



THE HAKHEL COMMUNITY AWARENESS BULLETIN

Reviewed by HaRav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita

Volume III, Number 2
Adar II 5763

The purpose of this Bulletin is to alert the public regarding important issues, so that the informed person can ask his Rav the right questions. It is also intended to heighten each member of our community's awareness of important contemporary shailos, **and to receive his own p'sak on each of these issues.**

How to Wait. HaRav Yechezkel Levenstein Z'TL (*Or Yechezkel*, Emunah p. 292) states that he remembers the Chofetz Chaim's mashal as to how we should wait for Moshiach: Imagine a person who is very unwell and who is waiting for the expert doctor who will give him the medication needed to cure him of his illness. When will he arrive? Every knock at the door...Is it the doctor?... And every delay in his coming causes a greater longing for him.

A Special Siyum Opportunity. This year, if you start on Shabbos Parshas Pekudei (March 8th) and learn only three Mishnayos a day, you will make a siyum on the entire Mishnayos Mesechta Megilah on Purim (only 11 days later), and if you then continue learning only three Mishnayos a day starting from the day after Purim, you will make a siyum on the entire Mishnayos Mesechta Pesachim on the first day of Pesach. Let us utilize our special opportunities!

NOTE: For those who plan in advance-if you start on 5 Elul (September 2nd) to learn just three Mishnayos a day of Mishnayos Mesechta Rosh Hashana, you will finish Mesechta Rosh Hashana before Rosh Hashana and Mesechta Yoma before Yom Kippur!

Medications. A very special Shiur on “**THE KASHRUS OF MEDICATIONS**” (prescription, over-the-counter, year-round and Pesach) jointly sponsored by Ask-OU and Hakhel will be presented on Sunday, March 9 at Agudath Israel Bais Binyamin, 2913 Avenue L, Brooklyn, New York. For tapes of this and any other Hakhel Shiur, please call 718-252-5274.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE ALERT: Fruits and vegetables bearing the labels “Carmel,” “Elite” or “Arava” (sold at ShopRite and produce markets) are imported from Israel and therefore require ma'aser to be taken before eating.

What is the Brocha?

a. **Pringles.** This snack product is made from *denatured* potatoes. According to Rav Moshe Feinstein Z'TL, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach Z'TL (*The Halachos of Brochos*, page 407), and Y'BLCHT Rav Elyashiv, Shlita (*V'zos Habrocha*, page 239), the appropriate brocha is Borei Pri Ha'adoma.

b. Falafel Balls. If one partakes of a “falafel,” which is falafel balls and salad in pita bread, the bracha rishona is a Hamotzi (notwithstanding the use of “mezonos pita”). However, if one eats falafel balls by themselves, and not as part of a bread meal, the appropriate bracha may either be a Borei Pri Ha’adoma (See *The Laws of Brachos*, page 367), or Borei Minei Mezones, since they are made from a mixture of flour and chumus (See *V’zos Habrocha*, page 283, note 58). The bracha achrona would likewise be a machlokes (Al Hamichya or Borei Nefashos). Accordingly, consult your Rav.

c. Soy Bread. What is the correct brocha rishona and brocha achrona on the new product Soy Bread, which is made of “**soy flour**, wheat vital gluten, filtered water, oat bran, wheat bran, yeast, salt and baking powder”? Nevertheless, according to the manufacturer, the brocha rishona is Hamotzi and the brocha achrona depends on the amount you eat: if you consume four slices or more, the brocha would be Birchas Hamazon.

d. Matamim Onion Rings. The Matamim Onion Ring snack product lists potato flakes and wheat flour as its first two ingredients. According to the Rav HaMachshir, the appropriate bracha rishona is Mezonos, and, if a full bag is consumed, the bracha achrona is Al Hamichya.

e. Fiber-One/All-Bran Cereals. We note that bran cereals contain the bran of the wheat, and are not made of wheat flour. Accordingly, the proper bracha combination is Shehakol and Borei Nefashos.

