

Hakhel



THE HAKHEL COMMUNITY AWARENESS BULLETIN

Reviewed by HaRav Yisroel Belsky, Shlita

Volume III, Number 4
Elul 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.**

Monumental New Task Force. Times have really changed. Because of the many companies today involved in banking, credit cards, real estate, insurance and securities financing which may be considered "Jewish" companies according to Halacha, Hakhel is in the process of forming a new Ribbis Task Force. Examples of problematic situations include Emigrant Savings Bank (See Volume 1, Issue 1, Spring 5761), The MBNA-VISA Credit Card Company (which is 13% owned by a Jew), Intervest (construction, bridge and other loans, which is a family-owned Jewish business), and many of the insurance premium finance companies. It is the opinion of some Gedolim that according to Halacha company ownership is determined by the rov, or majority of owners. However, according to HaRav Moshe Feinstein, Z'TL (Igros Moshe, Even Hoezer 1:7), if, as a result of a Jew's ownership in a company, he has a say in the company's affairs (this is typically five percent or more), it is considered a Jewish-owned company. HaRav Eliashiv, Shlita, concurs with this opinion.

If you can help provide us with any information at all in your area of business, or can otherwise dedicate some time to researching companies in these industries, you will be part of a Monumental Task Force which will be Mezakeh Es HaRabim worldwide. We hope to compile a list of companies which are mutar, questionable, and assur. We note that each aveirah of Ribbis could involve numerous Lo Sa'asehs in the Torah. The Rabbinic Advisory Board for the Task Force will consist of Rabbi Yisroel Belsky, Shlita; Rabbi Avrohom Moshe Lewanoni, Shlita (author of Sefer *Mishnas Ribbis*); and Rabbi Yisroel Reisman, Shlita (author of *The Laws of Ribbis* (Artscroll)).

Please join by contacting us at (718) 253-5497.

Reserve the Date. This year, if you start on 5 Elul (Tuesday, September 2nd) and learn *only three Mishnayos a day*, you will make a siyum on the entire *Mishnayos Mesechta Rosh Hashana* before Rosh Hashana, and if you then continue learning *only three Mishnayos a day*, you will make a siyum on the entire *Mishnayos Mesechta Yoma* before Yom Kippur. Let us utilize our special opportunities!

What is the Brocha?

Quaker Crunchy Corn Bran Cereal. This cereal lists corn flour and corn bran flour as its first two ingredients and oat flour as its fourth ingredient. According to the OU, which gives the hashgocha on this product, the appropriate brocha rishona is mezonos, but the brocha achrona is borei nefashos, because the

mezonos is slightly less than a kezayis bichdei achilas pras when dry, and considerably less than a kezayis when eaten with milk.

Note: There are other cereal products in which the brocha rishona is borei menei mezonos and the brocha achrona is borei nefashos. Care should be taken in reading the cereal's list of ingredients, and, in the case of doubt, calling the certifying kashrus agency or asking your Rav. This brocha combination, of course, applies to many rice-based cereals, such as Rice Chex.

La Nash Corn Snack (from Israel). According to the Badatz, which gives the hashgacha on this product, the brocha rishona is shehakol notwithstanding that "corn" (not corn meal) is listed as the first ingredient.

Schnitzel and Filet of Fish. The proper brocha rishona on schnitzel (breaded chicken) or on breaded fish depends on the thickness of the coating. According to HaRav Moshe Feinstein, Z'TL, HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky, Z'TL, and, Y'BLCHT, HaRav Eliyashiv Shlita, a thin breading, even if it gives some taste, is treated as a condiment (salt or spice), and, accordingly, the proper brocha rishona is shehakol (*The Halachos of Brachos*, page 78). However, at a certain point, a thick batter-dipped coating will require a borei minei mezonos (and an Al HaMichya if a k'zayis is consumed b'chdei achilas pras). Because it may be difficult to make this determination, the sefer *V'zos Habrocha* (page 110) suggests that one make a borei minei mezonos on one item, a shehakol on another, and only then should one eat the schnitzel or breaded fish. We must additionally caution that one should look at the label of ready-made schnitzel, because some breadings are now made out of corn meal, which has a brocha rishona of shehakol in any event.

Note: Based upon the above, the brocha over an onion ring with a light coating is borei pri haodomah, but with a heavier type of coating, one should make two (2) brachos as outlined above.

Soups. Soup is typically comprised of two elements, a solid and a liquid portion. In many cases, both elements are equally distinct and important and may be consumed in separate spoonfuls (*i.e.*, one is not tofel to the other), and (if not eaten in the course of a bread meal) two brachos would be required notwithstanding that one of the main ingredients is a mezonos. Possible examples of this are noodle soup, matzoh ball soup, soup with mandels, and barley soup. In such cases, it is preferable to make a mezonos on something else while having the noodles or the like in mind, a shehakol on something else while having the consommé portion in mind, and then eat the soup.

Note: Instant soups present special difficulties in that different brands have different amounts of dehydrated noodles or dehydrated vegetables, and so their significance in some cases may be questionable both as to brocha rishona and brocha achrona. Accordingly, your Rav or the Rav Hamachshir of the particular soup product must be consulted, in order to avoid brachos levatala, R'L.

