profane to the sacred, the finite up to the Infinite. The result of this clash is that infinity is couched within the finite; the mundane now contains a spark of the sacred within, as the Mirrer Mashgiach posited. So, the appearance of the Shechinah on Mount Sinai infused the physical with the duality of the perceptible and the imperceptible. A world that seems ordinary, hiding in its recesses a rich treasure of knowledge and Divinity. The role of a Jew is to carry the yoke of uncovering and delving into the rich depths of the Torah and the world.

Let us explore an example of this duality in the Torah. Rav Pinchus of Koretz, one of the Chasidic Masters, explained that every opposite pole has a midpoint that joins the extremes. Extremes exist only as limbs of a body—limbs are attached. The midpoint between the Written Torah and the Oral Torah, two extremes, is the word pronounced differently than written in text—*kri ukesiv*. What is read is not in the text, but, like a comment, a form of *Torah Shebe’al Peh*, is known from what is written. Thus, in Torah itself one finds hidden meanings that expand the written word. In *Tehillim* (24:4), it is written, “He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not taken His soul [נפשו] in vain and has not sworn deceitfully,” but is read “who has not taken My soul [נפשי] in vain...” The text is the perceptible—His soul, Hashem’s soul, the soul belongs to Hashem. One doesn’t feel the soul is his own. It is spirit granted by Hashem. The pronounced word is the imperceptible, man’s soul, spoken but not in the text, unseen. The soul obviously belongs to Hashem which is the way we perceive it. Still, it is entrusted to man and his responsibility, which is imperceptible. How does the soul, an extension of the

Infinite, find a home in the human? What makes it my soul, individual and characteristic of me? What binds one to the other? The full import of the verse becomes apparent only after contemplating what is seen in text, plus what is read aloud unseen.

The responsibility yoked on the individual soul at Mount Sinai is mentioned in the conclusion of *Aleinu*: “They will realize and know, all the inhabitants of the world, that to You, every knee must bend, every tongue must swear [allegiance to You].” “...every tongue must *swear*,” compare “... has not *sworn* deceitfully” (*Tehillim* *ibid.*). My soul which is His soul is true to its purpose, not deceitful, because it keeps its promise made at Mount Sinai. Though the soul is spirit and not my material property, rather His, I am committed to the event and pledge of Mount Sinai, “to behave and to learn.” His soul cannot sin, but mine can betray the Sinaitic pledge.

The Midrash calls our attention to an amazing aspect of the revelation at Sinai: the Jewish people were able to see what is normally only heard, as the *passuk* says, “And all the people saw the sounds” (*Shemos* 20:15). What does this mean? “If we are bound and limited to the present, if we can only perceive the universe through the viewpoint of the temporal and the material, then we will always be aware of the divide between sight and sound. The prophetic vision at Mount Sinai, however, granted the people a unique perspective, as if they were standing near the source of Creation. From that vantage point, they were able to witness the underlying unity of the universe. They were able to see sounds and hear sights” (Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook, as explained in *Gold From the Land of Israel* by Rabbi Chanan Morrison).

As the Mashgiach wrote, as with the Torah, so is it with the world. The world limits the human ability to perceive. We hear what is sound and see what light permits the eye to see. However, at Mount Sinai, limitations were lifted, perception





# Tzalash

## Tzava L'shem Shamayim



**DONATE  
NOW »»**



**Spiritual and Emotional  
Support for Religious  
Soldiers and Their Families**

Soldiers in the IDF confront many difficulties. In addition to the inherent danger involved in their work, army service also presents religious and emotional challenges. That's where Tzalash comes in! Starting from before the soldiers draft and continuing throughout their service, our many and multi-faceted programs are designed to offer these courageous soldiers the support that they need.

**TZALASH.ORG**

Strengthening And Inspiring The Soldiers Wherever They Are

was elevated from the finite and the bounded to the unbounded. In the same way, the event at Mount Sinai deputized man to perceive that which is below superficial nature to understand its secrets with the same curiosity as he delves beneath the outer garment of the Torah to discover its hidden riches. Man was able to see and hear as one beyond the physical limitations of the material world and likewise understand Torah beyond limitations of the human mind.

The meeting between Moshe Rabbeinu and Yisro serves as an introduction to the event at Mount Sinai and the duality of the infinite residing inside and below the finite. The *pasuk* describing the interaction states that Aharon and the *zekeinim* came to eat with Yisro “*lifnei haElokim*”—“before God” (*Shemos* 18:12). The expression ‘before God’ appears out of place here. In what way was this particular feast in God’s presence? “...The human soul, for all its greatness, is limited in its ability to grasp and enjoy God’s infinite wisdom.

Whatever degree of pleasure we are able to derive from God’s Presence is a function of our spiritual attainments. The greater our spiritual awareness, the greater the pleasure we feel in God’s Presence. But while we will never gain complete mastery of Divine wisdom, even the small measure of comprehension that is possible is sufficient to fill the soul with tremendous light and joy” (Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook, as explained in *Sapphire From the Land of Israel* by Rabbi Chanan Morrison). As the Mirer Mashgiach taught: There is Divine presence in all. The superficial is earthly and profane, though, to recognize the Divine within is to realize its hidden treasure and richness. Indeed, one can eat in the presence of God at every meal.



**Rabbi Avraham Shulman, '90**  
**Maggid Shiur and Mashgiach, 12th Grade**  
**Director of Israel Guidance**

## Megillas Rus: A Powerful Message for our Current Crisis

The *minhag* of leining *Megillas Rus* on Shavuot is recorded by the Rema in *siman* 490 and has gained nearly universal acceptance amongst *Klal Yisroel*. This year the lessons we can learn from this *kriah* have a particular significance during these times.

There are various well-known reasons for this *minhag*. The Abudraham writes that there is a strong connection to the *Kabbalas HaTorah* of *Klal Yisroel* at *Har Sinai* and the *geirus* of Rus. Before they were able to accept the Torah, *Klal Yisroel* went through a process that is similar to the *tevilah* and *milah* of a *ger*. A second connection that he mentions is based on the *zman* of the story of Rus. The *pesukim* indicate that Rus and Naomi came to *Beis Lechem*: “*b'tchilas kitzir se'orim*” (1:22) and stayed there until “*kelos kitzir hase'orim uktzir hachitim*” (2:23). The *Megillah* takes place during the harvest season which is the *zman* of Shavuot—Chag HaKatzir.

Another reason is based on the Yerushalmi in *Maseches Chagiga* (82:3), which says that Dovid Hamelech was *niftar* on Shavuot. The *Tevuos Shor* notes that since Hashem fully completes the years of *tzadikim*, Dovid Hamelech must also have been born on Shavuot. Therefore, it is appropriate to read the

story of the basis of Dovid’s *yichus* on this day. Finally, the *Mishna Berurah* (490:17) quotes the *Yalkut Shimoni* that the reason Rus is read at the *zman* of *Kabbalas haTorah* is to show how the Torah can be acquired. Rus overcame hardship and obstacles and was willing to lower herself to join the Jewish people. It is these *middos* that one needs to receive the Torah properly.

Perhaps there is additional relevance from the *kriah* of Rus that applies to the current circumstance we have been experiencing. After the death of their husbands, Naomi, Rus, and Orpah, all of them leave *Moav* and begin to journey back towards *Eretz Yehuda*. Naomi discourages them from joining her as she says: “*leichnah shovnah isha l'beis imah*” (1:8). Rus responds, “*ki itach nashuv l'ameich*” (1:10), her original intention being that Orpah would also accompany Naomi back to her country. However, after further discouragement from Naomi we read that: “*vatishak Orpah lachamosah v'Rus davkah bah*” (1:14). Orpah kisses her mother-in-law goodbye and Rus clings to her.

We would think that Rus's decision to stay was an act of *chesed* in the category of *lifnim meshuras hadin*, and Orpah was justified in returning to her homeland. However, *Chazal* view Orpah’s departure as an act of betrayal to Naomi, which reveals the true essence of who Orpah was. As *Chazal* say in the Midrash: “*Vayise'u lahem nashim moavios... Shem ha'achas Orpah shehafchah oref lachamosah*” (*Medrash Rabbah Rus* 2:9), Orpah’s name is based on her turning her back on Naomi. Furthermore, the Gemara in *Sotah* (42b) records the opinion of several *amoraim* who *darshan* the name Orpah based on acts of severe immorality. What indication is there that Orpah became morally corrupt? As a general rule, we do not encourage *geirus*, and Orpah was under no obligation to leave her nation and continue forward with Naomi.

A careful reading of Naomi’s response in the next *passuk* may offer some insight. In

*passuk tes-vav*, Naomi tells Rus regarding Orpah: “*hinei shavah yivimeteich el amah v’el eloheha*” that Orpah has returned to her nation and her god. Naomi describes Orpah as leaving her emunah and returning to “her god”. There is a *machlokes rishonim* regarding whether Rus and Orpah were *migayeir* when they married Machlon and Kilyon. According to the opinion that they converted, Orpah was now rejecting her Yiddishkeit which explains *Chazal’s* negative view. According to the other opinion that Rus and Orpah were still *Moavites* however, it is difficult to understand any critique of Orpah for leaving Naomi to go back to *Moav*.

The Gemara in *Yevamos* (48b) mentions several reasons why *geirim* suffered tribulations. One of them is “*Mipnei sheshihu atzmam lehikanes tachas kanfei haShechinah*”—“that they delay in joining the Jewish people.” The proof the Gemara brings is actually from Rus, who receives a *bracha* from Boaz in response to the *chesed* she did for her mother-in-law. How can a potential convert be punished for something they are not obligated to do? The Maharal in *Chidushei Aggados* explains the Gemara’s proof. If Rus received a reward because she is now closer to Hashem through her *geirus*, then by definition one who willingly remains distant from Hashem is punished. Perhaps we can apply this to Orpah. Rus and Orpah both saw the results of running from Hashem and his land. They saw the direct *hashgacha* of Hashem’s punishment against their husbands for brazenly violating the *Ratzon Hashem*. They were so close to being *tachas kanfei haShechinah*. Rus was rewarded for her *zerizus* and staying with Naomi, but Orpah made a different choice. She didn’t just leave Naomi, but she walked away from the *Ribono Shel Olam*. The opportunity for Orpah to transform her life and be “*Koneh olamo b’shas achas*” and also elevate her existence stood right in front of her, but she chose to miss that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

*Klal Yisroel* is experiencing a serious *eis tzara* that is ongoing. While we can’t say with certainty the reasons for this *gezeira*, we too have a tremendous opportunity standing in front of us: To respond and grow from the events happening around us. For each one of us to find a personal way in which we can change and grow. To ensure that we take advantage of the opportunities we have for our own *Kabbalas haTorah*. Hashem is sending us a message. Let’s make sure that we are ready to be *na’aseh v’nishma*.



## Ta’amei HaMikra: More Than A Melody

On the final *daf* of *Maseches Megillah* (32a), the Gemara quotes a statement of Rabbi Yochanan, that anyone who reads from the Torah without a melody —“*hakorei belo ne’imah*”— and one who studies Mishnah without a song —“*veshoneh belo zimrah*”—are deserving of the punishment delineated in *Yechezkel* (20:25) of “*chukim lo tovim*”—“statutes that were not good,” a reference to the punishments *Bnei Yisrael* received after leaving the ways of Hashem. Rashi there (*d’h ne’imah*) comments that the *ne’imah* mentioned is to be interpreted as what are colloquially known as *ta’amei haMikra*, the special set of notes, or trop, used to

read from the Torah.