Practical Outlook on Kibud Av V’Aim. In addressing a crowd of many middle-aged adults, Rabbi Moshe Faskowitz, Shlita, provided the following amazing insight. The Torah (Vayikra 19:3) states that “a person must fear his mother and father **and** observe the Shabbos.” Why does the Torah relate the honor of parents to Shabbos observance? Although there may be several answers to this question (see, e.g., Rashi and the Sifra there), Rabbi Faskowitz, a scion of the great Novordaker dynasty, suggested the following novel approach: When it comes to Shmiras Shabbos, one cannot be too busy, too taken, to do what he has to in order to observe, and not Chas V’shalom violate, the Shabbos. When Shabbos arrives, one cannot say he needs “another five minutes” or that he “will do it later” because he is too busy now. So too, when it comes to parents (especially elderly parents), no matter how busy one is—**even if he is the busiest person in the world**—HE CAN NEVER BE TOO BUSY to have time for his parents.

Every person must apply this great insight to his own circumstances. **Your parents** are like **your Shabbos**. This is what the Torah instructs.

Six Constant Mitzvos in the Car. We received correspondence as to how someone in Atlanta, Georgia is mekayem the Six Constant Mitzvos (see Bulletin Volume II, Number 2, Teves/Shevat 5762). Each time he enters his car he: 1) looks **up** to the One and Only Hashem; 2) looks **down** to demonstrate that Hashem created the world and its fullness (ma’aseh bereshis) and continuously supervises it (yetzias Mitzrayim); 3) looks to the **right** and thinks of his love for Hashem; 4) looks to the **left** and thinks of his fear of Hashem; 5) looks through the rearview mirror in **back** of him to demonstrate that there is no other force “in back of” Hashem; 6) looks in the **front** of him and commits not to look at things he need not, or should not, be looking at.

What a beautiful way to start your drive!

Not Left Out. How does a left-handed person do the following:

- Hold food when making a brocha?
- Wash his hands when arising or for a bread meal?
- Hold the shofar/ the lulav and esrog?
- Cover his eyes for K’riyas Shema?
- Put on/remove his shoes?

The sefer *Kuntres Ish Itar*, based on the p’sokim of, and published with the haskoma of, Rav Chaim Kanievski, Shlita, contains these and many other important halachos for lefties. Those with left-handed children should be especially careful to learn these halachos in order to properly instruct them.

What to Say. When someone you know suffers damage or loses money or an object of value, one should feel his pain (Avos 2:17) and should give him the following brocha “Hamakom Yemalei

Chesroncha (May Hashem replace what is missing).” Rav Pam Z’TL once told over that when he was a boy, he found a \$10 bill in the street and brought the treasure home to his mother. However, his mother was pained instead of elated. She explained, “Think of how the person who lost the money now feels!”

In a similar vein, Rav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita, asked during a Hakhel Shiur on Choshen Mishpat issues, “If someone comes to you with an investment opportunity in which you can earn 50% profit on your money in only three months guaranteed, what is the **first** question you should ask?” Think about it. Rabbi Belsky’s answer, “If I am **making** the 50%, who is **losing** the 50%?” We should not permit our halachos and hashkafos to be filtered through, and diluted by, the outside world and its business ethic.

Interest on Gas Refill. In our Tishrei 5763 Bulletin, we raised the *shaila* as to whether a person who borrows his friend’s car is paying *ribbis* if he refills it with more gas than was in the tank at the time of the rental. A Rav contacted us and advised us that he poskened it was definitely not *ribbis*, as he was **not borrowing the gas, but the car**. The sefer *The Halachos of Ribbis* by Rabbi Yisroel Reisman, Shlita, poskens this way as well, but in a footnote brings the opinion of the Chayei Halevi who in certain circumstances requires that the borrower state explicitly that the extra gas is in gratitude for the use of the car.