Additional Note: A borei pri haodoma is always required for soup in which a vegetable (split pea, beans, etc.) was cooked, even after the vegetable was removed and only its taste remains (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 205, Mishne Berurah seif katan 9, 10).

Kix Breakfast Cereal. Kix cereal is now to be considered dairy. Boxes of Kix lacking the OU symbol should be regarded as OU-D. Consumers are always urged to carefully check products for changes in hashgacha or in ingredients.

Bakery Horror – Follow-Up. In response to the item on bakeries which appeared in our last issue (Sivan 5763), we received a showing of both strong interest and extreme concern from community Rabbonim and from consumers who wanted to simply know where they could go shopping. It is only through consumer awareness and pressure that stores will be forced to bring their standards to a level we expect and deserve. Ask your bakery's proprietor or manager if they are monitored by the KIC or the KIS. For a listing of the growing number of establishments which allow their businesses to be monitored, call the KIC (Flatbush) at 718-375-0505 or the KIS (Boro Park) at 718-436-8188. Your Rav receives periodic reports from these community-based organizations and he can apprise you of details regarding particular establishments.

Only in America. Persons knowledgeable in the kashrus industry have advised us that Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola (which are cold-filled) wherever bottled in the United States are acceptable, whether or not

bearing a kashrus symbol. This is not true for Coke and Pepsi bottled outside of the United States. This becomes a frequent issue on airplanes which may have restocked their beverage supplies at a stopover location outside of the United States. Accordingly, you should look at the label to ensure that it was bottled in the United States.

Note: All fruit juices need a hashgacha, even if they are “pure” or claim to be “100% natural” because of the various pasteurized juices which may be manufactured in the same plant (hot-filled). This is once again an issue on airplanes or on vacation in areas where products with hashgochas are not that plentiful.

Additional Note: A similar issue occurred with a popular brand of chocolate which were consumed by many in Europe without any hashgacha, based upon the faulty assumption that bittersweet or dark chocolate was parve. Only after someone discovered that by law in England bittersweet chocolate is permitted to contain up to a certain percentage of milk chocolate or milk powder without stating so on the label were consumers shocked into refraining from consuming this popular product. In addition, it is claimed that in many places in continental Europe, animal fats may be used as a component of chocolate without so stating on the label. Thus, even if one is not concerned about the milk content, chocolate should not be used without an acceptable hashgacha.

Non-Mevushal. Please note that the Kedem company has let it be known that all **1.5 liter (50.7 ounce)** (i.e., large) **glass bottles of Kedem, Tam Pree and Gefen brand grape juices** are **not** mevushal. The packaging itself will state only if it is mevushal. Although non-mevushal is preferred for a Kos Shel Brocha (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 272:8, Mishne Berurah seif katan 23), it does create problems in terms of Akum and, l'havdil, non-frum Yidden coming into contact with the bottles after they have been opened (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 123:1,3). Accordingly, consumers should avoid non-mevushal products if their cleaning lady helps move around items in the refrigerator or if they have non-observant people over as guests.

That Special Guest. The Chofetz Chaim (*Z'chor L'Miriam*, Chapter 23) relates to us how the King prepares for his very special Guest of Honor: the Royal Table is set with the most elegant settings and the food is fit for the most refined of tastes. The King himself anxiously awaits the joyous moment when his guest will arrive so that he can accord him royal honor. The guest arrives, and the King rejoices at his guest's noticeable exuberance over the royal lavishness with which he is showered. Think about it: Hashem Yisborach has lovingly prepared for us a beautiful table with riches beyond comparison—the Torah and Mitzvos which are more precious than the rarest of jewels and to which nothing else can compare. The King anxiously awaits for us to arrive, partake and enjoy. Don't we all want to make the King happy?

Homeowners Insurance Is Not Enough. The Chofetz Chaim (*Chovas Hashemira*, Chapter 13) ponders the following question: A person takes out insurance on his house, so that if, chas v'shalom, a fire occurs, he will have enough funds to rebuild his home. But a house is made only of wood or brick and it is only a safek that it will actually burn down. A person's body, on the other hand, which is so holy that it houses the neshama, will certainly be consumed in the end, because all people die. Why does not everyone purchase T'chiyas HaMeisim Insurance, in order to insure that his body will come back to life at T'chiyas HaMeisim?!

Neither cash nor a broker is needed to purchase this important insurance. The Chofetz Chaim explains that T'chiyas HaMeisim Insurance is the study of **Torah**. As the Posuk (Yeshaya 26:19) teaches “Hakitzu V'Ranenu Shochne Ofor Ki Tal Oros Talecha”—Awaken and sing you who dwell in the dust, for the Dew of Light [of Torah] is Your Dew”—this, Chazal explain, will be what revives us at T'chiyas HaMeisim (Kesubos 111B).

The Chofetz Chaim goes on to teach that the Light of Torah that will revive a person can actually be a combination of his Torah, the Torah of others that he supports and even the Torah of his children that he sends through Yeshiva. It would seem that just as with insurance, where the larger the face amount of the policy, the larger is the amount that will be collected, so too with T'chiyas HaMeisim Insurance, the more Torah to one's credit, the more ...