Being that Shavuos is the *chag* of *Kabbalas HaTorah*, it would be worthwhile to examine the music and melodies that surround *krias haTorah*, a custom that according to some dates back to *Matan Torah* itself. As for the origin of *ta’amei haMikra*, there are various opinions concerning where it first originated in our *mesorah*. The general consensus is that Moshe received the Torah at Har Sinai with some type of tune, which was passed down until the *chachamim* in the time of the Second Beis Hamikdash established symbols to correspond to the already established tunes and notes.

In any event, it is clear from a variety of sources that *ta’amei haMikra* serve a far greater purpose than just providing a musical sound during *krias haTorah*. From a practical standpoint, Tosafos on the Gemara quoted above (*d’h vehashoneh*), explains that before the Mishnah was written down, it was taught with a tune in order to serve as a memory aid.

Another instance of the significance of the *te’amim* is seen in regard to the special trop of *Megillas Esther* and the *tefillos* of the *Yamim Noraim*. In this instance, the sound of the *zarka* (the symbol that looks like the letter ‘s’ rotated ninety degrees) in *Megillas Esther* is the same sound as is found in the tune for the *tefillah* of *Ochila laKeil*, specifically the words of *ufi yagid tehilasecha* in the chazzan’s repetition of *Mussaf* during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

In combining this *Megillah/Yamim Noraim* connection with the above Tosafos about teaching Mishnah with a tune, they can be understood as seeking to accomplish the same goal: eliciting a certain emotional response that would be impossible to obtain with just the reading of words by themselves. Indeed, one of the uses of a *zarka* in *Megillas Esther* comes in one of the most dramatic *pesukim* in all of Tanach (*Esther* 4:14), as Mordechai

responds to Esther's initial reluctance to inform Achashveirosh of Haman's evil plan, saying "*im hachareish tacharishi ba'eis hazos* (these words have a *munach zarka munach segol* attached to them)"—"if you persist in keeping silent at a time like this," "*revach vehatzalah ya'amod laYehudim mimakom acheir v'at uveis avich toveidu*"—"relief and salvation will come to the Jews from somewhere else, and you and your father's house will perish." The *passuk* continues, "*umi yodei'a im la'eis kazos higa'at lamalchus*"—"And who knows whether it was just for such a time as this that you attained a royal position?"

It is certainly fitting for a *passuk* of such gravity, that leads Esther to carry out a tremendous display of *mesiras nefesh* and save the Jewish people, to share a tune with the *tefillah* said by the chazzan on the *Yamim Noraim*, in which he asks Hashem for Divine guidance in allowing his words on behalf of the *tzibur* to be expressed most effectively. The name and opening words of the *tefillah* itself, *Ochila laKeil*, is commonly translated as "I shall put my hope in G-d," undeniably a fitting parallel to the words in *Megillas Esther* with which it shares a tune.

This connection can also explain the earlier comment of Tosafos in *Maseches Megillah*. Why is it so important to learn Mishnayos with a tune, to the extent that one who omits it is deserving of punishment? Perhaps it is related to this idea, that the *te'amim* allow for the emotional impact of a *tefillah* or *passuk* to be that much stronger, and can serve as a powerful inspiration to those who hear it.

In terms of more directly deriving meaning from the *ta'amei haMikra*, the Vilna Gaon, among others, has been known to invoke the names of the individual *te'amim* on words in order to derive deeper meaning in a *passuk*. One notable example of this is the opening of *Parshas Vayigash*, in which the *pesukim* describe Yehudah coming to speak to Yosef on behalf of his brothers and father.

The first *passuk* (*Bereishis* 44:18) begins:

"וַיָּגֵשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר בְּי אֲדֹנָי"

"And Yehuda approached him and said, 'If you please, my lord.'"

The Vilna Gaon on this *passuk* points out that the trop on the first three words is a *kadma v'azla* followed by a *revi'i*, which, if translated from Aramaic, can be understood as a reference to what was occurring in the *passuk*: "*kadma*"—"he got up," "*v'azla*"—"and he went," "*revi'i*"—"the fourth [son]," a reference to Yehuda. The trop on the following words in the *passuk*, says the Vilna Gaon, can explain a crucial detail in the *pesukim* and the story of Yosef and the brothers in Mitzrayim as a whole. The *passuk* continues "*vayomer bi adoni*"—"And he said, 'if you please, my lord.'" The Vilna Gaon explains that in reality, the oldest brother, Reuven, should be the one taking responsibility and confronting Yosef. How, then, did Yehuda find himself as the one in this position? This is where the trop plays a crucial role—the *te'amim* on those words are a *zarka munach segol*, with the word *zarka* coming from the verb *lizrok*—to throw. This, explains the Gaon, is a reference to the previous *parsha*, *Parshas Mikeitz*, in which Yehuda told Yaakov that if he did not bring Binyamin back, "*vichatasi lecha kol hayamim*"—"I will have sinned to you forever" (*Bereishis* 43:9), a condition that Rashi interprets as Yehuda offering to give up his *Olam Haba* if he does not return Binyamin to Yaakov. As such, the *zarka munach segol* can be understood as a reference to Yehuda being *zoreik* himself from being *munach*—at rest—with the rest of the *segol*, the *Am Segulah*.

Overall, this idea of *ta'amei haMikra* being used as tools to inspire should serve as a reminder to us to take in and appreciate the impact that the *te'amim* can have. By doing so, we can be inspired not only by the words of Torah, but also emotionally by the melody that surrounds and encapsulates it.



Noah Segelnick, '24

## Eat, Drink, and Be Merry!?

There is a *machlokes* in *Maseches Beitzah* (15b) regarding the way one should act on *yamim tovim*. Should one act festively and enjoy themselves with food and drink or dedicate the day to serving G-d by learning and davening? Rebbi Eliezer holds that one could choose to either eat and drink or learn and pray. Rabbi Yehoshua disagrees and holds that one should divide the day into two parts, using one to serve Hashem and the other to indulge in food and drink. However, in *Maseches Pesachim* 68b, it is stated that everyone agrees that the *yom tov* of *Shavuos* must be enjoyed with food and drink because it is the day that the Torah was given to *Bnei Yisrael*. Meaning, that even Rabbi Eliezer who holds that on other *yomim tovim* one could choose to either devote the day exclusively to Hashem or exclusively to oneself, on *Shavuos* there is no choice; everyone must celebrate the day by eating and drinking.

This statement in *Maseches Pesachim* gives rise to a difficult question: Logically, it should be that on the day commemorating *Matan Torah*, we should involve ourselves in spiritual acts. The day should be set aside exclusively for Hashem. Why then is it that *Shavuos* is the only *yom tov* that everyone agrees must be spent indulging in food and drink?

The answer to this question could be found by looking at a specific Gemara in *Meseches Shabbos* 88b. This Gemara describes a conversation between Hashem, the angels, and Moshe Rabbeinu when Moshe ascended *Har Sinai* to receive the Torah. When Moshe arrived atop the

mountain and the angels saw him, they asked Hashem why Moshe, a man of flesh and blood, was allowed to be among angels. Hashem responded that Moshe was there to bring the Torah down to *Bnei Yisrael*. This outraged the angels who could not believe that Hashem wanted to give man something that was hidden in *Shamayim* for nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the world was even created. Instead of answering the angels Himself, Hashem requested that Moshe respond to them. Moshe responded that the Torah was always meant to be given to humans made of flesh and blood. It says in the Torah that Hashem is the G-d who took you out of Egypt, but the angels were never enslaved. It is written in the Torah to keep *Shabbos*, to honor your mother and your father, not to swear falsely, and to have no gods besides Hashem. None of these commandments apply to angels; the Torah was specifically designed for human beings. Upon hearing this, the angels did not put up any more protest.

Moshe was able to get the better of the angels by proving that the Torah was created for humans of flesh and blood. It is only man who can use the Torah to elevate himself from physical beings into something truly spiritual and holy. Therefore, it is fitting that on Shavuos, the day commemorating *Matan Torah*, we celebrate through the physical pleasure of eating and drinking. This is a way of taking something physical, food, and using it in a spiritual way, celebrating the giving of the Torah. When we do this, we show the reason we deserved to receive the Torah, our ability to use the *mitzvos* included therein to transform something physical into something holy.

This concept of using physical objects to achieve spiritual goals can be seen in a Gemara in *Maseches Avoda Zara* (11a). The Gemara states that Antoninus and Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi were two of the richest people in the world. So rich that they could afford summer foods during the winter and winter foods during the

summer. Commenting on this Gemara, *Tosefos* asks that from this story, it appears that Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi benefited from this world. However, in *Maseches Kesubos* (101a), the *Gemara* relates that when Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi was about to die he proclaimed that he did not even benefit from this world one finger's worth. The Vilna Gaon answers this apparent contradiction by stating that whenever Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi partook in the foods found on his table or performed any other physical activity, he did not do it for his own physical pleasure. Rather, every physical act that Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi did was done in order to enable him to better serve Hashem.

This Shavuos, all of us should keep this idea of being able to use physical acts to spiritually elevate ourselves in mind while we are enjoying our *yom tov seudos*. At first glance, it might seem like this task, the same task Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi was challenged with every day, is very difficult to accomplish. However, if one works on themselves, it is definitely not impossible. After all, our ability to achieve this goal is the whole reason the Torah was not kept in *Shamayim* for eternity and was instead given to our ancestors at *Har Sinai*.



Dovid Winston, '24

### 3 Is Not 1. Or Is It?

The Gemara in *Maseches Shabbos* (88a) states, “*Brich rachmana dihav oryan telisay le'am telisay... beyarcha telisay*”—“Blessed is Hashem who gave his three-fold Torah [*Torah, Nevi'im, Kesuvim*] to a three-fold people [*Kohanim, Levi'im, Yisraelim*] in the third month [Sivan].” We know that all occurrences in the world, especially those related to Torah and *mitzvos*, are because of

*hashgacha pratis*. Therefore, it cannot be coincidental that the Torah was given in the third month, Sivan; there must be a connection with *Matan Torah*.

Although we are, according to the above Gemara, a people of three, the essence of our Judaism is one—one Hashem, one Torah, and one Jewish people, as is brought from the Zohar, “*Yisrael ve'oraysa veKudsha Brich Hu kula chad*”—“Israel and the Torah and *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* are all one.” Additionally, the Midrash (*Tanchuma, Nasso* 16) states that our entire purpose in the world is to create a *dirah betachtonim* (a dwelling place in the lower realms) for Hashem by revealing His oneness and Torah in the world. What, then, does *Matan Torah*, the greatest moment of revelation from Hashem and clearness in his Torah, have to do with three?

The Alter Rebbe explains in *Tanya* (*perek* 23) that through *mitzvos*, one becomes a *merkava* (chariot) to G-dliness. A *merkava* is completely *batel* (nullified) to the rider, without any will of its own. Whatever the rider wants to happen is what the chariot does. However, the chariot is still an entity of its own, not one with the rider. Nevertheless, the Alter Rebbe explains that through Torah specifically, one can become completely united with Hashem. What, then, does Torah have to do with three?

In reality, it is true that the entire concept of Torah is one of unity. If someone only knows of one *metzius*, and follows it, it is not certain that true unity exists in that relationship. Alternatively, it is only if there is another way to go, but the person clings to what he knows is true, is there a true oneness. A *mashal* for this, which is also a *mashal* for our *neshamos*, is that of a king's son. In order for the king to test his son, he sends him away to a foreign land to dwell among lowly people who are not royalty. If the son retains his status and conducts himself as a son of a king, the king will know that his son is truly bound to him. Similarly, when one finds himself

in an environment lacking G-dliness, but remains steadfast in his Judaism, it represents a true connection to Hashem.

To show that one is staying strong, one can either eliminate the opposing forces or change that opposition itself into something that can be a vessel for oneness. Certainly, though, the latter method is one that will bring out a truer oneness. In the first method, there still exists an entity that opposes the oneness of Hashem, but one simply chooses not to heed it. However, when the unity is so clear and penetrating that even things that seem to oppose it become engulfed in it, this is a true unity.

