



THE HAKHEL COMMUNITY AWARENESS BULLETIN

Reviewed by HaRav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita

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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.**

What is the Brocha?

a. Tortilla Chips In a previous issue (Volume I, Number 3, Av 5761), we reported that most tortilla chip products contain ground corn or "whole white corn". Nevertheless, the brocha rishona is shehakol. In contrast, the Lieber's Tortilla Chip product lists "**whole grain** corn" as its first ingredient. The brocha rishona on that particular brand, as provided on the wrapper by the Rav Hamachshir, is **borei pri haodoma**. Consumers should always be alert to brocha shailos and resolve the shaila before consuming the product.

b. Cookies and Cream One of the flavors of Klein's parve ice cream is "Cookies and Cream" which contains cookie crumbs or bits which are sprinkled through areas of vanilla frozen dessert. The appropriate brocha rishona on this product is **shehakol**, but it is k'dai to make a borei minei mezonos on another product and have in mind at that time to be motzi the cookie part of the ice cream as well.

c. Rokeach Sour Sticks This snack product lists wheat flour as its third ingredient, after sugar and corn syrup. The Rav Hamachshir advised us that the proper brocha combination is shehakol/borei nefashos, because the wheat flour is present "ledabek" only.

d. Wafers The generally-accepted minhag is to make a borei minei mezonos on all types of wafers, even those that are coated.

e. Chocoriot Cereal According to the Badatz, which gives the Hashgocha on this children's cereal, the proper brocha rishona is borei minei mezonos.

f. Fruit Leather The packaging on the Stretch Island Fruit Leather product states that it consists of "100% fruit" and contains "apples, cherries, orange puree and natural flavors." Nevertheless, the brocha rishona on this product is **shehakol**, because the fruit is first liquified and then reconstituted.

g. Wraps Over the course of the last year or so, a new food item has become popularized in America, the "Wrap". Wraps are made by taking a ball of dough, flattening it to an extremely thin form and then baking it. Typically, the Wrap is then filled with food, much like a pita. The question that arises

is what is the brocha rishona, and by extension what is the brocha achrona on a Wrap? Is the brocha an absolute borei minei mezonos (akin to a very thin liquid batter dough - see Mishne Berurah, Orach Chayim 168, seif katan 38), or is the Wrap to be treated like Pas HaBa'ah B'Kisnin (akin to the flat bread referred to in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 168:7) and would accordingly follows those rules? Or, notwithstanding that it does not have the typical form or shape of bread, is the brocha always a Hamotzi? In Eretz Yisroel, where Wraps have not yet been popularized, many Poskim have never seen or heard of a Wrap. Rabbi Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita, however, who was shown a Wrap, poskened that it should be treated like Pas HaBa'ah B'Kisnin. Rabbi Yisroel Belsky, Shlita, poskens that the brocha is always Ha motzi, because it is baked in the same manner as bread, tastes and feels like bread, is made of a heavy, bread-like dough and serves to fill and satisfy, just as bread does. A person is advised to consult his Rav before partaking of a Wrap.

The Power of Amen Yehei Shmei Raba. At a recent gathering, Rabbi Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, provided incredible inspiration to recite Amen Yehei Shmei Raba (V'chulu) with especial intensity:

The Gemorah (Shabbos 119B) states that one who says it with all his might (Rashi-**all his kavana**) will have a bad gezeira against him **torn up**. The *Sefer Chareidim* (Chapter 73) writes that this is actually **a segula from Chazal** and is a most potent factor in the Teshuva process.

What does “**all his kavana**” mean? It means that one must be **listening attentively** to Kaddish **beginning** with the words Yisgadal V'Yiskadash recited by the Shatz, and understanding what the Shatz is saying. He is praying that the Moshiach come as soon as possible (**not only** “bchayei d'chol bais Yisroel,” **not only** “ba'agola,” **but also** “bizman koriv”) so that Kiddush Hashem will come to the world—so that Kovod Shomayim is reinstated and that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is finally recognized by everyone as the Source of all Blessing. Our tefillos are not marked by prayers which ask for everything to **go back to normal**—but rather to **go forward to change**.