Note: What prevents one from arising at T'chiyas HaMeisim? The Chofetz Chaim (*ibid.*) quoting Chazal (Sotah 5A) states that the sin of gaivah (arrogance) prevents a person's earth from moving during T'chiyas HaMeisim. Additionally, lending money with ribbis (interest) prevents one from arising (*Pirkei*

D'Rebbe Eliezer 33). Even if a Heter Iska is used, the Chofetz Chaim writes, one must make sure that it is properly completed in order for it to be valid (See Final Note below). The Chofetz Chaim (*Dover B'ito*, Chapter 2) also writes that lack of proper care in matters of kashrus will also cause a person great difficulty at the time of T'chiyas HaMeisim. His proof is clear: The chait of Odom Harishon, which was **eating** from the Eitz Hadaas, brought death to Odom HaRishon and death to the world, because the consumed sin traveled through the bloodstream and infected his entire body and consequently, the bodies of all future generations. One who consumes ma'acholos asuros in his lifetime, without exercising the proper care, likewise infects his entire body and demonstrates that he has not learned from the chait of Odom Harishon, who was punished with death. How then can he awaken from **his death** at T'chiyas HaMeisim?! In fact, the Chofetz Chaim answers that in such a case, one's body will then require a "Tikun Norah" or, as he also puts it, a "dreadful operation," to remove the horrible infection in all of the limbs and organs of the body caused by ma'acholos asuros, in order to make him worthy to arise. With this idea, we can understand the words of the Mesilas Yesharim (Chapter 11) who writes that forbidden food is **poison**, and that one should take the same steps to avoid it as one takes precautions to avoid death. This is not an allegory, it is really very literal! One should never indifferently or naively put the blame on the mashgiach at a hotel catered affair, Shabbos retreat or restaurant—for it is **your** body, and **your** T'chiyas HaMeisim!

Additional Note: In our previous issue (Sivan 5763), we described how we should anticipate the coming of Moshiach. Indeed, Rav Schwab, Z'TL, writes in *Selected Speeches* (page 16) that he personally heard from the Chofetz Chaim that every day should be treated as a "sofek hashakul" (equally likely) for Moshiach's arrival. T'chiyas HaMeisim will B'EH quickly follow thereafter. Each person should take whatever steps are necessary to prepare himself **now** for this upcoming Great Event.

Final Note: Relating back to the Chofetz Chaim's caution about Heter Iskas, we must advise that there are a number of improperly worded Heter Iska documents in current use which are completely invalid, rendering loan transactions made through them bone fide Ribbis. For example, the phrase "in lieu of the sharing of profits and losses" or "it has been agreed..." (followed by language which does away with the sharing of any form of losses) voids the Heter Iska. Additionally, language which provides that "these payments will continue until the original loan is paid in full" (which has the effect of guaranteeing payment of the principal) voids the Heter Iska, as well.

The Last Remaining Lachash. Chazal (Shabbos 67A) teach that if a person, R'L, has a bone stuck in his throat, one should bring a bone of the same type and place it on the person's skull and say "**Chad chad, nochis bola, bola nochis, chad chad.**" Rabbi Akiva Eiger (Yoreh Deah 335, D'H Nasnah) brings from the Maharshal that this lachash is the last one we can generally use even in our days—as it is still "bodus um'nuseh." Indeed, Rabbi Elimelech Lebowitz, Shlita, noted Rav and Posek in Flatbush, related that he himself was in the presence of someone choking on a fish bone, and that he used this lachash. The bone immediately dislodged itself, and the choking person quickly recovered, b'chasdei Hashem.

Suggestion: Keep this lachash handy—you could become a one-man Hatzalah team!

Birchos HaShachar. The first of the Birchos HaShachar thanks Hashem for giving the "sechvi" the understanding to distinguish between night and day. The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 46, seif katan 4) explains that the ikar kavana of the word "sechvi" is to thank Hashem for giving **our minds** (and not only the rooster) the binah to distinguish between day and night.

Note: The Mishne Berurah there (*ibid.* seif katan 9) explains that **only** two of the 15 Birchos HaShachar contain the word "Yisroel" in them, while all of the other brachos such as "Matir Asurim" (thanking Hashem for giving us the power to sit up) or "Hamechin Mitzadei Gover" (thanking Hashem for the ability to walk) are more general brachos, because all of mankind should thank Hashem for all of these abilities. The brachos that relate only to Yisroel are 1) "**Ozer Yisroel Bigvurah**" (thanking Hashem for our being covered with clothing—the middah of tznius in clothing) and 2) "**Oter Yisroel B'sifarrah**" (thanking Hashem for our head coverings—once again the midah of modesty of K'lal Yisroel showing our complete subjugation to our Creator). It is particularly tznius—both for men and women—that is the hallmark of K'lal Yisroel. In fact, the posuk (Megillas Rus 2:51) goes out of its way to teach that Rus was noticed by Boaz only in the way she acted picking up the sheaves—rather than bending over and possibly exposing any part of herself, she crouched down (*ibid.* Rashi D'H L'mi). It was this act that so impressed Boaz, which ultimately led to the birth of Dovid HaMelech—and to the Moshiach.