This concept is reflected in the three months from Pesach to Shavuot: *Chodesh Nisan* is the first month, in which *Yetzias Mitzrayim* took place, a complete revelation of Hashem's hand in the world. Indeed, the *pasuk* says, "*vayugad lemelech Mitzrayim ki varach ha'am*"—"it was told to the king [Pharaoh] that the people [Bnei Yisrael] had fled" (*Shemos* 14:5). *Mitzrayim* was a place steeped in unholiness and opposition to Hashem, and the people had fled that idea and stuck to G-dliness. Next, *Chodesh Iyar* has the *mitzvah* of *Sefiras HaOmer* every single day, whereby we are meant to refine ourselves. Nevertheless, one is still forced to deal with his *nefesh habehamis* (animal soul), and can not yet be fully spiritual. This is reflected in the name of the month, *Iyar*, which is an abbreviation for Avraham (*aleph*), Yitzchak (*yud*), Yaakov (*yud*), and Rachel (*reish*), who according to the Bnei Yissaschar (*Iyar* 1:5) are the *daled raglei hamerkava*—the four legs of the Divine Chariot. As explained above, the whole idea of a chariot is one of *bitul*, but this is not unity. The chariot is still its own entity, just operating completely under the will of the rider. *Chodesh Sivan*, however, takes two completely opposing sides, G-dliness and our physical world, and unites them through the giving of the Torah.

When one performs a *mitzvah*, he is indeed bringing G-dliness into the world, but

there still exists the physicality of the world. The Alter Rebbe explains in *Tanya* (*perek* 5), however, that when one learns Torah, his mind becomes completely enveloped in Hashem's *chochmah* as contained in the Torah, and that *chochmah* becomes contained in his mind. Thus, this is the idea of the Torah being given in the third month. One must take his mind and infuse it with the wisdom of Hashem, and from this comes the ultimate unity of "*Yisrael ve'oraysa veKudsha Brich Hu kula chad*."

(Based on *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 2, p. 301-303)



## Why Na'aseh, Then Nishmah?

*Ma'amad Har Sinai* was composed of many different facets. There was thunder, lightning, and, according to the Gemara (*Shabbos* 88a and *Avodah Zarah* 2b), Hashem picked up Har Sinai and held it above Bnei Yisrael. As the Torah recounts the events that took place, it describes how Moshe went about preparing for *Matan Torah* - "*vayiven mizbeach tachas hahar u'shteim esrei matzeivah*" (*Shemos* 24:4).

The Torah tells us that Moshe built a *mizbeach* and twelve *matzeivos*, monuments, at the foot of the mountain. What is the significance of having both the *mizbeach* and the *matzeivos*? Furthermore, in *Sefer Bereishis* and *Shemos*, we find multiple examples of the *avos* and other important people building a *mizbeach*. The Torah also tells us explicitly that Yaakov Avinu built a *matzeiva*. However, we never find a case where there is both a *mizbeach* and a *matzeiva* being built together until now. Further analysis of the *pesukim*

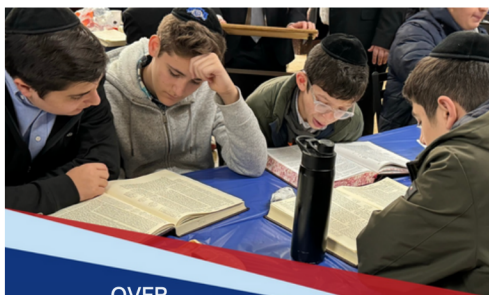
shows there was actually a shift in the attitude of B'nei Yisrael before and after the construction of the *mizbeach* and the *matzeivos*. Namely, before they were constructed, Klal Yisrael's commitment to Hashem was in the form of "*na'aseh*" only. As the *pasuk* says, "*kol asher diber Hashem na'aseh*" (*Shemos* 19:5), noticeably without an added, "*nishmah*." However, after the construction of the *mizbeach* and the *matzeivos*, B'nei Yisrael say, "*kol asher diber Hashem na'aseh v'nishmah*" (*Shemos* 24:17).

This change in language shows that the construction of the *mizbeach* and the *matzeivos* clearly impacted B'nei Yisrael's understanding of what *kabalas hatorah* meant. In fact, in *Maseches Shabbos* (88a) we learn that when the *malachim* heard *naseah* and *nishmah* from B'nei Yisrael they were amazed and remarked, "Who revealed this secret to B'nei Yisrael?"

Rabbi Dovid Hofstedter, in his sefer *Dorash Dovid*, cites the Shem Meshmuel and develops the following idea: The *mizbeach* and *matzeivos* represent two different pathways in *avodas Hashem*. A *matzevah* is made from a singular large stone which is representative of the *avodah* of an individual. A *mizbeach* on the other hand, which is made of many stones, is representative of the *avodah* of the *tzibur* that is the result of many people coming together to worship as one. It appears, says the Darash Dovid, that it is for this reason, that after the Torah was given, *matzeivos* were no longer allowed to be used to serve Hashem. It was from *matan Torah* and on that we were to serve Hashem as a *tzibur*, not as individuals. With this in mind, as B'nei Yisrael approached *matan Torah* with an unprecedented *achdus*, it appeared that this would be the only way to serve Hashem. This is what is meant by the use of the word "*na'aseh*". In other words, the term "*na'aseh*" refers to actions, the actual *ma'aseh mitzvah* that each Jew does. When one Jew puts on *tefillin*, it is the same as any other Jew putting on *tefillin*. In that way, we are united in serving Hashem.

The word “*nishmah*” represents the internal feelings and thoughts that go into a person's actions. It is indicative of the way they understand and internalize things as an individual. Initially, this part of *Avodas Hashem* was thought not to be relevant as *matan Torah* approached. When *Klal Yisrael* saw that Moshe Rabeinu built a *mizbeach*, and also built twelve *matzevos*, they understood that there was an underlying message being given. It was at this point that they expressed their acceptance of *ol malchus shamayim*, in terms of both “*na’aseh*” and “*nishmah*.” That the individual's thoughts, understanding, and intentions also play a vital role in the *avoda* of Hashem.

It is well known that *Klal Yisrael* is praised for saying “*na’aseh*” before “*nishma*,” agreeing to become servants of Hashem not knowing what that entails. Based on what we said above, we can explain that *Klal Yisrael* was actually saying that the *avodah* of the *tzibur* is of paramount importance, and that the *avodah* of the individual is secondary. The *avodah* of the *tzibur* is the foundation upon which the *avodah* of the individual can be built. That is why Moshe Rabeinu built the *mizbeach* before he built the *matzevos*. A person can not serve Hashem on his own, he can only stand before Hashem knowing he is a part of something much larger. But with this understanding, when he does stand before Hashem, that *avodah* is also truly meaningful to Hashem. May we be *zocheh* to see the *avodah b’shleimusa* with the coming of *Mashiach*.



OVER  
**80**  
TALMIDIM WILL BE  
MESAYEM A MASECHTA  
IN SHIUR THIS YEAR



## The Juice of Bikkurim

One of the many names of Shavuot is *Chag HaBikkurim*. This name originates from the times of the *Beis Hamikdash* when as the 3rd Mishnah in *Maseches Bikkurim* states the Jews would designate their first fruits and bring them to the *kohanim* to fulfill the commandment of *bikkurim*. In addition, the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* is meant to be done with great joy. As the farmer arrives at the *Beis Hamikdash* he recites *pesukim* that praise Hashem for allowing him to have land in *Eretz Yisrael*.

We learn from the Mishnah in *Maseches Bikkurim* that the commandment of *bikkurim* only applies to the *Shevas HaMinim*, the 7 species of fruit that the land is specifically praised for in the 8th perek of *Devarim*. The idea that *bikkurim* only applies to the *Shevas HaMinim* can also be learned from the word “*Me’Reishis*” (26:2). In that same *pasuk* we also see the words “*Pri Ho’Adama*”, or “fruit from the ground”. The Gemara in *Chulin 120b* teaches us that this means you can only use intact fruit for the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim*. With that in mind, the next words of the same *pasuk* however are very strange. The words that follow are “*Asher Tavi Mi’ Artzecha*”. If the *pasuk* simply wanted to teach us that we should only use intact fruits for *bikkurim* shouldn’t the *pasuk* just have said just *Asher Mi’ Artzecha*? Those words alone mean “that is from your land”, but when you add the word *Tavi*, it seems to be teaching something very unique. The word *Tavi* teaches us that you can bring more than we were told from this *passuk*. The word *Tavi* teaches us that you can

even bring your *bikkurim* in liquid form. Yet, R’ Ila said in the name of R’ Eliezer in the Gemara *Yerushalmi Terumos* (11:3) that this idea of juice only applies to olives and grapes. The Rambam in *Hilchos Bikkurim* (2:4) also says that you can only use olives and grapes if you want to bring your *bikkurim* as juice. The reason for this is because olives and grapes have a *chashivus* since they could be made into oil or wine.

In *Maseches Challah* there is a story of a person named Yosef HaKohen who brought his *bikkurim* from oil and wine, and it was not accepted. This is based on the *shita* in the Gemara *Yerushalmi in Challah and Terumos* which says that you can only bring *bikkurim* from oil and wine if you designated it to be made into juice before you came to the *Beis Hamikdash*. The Rambam however, didn’t differentiate between bringing *Bikkurim* as juice with or without designating before coming to the *Beis Hamikdash*, going against the *Yerushalmi in Challah and Terumos*. The *Kesef Mishnah* clarifies this by saying that the Rambam aligns with Rabbi Yehuda in the Mishnah in *Terumos* who says you can bring *bikkurim* as juice before or when you come to the *Beis Hamikdash*.

Rav Shamshon Rafael Hirsch teaches us something that we can internalize about the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* as a whole. He notes that the careful recitation of the *pesukim* teaches us about the other important aspects of this *mitzvah* as a whole. The *Beis Hamikdash* represents our relationship with *Eretz Yisrael* as being one that is dependent on Torah. We place the *bikkurim* on the southwest corner of the *Mizbeach*, representing that us having *Eretz Yisrael* is for us to observe the Torah to the greatest extent possible. The *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* is just one of many *mitzvos* that allow us to internalize how awesome *Eretz Yisrael* is, and it shows how integral it is to us as a nation.



Binyamin Goldfeder, '26

## The Everlasting Kabbalas HaTorah

Immediately after discussing the *Sefiras HaOmer* and the *Korban Omer*, the Torah says, “*Ukrasem b’etzem hayom hazeh mikra kodesh*”—“You shall call on this exact day a holy convocation” (*Vayikra* 23:21). The *passuk* is saying to have a Yontif. However, unlike the rest of the Yamim Tovim, the Torah does not tell us the date. Why is this the case?

Furthermore, the Magen Avraham in his *peirush* on *Shulchan Aruch* (491:1) calculates that *Matan Torah* really happened 51 days after the bringing of the *Omer*. He explains that the Gemara (Shabbos 86a) says that really Hashem was going to give the Torah on Friday, but Moshe wanted it to be on Shabbos. From this, the Magen Avraham calculates that it was the 51st day since *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, which happened on a Thursday. He says that this is why we celebrate *Yom Tov Sheini*, to stress the giving of the Torah happening on that day. However, this also doesn’t make sense, as *Yom Tov Sheini* of every other Yom Tov is for a totally different purpose? Moreover, why should the first day, the main day, of Shavuos be different from the day of *Matan Torah*?

