

A COMMUNITY AWARENESS BULLETIN

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הקהל

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1. What's the Bracha?

a. **Potato Poppers.** This new heimishe snack product lists "potato flakes" and "potato pieces" as its first two ingredients. The Rav Hamachshir of this product advised us that the appropriate bracha, nevertheless, is shehakol.

b. **Snack'n Fries.** Despite the appearance of the words "potato snack" and "fries" on the label of this product, the appropriate bracha is shehakol, as the main ingredients are corn meal and granulated potato.

c. **Tortilla Poppers.** This new heimishe snack product lists "whole yellow corn" as its first ingredient. The Rav Hamachshir of this product advised us that the appropriate bracha is shehakol.

d. **Mini Krispy Snack.** This new heimishe snack product appears to closely resemble miniature rice cakes, however, the first two listed ingredients are "rice pieces (rice flour, salt), corn (with germ removed)". We asked the Rav Hamachshir what the proper bracha was on this newfangled product, and he responded that the appropriate bracha is shehakol.

e. **Peanut Chews and Nutty Chews.** The candy products "Peanut Chews" and "Nutty Chews" contain peanuts, molasses, cocoa powder and other ingredients. What bracha do you make on these products? According to the sefer *Halachos of Brochos* (Rabbi Pinchos Bodner, Shlita), peanut chews are:

"a candy made from chocolate, caramel and peanuts. If one regards the chocolate and caramel as an enhancer to the peanuts, make a borei pri hoadomah. If he regards the peanuts as an enhancer to the chocolate and caramel, make a shehakol."

If neither food is regarded as an enhancer to the other, two brachos may be required (*ibid.* page 417).

As is evident from all of the above, one should take at least a moment to make a thoughtful determination as to what he is about to consume and why¹, so as to make the appropriate bracha on his food.

2. **Open Milk Containers, Cheese, and Tuna Fish Sandwiches.** What do open Cholov Yisroel milk containers, cheese and tuna fish sandwiches have in common? They each require a satisfactory "chosom" or seal, while being transported by an akum or in the possession of an akum (Yoreh Deah 118:1) in order to ensure that the food has not been tampered with or exchanged. Among other ramifications, this means that:

a. When ordering a tuna fish sandwich, or, for that matter, any non-whole fish item, or an item containing cheese, such as pizza, to be delivered by an akum delivery person, the bag or box must be sealed in such a manner as to easily determine if the container was opened. Typically, a proper hashgacha will require tape with the name of the establishment over packaging which can be detected if tampered with.

b. One should not drink instant coffee available for sale or as a courtesy at gas stations or other non-Jewish stores, since the Cholov Yisroel milk is open and not sealed.

c. One should ask his Rav what he can purchase in a fresh fish store owned and/or operated by an akum, even, of course, when the akum claims to sell "Kosher Fish Only."

You may think of other, additional applications of this important issue.

3. **Liquid Cough Syrups, Pain Relievers and Anti-Histamines.** With cold and flu season in full force, we have been asked to reprint the following alert, which was released by a nationally recog-

Please Note:

The purpose of this Bulletin is to alert the public regarding timely issues which raise serious *shailos*, so that the informed person can ask his Rav the right questions. This Bulletin is not intended to provide the answers to these issues. It is intended to heighten each member of our community's awareness of important *shailos* in our community, and to receive his own *p'sak* on each of these issues.

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nized kashrus agency and which appeared in Volume I, Number 1 of our Bulletin:

“The public should be aware that many liquid medicines such as cough syrups, pain relievers and anti-histamines contain non-kosher ingredients. They are present in substantial amounts and are generally pleasant-tasting and thus are neither batel nor pogum. As such it is assur to use them unless taken to protect against a life-threatening condition. Common opinion that permits their use is based, by and large, on misinformation. We are fortunate that comparable kosher products have become available to us, which are produced under Rabbinical supervision and are of the same degree of effectiveness as the finest alternate non-kosher medications... No one should assume that anything else is permitted without first asking a competent Rav... Heaven forbid that the issur of ‘prohibited foods which clog the heart’ should be taken lightly, and allowed to be condoned by public apathy.”

4. **Pizza.** What is the appropriate bracha combination on pizza? This is a rather complicated question. The Sefer *Halachos of Brochos* concludes:

In the US (or any other country where [it is] difficult to determine if eaten as a snack or as a meal), the poskim advise us to do as follows: If the individual eating the pizza is doing so for a snack (and he plans to eat less than a shiur seuda²), he should make a borei minei mezonos and al hamichya. If he is eating the pizza as a meal, he should wash, make a homotzi and bentsh (even when eating less than a shiur seuda)³.