Two Different Ties. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 61:14 through 62:2) takes much effort to assist us in the proper recitation of the Shema, which is the only Mitzvas Aseh D'oraysa in our day which is absolutely required to be performed at distinct times **twice daily**. Indeed, the Mishne Berurah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 61, seif katan 2) demonstrates in detail from the Yerushalmi in Brochos (end of Chapter 1) how each of the Aseros HaDebros is alluded to in the Shema itself. Moreover, by reading the Shema properly, we fulfill so many mitzvos, among them: 1) Kabolos Ol Malchus Shomayim, 2) Kabolos Ol Mitzvos, 3) the Mitzvas Aseh of Kriyas Shema, 4) the Mitzvah of Ahavas Hashem, and 5) the Mitzvah of Zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim (see Brochos 12B for additional benefits from recitation of the Shema). It behooves us to be painstakingly careful in the proper performance of reading the Shema, since it intertwines so many mitzvos. We note that the Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 64, seif katan 9) cautions us that in the first parsha of Shema, when speaking of Tefillin, we say “U'keshartom l'os,” (Devorim 6:8), which is the **singular** because the entire first parsha is written in the singular. On the other hand, when speaking of Tefillin in the second parsha of Shema, we say “U'keshartem osom” (Devorim 11:18), which is the **plural** because the second parsha is written in the plural. The change of just one vowel (from a komatz to a segol) can change the entire translation and meaning of what we are saying! We can see from this example how essential it is for each of us to take our time reciting Shema extremely carefully.

The Crock Pot's Blech. The commonly-accepted practice is that one places a piece of aluminum foil on top of the heating element of the crock pot to serve as a blech between the heating element and the pot itself. This foil extends over the temperature dial to ensure that the dial will not be adjusted on Shabbos. We note that the dial should be adjusted to the appropriate setting (typically between two and three) **before** the aluminum foil blech is inserted—otherwise, if the setting is adjusted after the foil is put on, the blech is clearly not preventing you from adjusting the dial! (*Shmiras Shabbos K'Hilchasa*, Chapter 1, footnote 185).

Making Kiddush (Continued). In our last issue (Sivan 5753), we noted that the person making Kiddush should distribute less than one ounce of wine to each of those being yotzeh with his Kiddush. (For additional Mareh Mekomos on this topic, see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 272:10 and 174:6 and Biur Halacha D'H V'chein and D'H V'afeelu, as well as *Chayei Odom* 41:3). The Mekadesh himself, however, must drink a rov revi'is (between 2.2 and 4.1 ounces). As far as a brocha achrona on the Kiddush wine, it is optimal that when making the brocha rishona of borei pri hagafen **at** Kiddush, one has in mind that he will drink more wine during the seudah and then actually does drink some more wine during the seudah. Then, before Birkas HaMazon, one should have in mind that it will cover the wine he drank for Kiddush and during the meal (Biur Halacha, *ibid.*).

Note: With respect to the Kos of Havdalah and of Birkas HaMazon, the Mevorech must drink a full revi'is and make a brocha achrona of al hagefen.. See Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 190:3; 271:13 and 296:3, Mishne Berurah seif katan 23; Yoreh Deah 265, Be'er Heitev seif katan 9.

Soda at a Kiddush. The brocha of borei pri hagofen on wine, because of its importance, generally covers all other drinks that a person will drink at that time (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 174:2). If on Shabbos morning, one makes Kiddush at shul or at a simcha and will later drink soda at the Kiddush, the halachos become intricate as to whether a brocha rishona and brocha achrona are made on the other drinks (*ibid.*, and Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 208:16). Accordingly, it is recommended that at a Kiddush both the mekadesh and those who he is motzi with his Kiddush (who drink of the Kiddush wine) make a shehakol and a borei nefashos on a solid food (like gefilte fish) and have the soda or other liquids he may drink in mind when making both of these brochos.

The Light of Havdala. When making Havdala, we also make a special brocha of thanks to Hashem for providing us with light. This brocha, borei meorei haesh, is made Motzei Shabbos only, since this is when Odom Harishon discovered fire (Pesachim 53B). One cannot make this brocha (or be yotzeh with the person making Havdala) unless he or she is actually close enough to the ner Havdala to be able to distinguish between two coins, such as an American nickel and a Canadian nickel. The equivalent of this is to be able to distinguish between the fingernails of one's hand and the skin on the palm and on the fingers, using only the light of the ner Havdala (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 298:4). Accordingly, family members should take care not to stand at the other end of the room from the Havdala candle, but rather

close to it, when the person making Havdala recites the borei meorei haesh. As to how you should actually demonstrate your benefit from the ner, entitling you to make a brocha, see *ibid.* 298:3.

Note: Generally, **only** the person making Havdala should make the brocha over the besomim and the ner, even though all others smell the besomim and benefit from the ner (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 297, Mishne Berurah seif katan 13).