To demonstrate our dedication to the principle of Kaddish, the Shulchan Aruch itself (Orach Chayim 56:1) states that a person should **run** to hear Kaddish. We run for what we really want.

Practical Application: Try at least one time per day to concentrate intently on the words of Kaddish as recited by the Shatz and your responses. The Middah K'negid Middah will be self-evident—since you fervently want Hashem's status in the world to change from its current state of Chilul Hashem to a glorious state of Kiddush Hashem, Hashem **will change** any negative gezeirah against you to a positive one.

Solutions Are Not Necessary. At a recent shiur on the current world situation, Rabbi Reuvain Feinstein, Shlita, reminded the gathering that when we daven, we should **not** be giving Hakadosh Boruch Hu the **solutions** to our problems. Instead, we should be pleading to Him, setting forth our lackings. Hashem will “decide” how to deal with our needs. As an example, at Mei Merivah, K'lal Yisroel sinned by asking for water, when instead they should have been mispallel merely that they were thirsty! It is reported that the Satmar Rebbe Z'TL once remarked that when wealthy people come to him, they give him money and take **his eitzas**, while when poor people come to him, he gives them money and they give him eitzas!

Who is Hashem Close To? Dovid Hamelech, through his Ruach HaKodesh, shares a fundamental principle of life with us: Hashem is close to all who call on Him—to all who call out to Him in truth (Tehillim 145:18). In layman's terms this means that a heartfelt, tearful, prayer brings Hashem's presence down from above the Seventh Heaven to be close to the one who calls!

At Least That! One of our Gedolim recently pointed out that there is actually a greater possibility that the Moshiach will come today than it is that you will win the regular weekly lottery drawing. The calculation is simple—there are 236 ½ years left until the year 6000. This is only approximately 86,200 days. Thus, the “chance” that Moshiach will come **today** is only 1:86,200. The chance that you will win the New York Lotto is about 1:45,000,000. Conclusion: At the very least, we should anticipate and yearn for achieving the Redemption as much as those who are addicted to the lottery hope to win it—since the chances of such an occurrence are truly that much greater!

A Separate Gehinom. The Chofetz Chaim in the sefer *Shmiras Haloshon* (Shaar Hatevuna, Chapter 13) writes that there is a separate Gehinom which a person must withstand for each type of aveirah he commits. There is not one standard Gehinom or even one category of Gehinom into which a person

falls. Just as there is no mass reward for mitzvos, as every mitzvah is treated independently, so, too, is every aveirah weighed and studied. The Chofetz Chaim there tells that ka'as (anger) is the gateway to many aveiros. Therefore, Chazal teach that if a person gets angry, “**All types** of Gehinom rule over him (Nedarim 22A),” because many types of aveiros will result from his anger.

Don't Touch. One should be careful to make washing negel vasser his very **first** activity of the day after opening his eyes and reciting Modeh Ani (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 4:1,2,3). If one mistakenly handled food before washing negel vasser (three or four times **alternately** on each hand) in the morning, the Mishne Berurah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 4; Mishne Berurah, seif katan 14) writes that the food is not prohibited, but l'chatchila, one should be very careful not to touch any food prior to washing. If inadvertently done, one should rinse the food three times before eating (*ibid.*).

Nighttime Asher Yotzar. If a person wakes up in the middle of the night to use the restroom, he should first wash negel vasser (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 4:1,3) and be sure to recite an Asher Yotzar immediately thereafter. One should not wait until Shachris to recite the Asher Yotzar, because by doing so, if he takes care of his needs again upon awakening in the morning, he will have missed the original Asher Yotzar opportunity. The reason is that the “window of opportunity,” for Asher Yotzar is only until the next time he takes care of his needs (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 4; Mishne Berurah, seif katan 3 and Orach Chayim 7, Mishne Berurah, seif katan 6).