Rav Eli Belizon answers these questions by using an idea from the *Eretz Tzvi* about the days of preparation for *Kabbalas HaTorah*. In advance of *Matan Torah*, Hashem told Moshe that *Bnei Yisrael* should prepare themselves for the next day and night, but Moshe determined that they needed two 24 hour periods, which required another day and night (since the night before had already passed), which made it into three days. The *Eretz Tzvi*

explains the reason for including the last night - Moshe thought that each day needed to be accompanied by a night. The reason for this is because night represents darkness, a time of confusion and Hashem’s hashgacha being hidden. Moshe wanted to convey that *Kabbalas HaTorah* is always in effect. Even in the dark times, the night times, we will always be connected to Hashem through the Torah, and we must always focus on the Torah.

Rav Belizon says that the reason why *Matan Torah* was on *Yom Tov Sheini* is because we must remember that *Kabbalas HaTorah* is eternal, even in *galus*. This is also why the Torah doesn’t explicitly provide a date for *Kabbalas HaTorah*, as it is really all the time, every day, no matter where we are. Rav Belizon further explains that this can also explain a puzzling statement of the Chok Yaakov, who says that one can make up the bracha of *shehecheyanu* for up to a week after Shavuos. This is difficult because, concerning all the other Yamim Tovim, there is no opportunity to make another bracha. Rav Belizon answers that the reason Shavuos is different is to show that *Kabbalas HaTorah* is not limited just to the one day.

The *Meshech Chochma* (*Vayikra* 23:21) points out that the Torah changes its *lashon* in the context of its description of Shavuos from how it presents the rest of the Yamim Tovim. Usually, the Torah uses the *lashon* of “*l’doroseichem b’chol moshevoeichem*,” which means “[it shall be] for all generations in all your [*Bnei Yisrael*’s] dwellings” (*Vayikra* 23:31 et al.) Regarding Shavuos, however, the *passuk* says “*b’chol moshevoeichem l’doroseichem*,” which means, “in all of your dwellings for all generations” (*Vayikra* 23:21). By the rest of the Yamim Tovim, the generations are mentioned first, and then the *passuk* mentions dwelling, but when discussing Shavuos, the *passuk* says dwelling first, and then generations. The *Meshech HaChochma* explains that the switch hints to the following idea: For all other *Yamim*

*Tovim*, those in *Chutz La’aretz* might not celebrate on the same day as those in *Eretz Yisrael* due to a *sfeika d’yoma*—a doubt regarding the correct date for the holiday—since they might not receive word in time from the Beis Din about which day is Yontif. By Shavuos, however, since it is at the end of *Sefiras HaOmer*, whose count is universal, everybody will celebrate on the same day. Therefore, the Torah says “your dwellings” first by Shavuos, in order to emphasize that we are all celebrating on the same day. It doesn’t matter where we are or what time period, the Torah and its acceptance of it are eternal. May we all be *zocheh* to internalize this mission and to truly connect to Hashem through the Torah.

**JOIN THE MTA TORAH  
WHATSAPP GROUP TO  
LEARN AND HEAR  
MORE TORAH FROM  
OUR REBBEIM AND  
TALMIDIM!**



MTA Torah  
WhatsApp group



**DIGITAL SHEMA KOLEINU  
+  
SHIURIM FROM  
YU ROSHEI YESHIVA &  
MTA REBBEIM  
+  
AND SO MUCH MORE!!**



# שמע קולנו YEAR IN REVIEW 5784

PRINTED

**10K+**

PAGES

VIEWED

**4.5K+**

TIMES ONLINE

DELIVERED TO

**20+**

SHULS AND  
COMMUNITIES

THANK YOU TO OUR ENTIRE STAFF!



YAAKOV FELDMAN

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



MOSHE LIEBERMAN

HEAD EDITOR



EITAN ISAACS

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND DESIGN



RABBI BARUCH PESACH MENDELSON

RABBINIC ADVISOR



NAFTALI FRANKEL

EDITOR



EITAN CANTER

EDITOR



DAVID WINSTON

EDITOR



YAAKOV ERDFARB

EDITOR



YITZI ROSENBLUTH

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

# Where It All Begins: Insights on Maseches Brachos



Rabbi Shimon Schenker  
Menahel, YUHSB

The *passuk* (*Bereishis* 19:27) in *Parshas Vayeira* says, “And Avraham awoke early in the morning, and he came to the place and **stood** there in front of Hashem”. The Gemara in *Brachos* (6a) explains that from the word “stand”, we learn that Avraham had a *makom kavua*, a set place for davening. The Gemara continues by telling us that whoever establishes a *makom kavua* for themselves will be assisted by Hashem, and when he dies they will say about him, “what a modest person, what a *chasid*, he must be from the students of Avraham Avinu. However, Rav Zalman Sorotzkin asks (*Oznayim Latorah* 19:27), why does someone deserve so much praise just because he davened in

the same place every day? Rav Sorotzkin gives a beautiful answer which explains a phenomenal idea about davening:

If we contrast how and why Avraham davened as opposed to how and why Bilaam davened, we will see two diametrically opposed ways of approaching davening as well as life as a whole. The Mishnah in *Pirkei Avos* [5:19] gives us important background in understanding the fundamental principles behind both Avraham’s and Bilaam’s methods of davening. The Mishnah lays out the general good traits that a student of Avraham possesses and the general bad traits that a student of Bilaam possesses. It says “Whoever has these three things: a good eye, a submissive spirit, and a lowly soul is from the students of Avraham Avinu, and whoever has the following three traits is from the students of Bilaam Harasha: an evil eye, haughty soul, and a desirous soul.” The fundamental principles behind Avraham’s students are that of humbleness and selflessly giving to others. When Avraham entered Sedom, he walked into a situation where the people of Sedom had basically dug their

own grave. They had destroyed every piece of good moral fiber that had existed within them to the extent that Avraham couldn’t find even ten *tzadikim*! Hashem had had enough and wanted to wipe them off the face of the planet. Yet, Avraham had a “good eye”, and saw some good in them which could merit their savior. He had a “generous soul”, in the sense that he was davening for people that he wasn’t related to and did nothing for him and were clearly guilty as charged, yet he faced Hashem head on in order to save them. However, the most spectacular aspect to him davening for the people of Sedom was how he approached this awesome task with the utmost humbleness and lack of greed. When he asked Hashem to save them, he could have said, “Hashem, listen to me, I am your first believer, do it for me! Yet, he didn’t. All he said was, “I am dust and dirt”, yet listen to me anyway.

On the flipside, if we look at the characteristics of Bilaam and how he prayed, we will see a completely opposite view of how a person could act. Bilaam had an evil eye; he wanted to kill even the *tzadikim*. He was incredibly haughty and

said “who is this Hashem that wants me to go with these people?”

However, the difference is even more striking when we look at the manner in which they prayed. As we said, Avraham stood there, meaning in one place repeatedly. However Bilaam knew that his *tefilla* would be repulsed by Hashem, so the second time that he prayed he said, “Please let us go to a different place (*Bamidbar 23:27*)” and repeated this the next time his *tefillos* were rejected (ibid). He knew that it was inappropriate to pray for what he was praying for in the same spot twice, as opposed to Avraham who specifically set one place to daven, over and over again. Avraham believed that the place itself would become inherently holy and purified through his holy *tefillos*, despite the actions of the people. The reason he had such strong beliefs was because his *tefillos* were totally selfless and not at all for his honor or benefit.

With this idea, the Gemara in *Brachos* is now crystal clear. If somebody has a set place to daven (and they daven with the purity and selflessness of Avraham), then people will regard him as humble and a *chasid*, as he will truly emulate his holy ancestor. Rav Sorotzkin not only answers the question, but also leaves us with a tremendous goal to reach for. It is not enough to simply daven in the same place three times a day; we must emulate Avraham both in the physical and mental manner in which he davened in order that we become humble and a *chasid*.

With this understanding, we can appreciate two fascinating opinions about why it is we should daven in a set place all the time. The Arizal and the *Sefer Derech Moshe* (brought in introduction of *Besamim Rosh* to *Otzar Hatefillos*) explain that especially in these times when we are in Galus and not exclusively in Eretz Yisrael, the only place to find the shechina is in shuls. More precisely, in set places in our shuls where we daven. We need to show Hashem that we are there everyday waiting for him to reveal his *shechina* to

us, as it is much more powerful if we wait in the same spot everyday. By putting this into practice, we don’t only show him that we are waiting for him, but we are able to actually penetrate the gates of *shamayim* with our *tefillos*. The Arizal (Ibid) expands this idea with a *maschal*. If a king wanted to conquer an enemy city, he would take a battering ram and ram the same spot in the wall over and over again. It would be unproductive to ram different random spots as that wouldn’t accomplish anything. The Gemara in *Brachos* says that since the *Beis Hamikdash* has been destroyed, there are iron walls keeping our *tefillos* out. If we daven in the same place, we are essentially pounding on the same place in *shamayim* three times a day everyday. What does that mean? It means that we have to daven in the same manner as Avraham Avinu. Avraham understood that since his *tefillos* were so pure and selfless they could break down any wall. If we emulate Avraham, our *tefillos* will also break through the walls of *shamayim* and be a *zechus* for all of *Klal Yisrael*.



Rabbi Daniel  
Konigsberg ('05)  
Principal, YUHSB

## Duality in Kavanas HaTefillah

This *zman* in yeshiva, I have the privilege of learning the fifth *perek* of *Maseches Brachos*, *Perek Ein Omdin*, with my 10th Grade shiur. For the first three quarters of the year, we spent time delving into the *halachos* of *tefillah*, particularly the *zmanim* of *Krias Shema* and *tefillas*

*Shacharis*, *Mincha* and *Maariv*. As we transitioned into the final quarter of the year, our focus shifted to studying the meaning and requisite *kavanah*, intent, that one must have when davening.

There is deep insight into the meaning of *kavanah* and the nature of *tefillah* that can be gleaned from the two different expressions used by the Mishnah and Gemara to present the topic of focus during prayer. First, when describing the exercises one must conduct before he davens, the Mishnah uses the term “*koved rosh*”, a seriousness of the head, or mind. Before a person stands in prayer, he must remind himself before who he is standing and is about to beseech. Even more than that, in addition to having a cognitive awareness, there must be an understanding of what one is about to say. On a most basic level, we must know the meaning of what we are saying when we daven. Without knowing the translation of the words, we are quite literally offering lip service. Furthermore, if we do not know the meaning of what we are saying, it will be hard to maintain proper focus. Distractions will come more easily and be more impactful if we cannot internalize what we are saying. To maintain proper focus during *tefillah* necessitates a basic understanding of the words. This meaning of *kavanah* is more likely to better align with the conventional understanding that we are taught as little school children; namely that we must be able to translate and know the meaning of the words that we are saying.

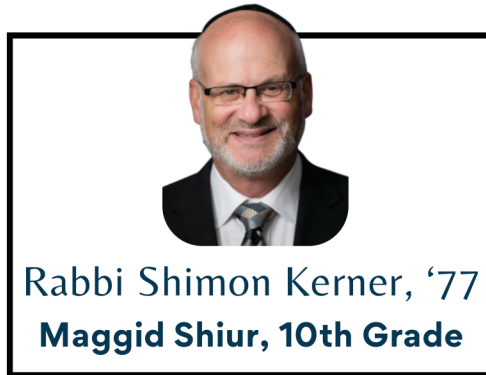
Interestingly, when seeking a source to support the Mishnah’s statement that one may not pray unless he is focused, the Gemara quotes a *passuk* from *Sefer Shmuel* (*Shmuel I*, 1:10) which describes Chana as praying from the depths of her heart, weeping bitterly to Hashem. The implication here is that there is that Chana’s emotionally-charged charged supplication would satisfy the requirement to daven “*mitoch koved rosh*.” (The gemara ultimately goes on to reject this source as a valid proof, pointing out that

Chana was especially broken-hearted, and therefore, we cannot learn from her. Nevertheless, the emphasis is clearly on the emotion that she displayed rather than a cerebral focus.) In addition to the requisite mental state and understanding the words, there seems to be an emotional element of *kavanah* as well. A proper *tefillah* is not only one of mental concentration, but also one of emotional connection. As the Mishnah in Avos describes, *tefillah* is most certainly an “*avoda shebaleiv*” and not just an intellectual exercise.