Shehecheyanu. If one encounters a new fruit that he has never eaten before (such as a starfruit or a more exotic fruit), one does not necessarily make a shehecheyanu, as the shehecheyanu is made not because of the novelty of the fruit to you, but because the fruit is now in season. It is for this reason that some do not make a shehechyanu on new fruits in our times—unless they are certain that there is a seasonal renewal in the availability of this particular type of fruit—as most fruits are now obtainable year-round in produce markets (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 225:6).

How Can It Be? How can it be that two people study the same Mesechta thoroughly, put in the same effort and hours and remember it equally well, yet, in Olam Haboh, one is cheerfully greeted by the Bais Din Shel Ma’alah, and the second is frighteningly frowned upon?

The Chofetz Chaim (*Chovos Hashemira*, Chapter 7) writes that the disparity may be based solely upon the lashon hora occasionally spoken by the latter person. The Torah of the one who is careful with his speech, the Chofetz Chaim writes, shines from afar, while the lashon hora speaker smothers the light of his Torah with the tumah which leaves his lips.

In addition to the profound impact lashon hora will have on one’s Olam Habah, the Chofetz Chaim (*Kovod Shomayim* 1:20) adds that lashon hora also severely impacts upon one’s Torah learning **in this world**. He likens the Torah learned by a speaker of lashon hora to one who presents the King with a unique and beautiful gift (the words of Torah), which is sorrowfully wrapped in a dirty, putrid gift box (the foul mouth). Obviously, the more lashon hora ones speaks, the more repulsive the box—and gift itself—becomes. On the other hand, a beautiful wrapping can truly enhance the gift....

Note for the Urban Dweller: Tumah of the lips also includes nivul peh (profane language) of any kind (*Shaarei Teshuva* 3:229), notwithstanding its “social acceptability” by the hamon am in the ordinary course of conversation, and its use by persons who might otherwise consider themselves successful, professional or sophisticated.

What is “Sichsucha”? The Chofetz Chaim brings the following remarkable statement from the Zohar Hakodosh (Parshas Pekeudei 264): “When a person has a hisorerous to speak lashon hora, a ruach ra’ah (evil spirit) by the name of ‘Sichsucha’ is thereby aroused and actually rests upon this hisorerous of lashon hora, causing **it to rise heavenward** and bring death and destruction down to the world. Woe to those who arouse themselves to do evil, and do not guard their mouth and tongue, and are thus not worried about this terrible result! They do not know the tragic effect of their actions.” **Say no to Sichsucha!**

Don’t Be a Candidate. Contrary to popular thinking, tzoraas as a punishment for lashon hora, among other sins, has not left us. The Chofetz Chaim (*Kovod Shomayim* 2:15) brings from the *Sefer HaKoneh* that anyone who deserves this particular punishment will receive it in the future, R’L.

Observation: The shame and embarrassment in the future may be that much greater, as others bask in unfathomable light and he is instead outside of the camp, isolated in quarantine, alone and ashamed.

Speechless. Furthermore, the Chofetz Chaim (*Kovod Shomayim* 1:17) brings from Chazal that the ultimate punishment for the baal lashon hora is that he will be speechless **for eternity** (For a description of eternity, see “Closing Words”, Note in our Elul 5762 Bulletin (Volume II, Number 5)). Can we at all appreciate the pain and shame one will feel if he stands mute as all around rejoice in the incomprehensible bliss of Olam Haboh? The Chofetz Chaim explains that we are forewarned of this midah k’neged midah punishment by the posuk “Yachres Hashem Kol Sifse Chalakos Loshon Medaberter Gedolos (Tehillim 12:4).” The posuk means that Hashem will **forever** cut off (kares) the tongue that speaks gedolos (a euphemism for lashon hora).

Many Roles. The Gemara states “He is the Satan, he is the Yetzer Hora, he is the Malach Hamovess (Baba Basra 16A).” This means much more than that the Yetzer Hora has three surnames. Nor is it simply a “Charles, Chuckie, Chuck” comparison. The Chofetz Chaim (*Dover B’ito*, Chapter 5) teaches

that the **Yetzer Hora** first tempts a person to sin. If he, R'L, succeeds, he then acts as the **Satan**, prosecuting against his victim in the Bais Din Shel Maaleh. If he succeeds in his prosecution, he then acts as the **Malach Hamovess**, completing his victory by enforcing the judgment. Obviously, the proper place to dig in against this “multifaceted” Angel of Evil is at the **Yetzer Hora** stage, not letting him get the upper hand in any test of willpower.

Note: Chazal (Shabbos 31B) teach that if one is in the process of sinning, he should cut off or stop as much of the aveirah as he can while in process. After all, “if one ate garlic and his breath is foul, should he then eat even more garlic and make his breath even more foul?” Each additional word of lashon hora, every additional glance at something we should not be looking at, each hirhur aveirah, and yet one more brocha jettisoned under one’s breath brings on a condition which is truly much graver than halitosis. We live in times with many mouthwashes, mouth rinses, breath fresheners, sprays, drops and mints readily available—let us take the lesson from all these remedies for foul breath and stop the effect of an aveira in midstream before the Yetzer Hora can take it to the next step.