Washing Again. If a person arises before Alos HaShachar and washes negel vasser, the Rama poskens that he should wash negel vasser again after Alos HaShachar without a brocha (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 4:14). This procedure is especially important to those who arise early to daven vasikin or for a shiur or when traveling.

Kashering of Chocolate Plants. Because of problems water may cause in the production of chocolate, chocolate companies are hesitant to allow water to go through their machines. Accordingly, some well known European chocolate companies use **cocoa butter** or **liquid chocolate** to kasher their equipment. Rav Moshe Feinstein, Z'TL (*Igros Moshe*, Yoreh Deah 1:60), holds that this is **unacceptable, even b'dieved**. According to Rav Moshe, kashering can be done **only with water** and not with “other liquids.” Moreover, cocoa butter may not even be considered an “other liquid,” as it is a solid at room temperature.

Failing to kasher the machines according to Rav Moshe's p'sak results in the following halachic concerns:

- 1) Chocolate companies generally use the same machinery for both dairy and parve chocolates. As a result of a kashering process which is wholly ineffective according to Rav Moshe, parve chocolates may not be considered really parve and Cholov Yisroel chocolates may not be considered Cholov Yisrael (assuming milk that was not Cholov Yisroel was previously used).
- 2) Moreover, in Europe, non-kosher oils (i.e., from neveilos) are commonly used in chocolates not under kosher supervision. If machines using these oils are kashered (to make a run under has hgocha) using ineffective methods, the kosher chocolates produced on those machines may not be considered kosher at all.

While many American hashgachos are careful to kasher according to the p'sak of Rav Moshe, European hashgachos are, generally, not careful to kasher in this way. Alprose, under the hashgocha of both the OU and Rav Weismandel of the United States, is currently the only Swiss chocolate company known to kasher their machines in a way that would be acceptable according to Rav Moshe. The other “famous” heimshe Swiss kosher chocolate companies with European heimshe hashgochos which may be otherwise well known follow Poskim in Europe who hold differently than the commonly-accepted p'sak here in America.

Bakery Horrors. We were given access to the baking area of a certain bakery with “heimshe” hashgochos. The bakery owner, a straightforward “yungerman,” revealed to us the following about his operation:

a. The hashgachos do not require the bakery to have a Shomer Shabbos worker at all times when it is open, not even during the actual baking process. In fact, typically, an akum who has his own set of keys opens the bakery and, together with another akum, begin to bake at 4:30AM by themselves until a Frum Yid comes in to work anywhere from one to three hours later. The Frum Yid does come in at the same time as the akum occasionally (apparently to show the akum that he can get up early, too!).

b. There is no log kept as to when challah is taken. Typically, challah is taken in the morning when the dough is made, and then at the end of the day, at which time the person taking the challah stated that if challah was not taken earlier, this later taking should cover it.

c. Eggs are not checked by Frum Yidden, as this is too costly and time-consuming. Instead, an akum who checks them is paid \$1.00 for every egg he finds containing a “blitztrop” (blood spot).

d. There is no separate milchig oven. Milchig products are typically made by the akum around the end of the day, and the oven is then “burned out” for about a half an hour before starting “parve” production again.

Representatives from each hashgacho agency typically come in about once a month or so. It is challenging to conjecture as to what these visitors hope to observe during their infrequent drop ins.

Questions: While everything described above might be claimed to be halachically valid, parve and challah considered taken—are these the standards you would allow in your home? Are these the standards that hashgachos should allow?