What derives from the two different metaphors used by the Mishnah and Gemara is that there are actually dual components that form the ideal *kavanah* that one should have when davening (or as the proverbial Brisker might say, there are *tzvei dinim* in *kavanah*). *Kavanah b'tefillah* is multifaceted. On one hand there is the cerebral element, the understanding of the words and the moment. On the other hand is the emotional aspect, that one must connect with Hashem and pray to Him with genuine feelings. These two aspects of *kavanah* together comprise the purest form of prayer.

The goal of *tefillah* is to help create and maintain a strong and healthy relationship with Hashem. As we know from life, any good relationship requires both proper communication and emotional investment. No couple could maintain a harmonious marriage without the ability to communicate. In addition, there can be no communication if the parties involved do not understand the language that is being spoken. *Tefillah* is meant to be a conversation with Hashem, and for such an interaction to take place there must be a common language that is shared. Secondly, but equally as important, is that any good, lasting relationship must be built on emotional investment. Deep connection, based on shared values, goals, and emotional support is the bedrock of any healthy, durable relationship. So too, this must be the foundation of our relationship with Hashem, laid through

the vehicle of *tefillah*. Davening is our chance to express gratitude, convey our love and ask for help and support from the Creator of the World. Doing so, with an understanding of the words, conveyed with emotion, will create a healthy, deep and genuine relationship with our Father in Heaven, and serve as the catalyst for ongoing growth in our *Avodas Hashem*.



## The Missing Nun in Ashrei

The Gemara in *Brachos* (4b) notes that the *perek* of “*Tehilla l'Dovid*” (*Tehillim* 145), which is the centerpiece of our *psukei d'zimra*, is deliberately composed such that each verse begins with a succeeding letter of the Aleph-Beis. Presumably, this is to highlight that once we begin praising Hashem, we really can't stop, as He is truly beyond all praise. To praise Hashem is, in essence, to limit Him, *chas v'shalom*.

The Gemara is bothered by the glaring absence of a verse beginning with the letter *nun*. The Gemara answers that King David saw that *nun* stands for “*nefila*”, which is an allusion to the downfall of Israel. This would associate it with the verse from *Amos* (5:2) – “She has fallen, and will no longer arise, the maiden of Israel.” Although we find many verses that refer to Israel's punishment, there is no other mention of her downfall, besides this verse, without a subsequent ascent. When extolling G-d's praises in Psalm 145, King David did not want to allude to

terminal catastrophe. (Rashba Responsa I,49)

The Gemara goes on to say that in Israel, they were able to reinterpret this verse in a positive way by shifting the comma: “She has fallen, but will no longer do so. Arise, maiden of Israel.”

The question can be posed: Why could only those in Israel think of this alternative reading of the *passuk*? Weren't there many *talmidei chachamim* in Bavel? I heard a beautiful explanation in the name of Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop *zt"l*. He explains that the very nature of the land of Israel is that regardless of pain, punishment, and persecution, somehow there is always a rebound. The land of Israel has the holiness of being Hashem's special land. Only in Israel can one have the perspective that falling is the beginning of a brighter future, and that tragedy is the beginning of something greater.

With this insight of Rav Y.M. Charlop, we can be helped to understand the simcha of this year's Yom Haatzmaut in the aftermath of October 7th and the months beyond. *Be”H*, may we be *zoche* to live the verse the way they read the verse in Israel: “Rise up maiden of Israel!”



## Learner or Earner?

Amidst a series of complicated discussions regarding the source for, and details of, *brachos rishonos*, the Gemara in *Brachos* (35b) goes on a brief tangent to discuss the various paths on which one may lead his life. Having just resolved a contradiction involving the *passuk* that states, “*v'asafta deganecha*”—“and you [*Bnei Yisrael*] shall gather your grain,” (*Devarim* 11:14), the Gemara cites a *machlokes tannaim*

regarding the idea that these words are meant to teach. Contrasting this phrase to a different *passuk*, “*Lo yamush sefer haTorah hazeh mipicha*”—“This book of the Torah should not leave your mouth” (*Yehoshua* 1:8), R’ Yishmael teaches that one may take this *passuk* literally, and think that he must spend all his time immersed in *talmud Torah*. Rather, R’ Yishmael explains, the Torah states “*v’asafta deganecha*,” that one must, in addition to Torah study, engage in “*derech eretz*”—“the way of the world,” and acquire a job.

R’ Shimon bar Yochai questions the stability of such an arrangement, and says that if one works, he will become busy and never have time to learn Torah. Therefore, he says, one should dedicate himself exclusively to Torah, and by performing G-d’s will, *Bnei Yisrael’s* work will be performed by others. On the other hand, however, if *Bnei Yisrael* fail to fulfill the will of G-d, they will be forced to perform their own labor, as is taught by the phrase, “*v’asafta deganecha*.”

In reference to this *machlokes*, Abaye points out that many people followed R’ Yishmael and were successful in both their learning and their job, while many acted in accordance with R’ Shimon and were not successful. Moreover, the Gemara mentions that Rava would implore his *talmidim* not to come to him to learn during the months of Nissan and Tishrei, as these months were crucial in the agricultural cycle. If the *talmidim* were to fail to take advantage of the opportunities that presented themselves in these months, they would not have the means to support themselves the rest of the year. Based on the statement of Abaye, as well as Rava’s message to his *talmidim*, it appears abundantly clear that, while one must dedicate time to *talmud Torah*, having a job and a means of supporting oneself is an essential and necessary aspect of life.

As is reflected by the agreement of the *amoraim* with the opinion of R’ Yishmael, *Chazal* lauded the practice of balancing

Torah study and work. Furthermore, one who maintains a complete involvement in Torah and a reliance on others for his needs appears to be held in contempt. This is most clearly seen from various statements recorded in *Pirkei Avos*, specifically that of Rabban Gamliel, who states, “*Yafeh talmud Torah im derech eretz... v’chol Torah she’ein imah melacha, sofah beteilah v’goreres avon*”—“Beautiful is the study of Torah with the way of the world [an occupation]... and all Torah study that is not accompanied with work is destined to cease and to cause sin (2:2). This Mishnah, along with many similar to it, is quoted by the Rambam (*Hilchos Talmud Torah* 3:10), who writes that one who only learns and relies on others to support him desecrates the name of G-d, disgraces the Torah, and, among other negative consequences, forfeits his share in *Olam Haba*. While this would seem to indicate that the Rambam holds in accordance with R’ Yishmael, in reality, the Rambam’s opinion may not be so clear cut.

Following his discussion of the *Levi’im* being obligated to completely dedicate themselves to service of Hashem, the Rambam (*Hilchos Shemitah v’Yovel* 13:13) speaks of a person who, if he contains the wisdom and insight necessary to completely devote himself to *talmud Torah* and service to Hashem, can rely on Him for his material needs, and is called “*kodesh kadashim*.” Immediately, these two statements of the Rambam are apparently contradictory. In the former statement, the Rambam speaks of the great disgrace that a person who only learns causes, yet, in the latter statement, he goes so far as to praise such a person!

In addition to the contradiction within the Rambam, it is also worth noting a *stirah* in the Mishnah in *Kiddushin* (82a), which also deals with our topic. In the Mishnah, R’ Meir is quoted as saying that one must teach his son a clean and easy job, while R’ Nehorai says that he would ignore all professions, and only teach his son Torah. At first glance, there appears to be

nothing difficult in regard to the relationship between these two opinions; this argument can be chalked down as any ordinary *machlokes tannaim*. However, as the Brisker Rav famously points out, the Aramaic name “*Nehorai*,” meaning “light,” is similar in its meaning to the Hebrew name “*Meir*,” making it entirely possible that R’ Nehorai is merely an alternate name for R’ Meir. Once this is the case, R’ Meir appears to be saying two contradictory *dinim* in the Mishnah; how can he state that one must teach his son a job, but then also actively choose to only teach his own son Torah?

It is possible that an answer to these contradictions can be found by examining a *diyuk*, inference, made by the Vilna Gaon in our original Gemara in *Brachos*. As quoted by the Brisker Rav in his commentary on the Torah (*Chayei Sarah, d’h lo*), the Vilna Gaon remarks that when Abaye seemingly *paskens* like R’ Yishmael, his statement is dissimilar to other instances in which an *amora* gives a *psak* on a matter. Rather than explicitly say that we follow R’ Yishmael, Abaye merely said that many people acted in accordance with R’ Yishmael and were successful, while many followed R’ Shimon and were not. Through the language used by Abaye, it is implied that some people followed R’ Shimon and were successful. It is this *diyuk* in the *psak* of Abaye that the Vilna Gaon points out may be the Rambam’s source for his statement that if one is on a high enough level and is capable, he should follow R’ Shimon and completely devote himself to service of Hashem and *talmud Torah*. On the other hand, in regard to the average person, the Rambam admonishes such a person from acting in accordance with R’ Shimon, and instead commands him to balance learning and work, as per the opinion of R’ Yishmael. It is now clear how the Rambam could write such contrasting statements in regard to whether one must work or not, as we now know, based on the nuance in the language of Abaye, to whom the Rambam was referring with each statement.

Similarly, the Brisker Rav extrapolates this idea highlighted by the Vilna Gaon to the contradiction in the Mishnah in *Kiddushin*. With our new understanding of the Gemara in *Brachos* and the no-longer contradictory comments of the Rambam, we can easily realize the contexts that exist behind each of the opinions attributed to R' Meir and R' Nehorai. In regard to the view linked to R' Meir, that one must teach his son a trade, it can be said that this *din* is addressing the masses, but with respect to R' Nehorai's practice to only teach his son Torah, it must be that this only applies to a son who is on such a high level that he can effectively and entirely give himself over to the service of Hashem.

It is now evident from our enhanced understanding of the Gemara that two paths exist, but neither path is for everyone. Each person must come to acknowledge his own potential, and only after a calculated realization of one's abilities can one begin to choose the foundation upon which he will build his life.



Elisha Price, '23

## Mantra, Mitzvah, or Milestone: Exploring the Nature and Purpose of Birkas haTorah

Typically, *brachos* are categorized into three groups: *birchos hanehenin*, blessings recited over deriving *hana'ah*, benefit, from G-d's world, *birchos hamitzvos*, blessings recited over the performance of *mitzvos*, and *birchos shevach vehoda'ah*, blessings recited to praise G-d, often in the context of experiencing something extraordinary. Certainly, there are many *brachos*, such as *birkas hamazon* and *shehecheyanu*, whose identities are

ambiguous, as it is unclear into which category they fit. A *bracha* that we would not have expected to be controversial is *birkas haTorah*, the series of blessings we recite before studying Torah; obviously this is a *birkas hamitzvah*!

However, defining *birkas haTorah* as a *birkas hamitzvah* may not be so simple. One of the central questions surrounding *birkas haTorah* is its frequency. Everyone agrees that, at least in most cases, *birkas haTorah* is recited once daily. This raises a fundamental dilemma: if the *bracha* is a *birkas hamitzvah*, then shouldn't we have to say a new one every time we learn Torah? Why is one *bracha* sufficient for such a long period of time?