Tefillin Notes

Yud on the Shel Yad. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 27:2) writes that one should be careful that the knot of the retzuos which form a Yud should be physically touching the bayis of the Shel Yad. The Biur Halacha there (D'H Yesh Li'zaher) brings the Vilna Gaon who holds that this halacha is Mi'Dinah D'Gemora. Please consult with your Rov (or your qualified sofer) on how to keep the kesher physically touching, and not even a mere **centimeter** away.

Tefillin at a Bris. The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 25, seif katan 55) writes that at a bris milah it is befitting that **everyone** (not only the ba'al bris and the sandek) leave their Tefillin on until after the bris, because both the Tefillin and the bris are osos (signs) of our relationship with Hakodesh Boruch Hu. Picture someone who had received two medals of honor from the King himself—would he only display one at a time?

Asher Yotzar in P'sukei D'zimrah. If a person must take care of his needs during P'sukei D'zimrah, the Mishne Berurah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 51, seif katan 8 and Biur Halacha D'H Tzarich Li'zaher; Orach Chayim 53, Biur Halacha D'H Ain L'verech) poskens that one should actually make the Asher Yotzar during P'sukei D'zimrah, preferably, bein haperokim (between paragraphs or sections). Those points which are considered bein haperokim are listed there in Mishne Berurah seif katan 13. It is useful to mark them off in your siddur, because it is preferable to be at a bein haperokim point to answer Amen, Kaddish, Kedusha, Modim and for other permitted hafrosokos.

Note: However, if one must take care of his needs during Birchos Kiriyas Shema, one must wait until after tefilah to make the Asher Yotzar (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 66, Mishne Berurah seif katan 23).

Five Extra Minutes. A sign posted on a retail store in Lower Manhattan reads “What would you do with five extra minutes?” Do you know? If you do—are you **always prepared** when those five extra minutes become available? For an elucidation of this point, see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 47, Mishne Berurah seif katan 27.

Note: In a similar vein, what if you suddenly came face-to-face with a Gadol, or had a moment with your Rav, or as a token of thanks, someone wanted to give you a brocha. Do you know exactly what brochos you would request? For some help in this regard, see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 122, Mishne Berurah seif katan 8 (in the name of the Chayei Odom).

Not After Hamotzi. Although we noted in our last issue (Sivan 5763) that you may answer Amen to another's brocha after you have made an Al Nitalas Yodayim, we note that the same halacha is **not true** for Hamotzi itself. That is to say, if you have already recited birkas Hamotzi, you must first swallow a bite before answering Amen to another's brocha or otherwise being mafsik (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 167:6, Mishne Berurah seif katan 35).

Under the Influence. The Chofetz Chaim (*Chovas Hashemira*, Chapter 3) writes that we learn from the principle of “Tov L'Tzadik, Tov L'Schaino” that when one positively influences others by his deeds (such as speaking softly and refraining from lashon hora and anger), one also receives reward for the

deeds of the others whom he has influenced. In fact, HaRav Chaim Shmulevitz, Z'TL (brought in *Growth Through Torah*, page 309) explained that the Yissacher/Zevulun relationship extends far beyond monetary support. If one learns with intensity, being careful not to be "m'vatel," the others learning around him will observe this intensity and will learn with a "bren", as well. Hashem is more than pleased to note your role in helping others grow and fulfill their true purpose in life.

Tefilah Zaka. The Chofetz Chaim (*Sefas Tamim*, Chapter 3) notes that we are all capable of Tefilah Zaka, not only on Yom Kippur, but each and every day. Chazal teach regarding Iyov's statement "U'Tefilasi Zaka (and my prayer is pure)" (Iyov, 16:17), "Is there then a "Tefilah Achura"—a muddled tefilah that requires Iyov to describe his prayer as being pure? Chazal's answer is yes, a tefilah by one who commits acts of dishonesty or deceit, this is a muddled tefilah. A tefilah by an honest person—this is a Tefilah Zaka, a pure tefilah. At the end of the day, ask yourself, "Did I daven a Tefilah Zaka today?"

Standing Before Old Age. The Sefer *Lulei Soroscha* (page 224) writes that HaRav Shach, Z'TL, explained the posuk "Mipnei Seivah Tokum (stand up **before** old age)" (Vayikra 19:32). as referring to a **dual obligation**. **FIRST**, we are required to stand before a 70 year-old who enters the room until after he or she passes by you (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 244:1). **SECOND**, it requires you to stand up before **your** own old age—get up and do something **before you** become old. In fact, the Brisker Rav Z'TL once saw his father HaRav Chaim Brisker Z'TL looking at the white hairs in his beard. The Brisker Rav, puzzled, asked, "Father you have had white hairs for years. What are you looking at?" R' Chaim replied, "My son, I am reflecting on their turning whiter and whiter."

Question to Reflect Upon: Am I GROWING older?

The Greatest Nisayon. According to the sefer *Orchos Tzadikim* (Sha'ar HaSimcha), the greatest nisayon that a person faces is his parnosa. Why is the nisayon so great? Because the person actually believes that it is due to his skill or prowess that the job gets done, and that his boss is the one who hands him his paycheck. This, writes the *Orchos Tzadikim*, can be compared to the metal axe that chops down the tree—is it the sharp metal, or perhaps the solid, sturdy wooden handle or is it really the woodchopper that felled the tree? So, too, when it comes to parnosa, you must realize that you and your skills are a mere instrument wielded by Hashem (the woodchopper in the mashal). Let us from time to time stop and take note... in order to pass the greatest nisayon.