Taking Note. When borrowing/lending money, the halacha (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 70) requires that the borrower deliver a written IOU to the lender, in order to avoid the Issur D’Oraysa of Lifnei Iveiv Lo Setein Michshol, because if no written evidence of the loan exists, the lender is tempting the borrower to deny the loan even existed. We note that there is not even a dispensation for talmidei chachim or tzaddikim in this regard, as it is ossur to tempt **anyone**. Other practical examples of lifnei iveiv are:

- Starting a conversation which will lead to loshon hara (Sefer Chofetz Chaim, Introduction, Lo Sa’aseh # 4).
- Distracting a person who is in the middle of learning.
- Listening to someone who starts a conversation with you during davening.
- Giving someone business advice, when the recipient of the advice is unaware that the person giving him advice will earn a commission or referral fee if the advice is followed.

Looking for Z’chusim? R’ Yehoshua ben Levi (Brachos 47B) teaches that a person should arrive early to shul so that he is among the first ten, “..for even if 100 come after him, he receives the reward k’neged kulam (equivalent to them all).” The Maharsha there **incredibly** explains that **the first ten actually bring the Shechina to shul**, and all the rest that come after them **are only davening together with** the original ten who had brought the Shechina to shul.

Washing Before Davening. A halacha that may be forgotten from time to time is that one is **required** to wash his hands before davening – whether it is Shachris, Mincha or Maariv (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 92:4; 233:2). One must even travel in certain instances in order to obtain water (See Orach Chayim 92:4; 233, Mishne Berurah seif katan 20; and Brachos 15A for details). In fact, the Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 92, seif katan 13) brings the opinion of the Pri Megadim that according to the Rambam, if one did not wash his hands (or at least thoroughly wipe his hands in the absence of water), he must repeat the entire Shemone Esrei (!). Although this is not the halacha (Mishne Berurah *ibid.*), we certainly see that netilas yodaim before Tefilla is not merely a “nice practice”, but an absolute requirement (for men **and** women). For further details as to the requirements for one who initially washes, davens Mincha then learns and davens Maariv, see Mishne Berurah, Orach Chayim 233, seif katan 16-18.

Ethnic Slurs. If one in his haste to keep up with a minyan or otherwise, unwillingly slurs the words of Shema together, he may say “alevovacha”, “becholevavchem”, “eschemearetz.” (See Shulchan Aruch 61:15-23 for many other examples). The Mishne Berurah (62, seif katan 1) writes that one should be very careful with the proper recital of the words of the Shema, for as the Gemara (Brachos 15B) states: the fires of Gehinnom are cooled for the person who is especially careful in his recital of Shema. The Mishne Berurah explains the Midah K’neged Midah involved—since he takes the effort to cool (slow) himself down, Hashem will cool Gehinnom for him (*ibid.*).

Don’t Skip This. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 52) devotes an entire Siman to the halachos of one who came late to shul, and is forced to skip parts of P’sukei D’zimrah in order to begin

Shemone Esrei together with the tzibbur (which is the ikar of Tefilla b'tzibbur). The Mishne Berurah (ibid., seif katan 1) writes that l'chatchila one should come to shul early **so that he does not have to skip**, because the seforim write that the **Maggid**[Eliyahu HaNavi] warned the **Bais Yosef** (R' Yosef Karo Z'TL) to come to the Beis Hakenesses early so that he would daven in order, without skipping, because one who skips is **Mehapech Tzinoros** (upsets the channels of prayer to Heaven).

There is a machlokes haposkim if one **is allowed to** or to the contrary **must** make up the P'sukei D'zimrah that he missed in skipping. The Aruch Hashulchan (52:5) brings the opinion of a number of Rishonim and Baalei Kabala who hold it is an "Issur Gadol", (a **great prohibition**) to recite the skipped P'sukei D'zimrah after davening. The Mishne Berurah (52: seif katan 9), however, poskens that one is **obligated** to repeat the skipped P'sukei D'zimrah after davening. It certainly would be best to avoid this great machlokes and not to upset the channels of prayer, by coming to shul on time in order to properly recite all of the P'sukei D'zimrah.

We also note that coming late to davening could also result in Chillul Hashem, as others may feel comfortable to follow your lead. See Yoma 86A, Rashi D'H' Chillul Hashem, and Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 90, Mishne Berurah seif katan 33.