There is a *machlokes* between three great Ashkenazic *Rishonim* about this very question, all of whom wish to preserve the *birchos hamitzvos* aspect of *birkas haTorah*, and thus attempt to answer the question in various ways. Tosafos writes (*Brachos* 11b d"h. *shekevar*) that the obligation to recite *birkas haTorah* is fulfilled with a once-daily recitation, renewed only after nightly sleep. This means that, if I wake up in the morning and recite *birkas haTorah*, this recitation carries through the day, permitting me to study Torah all day until I go to sleep that night, at which point any further study would require a new *bracha*. This is because sleep serves as a *hefsek*, an interruption, and would discontinue any further application of that morning's *bracha*. Tosafos argues that since the requirement to study Torah continues all throughout the day and, naturally, a Jew's mind is always, to some degree or another, involved in Torah study, that distractions that come up during the course of the day do not count as a *hefsek*. It is only during sleep, a time in which one is not obligated to learn, and is not thinking of anything at all, that a *hefsek* occurs. Tosafos then quotes Rabbeinu Tam who disagrees, asserting that *hefsek* and the status of being awake are not the determining factors surrounding this blessing, but day and night. Thus, if I were to go to sleep

and wake up before dawn, I would not need to make a new *bracha*—yesterday's recitation would suffice. Thirdly, the Rosh (*Brachos* 1:13), after quoting and expressing dissatisfaction with each of the former *shitos*, opines that, in addition to sleep, performance of labor or any other all-encompassing activity certainly turns one's mind away from Torah, thus creating a *hefsek*, and the requirement to make a new *bracha*.

This debate leaves us with three questions: First, Tosafos makes two seemingly unreasonable assumptions, one halachic and one psychological, when distinguishing between sleep and other potential interruptions. Tosafos suggests that the framework of potential Torah study is somehow equivalent with actual study throughout the day. This is simply not true—I am not, for example, exempt from the performance of *mitzvos* all day just because I have the constant obligation to study Torah! The second half of Tosafos' assertion—that Jews always have Torah in mind—is sadly, but nevertheless factually, incorrect. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case, even with the most holistically righteous and saintly individuals. Secondly, we have yet to fully understand Tosafos' distinction between sleep and other interruptions: if the cardinal issue, in Tosafos' opinion, is *hefsek*, surely any *hefsek* would be sufficient interruption; what additional factor does sleep add? Furthermore, the Rosh makes no distinction between sleep during the day and sleep at night, but it is implicit in Tosafos' language that they disagree; only sleep at night is considered a *hefsek*, but a daytime nap—even one that is *kavuah*—would be insufficient. What is so special about nighttime sleep that Tosafos excludes all other forms of potential interruption, including daytime sleep. Finally, Rabbeinu Tam's opinion is, at first glance, difficult. Very few *halachos* are determined by day and night, and, in such a case, specific *pesukim* are necessary to indicate that this is so. Thus, it is surprising that he would raise this factor here, despite there being no time-bound

restrictions on the performance of *talmud Torah*.

Our goals thus defined, we return to our very first point: the categorization of *birkas haTorah*. We will now, however, add a second layer to the issue: We have already seen that *birkas haTorah* appears to operate on its own terms, so if we were to categorize it, would it normatively fit into its category, or would it be bluntly categorized, placed somewhere for lack of better location?

One could argue, as is simplest, that *birkas haTorah* is a *birkas hamitzvah*, but it is an unusual *birkas hamitzvah*; it breaks some of the normative rules. Indeed, this is the most obvious way to interpret the Gemaras that talk about the source for *birkas haTorah* (*Brachos* 21a, *Yerushalmi Brachos* 7:1), which quote *pesukim* whose content is the *mitzvah* of *talmud Torah*. This position is also explicated by Rashi (*Brachos* ad loc), the Rambam (*Hilchos Tefillah* 7:11), and our aforementioned Rosh.

However, there is certainly another side to the equation. There is a *machlokes* on *Brachos* 11a about which texts are included in the *mitzvah* of *talmud Torah*: only Tanach, even Midrash, even Mishnah, or even Talmud. Rashi and the Rambam write, explaining and *paskening* like the fourth *shitah*, that every *cheftzah shel Torah* (text/piece of Torah) requires a *bracha*. Thus, they clearly believe that the *bracha* is dependent on the *mitzvah* of learning. However, Rabbeinu Yonah (*b'dapei haRif*, ad loc) writes otherwise. He says that the debate in the Gemara is really about the experience of learning, not the *mitzvah* of learning. Rabbeinu Yonah contends that the *amoraim* instead argue about how far away from the literal word of G-d can one get and still feel the experience and the connection of *talmud Torah* that would require *birkas haTorah*. This would imply that the experience of *Torah*, not its *mitzvah*, is what necessitates a *bracha*; thus it cannot be a *birkas hamitzvah*—it simply is not related to the *mitzvah*. Similarly, the Ramban (*Hasagos*

*l'Sefer haMitzvos, Mitzvos Sheshachach HaRav, Asei* 15) counts *birkas haTorah* as a separate *mitzvah*, so he clearly thinks it cannot be a *bracha* on the *mitzvah* because he, unlike the Rambam, distinguishes and separates it from the *mitzvah* to study *Torah*. If they are separate *mitzvos*, it would be logical to assume that they are not predicated on one another. Thus, we clearly see two camps: Some (Rashi, Rambam, Rosh, etc.) clearly think that this *bracha* is, as we initially expected, a *birkas hamitzvah*, and the details are just a bit fuzzy. The other camp would argue that the details are more than fuzzy—they make no sense. Thus, they feel compelled to evict *birkas haTorah* from its natural home of *birkas hamitzvos* and place it in some other, somewhat undefined, category, wherein the *bracha* is made by dint of the experience, not the *mitzvah*. This formulation would seem to imply that the alternative category is *birkas shevach*.

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein *zt"l* demonstrated this division similarly, but based on a double *machlokes* between the *Shulchan Aruch* and the Gra: the Mechaber writes that even though women have no *mitzvah* to learn (*O.C.* 17:2), they still would make a *bracha* before learning if they choose to do so (*ibid*, 47:14). However, a person who merely thinks about learning, but neither speaks nor performs an act of learning, need not recite the blessing (*ibid*, 47:4). The Gra objects in both places—why should the man who thinks in learning but doesn't write or speak, but who actually fulfills the *mitzvah* of *talmud Torah*, not recite a *bracha*, but the woman who speaks or acts and nonetheless fulfills no *mitzvah* does!

Rabbi Lichtenstein explained that the Gra and the Mechaber were simply not thinking on the same plane. The Gra hoisted the flag of the *birkas hamitzvos* approach, so, in his mind, the *mitzvah* and the *bracha* must line up exactly: the *bracha* must conform exactly to the parameters of the *mitzvah*, no more and no less. However, the Mechaber disagreed,

preferring the second approach, the experience-based *bracha*.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik *zt"l* (*Reshimos Shiurim* on *Brachos* (11b)) offers the following dialectical view of *talmud Torah*: The study of Torah is, on the one hand, a ritualistic religious act, wherein we simultaneously perform the will of G-d and learn to better perform His will in the future by means of study, and an encounter between man and his Creator, one that can not be replicated but with the study of G-d's own books. It is this, he offers, that explains the *machlokes* above. If one insists that the *bracha* is on the formal *mitzvah*, that is because they believe that the *bracha* corresponds to the first element of *Torah*—technical ritual service—in which case, *birkas haTorah* must be a *birkas hamitzvah*, for *mitzvos* are the essence of Torah. However, the second camp suggests that the *bracha* is in fact a *birkas hanehenin*, a *bracha* recited in thanksgiving for the opportunity and privilege to connect with God. In this dichotomous presentation, it is clear that both Tosafos and the Rosh belong to the first camp of *rishonim*.

It is now clear that Tosafos has two basic guiding principles when constructing their opinion: *birkas haTorah* is a *birkas hamitzvah*, but nonetheless, both elements of *talmud Torah* play a role in its *bracha*. However, *talmud Torah* has no real time restrictions; it can and must be done all day, barring other obligations, religious or otherwise. Nonetheless, since the Gemara (*Menachos* 99b) tells us that the minimum of *talmud Torah* is *Kerias Shema* twice daily, Tosafos bases the *bracha* on the time zones of *Kerias Shema*, which are *sheinah v'kimah* (sleeping and rising; *Brachos* 10b). Thus, we (and the Rosh) misunderstood their intentions: the reason sleep begets a renewed requirement to bless is not because it is a greater *hefsek* than other activities, but because it marks the end of the *Kerias Shema* timeframe. Moreover, one *bracha* is able to last all day because it encompasses both the formal study and the general lifestyle. I once heard from

Rabbi Michael Rosensweig, in the name of Rabbi Soloveitchik *zt"l*, that in this Tosafos, the word “Torah” need not refer only to formal study, but also to living what we might call “a Torah life”—a life guided by G-d’s word and commandments—even if very little formal Torah is studied. Thus, it is indeed the case, broadly speaking, that all Jews continuously act on this *bracha* all day—simply working an honest job is itself a fulfillment of “Torah.”

However, Rabbeinu Tam slightly adjusts these principles. He believes that *birkas haTorah* is a *mitzvah*, but in the purest sense, with no need to incorporate the other element of *talmud Torah*, and that *Torah* study does, in fact, have its own time bounds. “*Vihigisa bo yomam v’layla,*” (*Yehoshua* 1:8) cited as the source for

*talmud Torah*, does appear to offer its own boundaries: day and night. Thus, argues Rabbeinu Tam, one *bracha* suffices for one set of day and night, and then expires.

The Rosh explicates his opinion that *birkas haTorah* is a *birkas hamitzvah*, but, in contradistinction to Tosafos, clearly thinks that *hefsek* is the main factor in determining the boundaries of the *bracha*. Thus, anytime a significant *hefsek* occurs, a new *bracha* is required.

Based on all this, a fourth position opens up, that of Rabbi Soloveichik (in the name of his grandfather, Rav Chaim). This position, possibly supported by Rabbienu Yonah, the Ramban, and the Mechaber, rejects the notion of *birkas haTorah* being a *birkas hamitzvah* entirely, and focuses solely on the second element of *talmud*

*Torah*: the experience. In this case, the *bracha* is really a *birkas hanehenin*, which logically lasts all day: One continues to experience G-d from the moment he awakes till the moment he returns to sleep

In terms of technical, halachic rulings, this position would likely line up best with Tosafos, because it too would hinge the *bracha* on sleep—the one time when you don’t feel the experience of G-d’s closeness—rather than day and night or *hefsekim*.



## SHABBOS SPECIAL

**\$169** Feeds 2 adults & 2-3 kids

### FRIDAY NIGHT

Challah Rolls, Gefilte Fish  
Red Onion Dip, Eggplant Dip  
Chicken Soup with Matzo Balls  
Grilled Chicken  
Pretzel Chicken Fingers  
Herb Roasted Potatoes  
Roasted Broccoli  
Cookies

### SHABBOS LUNCH

Challah Rolls  
Gefilte Fish, Olive Dip  
Chicken Fingers, Cholent  
Potato Kugel,  
Roasted Vegetables  
Israeli Salad, Coleslaw

**Order must be received by  
Thursday 3PM**

182 West Englewood Avenue, Teaneck • Tel: 201 644 5100 • [orders@HeimishFood.com](mailto:orders@HeimishFood.com) • [@HeimishFood](https://www.instagram.com/HeimishFood)  
Wednesday 12PM - 8PM • Thursday 10AM - 10PM • Friday 8AM - 2PM



# MTA MISSION TO WASHINGTON DC



A group of over 40 MTA students and faculty joined together on the school's eighth annual MTAPAC mission to Capitol Hill to advocate for Israel, marking the first trip since the 2020 pandemic. With heightened urgency following recent events, the students led meetings with senators and representatives, discussing the impact of October 7 and emphasizing the vital alliance between the US and Israel. Organized by the Hatzioni club, the students underwent training sessions and prepared talking points before engaging in a day of lobbying. They returned to MTA, proud of their efforts and hopeful for the future.