Who Is Running This Train? The Chofetz Chaim (*Shem Olam*, Chapter 3) likens this world to a train ride. The novice to trains may believe it is the conductor collecting the tickets who is running the train. The simpleton may believe it is he who is sounding the bells. The slightly more sophisticated individual may believe the machinist sitting in front of the train is the one in charge. Only the educated person knows that these gentlemen are only the workers, and that there is truly an owner of this train who bought it, scheduled its starts and stops, keeps it running and takes care of its passengers.

Note: Sometimes when we arise early in the morning and go outside to daven, we see what the world refers to as a man walking a dog. In reality, it is the dog walking a man. A similar illusion is created by a man with a rope held tightly in both hands, riding on a horse traveling at a blazing speed. In fact, it is the man controlling the horse, and not vice versa. Finally, those a little older among us remember how Heinz ketchup was advertised as so slow and thick that one needed "anticipation" because the ketchup was "keeping [the consumer] waiting" for it to pour out of the bottle. Today, the very same ketchup's packaging recalls "Est. 1865", yet boasts that it is "Easy Squeeze" and "No Wait". After contemplating all of the put-ons and illusions in Olam Hazeh, we should realize once and for all who is running the train, and that it is the destination, and not the trip itself, that should be our focal point in life.

Additional Note: The Chofetz Chaim (*ibid.*, Chapter 5) provides a wondrous insight into why so few people traveling through life actually figure out their purpose. He points to the various denominations of rubles—all recognize a one ruble coin, almost all will recognize a ten ruble note, many, a 100 ruble note, some, a 1,000 ruble note, and almost no one will be able to identify a 10,000 ruble currency. The reason—the greater the value, the fewer that can fathom or understand it.

Who Are You? The Mishne Berurah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 59, seif katan 15) explains why the shliach tzibbur cannot be motzi another who is able to read Loshon Hakodesh with his chazaras hashatz: because everyone who is capable must ask for mercy for himself. Indeed, Chazal (Brachos 20B)

teach that women are obligated to daven for this reason—women, too, must ask on their own for mercy. It would be helpful for our kavana if we could remind ourselves that we are pleading for abundant mercy before the Heavenly Throne—and we cannot rely on anyone else—not the shliach tzibbur, nor even our parents, spouse or children for this awesome and momentous task.

Rabbi Pliskin's Exercise. At a recent Hakhel shiur, Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, Shlita, asked everyone to color a black dot on a white piece of paper. What do you see? Before answering, look again. The correct answer is not “a black dot on a piece of paper.” Rather it is a paper that is almost entirely white, with the exception of a small black dot on it. This should be our approach to evaluating others with merit. Look at the large piece of white paper and not at the relatively insignificant black dot.

Note: Rabbi Pliskin added the following from his mechutan, ZT'L: If you love every person you will always be in the presence of people you love.

What Are You Talking About??! The Chofetz Chaim (*Chovas Hashemira*, Chapter 14) writes that a person naturally talks most about what he loves and is on his mind. Some are always talking about their children, some constantly speak about the economy and earning a living, and others are negative, not even thinking twice about speaking lashon hora. Dovid Hamelech (Tehillim 119:97) writes “Ma Ahavti Torasecha, Kol HaYom Hi Sichasi (O, How I love Your Torah, all day long it is my speech).” Let us study what we constantly speak about and use our speech as a method of improving our thoughts and attitudes.

Birchos HaTorah. One is permitted to think Torah thoughts before actually making Birchos HaTorah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 47:4). However, one is **not** permitted to hear Torah thoughts from others or to read Torah thoughts before making the brocha (*ibid.*, Shaarei Teshuvah, seif katan 3). The reason: he may get thereby drawn into saying words of Torah aloud, which would require a Birchos HaTorah.

Note: If you arise in the middle of the night and want to learn, you must, of course, recite Birchos HaTorah. If you then go back to sleep, it is a machlokes whether you must make a new Birchos HaTorah again upon rising. The Mishne Berurah concludes there that hamevorech lo hifsid (one who makes the brocha in such a case, did not do wrong) (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 47:13, Mishne Berurah seif katan 29).

Cleanliness Is Next to... It is forbidden to study Torah subjects (even without saying the words) in a place which is within daled amos (seven feet) of unclean or spoiling, odorous matter. Accordingly, care should be taken about the types of seforim and Jewish publications that one brings into unclean places, and as to where one changes diapers or places children’s toilet-training devices (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim, Chapter 75).

Avoiding a Disgrace. Chazal (Chulin 87A, Shabbos 22A) teach that bizui mitzvah, shaming or disgracing a mitzvah, is a serious prohibition.