Note: Further investigation into bakeries under one of these hashgochos has yielded some additional information:

- Typically, many batches of dough are made, baked and packaged for distribution in the night/early morning, while only akum are present. By the time the challah-taker arrives later in the morning, many of these products have already been delivered. A worker (akum) removes a blob of dough from each mixture during the night/early morning and these are presented to the challah-taken when (and if) he arrives. Does the akum worker have ne’emonus that he separated a blob out of each batch? You better believe it!
- Challah is almost never separated from “b’lilah rakka” such as sponge cake, contrary to the view of most, if not all, poskim.
- The various methods of making the product Pas Yisroel are highly innovative and questionable. A full discussion is beyond the scope of this publication.
- The various rules used in determining what to label “mezonos” bread are even more innovative. A recent Kuntres issued by Rabbonim of the Beis Din of Rav Vosner, Shlita, calls into question the whole concept and concludes convincingly that the brocha is almost always Hamotzi.

Interesting Fact: We have been advised that the Dayan of one major community has advised his constituents to take their own challah at home without a brocha from baked goods purchased in his neighborhood.

Final Note: The Kashrus Information Center of Flatbush (KIC) and the Kashrus Information Service of Boro Park (KIS) have advised us that they are both well aware of problems existing in certain bakeries. In fact, they believe that, as a direct result of this knowledge, they have been denied permission to monitor bakeries under certain hashgochos, so that they are unable to provide any information about them to the rabbonim they service.

Only through strong public pressure upon the establishments and upon their certifying agencies can these problems be rectified. As long as there is no **independent** monitoring systems such as the KIC or KIS, the multiple problems most likely will continue to exist.

Kiddush Wine. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 210:1) brings a Machlokes Haposkim as to the minimum shiur of wine one needs to drink in order to be required to make the brocha achrona of Al Hagefen. According to some opinions, the shiur for a brocha achrona of Al Hagefen is only **one k’zayis** (which the Mis hne Berurah explains is one-third of a reviiis, or approximately **only one ounce**). Accordingly, when distributing Kiddush Wine around the table, we should be careful to give only a very small amount (less than one ounce) to each person to avoid a safek brocha achrona.

A Door Opener. If one’s door knob falls off on Shabbos, it is prohibited to even loosely place the doorknob back in the handle to open the door because (i) it resembles the melacha of boneh; and (ii) the doorknob is muktzeh. There is also the possibility that a person might continue to completely rebuild it

(shemah yetokah). Instead, one should use a knife, bobby pin, handle of a spoon, or, if necessary, a screwdriver to open the door (*The 39 Melachos*, Rabbi Dovid Ribiat, Shlita, Volume IV, page 1090).

Shabbos Bows. One is permitted to make bows on Shabbos, but only for items which typically would come apart on Shabbos (i.e., are not meant to last more than one day), such as shoe laces. Accordingly, when one's trash bag is full, he should not close it by tying a bow on top, since he never intends to open it afterwards (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 317, Mishne Berurah, seif katan 29).

Shabbos Nap. The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 8, seif katan 42) writes that if one naps during the day, one should leave his tzitzis on, or at least cover himself with his tzitzis, because there is a Machlokes Haposkim as to whether sleeping is a "hesech hadaas", requiring a new brocha on the tzitzis.

Note: One should consult with his Rav as to the necessity of making a new brocha of Al Mitzvas Tzitzis when putting back on his tzitzis (and certainly when putting on a specially-designated pair of "Shabbos tzitzis") after bathing on Erev Shabbos.

Additional Note: The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 8, seif katan 26) makes the following incredible statement: "It appears from Kesuvim that the Jews who will be left at the End of Days will be metzuyanim in the mitzvah of tzitzis, as the posuk states ...and as Chazal teach...." It would seem that there is no better time than now to be especially careful and exacting in the performance of this mitzvah.

A Mirror Image. When you are davening to Hashem you must remember that it is forbidden to face a mirror or a window or door which shows your reflection (even with your eyes closed), so that it does not appear as if you are davening to yourself, who are also created in the "image" of Hashem (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 90, Mishne Berurah, seif katan 71; *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 18:8).