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Davening for Others. The classic Mussar sefer, *Orchos Tzaddikim*, in Shaar Ha'Ahava urges everyone davening Shemone Esrei and making requests such as Slach Lonu, Hashivenu, Refuenu to have in mind all Yidden—whether or not they are his friends—and through this he will fulfill the Mitzvas Aseh D'Oraysa of V'avavta L'reacha Komocha.

A Loaded Question. What Tefillah do you recite approximately 1,200 times a year (comprising approximately 25,000 brochos a year), and 85,000 times in a lifetime (comprising over 1,500,000 brochos)?

NOW IS THE TIME to make **hundred of thousands** of brochos over your lifetime meaningful by putting effort into having simple kavana (for meaning of the words) in the brochos of Shemone Esrei. The Chofetz Chaim Z'TL (Introduction to *Shmiras HaLoshon*) provides the following heartfelt practical advice for kavana in Shemone Esrei: For just **a moment or two** before each bracha think about what you are saying in the bracha and what you are asking Hashem for. The Chofetz Chaim goes out his way to reassure you that this mental process will only involve a minimal investment of your time and its rewards will be astounding. See Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 98, 101 for further details.

Tosefes Shabbos – A Nusach. In a previous Bulletin (Volume II, Number 3, Adar 5762), we discussed the Mitzvah D'Oraysa of Tosefes Shabbos-for **men** (and not only for women, who are m'keyem the mitzvah at hadlakas neiros when they are mekabel Shabbos before shkiah). Rav Moshe Shternbach Shlita (*Teshuvos V'Hanhagos* 3:83) provides the following nusach for being mekabel Tosefes Shabbos: "Hareini Mekabel Olai Bozeh Tosefes Shabbos Kodesh." It would seem appropriate for women (other than the woman lighting) and for other members of the household to recite this nusach after hadlokas neiros.

Erev Shabbos Notes.

a. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 250:1) poskens that one should awake early ("Yashkim") on Erev Shabbos to prepare for Shabbos. According to the Biur Halacha there, this may even be a **Mitzvah D'Oraysa**. The Mishne Berurah (seif katan 1), however, notes that if one can purchase items or otherwise prepare **after** davening Shachris, one should wait until after finishing davening.

b. The Mishne Berurah (ibid., seif katan 2) adds that there is a second part to the mitzvah—to prepare something in the afternoon. Even if you are doing this anyway, you should nevertheless have specific intent to fulfill this second part of the mitzvah. As we have noted in a previous Bulletin (Volume II, Number 5, Elul 5762), the Mishne Berurah writes that upon purchasing an object for Shabbos, one should state "*Zehu L'chavod Shabbos*", because hadibbur poel harbeh b'kedusha (speech effects much for holiness).

c. The Mishne Berurah also brings that on Erev Shabbos one should dedicate some time to thinking about Teshuva and look into his deeds, because Shabbos is called Royalty—and going to greet Shabbos is **as if one is going to greet the King, Yisborach Shmo**. It is therefore inappropriate to meet the King in clothing which is full of sin (ibid., seif katan 3).

d. The Mishne Berurah there additionally gives the following instruction: “One should picture in his mind that if an earthly king was coming to visit, how he would clean the house, make the beds, etc... and all the more so when Shabbos Malkasa comes.” This is important for us to recognize—we are not mechabed Shabbos by **our** subjective standard, but by the **King’s** standard. Thus, statements such as “It is clean enough for **me**.” “I don’t shine my shoes even on special occasions.” “I don’t mind my nails not being cut.” are simply not halachically correct in fulfilling the Mitzvah D’Oraysa of Kovod Shabbos.

e. For those responsible for buying “Shabbos Nosh” for the children, we note that the Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 242, seif katan 6 and Shaar HaZion note 18) writes that pas (bread) products used on Shabbos should be Pas Yisroel. Thus, not only challahs, but cakes, cookies and pretzels should come from an appropriate source. This may rule out many national bread, cookie and pretzel products on Shabbos.