The *Laws of Brachos* (Rabbi Binyomin Forst, Shlita) concludes:

Pizza... present(s) difficult halachic problems... In addition, since pizza itself is often eaten as a meal, it is difficult to assume that pizza is merely a snack, albeit that it also cannot be assumed with any certainty that pizza is primarily eaten as a meal. Faced with these problems, it is difficult to offer a clear halachic decision on this matter. Perhaps, since the status of pizza as a snack or meal is vague, its subjective intent governs... Although this argument is far from convincing, the common custom is to recite a mezonos on one slice of pizza when eaten as a snack.

What should you do? First, be honest with yourself as to whether or not the pizza that you are about to eat is your meal or merely an appetizer, to temporarily “hold you over” until your next meal. Then, if necessary, ask a shaila.

Note: If one made a borei minei mezonos and ate a small amount, then changed his mind and ate a shiur seuda, he is required to bentsh. If there is a shiur seuda in what he has not yet eaten, he should wash, make al nitlas yadaim and hamotzi, as well (Orach Chayim 168:6 and Mishna Berura Seif Katan 26).

5. **Kashrus in Flight.** Rabbi Chaim Morgenstern, Shlita, in an article printed in *Kashrus Magazine* entitled “Kashrus in the Air,” highlighted the following points about kosher airline food:

a. Don’t be fooled by the word “mehadrin,” unless you recognize the hashgacha as valid.

b. Make sure that any meal served you is double wrapped when it reaches your seat. The flight attendants cannot have “already removed” the first wrapping.

c. Sodas and other drinks under hashgacha in the United States may not be under hashgacha in a foreign country. Never be fooled by the term “natural juice” without a hashgacha.

d. Prepared or brewed coffee and tea served from the airline’s coffee pots are problematic because they are washed with non-kosher pots in hot water. Use your own disposable cup and instant coffee, and add hot water directly from the hot water urn and not a pot, percolator (or coffee machine).

e. If you drink cholov stam, make certain that you know the country that the milk comes from has governmental controls on milk. Additionally, on “non-dairy creamers,” make sure that the label explicitly says “pareve.”

f. A “Mezonos roll”, especially when eaten together with your meal, is a contradiction in terms.

6. **Travel Advisory.** In the post September 11 era, with heightened security in many public places, and especially at airports, a word of caution regarding married women’s head-coverings. Part of the security procedure in many airports is that security personnel in front of the metal detectors ask people to remove their hats. While not a problem for men wearing both yarmulkes and hats, it is a very big problem for women wearing hats or snoods. It therefore may be appropriate for women to wear a shaitel when traveling by airplane.

7. **The Gift of Shabbos.** A poor man once came to R’ Shmelke of Nikolsberg and begged for a donation. R’ Shmelka could not find even a groshen to give him. Looking about frantically, he found his wife’s gold ring and without hesitation, give it to the pauper.

When R’ Shmelke’s wife came home, he told her what had transpired. His wife exclaimed, “Oh, no! That poor man has no idea how much that ring is worth. He may sell it for much less than its true worth.”

R’ Shmelka and his wife chased after the man and finally, after a long search, located him and told him the price of the ring.

The following Friday night, R’ Shmelke related the incident to his Chassidim. He continued, “This is what Hashem meant when he told Moshe Rabbeinu to tell the Jews about the precious gift of Shabbos. Moshe Rabbeinu was to convey to them the fact that Shabbos is priceless, that it is a day of limitless spiritual potential. Otherwise, they might trade it away for nothing more than a piece of kugel.”

8. **Brushing or Combing Hair on Shabbos.** In *The Shabbos Home*, Rabbi Simcha Bunim Cohen, Shlita is posek:

It is absolutely forbidden to brush or comb one’s hair or beard on Shabbos with a brush or comb that has hard bristles. This applies equally to men and women. Since all people have some loose hair or some knotted hair, brushing or combing with a hard bristled implement inevitably pulls out some hair, in violation of the melacha of shearing. It is permitted, however, to straighten out hair with one’s fingers.

Rabbi Cohen, Shlita, provides three conditions under which a specifically designated Shabbos brush with very soft bristles may be used in a limited manner on Shabbos (ibid, page 163). We urge you to study these conditions, and, if necessary, review them with your Rav.