Joining Together. The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (12:2) and the Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 92: seif katan 36) write that it is appropriate to give tzedaka before davening. The *Kitzur* also adds (as is found in many siddurim) that one should be mekabel on himself the mitzvah of V'Ahavta Le'Reacha Comocho before davening as well. The *Kitzur* provides the following fascinating explanation for this declaration at that time: **Through the uniting of the bodies below, the souls unite above, and as a result, our tefillos also unite. When Klal Yisroel's tefillos are united, it is pleasing before Hashem Yisborach.**

Al Netilas Yodayim. If you have washed and made an Al Netilos Yodayim, but have not yet made Hamotzi, can you still answer Amen to someone else's brocha of Al Netilos Yodayim? The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (41:2) poskens that one is permitted to answer Amen to another's brocha (of any type), even though you have still not made a Hamotzi and may not otherwise have hesech hadas until partaking of bread.

Our Meals Have Spirit. The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 6, seif katan 6) writes that the neshama benefits from the ruchniyus part of the food in the same way as the body benefits from the gashmiyus portion. This is the explanation of "U'Mafli La'asos" in the brocha of Asher Yotzar—that Hashem performs great wonders—in remarkably providing us with ruchniyus and gashmiyus in every bite!

Don't Wait. After you complete a meal or a snack, it is extremely important to make the brocha achrona immediately so that you do not later forget to make the brocha. The Chofetz Chaim writes that l'chatchila, one should not step out of his house for any reason prior to making a brocha achrona (Orach Chayim 178: Mishne Berurah, seif katan 7, 35 and 36). If you take that phone call, do that one more errand, or do just that one more thing around the house, experience shows that you will likely forget to make the brocha.

Note I: What if you fell into the above-described trap—time passed and you forgot whether you made the brocha? In such a case, the best eitzah would be to make a new brocha rishona on more of the same item (or something else with the same brocha achrona), and have in mind that your new brocha achrona cover the first food as well (Orach Chayim 208, Mishne Berurah, seif katan 80,81). If for some reason you cannot eat (you have no additional food, etc.) then you could ask someone else who may be making the same brocha achrona to have you in mind when he or she recites it.

Note II: A good way to ensure that you made a brocha achrona is to always recite it from a special card carried in your wallet or pocketbook. The additional step of taking and putting away the card (in addition to the kavana you will have by reading the words “inside”) will help you remember whether you made the brocha or not.

Starting the Day Right. When we arrive to work each day, there may be phone messages and emails to respond to, memos to write, papers to review, among other tasks. One man from Brooklyn recently advised us that no matter what the day and what the urgent or pressing need is, he makes it a point to **consciously** start his work day off with a mitzvah. Some examples he provided: calling his father, saying a “kepitel Tehillim” for a sick person, walking in to someone’s office who needs to be cheered up, listening to a TorahPhone message, or simply saying a personal tefilla to Hashem that the particular project he is working on brings success and happiness to himself and to others.

Try this yourself every day in the same way, and see if it helps structure your work day.

Additional Suggestion: Make the conscious performance of a mitzvah the **last** thing you do before leaving your office, as well.

Revisiting the Zoo. Some readers queried on the halacha mentioned in our last issue (Volume III, Number 2; Adar II 5763) regarding brochos on monkeys and elephants. After all, are we not used to seeing monkeys and elephants at the zoo (there are two Chol Hamoed periods per year!) and in pictures? Do these special creatures still require a brocha even in our times? In fact, we must point out that, although the *Chayei Odom* (63:14,16) does require a brocha on a monkey or elephant if you have not seen one within the last 30 days and the *Aruch HaShulchan* (225:13) apparently requires a brocha on a new monkey or elephant not seen before, the Mishne Berurah (225, seif katan 30) does pasken that you make the brocha only **once** with Shem U’Malchus on the first viewing of each of these creatures. Thereafter, every 30 days on a different monkey or elephant, you make the brocha without Shem U’Malchus by saying “Boruch Meshane HaBrios.” What if you have never made the brocha and you are now 40 years old—would you make it one time now that you realize a brocha is to be made? What if you made the brocha as a katan/katana under Bar/Bas Mitzvah age—would you make it again as a godol? Please ask your Rav to posken for you based upon your particular circumstances. Finally, we note that when making this or any brocha in the zoo, you should be careful to ensure the place is clean, free of foul odors and that no improperly-dressed individuals are within your view (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 75, 79).