Kiddush Levana Notes.

a. If you make Kiddush Levana outside of shul in an urban area, care must be taken that you are not within close proximity to trash or trash containers from local homes, apartment buildings or stores, all of which can be assumed to contain unclean matter. Moreover, any *Dovor Hamasriach* (item which emits a foul, spoiling odor) would have the din of unclean matter. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 79:8, Mishneh Berura, seif katan 29). We recently observed a group of individuals reciting Kiddush Levana outside of their shul and in front of the garbage of a grocery store containing smelly spoiled fruit which would seem to fall within this prohibition.

b. In addition when reciting Kiddush Levana, one should be careful not to be facing passersby on the street, as they may not be properly dressed (Orach Chayim 75).

c. The Rema (Orach Chayim 426:2) writes that Kiddush Levana, contains the yesod of K’nesses Yisroel reuniting with Hakodesh Boruch Hu “...and therefore we perform joyous acts and dance at Kiddush Hachodish, as at a **simchas nesuin**.” Accordingly, one should be careful to perform the mitzvah of Kiddush Levana with joy, and in a place where he can properly exhibit his joy.

Preparing for the Mitzvah. Sometimes in life we have to look up, sometimes we must look down. Instead of looking **down** at the seemingly ravenous person at a smorgasbord who eats hovering near the serving trays or sits down with two to four plates of various delicacies in front of him, we suggest looking **up** and aspiring to the following description of how Rav Moshe Aharon Stern Z’TL (*The Mashgiach of Kamenitz*, page 383) conducted himself:

“The preparatory steps he took before eating were a true divine worship. He said a supplication not to stumble by eating forbidden foods, that his eating be kosher, that his Creator would consider it like a Mincha offering and a sacrifice. He would then meditate intensely on the exalted purpose of eating—to strengthen one’s body to serve the Creator.”

If the above seems way out of reach for the average individual, perhaps we can try it at least occasionally. We note that the Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 231, seif katan 5) writes in the name of the Chayei Odom that he saw men of good deeds who would say “Hinini rotzeh le’echol v’lishtos k’dei she’ehey boree v’chazak l’avodas Hashem Yisborach (I now would like to eat/drink in order to be healthy and strong in the service of Hashem, Blessed be He).” Only with aspiration, inspiration and effort (and davening) can one turn the mundane into the spiritual.

Shedding the Fat. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach Z’TL once asked his students in which Tefillah they had more kavana—Birchas HaMazon or Shemone Esrei. The students responded “Shemone Esrei.” He asked rhetorically why this was so—after all was not Birchas HaMazon a **Mitzvah D’Oraysa** and Shemone Esrei a **Mitzvah D’Rabbanan**? He then commented that Birchas HaMazon is recited **after eating**. Once a person eats, his immediate response is to reject (“VaYishman Yeshurun VaYivat”—Devarim 32:15). Accordingly, great efforts should be placed into bentsching properly because it demonstrates the recognition that all of our good comes from Hashem.

NOTE: Birchah HaMazon is only recited if one consumes a shiur (minimally a k'zayis) within k'dei achilas pras-in two to nine minutes. On a practical level, this means at some point in the seudah (preferably at the outset-Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 167, Mishne Berurah seif katan 15) you should consume a k'zayis in the short period of time, and not merely "nibble" at your break throughout the meal.

When Solids and Liquids Don't Mix. If a person eats less than a k'zayis of a food, and drinks less than a r'evius of a drink, he does **not** make a brocha achrona, because we do **not** combine the shiur of food and drink for the purpose of brocha achrona (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 210, Mishne Berurah seif katan 1).

Enjoy! The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 225, seif katan 19) brings from the Achronim in the name of the Yerushalmi...that it is a **mitzvah** to eat a little from every newly-ripened fruit in order to demonstrate that Hashem's creations are dear to you.

Spice Store and Flower Store. When walking into a spice store, one should make the bracha "Borei Minei V'somim" (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 217:1). When smelling flowers, whether your own or those of a street vendor, or those found in public, one must make the appropriate bracha: "Borei Atzei V'somim" (if the source is from a tree), "Borei Isvei V'somim" (if the source is not from a tree, such as a carnation), or "Borei Mimeni V'somim" (on a bouquet or mixture of flowers, when one does not smell the individual flowers) (Orach Chayim 216:2).