Based upon the foregoing, hair brushes and combs are muktzeh and should be put away before Shabbos. Of course, all of the same prohibitions as to brushing and combing would apply to children, as well.

9. **Kiddush—The Shiur to Drink; Bracha Achrona.** The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 271:14) poskens that when making kiddush, l’chatchila, one person (most preferably the one making kiddush) must drink a minimum of “melo luguv” (a cheekful, which to the average-sized person is a majority of a reviis), but in no event need he drink more than a reviis (as explained in the Mishna Berura there, se’if katan 68 and 72). According to Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l, the reviis on leil Shabbos is 4.42 ounces, and, accordingly, a *rov* (majority) would be 2 ¼ ounces.

As for the bracha achrona on the kiddush wine, although the Chofetz Chaim has difficulty with Birchos Hamazon exempting wine drunk before the seudah (such as kiddush wine⁴), one should at a minimum have specific intent before benching to include the wine drunk at kiddush (Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchoso 49:21).

10. **Shalosh Seudos—For Women.** The third meal of the on Shabbos is a crown which distinguishes Shabbos from the other days of the week. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 291:6) devotes a specific se'if to the following p'sak halacha: "Women are obligated in Seuda Shlishis." The Mishna Berurah there explains that this p'sak is because men and women are equal in all Shabbos matters, and women also benefited from the miracle of the man. It is for this reason that women are also obligated in lechem mishne. Accordingly, every adult should be careful, especially in the winter months, to leave enough room for Shalosh Seudos. The Gemara (Shabbos 118A) explicitly states that one who upholds the mitzva of three meals on Shabbos is saved from three punishments—the pangs of Moshiah, the Judgment of Gehinnom and the War of Gog U'Magog. Husbands and fathers who choose to spend Shalosh Seudos in shul should ensure that their homes maintain the appropriate level of Kedushas Shabbos and that family members eat Shalosh Seudos.

11. **Havdala-Bracha Achrona.** In the face of the multitude of activities that may take place after Havdala, the mavdil should not forget to make a bracha achrona⁵. Instead, the mavdil should take care to drink a reviis of wine/grape juice immediately, and make the bracha achrona of al hagefen before folding his talis, cleaning up, etc.

12. **Bracha Achrona Points.** The Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchasa (18:45) poskens that one should not place anything in his pockets on Shabbos—even while inside. Experience shows that no matter how careful a person is about checking his or her pockets before going outside on Shabbos, there will probably be a few slip-ups each year. Once a few slip-ups each year are expected, how far is it from negligence to put anything in your pockets on Shabbos? We can analogize this point to the brachos achronos. Especially when a person is talking, busy, tired or otherwise occupied, he may not remember whether or not he made a bracha achrona. One excellent way of remembering to make a bracha achrona is by committing to always make it from a siddur or "bracha achrona card." This added effort will not only cause the person to remember to make the bracha, but will have the added benefit of making the bracha with more kavana! Making brochos with kavana will help us strengthen our emunah in these troubled times.

13. **Zimun Obligation.** The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 199:7) poskens that when men are obligated in zimun, women who have eaten together with the men b'kvius are obligated to answer their zimun. This means that before starting their zimun, men should wait for the women to return to the table to answer the zimun and that women, as well as men, should be advised at a chasuna to find a seat somewhere in the hall as "benching and sheva brachos are about to begin." See Igros Moshe Orach Chayim 5:9, Anaf 10.

14. **Personal Prayers.**

a. **A Silent Prayer.** The newest Manhattan bus advertisement reads, Rachmana Litzlan, "Sin Is In". Before beginning one's daily sojourn on the subways, buses and streets, a personal prayer to Hashem would be in order, asking the Al-mighty to save him from the physical and spiritual dangers of the street. One should personalize this tefilah—by referring to the specific nisyonos that face him, and take personal caution to minimize nisyonos. For a specific example of a tefilah before entering the street, see Sifsai Chayim (Rav Chaim Friedlander zt"l) Volume 1, Page 26.

b. **A Work Prayer.** The Gemora (Kesuvas 50A) states that one who supports his family members by working fulfills the mitzva of "Oseh Tzedaka B'chal Ais" (Tehillim 106:3). As with any mitzvah, one should daven to Hashem (Who is the One Who is actually mefarnes the whole world) that he properly perform this mitzva, that his parnosa

should be b'nachas and not b'tzaar, b'kavod and not b'bizui, b'heter and not b'issur, and with shefa and bracha. One should ask for guidance and assistance in any of the particular situations that face him specifically in the workplace.