Daniel Farkas, '25

and



Akiva Fox, '25

## Kavanah and Hafsakah: Birkas Hamazon vs Tefillah

The Gemara (*Brachos* 49b) states that one who forgot to say *Retzei* in *Birkas Hamazon* on Shabbos should insert the special *bracha* of *Baruch Shenasan Shabason* after *Bonei Yerushalayim*. If they already started *Hatov Vehameitiv*, they must restart *Birkas Hamazon* from the beginning. Rashi (*d"h vehadar lereisha*) connects this to an earlier Gemara (29b) which says that if one forgot *Ya'aleh Veyavo* on Rosh Chodesh and already took three steps back at the end of their *Shemoneh Esrei*, they must go back to the beginning. Just like taking three steps back requires one to restart *Shemoneh Esrei*, so too, finishing *Racheim* and starting *Hatov Vehameitiv* requires one to restart *Birkas Hamazon*.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Brachos* 2:12) says that the *halacha* is like the Gemara: one inserts *Baruch Shenasan Shabason* if they forgot *Retzei*, as long as they have not yet started *Hatov Vehameitiv*; if they have, they restart *Birkas Hamazon*. The Ra'avad (*d"h shachach*) disagrees with the Rambam. He holds that if one started *Hatov Vehameitiv* after forgetting to say *Retzei*, they go back to the beginning of

*Racheim* (the *bracha* in which they messed up) rather than restarting *Birkas Hamazon* entirely. He supports his opinion by connecting *Birkas Hamazon* to *Shemoneh Esrei* as Rashi did but in a different way: If one missed the *hazkara* of Rosh Chodesh in *Shemoneh Esrei* and remembers while saying *Tachanunim* (supplemental prayers said *after* taking three steps back), they should go back to the start of the *bracha* in which they messed up (*Avodah*). Therefore, the Ra'avad argues that if one were to miss *Retzei* and continue to *Hatov Vehameitiv* (which resembles *Tachanunim*), they should also go back to the start of the *bracha* in which they messed up (*Racheim*).

While describing *hilchos tefillah*, the Rambam seems to contradict himself. In *perek daled* (*Hilchos Tefillah* 4:15), the Rambam writes that one must have *kavanah* throughout *Shemoneh Esrei* for it to be considered *tefillah*. If such *kavanah* is lost, the *tefillah* is ruined and must be restarted. He describes this *kavanah* as withdrawing all other thoughts not relevant to *tefillah* and viewing one's self as standing in front of the *Shechinah*. However, in *perek yud* (10:1) the Rambam writes that as long as one has *kavanah* in the first *bracha* of *Shemoneh Esrei*, they no longer need to maintain *kavanah* throughout the rest of *Shemoneh Esrei*. Seemingly, in one instance, the Rambam says that *kavanah* is required throughout the duration of *Shemoneh Esrei*, while in another instance, he says that *kavanah* is required only during the first *bracha*.

Rav Chaim Brisker explains that the Rambam was referring to two different ideas of *kavanah*. The first form of *kavanah*, described in *perek daled*, which is required throughout *Shemoneh Esrei*, is withdrawing all other thoughts not relevant to *tefillah* and viewing one's self as standing in front of the *Shechinah*; this is called *kavanah Shechinah kenegdo*. This *kavanah* is not merely a requirement, it is the defining aspect of *tefillah*. Therefore, if one does not maintain *kavanah Shechinah*

*kenegdo*, it is as if they haven't even done a *ma'aseh tefillah* and must repeat *Shemoneh Esrei*. The second form of *kavanah*, described in *perek yud*, which is necessary only in the first *bracha*, requires one to understand the words being said—*kavanah peirush hamilim*. This is a condition within *tefillah* that must be met for one to be *yotzei*. However, if lost, they are still doing a *ma'aseh tefillah*, just without a condition necessary for them to be *yotzei*.

The *Emek Bracha* (*tefillah* 1) uses this *chiluk* of Rav Chaim Brisker to defend the Rambam from the attack of the Ra'avad. The Ra'avad argues that just like if one were to miss the *hazkara* of Rosh Chodesh in *Shemoneh Esrei* and continue on through *Tachanunim*, they would go back to the *bracha* in which they messed up, so too if one were to miss *Retzei* in *Birkas Hamazon* and continue onto *Hatov Vehameitiv*, they would only go back to the start of the *bracha* in which they messed up. The Ra'avad assumes that the connection that exists between the *brachos* in *Shemoneh Esrei* also exists within the *brachos* of *Birkas Hamazon*. However, the Rambam holds that *kavanah Shechinah kenegdo*, which turns the entire *Shemoneh Esrei* into a *tefillah*, is a concept that does not exist within *Birkas Hamazon*. Therefore, by *Shemoneh Esrei* one merely goes back to the start of the *bracha* in which they made their mistake because they are still within the *tefillah* due to maintaining *kavanah Shechinah kenegdo*. However, by *Birkas Hamazon*, since the *brachos* are not connected by *kavanah Shechinah kenegdo*, once one finishes the words of the *bracha*, they are no longer *osek bebracha*, and they must restart *Birkas Hamazon*.

However, this doesn't seem to distinguish one who just finished *Bonei Yerushalayim* (in which case they say *Baruch Shenasan Shabason* instead of restarting *Birkas Hamazon*) from one who has started *Hatov Vehameitiv* (who must restart *Birkas Hamazon*). If the problem is that the individual is no longer *osek bebracha*, why does it matter whether or not they

started *Hatov Vehameitiv*? The Rashba (*Brachos 49b d"h lo shanu*) answers this question by reading the Gemara according to the Ra'avad: one who started *Hatov Vehameitiv* goes back to *Retzei*, not the start of *Birkas Hamazon*. However, if one finished *Bonei Yerushalayim* but hasn't started *Hatov Vehameitiv*, they say *Baruch Shenasan Shabason* instead of going back to *Retzei*. There is a special *din* that one may insert *Baruch Shenasan Shabason* immediately following *Bonei Yerushalayim* as to avoid making a *bracha levatala*. This is permitted since the rest of *Birkas Hamazon* is considered to be a form of *tachanunim* which allows one to add on to or correct the *bracha*. However, once one has started *Hatov Vehameitiv*, they have created a separation from *Bonei Yerushalayim*, and therefore they may no longer say *Baruch Shenasan Shabason*. Rather, they must stop and restart from *Racheim* in order to fulfill the *hazkara* of Shabbos. Yet, this answer does not work within the Rambam (and Rashi *d"h vehadar lereisha*), as he believes one restarts the entire *Birkas Hamazon* once they started *Hatov Vehameitiv*.

Picking up on this issue, the *Shitah Mekubetzes* presents an answer within the Rambam. One is only considered to no longer be *osek bebracha* once they have averted their mind from the actual *bracha* by starting another one. At that point, one is considered to have finished the *bracha* and may not add on to or correct the *bracha*. Therefore, only once one has started *Hatov Vehameitiv* must they restart. However, immediately after *Bonei Yerushalayim*, one is still within *Racheim* and may therefore fulfill their *hazkara* of Shabbos through saying *Baruch Shenasan Shabason*. However, this answer does not work so well within the *Emek Bracha* because he stresses that once one has finished the *nusach habracha*, they are no longer considered to be *osek bebracha* and may not add on to or correct the *bracha*.



## The Interplay of Chovah and Tashlumin in Maariv of Motzei Shabbos

On a typical *Motzei Shabbos*, one traditionally recites *atah chonantanu* during *maariv*. But what if someone forgets to daven *minchah* on *shabbos* and needs to say *Shemoneh Esrei* twice during *maariv* on *Motzei Shabbos*? Does *atah chonantanu* belong in the first or second *Shemoneh Esrei*? The Gemara on *daf chaf vav amud beis* stipulates that it should be said in the first one. However, if someone inadvertently says it in the second *Shemoneh Esrei*, only the latter counts. In fact, the first *Shemoneh Esrei* not only fails to suffice but is considered as if it were not recited at all. This mistake necessitates a third *Shemoneh Esrei*. Nevertheless, a different braisa raises a contradiction: If one forgets *atah chonantanu* during a standard *Motzei Shabbos maariv*, where only one *Shemoneh Esrei* is said, there's no *chiyuv* to repeat the *Shemoneh Esrei* as *havdalah al hakos* will be said upon returning home. This seems to suggest that *atah chonantanu* isn't a crucial component of *Shemoneh Esrei*; its omission doesn't render the entire *tefilah* null and void, contrary to the previous notion.

The Bach explains this Gemara further. He posits that our concern extends beyond the mere recitation of *atah chonantanu*; it encompasses the individual's intention during *Shemoneh Esrei*. Is their focus on fulfilling the *chovah*, the regular *maariv* for that time, or the *tashlumin*, the compensatory *Shemoneh Esrei* for the missed *minchah*? It appears that both *braisos* address scenarios where the person

intended the first *Shemoneh Esrei* to fulfill the obligation. Thus, the Gemara's question arises: If the first *Shemoneh Esrei* lacks *atah chonantanu*, why doesn't the subsequent *havdalah al hakos* suffice, considering the correct intention was present during the *tefilah*? This interpretation hinges on the concept of *da'as*, the mental state establishing the nature of the *Shemoneh Esrei*.

However, Rav Soloveitchick raises a crucial question regarding the Bach's stance. If *da'as* is indeed paramount, then not only should the first *Shemoneh Esrei* be invalidated, but so should the second. This is because *tashlumin* cannot precede *chovah*. If the *chovah* of the initial *Shemoneh Esrei* failed due to the absence of *atah chonantanu*, then the subsequent *tashlumin* should likewise be nullified since the primary obligation wasn't fulfilled. Surprisingly, the Gemara doesn't address this issue as the Rav expected.

The Rav defends the Bach's position by posing a fundamental question: Are two *Shemoneh Esreis* on *Motzei Shabbos* tantamount to two separate *maarivs*, or is the additional *tefilah* merely a *tashlumin* for the missed *mincha*? Initially, the Gemara assumed the former, aligning with the Bach's interpretation. Consequently, the second *Shemoneh Esrei*'s validity hinges on the individual's intention to fulfill the *chiyuv* of *maariv*. If both *Shemoneh Esreis* are intended for the *chovah*, then the second one inherently possesses the correct *da'as*, irrespective of *atah chonantanu*. Hence, the Gemara's silence on the Rav's anticipated question solidifies the Bach's stance.

On the other hand, the Rif asserts that the individual's words in the *Shemoneh Esrei* takes precedence over their intention. This retroactively reveals their *da'as*, such as the inclusion of *atah chonantanu*, indicating an awareness of the obligation. A story is brought down about a man from Volozhin which illustrates this point: A man inquired which *Shemoneh Esrei* in *shacharis* he should recite *atah chonantanu*

in after forgetting *maariv* on *Motzei Shabbos*. Initially, Rav Chaim suggested the second *Shemoneh Esrei*, assuming it was the *tashlumin*. However, he later reasoned that *atah chonantanu* pertains not to *maariv* specifically but to the first *Shemoneh Esrei* of *Motzei shabbos*. Hence, it should be recited in the initial *Shemoneh Esrei*.

The Rav raises a pertinent question regarding *atah chonantanu's* nature: Is it an independent paragraph inserted into *maariv* of *Motzei Shabbos* or an integral component of the *atah chonein* formula? The former aligns with Rav Chaim's viewpoint, emphasizing its placement in the first *Shemoneh Esrei*. Conversely, the latter supports Rav Chaim's initial notion of placing it in the second *Shemoneh Esrei*, the *tashlumin*. This discrepancy extends to determining the latest acceptable time for reciting *atah chonantanu*.