Right Hand Forward. When making a brocha over a food or a birchas hareach over a flower or pleasant-smelling item, one should hold the object in his **right hand** (or for a left-handed person, his left hand). (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 206:4 and Mishne Berurah, seif katan 18)

Skyscraping. The Chofetz Chaim (*Chovas Hashmira*, Chapter 5) writes that if a person speaks well of his friend below, the malachim above speak well of him. Obviously, the reverse is also true. Observation: It pays to have the malachim on your side.

Note: This does not mean you should constantly speak about others—even if it is always in a positive manner. Listeners may disagree, contradict, question—and loshon hora can readily result. See *Sefer Shmiras Halashon* (Shaar Hatevuna Chapter 3) for guidelines in this area. Remember that your mouth is like the front door to your home. You should keep your front door open only when necessary.

Healthy Exercise. In our Viduy, the os of tzadi stands for “tzararnu”—we have caused others pain or anguish. In fact, it is an **Issur D’oraysa** to cause someone (even one’s own spouse or children) pain or anguish with words (Vayikra 25:17). The *Sefer Chofetz Chaim* (1:8) notes that the Issur D’oraysa of hurting another person with words applies not only of the spoken word, but to the written word and to physical gestures, as well. See Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 228 for examples of Ona’as Devorim. How can we put the brakes on tzararnu, even if we know we are guilty only “occasionally”? A tried and true method is for a period of at least two (2) weeks, at the end of each day, to look back on that day’s events and see if you have hurt anyone. If you have, write it down **and** apologize or reconcile no later than the next day. If you have already apologized “on the spot” write it down anyways. By the end of the two-week period, your daily written log should have substantially dwindled. You may want to keep going with the written record to keep yourself in check. Remember: Ona’as Devorim applies to children under Bar/Bas Mitzvah, workers, co-workers and any Yid whom you may meet, even only once.

Finding Favor. We remind everyone of the great statement of the *Mesilas Yeshorim* (Chapter 19, end), that “Hakodesh Boruch Hu **only** loves those who love other members of K’lal Yisroel. **And** as a person’s love for K’lal Yisroel increases **so does** Hakodesh Boruch Hu’s love for him.” We understand that Rabbi Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, has emphasized that we should specifically be mispallel (in Hashivenu Avinu L’Sorosecha and other appropriate times and places) for the anti-religious Jews in Eretz Yisroel that they find their way back to Yiddishkeit.

More on Love Versus Hate. The Torah teaches us that we can control our emotions, by teaching us how and when to use them. We are commanded, for instance, V’Ahavta Le’reacha Comocha, to love our fellow Jew as ourselves. See Bulletin Volume II, Number 3 (Adar 5762), Item 31 for the parameters of this mitzvah. The Torah teaches us also not to hate any fellow Jew, except under certain limited circumstances. The only type of person who you are permitted to hate in your heart is someone who you saw commit an aveira, who has been rebuked and who has refused to do Teshuva (Rambam Hilchos Rotzeach 13:14; *Sefer Hachinuch* 238). As Rashi (Shabbos 32B) explains any hatred **other than** in these limited circumstances is likened to **sinas chinam** (baseless hatred) which, of course, destroyed the Bais Hamikdosh (Yoma 9A), and also carries the terrible punishments enumerated in Shabbos 32B. Let us remember whom we “hate” and why, so that we can demonstrate to Hashem that even our feelings are dedicated to His service.