Note: It is very worthwhile to procure a copy of a new, small sefer entitled *Nine to Five* by Rabbi Shmuel Neiman, Shlita, which provides excellent halachic guidelines for workplace situations.

15. **Shalom Aleichem.** On leil Shabbos, as we sing the Shalom Aleichem, it appears that we ask numerous times "Mimelech Malchei HaMelochim." Who is the King of kings?... And that we respond: Hakodosh Boruch Hu! In fact, the words "Mimelech Malchei HaMelochim" are not a question at all, but a statement—that the malachim who have just entered our homes are sent from the Malchei HaMelochim—Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Our misunderstanding of daily or weekly tefillos which we have literally recited hundreds and thousands of times is the reason we should make a seder to study basic be'ur hatefila. For various Hakhel tapes on tefilah, call 718-252-5274.

Note: Be careful not to mispronounce "Mal'chei Hashareis" and "Mal'chei Elyon" (which means "Angels from Above") as "Malchei Hashareis" and "Malchei Elyon" (which means "Kings from Above" R'L), as many unfortunately do.

16. **Amen.** Chazal (Brachos 53B) teach us that a person who answers Amen to a bracha is more worthy than the mevarech himself! The Alter of Kelm is reputed to have said that the entire world's creation was worthwhile if only for the recitation of one Boruch Hu U'voruch S'hmo, and that 1,000 Boruch Hu U'voruch S'hmo do not equal one Amen. The word Amen is an acronym for "Kel Melech Neeman [Al-mighty, Trustworthy King]" and is not to be taken lightly or wasted. In fact, the Mishne Berurah (215:16) prohibits answering Amen to the bracha of a child under the age of chinuch. (See Chinuch Yisroel (Pages 126-7) for the views of others). The Halachos of Amen are primarily found in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim Chapters 124 and 215. The Rema (Orach Chayim 124:7) writes that one should teach his young children to answer Amen, and that a child immediately attains a chelek in Olam Habo upon his beginning to answer Amen! Following are several important points about Amen:

a. The Shlich Tzibur should wait until a majority of the Tzibur has answered Amen before commencing the next bracha of Shemone Esrei (Orach Chayim 124:9).

b. The person making kiddush or hamotzi over lechem mishna should wait until the Amen from those he is being motzi has been concluded before drinking the wine or cutting the challah (Rema, Orach Chayim 167:2, and Mishne Berurah, Seif Katan 20, 84 and 85).

c. It is prohibited to answer Amen before the bracha has been fully completed. This is considered one form of Amen Chatufa (Mishne Berurah 124:8). It is dangerous for a person to respond with an Amen Chatufa (Brochos 47A).

d. Amen should be said in the time it takes to say "Kel Melech Neeman" (Orach Chayim 124:8). When saying Amen, one should have in mind that the specific intent of the bracha is true⁶, that he believes that Hashem has this power, and in the case of a bracha of request (such as the middle brachos of the Shemone Esrei), that may it be Hashem's will that He grant our requests in this bracha (Orach Chayim 124:6 and Mishneh Berurah Seif 25).

We urge you to study Orach Chayim Siman 124 and Siman 215, which are dedicated to answering Amen to brachos.

17. **Asher Yotzar.** The awesome bracha of Asher Yotzar, thanking Hashem for the continuous daily miracle of the proper functioning of our body, is available in a beautiful color poster format, suitable for posting in the home or in public places, and in a pocket-sized edition, all especially designed to increase kavana when reciting the bracha. The posters are

available in several sizes and nusachos and translated into numerous languages.

As Kenneth M. Prager, M.D., stated “While in medical school I began to understand the appropriateness of this short prayer. After seeing patients whose lives revolved around their dialysis machines, and while caring for patients with colostomies and urinary catheters, I realized how wise the Rabbis had been [to institute this prayer].”

For copies of these wonderful materials, call Foundations at 800-700-9577.

18. **Tevilas Keilim-Pointers.**

a. If a utensil requires immersion, it may not be used at all without immersion (not even once) (Yoreh Deah 120:1).

b. Disposable aluminum pans which are used and thrown away do not require tevilah. According to Rav Moshe Feinstein z’tl, these pans can even be used two or three times without tevilah and then discarded (Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 3:22,23).

c. A fruit and vegetable peeler requires immersion (Sefer Tevilas Keilim, p. 221).