Revisiting the Rif's perspective, which prioritizes the words spoken in *Shemoneh Esrei*, highlights a discrepancy with Rav Chaim's stance. While the Rif emphasizes whether the first *Shemoneh Esrei* serves as the *chovah* or *tashlumin*, Rav Chaim deems it sufficient that it is the initial *tefilah*. This fact that this doesn't fit prompts a question from Rabbeinu Yonah: In cases of forgotten *atah chonantanu* without a *havdalah* cup, according to Rav Chaim, repeating *Shemoneh Esrei* wouldn't be obligatory, contrary to Rabbeinu Yonah's assertion.

In conclusion, synthesizing the Bach's and Rif's perspectives explains that it's a dual *halacha*: On *Motzei Shabbos*, there exists a specific *chiyuv* for *atah chonantanu* in that *maariv*. However, once *Motzei Shabbos* passes, the crucial factor is that it is the first *Shemoneh Esrei* post-*shabbos*, irrespective of whether it serves as the *chovah* or *tashlumin*.



## The Damage Has Been Done: Drinking Straight Oil

Have you ever had an inexplicable urge to drink olive oil straight out of the bottle? No? Me neither. However, if one did happen to develop this strange desire, would it be halachically acceptable to drink? If so, what *bracha* would it require?

The Gemara in the 6th *perek* of *Maseches Brachos* (35b-36a) is the source for these questions. The Gemara begins by establishing that there is such a case where one would make a *ha'eitz* on oil. The Gemara questions what this case is, and suggests multiple *hava aminos* until finally reaching a conclusion.

The Gemara first suggests that the case is where one drinks the oil straight. However, that possibility is rejected as it will cause damage to a person, which is *assur*. Rashi explains that you are being *mazik*—damaging your body—and the drinking of the oil is not even considered eating as the *passuk* says, “*v'achalta v'savata uveirachta*”—“and you should eat and you should be satisfied and you should bentsh” (*Devarim* 8:10). The Gemara then brings a proof to this from the case of someone who accidentally drinks *terumah* oil, where he is required to pay back the principal amount of the oil but not an extra fifth, the *chomesh*, as one normally would be required to pay. Rashi explains where the Torah mentions the *chomesh*, it says, “*ki yochal kodesh bishgaga*”—“if [a person] eats *kodshim* accidentally,” which would exclude *mazik*. Apparently, Rashi holds that since there is no eating being done, there is no requirement to make a *bracha*. However,

the Rambam disagrees and says that you still make a *shehakol*. The Tur by the Rambam, as Rashi had clearly stated that you are being *mazik* yourself and are not actually eating. However, the Bach supports the Rambam's opinion using a later Gemara (36a) that although eating raw barley flour causes intestinal worms, it still requires a *shehakol*. Similarly, the Rambam holds that you must make a *bracha* on straight oil, because although you are causing damage to yourself, you are still getting some benefit from it.

Next, the Gemara suggests that the case where you make *ha'eitz* is where you dipped bread into the oil. However, this is also rejected as the bread would be considered the *ikkar* and the oil is *tafel*, only requiring the *bracha* on bread and canceling out the *bracha* on oil. The next suggestion is that the oil is eaten in *anigrone* (beet soup) but we reject this using the same logic, as the *anigrone* is still the *ikkar* and therefore there would be no *bracha* on the oil. The Gemara concludes that the case must be where you are suffering from a sore throat on *Shabbos* and you therefore place a lot of oil into the *anigrone* and eat it, making the oil the *ikkar*, requiring a *ha'eitz* to be made. The reason behind eating the oil in the *anigrone*, Rashi explains, is to avoid the issue of *refuah* on *Shabbos*, as there is a *gezeirah* against performing clear acts of *refuah* on *Shabbos*. By eating it in the *anigrone*, it is considered *derech achilah* and not a recognizable form of *refuah*. The other exception to this rule of *refuah* is if you are very sick. Ultimately, the Gemara gives the case of eating the oil through the *anigrone* as an alternative to performing the *assur* act of *irur*, which Rashi defines as gargling. He explains that people would hold the oil in the back of their throats and gargle it for *refuah*, but since it is clear that it's for *refuah*, it's *assur* on *Shabbos*. Rashi says, however, that swallowing is permitted.

On the other hand, Tosafos questions Rashi's *pshat* of the word *irur*, and comes up with a different, more broad definition

of the term. Tosafos asks, if in fact it's permitted to swallow the oil, why does the Gemara mention specifically consuming the oil through *anigrone*, even oil on its own should be permitted if one swallows it immediately," seeing as it is only forbidden through *irur*?

To answer this question, the Ri posits a new definition of the word *irur*. He says that the *issur* of *irur* includes both gargling and swallowing as they are both telltale signs of *refuah* on Shabbos. Additionally, Tosafos gives a *pshat* to answer within Rashi's views as well. He says that Rashi could make a *diyuk* from the *beraisa* which had said that *irur* is *assur*. He could say although *irur* is *assur* by itself, it would be *mutar* through *anigrone*. Additionally, Rashi could interpret the word in the *beraisa*, "*ubole'a*,"—"and swallow it," as "*o bole'a*"—"or swallow it," meaning that both swallowing by itself and gargling with *anigrone* would be *mutar*.

However, the Tosafos HaRosh asks, the *beraisa* implies that it is only *mutar* to swallow oil through *anigrone*, so how could Rashi possibly hold that swallowing by itself is okay? The Tosafos Harosh holds similar to Tosafos that the definition of *irur* is anything that is not normal to drink, namely, oil. He explains that since oil is clearly damaging, it must be that the only reason you would drink it by itself would be for *refuah*, but to drink it with *anigrone* would be *mutar* since it is *derech achilah*. So, he completely flips Tosafos's explanation of Rashi to say that even through *anigrone* it's *assur* to gargle and it is only through *anigrone* that it is *mutar* to swallow. This is because gargling will always be a clear indicator of *refuah*, even through *anigrone*, as nobody would gargle for any other reason. Additionally, he holds that swallowing is only *mutar* through *anigrone*, as otherwise it's clear that it's for *refuah*.



## Can You Say Shema For Me?

The idea of *shomea ke'oneh* is a familiar one, the famous principle that hearing something is akin to saying it. This raises an interesting question, if one hears someone else recite *Shema*, does that count for fulfilling his *chiyuv*? The answer is, like almost everything, a *machlokes*. However, this mere fact should prompt a question: *shomea ke'oneh* appears to work in other areas of *halacha*, so why isn't it obvious that it would work here as well? Why is it that we suddenly have a question with regard to *Shema*?

The Chofetz Chaim brings a possible explanation why *shomea ke'oneh* doesn't work for *Krias Shema*. He explains that by *Shema* there isn't only the *chiyuv dibur*, but also a *chiyuv hirhur* of thinking that one is now proclaiming the oneness of Hashem. This is why one can not be *yotzei* by listening to someone else say *Shema*, as one person can not think for another.

R' Chaim Kanievsky *zt"l* explains similarly to the Chofetz Chaim, mentioning the fact that by the *brachos*, which are only dependent on speech alone, it makes sense that *shomea ke'oneh* applies. However, *Shema* has an extra element beyond simply saying the words: the aspect of being *mekabel Ol Malchus Shamayim v'mitzvos*. Being *mekabel Ol Malchus Shamayim* is something only you can do for yourself; it's a part of your emotions! No one else can feel emotions for you; someone else can't do *teshuvah* or sit *shiva* for you! It's the same thing here, only you can accept Hashem on yourself. This is very similar to what the Abudraham says regarding the reason we

say *Modim Derabanan*. He says that *Modim* is an expression of *hoda'ah*, and just like only you can do *teshuvah*, only you can thank Hashem.

The Abudraham also gives an answer for why *shomea ke'oneh* works for the *birchos Krias Shema*, but not *Shema* itself. He explains that the reason that *shomea ke'oneh* works for the *brachos* is that there is a possibility that someone may not know the *brachos*, and will need someone else to recite them for him. However, with respect to *Krias Shema*, everyone knows the words and is fully capable of saying it on his own. Additionally, he, similar to R' Chaim, quotes the idea that the *brachos* only require *amirah*. On the other hand, *Shema* has an extra aspect of "*v'dibarta bam*" (*Devarim* 6:7); the *passuk* says that you have to say it, not someone else for you.

Another proof that *Krias Shema* must be said by each individual can be found in the commentary of the Ritva at the start of *Maseches Megillah*. The Ritva raises a question regarding the *lashon* of the first Mishnah in *Megillah*: why did the Mishnah choose to say "*Megillah nikreis*," and not "*Korin es haMegillah*?" The Ritva answers by drawing a parallel to *Shema* in *Maseches Brachos*. By *Megillah*, one person reads and everyone listens, which is why the Mishnah writes in *lashon yachid*. However, in regard to *Shema*, *lashon rabim* is used, showing that everyone has his own *chiyuv* to say it.

Although it seems obvious that *shomea ke'oneh* does not work for *Shema*, the *Beis HaLevi* quotes a *chacham echad* that tries to make it work. The Mishnah in *Megillah* (24a) says "*Hamaftir b'navi hu pores al shema, v'hu over lifnei hateivah, v'hu nosei es kapav*"—"The one who read the *haftarah* recites the *birchos Krias Shema*, [leads the prayers], and [performs *birkas Kohanim*]." The Mishnah teaches that if he is a *kohen*, he gets the privilege of *duchaning*. The problem is, the *kohen* has a *chiyuv* to *duchan* even if he didn't get *maftir*, so what is the Mishnah saying?

The *Beis HaLevi* quotes an answer from the “*chacham echad*,” which allows us to gain some insight into the nature of *shomea ke’oneh*. Perhaps the Mishnah means that the *maftir* is given the privilege of being the only *kohen* who actually *duchans*, while the other *kohanim* are *yotzei* through *shomea ke’oneh*. However, the *Beis HaLevi* doesn't like this answer of applying *shomea ke’oneh* to *Birkas Kohanim*. This is because the Gemara in *Sotah* (38) tells us that there is a requirement for the *kohanim* to recite

*Birkas Kohanim b'kol ram*—with a loud voice. If we were to apply *shomea ke’oneh* here, while it's as if the *kohanim* said the words, they lacked *kol ram*, and would thus not be doing *Birkas Kohanim* correctly.

Based on this *Beis HaLevi*, the Steipler (*Kehilos Yaakov*) writes that there are two different ways to look at *shomea ke’oneh*: both the *dibur* and *ma’aseh* are transferred, or only the *dibur* is transferred. While *chacham echad* seems

to subscribe to the first view, the *Beis HaLevi* appears to hold by the latter.

As can be seen, while there certainly exists the opinion of the *chacham echad*, the *halacha* does not follow him, and we instead hold that one can not fulfill his obligation to recite *Krias Shema* through *shomea ke’oneh*.

MAZAL TOV TO ALL OF OUR  
TALMIDIM ON THEIR  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN TORAH  
LEARNING THIS YEAR!



EST. 1916

WISHING EVERYONE A  
חג שמח!



**CULTIVATING** Bnei Torah.  
**INSPIRING** Tomorrow's Leaders.  
**INVEST** in MTA Today  
for a Brighter Future.

**DONATE NOW AT**

**[YU.EDU/MTASCHOLARSHIPCAMPAIGN2024](https://YU.EDU/MTASCHOLARSHIPCAMPAIGN2024)**

---

---

**ALL GIFTS ARE MATCHED 1:1**

The Rabbi Hyman Arbesfeld ('49) Z"L  
Scholarship Campaign





[YUHSB.ORG](http://YUHSB.ORG)