Visiting the Zoo. Those who take a "Chol Hamoed"-type of trip to the zoo should note that the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim, 225:8) poskens that on **monkeys** and **elephants**, one should recite the brocha of Meshane Habriyos. The Meiri to Brochos 58B and other Meforshim explain why monkeys and elephants are unique in this regard among all of the animals. One should be careful to teach his children to be alert to making brochos at these and other special opportunities.

Don't Tell. The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 229, seif katan 1) writes that if one sees a rainbow, he should not relate it to others, because the rainbow is a sign that Hashem is upset with the world and is withholding His wrath because of the covenant He made at the time of Noach. Thus one who relates this information is speaking badly of the world and violates the principles of "Motzei Dibah Hu K'sil".

Thanks for a Miracle. When one personally experiences something that is "yotzi mederech hateva," commonly referred to as a "miracle," one makes the bracha of "sheoso li nes bamakom hezeh" when passing the spot (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 218:4). If one passes the spot more frequently than every 30 days, it should be said without "Shem U'Malchus" (ibid. Mishne Berurah seif katan 15). Additionally, the Chayei Odom (Conclusion) writes that one should make a Seudas Hodaah (Thanksgiving Meal) on the anniversary date of the miracle every year. The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (61:3) adds that one who was miraculously saved should set aside money for tzedaka according to his ability and distribute it to those who study Torah and should daven to Hashem that his giving to tzedaka should be considered as if he brought a Korban Todah. In fact, the Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 218, seif katan 32) adds that, in recognition of the miracle, one should actually recite the pesukim of the Parshas Todah (See Vayikra 7:11) from the Torah.

A Note of Thanks. When servicemen perform work for us in our homes, we do not discharge our "Bein Odom L'Chaveiro" obligation with payment alone. A warm "hello," "could you please," "thank you" and respect for the person, as well as hospitality, such as offering him something to drink are all matters which fall within the code of conduct of K'lal Yisroel. We also note that just as a doctor's payment is due at the time of the visit, and a lawyer's payments is due at the closing, B'Yomo Titein S'choro requires that other people providing services receive payment **at the time** they performed the services. (See Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 339).

Pain Relief. When one is experiencing pain or suffering (by moving, walking, sitting in a certain way, etc.) he should:

1. First, one should not feel upset as a result of the pain, realizing that every **iota** of pain experienced is from Hashem Yisborach, and have in mind that it should be a kapara for his sins (Brachos

62B, and Rabbeinu Yonah and Tosfos Yom Tov on the Mishne Brochos 54A). In fact Dovid Hamelech express this very thought explicitly in Tehillim (25:18). It is said in the name of the Apter Rav Z'TL that one should specifically recite the posuk when experiencing pain. The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 222:4) adds that, in truth, yissurin in this world actually replace yissurin in the next world which are many times more severe "Sheshum Haonesh Hu Harbeh Yoser Gadol."

2. Daven to Hashem Yisborach that in the future, to the extent possible, pain should be replaced by other means. As Mishlei (16:6) teaches B'chesed V'emes Yechuper Avone, through acts of Chessed and Torah study will aveiros be wiped out.

3. Realize that the pain could always R'L be worse. However, if you see **someone else** suffering, your response should **not be** to belittle the pain by statements such as "others have had it much worse," "the pain will go away in a few days," or "grin and bear it." Instead, one should express empathy, attempt to feel the pain, even if it is true that the pain will pass, and daven for, and give a bracha to, the unwell person.

On the Way to Greatness. One of HaRav Avigdor Miller's Z'TL most famous tapes is entitled "Ten Steps to Greatness" (Tape #706). The first step is that "every day, think about Olam Haba for half a minute or more." Perhaps now we know why Hakodesh Boruch Hu has given us the power of imagination.

Note: **We received a very positive response to our prior Bulletins and we thank all those who have given us chizuk in this matter.** If you would like a copy of one or all of our prior Bulletins please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for each Bulletin requested to Hakhel, 1327 East 26th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11210

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Mazel Tov and Much Nachas!