Daily Appointment, Nightly Appointment. The Gemara (Shabbos 31A) provides the six questions that a person is asked on his Day of Judgment after 120 years. On the second question (Did you set aside **times** for Torah study daily?), the meforshim (see Maharsha) there point out that the stress is on the plural formulation “**set aside times**”. This is because there is an obligation to set aside time both in the day and in the evening (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 238; Mishne Berurah, seif katan 1). Since it may be more difficult because of family or other responsibilities to find a set time every night, may we suggest that the required set time be every night **immediately after Maariv** (wherever you are and whenever you may daven). All you need to do is keep your pocket Mishnayos, Gemora, *Mesilas Yeshorim* or Mishne Berurah with you and learn those two mishnayos, two halachos, etc.—and when asked the question, you will be able to respond “Yes—after Maariv every night, and during the day at...”

Note: The Chofetz Chaim (*Chovas Hashmira*, Chapter 8) writes that the **Ikar Kedushas Hamitzvah** is attained when doing a mitzvah “B’kiviyus Gemurah,” in a set, established way. This indicates a dedication, sincerity and perseverance not found in a mitzvah performed on a “as can do”, “special occasion”, or “when a good shiur comes up” basis.

Choshen Mishpat Corner. The Rabbeinu Bachya (Vayikra 25:50) brings from the Tosefta in Bava Kamma (10:8) that Gezel Akum is more chomur than Gezel Yisroel because the issur of Gezel Akum is based upon Chillul Hashem. As a result of the act of gezel, the akum will reject the Emunas Yisroel which is a great Chillul Hashem.

Note: The Gemara (Pesachim 87B) expressly states that the reason we were placed into this long and difficult golus is to spread the Word of Hashem and bring geirim into the world. Through acts of Gezel Akum, we undermine our very purpose in this world. (See also Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 348, Be’er Hagolah os daled).

Danger. According to the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 334:44) a person who keeps a dangerous object in his possession is put into *nidui* until he removes the dangerous situation. Rav Avigdor Miller, Z’TL, was once asked by a father whose son’s hand was burned by hot tea that spilled on the table—What do I have to do Teshuva on? HaRav Miller replied that his Teshuva is to keep hot drinks away from small children!

Shatnes Alert. All men’s suits bearing the **Boss** label sold at Syms and other stores **have been found to contain shatnes**. This is despite their discounted price and their inaccurate claims by sales personnel stating that Boss suits no longer contain shatnes. For further information, please contact the Flatbush Shatnes Test Center at 718-382-5689.

Free Service for Shavers. If you have a “lift and cut” shaver (see Bulletin Number 1, Spring 5761) and need the lifts removed in order to render the shaver “kosher” for use according to Rabbi Dovid Feinstein, Shlita, and Rabbi Yisroel Belsky, Shlita, following the principles of Maran R. Moshe Feinstein, Z’TL, please send the blades to Kosher Shaver Service, 1224 Avenue R, Brooklyn, New York 11229-1016 (no return postage is necessary) for this absolutely free chesed service. You need not worry about damage in the mail. The blades will be promptly returned to you.

Tevilas Keilim. We provide the following essential reminders prior to toveling keilim. Please note that tevilas keilim is not a metaphysical or mystical concept. If not done properly, a k’li should **not** be used until toveled correctly.

General Tevila Reminders

- Submersion **must be** supervised only by an individual **over** Bar/Bas Mitzvah. A child may be tovel keilim if an adult sees him do it.
- The entire k’li (even if oversized) **must be fully** submerged all **at once** (**not** one-half first, then the other half immediately thereafter).
- All chatzitzos (i.e., stickers or other items or markings not part of the k’li which neither the owner nor most people would use with this item on the k’li) must be removed prior to submersion.
- Do **not** hold the k’li tightly, so that the mikva water can reach every where. If necessary, dip your hand in the mikva first, and then take hold of the k’li and submerge it in the mikva. Move your hand to another part of the k’li while holding it below the water level.
- All keilim should be submerged right side up or on a slant, but not upside down, in order to avoid the formation of air pockets, which would render the tevila invalid.