Each and every mitzvah is a special and unique treasure, deserving, at least, of the honor and reverence given the Crown Jewels. In fact, the Chofetz Chaim (*Kovod Shomayim*, Introduction) writes that the way one can honor Hashem is by honoring His mitzvos. It is therefore important:

- Not to walk by tzitzis (even those not belonging to you) on the floor without picking them up (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 21:4, Mishne Berurah seif katan 48);
- Not to trample on the noi sukkah after removal from the sukkah, nor on the walls or the s’chach after the sukkah is dismantled (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 638, Mishne Berurah seif katan 12 and 24);
- Not to purchase inferior quality goods with which to do a mitzvah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 11:5);
- Not to hold both a mitzvah object and unclean matter together (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 41, Mishne Berurah seif katan 3); and
- Not to leave the room while the sefer from which you are learning remains open (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 277:1, Schach and Taz).

For the horrible punishment of one who disgraces mitzvos, R’L, we refer you to Mishlei 19:16. Let us resolve to show our reverence and love for Hashem by exhibiting those very same feelings towards those objects which we utilize for His Mitzvos.

To Whose Eitzos Are We Listening? The Pesukim (Melochim I 12:8; Divrei Hayomim I 2:12) teach us that Malchus Beis Dovid was removed from ruling over all 12 shevatim, and ruled over only two instead because Rechavam took the eitza of his childhood, young friends rather than the eitza of the z'keinim of his generation, who had advised him not to tax so much and to speak kind words to his subjects. One piece of advice from the wrong people can be literally devastating. In this case, it led to hundreds of years of avodah zarah, other heinous sins and the destruction of the Beis Hamikdosh. When it comes to important decisions, even if mundane, one must learn to take the time, make the effort, and accept the responsibility to seek true guidance of his Rebbe or Rav.

Beware of Idolatry. Incredibly, even in our day and age, the ugly head of avodah zarah has infiltrated the Jewish community. In fact, we learned of one bioenergy healer who puts what are apparently innocuous herbs on his patients' backs. Prior to doing so, he offers the herbs on an altar in another room. Be cautious with respect to the following practices: Bioenergetics, Biokinetics, Chi-Kun, Radionics, Natural Healing, Aromatherapy, Energized or Essential Oils and the like. Please speak to your Rav before being treated by practitioners of any alternative medicines or holistic therapies.

Take Note. When we daven Hallel, what is the most repeated posuk? (Hint: It is in the first and last posuk of Tehillim 118, and it is also the first posuk of Tehillim 106, 107 and 136.) Perhaps this is a siman that we ourselves should be reciting this posuk quite often as an expression of thanks and recognition as to where all of our goodness comes from.

From Strength to Strength. The posuk (Tehillim 85:5) teaches us "Go from strength to strength, and appear before Hashem in Tzion." The Targum on this posuk **incredibly explains** that going from **strength to strength** means that one should go from the **Beis Hamikdosh** to the **Beis Hamedrash**. Each person should take his own personal steps to truly appreciate the awe he should feel upon our entry into our Beis HaMedrash, for one even goes from the Beis Hamikdosh itself to go into the Beis Hamedrash!

Note: The Tiferes Yisreol (Mishnayos Tamid 4, seif katan 63) proves from the Mishne there that the Kohanim who were serving in the Beis Hamikdosh **actually left** the area of the Mizbeach—standing in front of the **Heichal and the Kodesh Hakodoshim** in order to go into the Lishkas Hagozis (where the Sanhedrin Hagadol learned and judged) in order to say Shema and daven—because since Torah was studied there, their Tefillos would be more accepted there than in the actual Azarah of the Beis Hamikdosh facing the Kodesh Hakodoshim itself!

Expressions and Exclamations. The prohibition against mentioning Hashem's name in vain, and not in the derech hakedusha v'hodaah, applies in all languages and at all times. Thus, one should not say "Oh my G-d!" or the like. The entire world is filled with the glory of His Name and the language we use is no barrier or excuse. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 215, Mishne Berurah seif katan 27 and Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 4:40).

Rav Chesed. One of the thirteen midos of Hakodesh Boruch Hu is "Rav Chesed" (Shemos 34:6). What is the difference between Rav Chesed and Chesed? Perhaps the following will elucidate this: In the Shomer Shabbos Shul in Boro Park, where one can find a minyan from Vasikin until 2AM the next day, there is also food and drink available as a "chesed" on a 24-hour basis (including Shabbos Kodesh). But it is not just its availability. The Shul provides **33** different kinds of coffee, **18** different kinds of tea, and **20** other types of drinks and soups. From this, we can get an inkling of the "Rav Chesed" that Hakodesh Boruch Hu showers upon us, and the midah of "Rav Chesed" that Hakodesh Boruch Hu wants us to emulate.

Special Prayer. Hakhel is offering complimentary cards containing a special supplication to be said during a bris. These cards can be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to Hakhel, 1327 East 26th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11210.

ENDNOTES:

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 (tapes **only**).

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, 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.

The new Hakhel Gemach List (Summer 5763) B’EH is now 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.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS:

AGUDAS YISROEL OF SOUTHFIELD MICHIGAN
YOUNG ISRAEL OF MANHATTAN
DOCTOR CRAIG HERMAN – MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA
DOCTOR PINCHUS ELIYAHU CALAFIURA—
CHERRY HILL, NEW JERSEY
MISTER YONA KATZ—CLIFTON, NEW JERSEY

K’siva v’chasima tova