Using Baskets

- Only use baskets for metals and non-breakable items, so that you can shake the basket vigorously up and down and to and fro.
- Lay objects side-by-side in the basket or loosely one on top of the other.
- **WHILE SHAKING THE BASKET VIGOROUSLY, YOU MUST MAKE SURE THAT EVERY PART OF** each object comes into contact with the mikva water. **EXERCISE GREAT CAUTION**-you **cannot** tovel a full service of flatware in one or two basketfuls. **DO NOT BE PRESSURED** by impatient people in back of you. This is a one-time mitzvah. You must do it right, or you are prohibited from using the k’li until done properly.

The Brocha

- “Al Tevilas Keli” for one item, “Al Tevilas Keilim” for more than one item.
- If the k’li is involved in food preparation which will require further processing (such as a kneader, grinder, beater, etc.), no brocha is recited.
- A k’li which is made by Jewish workers for non-Jewish manufacturers or vice-versa requires tevila without a brocha.
- Hold the k’li in your hand (or basket) and be ready to tovel immediately after making the brocha.

Focus. The Chofetz Chaim’s sefer *Ahavas Chesed* is dedicated to the need to do chesed and provides us with needed details as to how to properly perform such mitzvos as tzedaka, maaser, lending money and objects, bikur cholim and nichum aveilim. Accordingly, it is very significant that near the conclusion of this sefer (Section 3, Chapter 4), the Chofetz Chaim writes:

“There are three precious and honorable matters which a person must constantly seek to fulfill in this World, in **descending** order of priority:

- 1) **The study of Torah, which is greater than them all, with a reward which is greater than all of the other mitzvos, and which has a punishment for failure to study that is greater than all other sins, as we all know;**
- 2) Teshuva, which is also very precious and beloved before Hashem Yisborach; and

- 3) To search for and run after mitzvos and Maasim Tovim (good deeds), and this, too, is an honorable matter.”

Thus, even among honorable and proper pursuits, there are priorities to follow. The study of Torah takes precedence over all. In fact, the Chofetz Chaim near the conclusion of the very same sefer on chesed writes, “And you should know further, that the **study of Torah in a group** is a mitzvah fourfold-for Hashem’s house is sanctified through learning with the public ...as Chazal teach, one cannot compare one person performing a mitzvah to a few together performing the same mitzvah. Additionally, when learning in a group, the Shechina dwells between its members.” To reiterate, let us focus on the order of our priorities—(1) the Study of Torah, (2) Teshuva, and (3) Mitzvos and Maasim Tovim.

Note: The Chofetz Chaim (*Zechor L’Miriam* Chapter 12) brings the following from the *Sefer Chareidim*: “Gehinom will not help one who has wasted his days and hours from the study of Torah, for Gehinom only helps to correct the defilement of the soul from the commission of sin, but for his failure to study the mesechta or the perek [that was his chelek in Torah], Gehinom cannot provide this for him.”

Your Gramophone. The Chofetz Chaim (*Zechor L’Miriam* Chapter 9) writes that the gramophone (predecessor to the tape recorder) teaches us the following great lesson: If you initially record beautiful and pleasant songs, you will always hear beautiful and pleasant songs, making you **and** all listeners happy. However, if you initially record wails and cries...

Everyone in life is given a gramophone. What will we choose to record with it?

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 ten Bulletins please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for each Bulletin requested to Hakhel, 1327 East 26th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11210.

A current Hakhel tape list is available by calling 718-252-5274.

The new Hakhel Gemach List (Summer 5763) B’EH will soon be available. For a free copy, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Hakhel, 1327 East 26th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11210.

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Do you know about something important you would like to make your community aware of? Is there something you would like to help your community with? Let us know by writing to Hakhel at the address above. The Hakhel Bulletin will B’EH appear periodically, as necessary. Thank you.

This issue is dedicated l’ilui nishmas

Reb Shlomo Yisroel B’R Yosef Yuda a”h

Brocha Fayga bas Shmuel Dovid a”h