19. **Mezusa Pointers.**

a. The Shulchan Aruch (and Aruch HaShulchan Yorah Deah 291:1) is posek that Mezuzos in homes should be checked once every 3 ½ years.

b. The Rema (Yorah Deah 285:2) brings the now famous Maharil that “one who leaves his home should place his hand on the Mezusa and say the posuk of *Hashem Yishmor Tzeisi U’voee Meatah V’ad Olam*, and when one enters, he should place his hand on the Mezusa.” In fact, according to the Arizal, the middle finger should be placed on the Mezusa, then kissed and the person should pray to Hashem, as the Almighty, to protect him (Birkei Yosef 285). For further beautiful hanhagos relating to what to do when approaching the Mezusa, see Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 11:23,24, Chayei Odom 15:1 and Aruch HaShulchan Yorah Deah 285.

c. If one is taking down his Mezuzos to check, and they will be down overnight, one is required to make a bracha when putting back up the Mezuzos (Aruch Hashulchan 289:4)⁷. One should endeavor not to leave his house overnight without the shemira of Mezusa. There is a Mezusa Gemach in Boro Park which can be reached at 718-853-4743 and one in Flatbush which can be reached at 917-847-1025. You may want to start one in your community. In the absence of a Gemach, find a qualified sofer who makes “house calls,” or urge your sofer to provide “same-day service.”

20. **Yichud Issues: Babysitting and Work.** The Shulchan Aruch dedicates an entire siman (Even Hoezer 22) to the prohibition of Yichud. Seforim and taped shiurim (call 718-252-5274 for tapes) are available which discuss contemporary Yichud situations. We wish to highlight the following:

a. **Babysitting.** A boy above the age of nine may not remain alone with a female over the age of twelve. A girl of three or over cannot remain alone with a male over the age of thirteen. Accordingly, care should be taken in arranging babysitters.

b. **Work.** A male and female may not remain alone with each other, even in business situations (employer/employee; proprietor/customers). This means that one who has a trade dealing with women may

remain alone with a woman only if an unlocked door is open to a public place and people are expected to pass by and may likely enter; or there is someone else outside with the key who generally visits during these hours; or a window is open to a public area and people are expected to pass by, provided one can look into the room from the outside without standing on other objects.

Care should be taken before getting yourself into a potential Yichud situation. Even though there may be a heter of ba’aloh bo’ir, there are exceptions and a shaila must be asked in each particular situation. We also urge women to utilize common sense (the “fifth” volume of Shulchan Aruch) before arranging appointments with servicemen, contractors and the like or before allowing strangers to enter the home.

21. **Kosher Wills.** The Torah’s laws of inheritance (Hilchos Nachalos) are very different from those found in state law here in America. The role of dina demalchusa dina does not apply to the laws of inheritance according to most poskim (Rema, Choshen Mishpat 369:11). Accordingly, a will or trust must be prepared in accordance with Halachic parameters. Anyone accepting money allotted through the secular laws of inheritance to which he or she is not entitled according to Halacha may be guilty of an act of theft, unless the inheritors agree to the distribution. The Bais Din of the Mechon L’Horoa has prepared an invaluable booklet entitled “Making a Will the Jewish Way.” The booklet explains the Torah’s laws of inheritance and provides practical guidance as to how a person can have a will prepared in accordance with Halacha. Your lawyer must have knowledge relating to making a kosher will in order for you and (after 120 years) your inheritors not to violate Halacha. For a copy of this free booklet, call the Mechon L’Horoa at 845-425-9565. For the tape of a special Hakhel shiur given by Rabbi Levi Gelbfish, Shlita, on this topic, call 718-252-5274.

22. **Kibud Av V’aim Pointers.**

a. Unless a parent is knowingly mochel, it is forbidden to refer to your father or mother by their first name (even when requested for identification purposes) without a title of honor preceding the first name, whether or not they are present and whether or not they are alive. When being called to the Torah, one must refer to his father as Reb or Avi Mori. Whenever referring to one’s mother, one can use the title HaIsha or Moras (Yoreh Deah 240:2)

b. When honoring parents, very special care and concern must be taken to do it b’sever ponim yofos—pleasantly (Yorah Deah 240:4). The Sefer Chareidim (Mitzvos Asei of the Heart 1:35) and Rav Chaim Shmulevitz (Sichos Mussar 5731:22) both explain that in order to properly perform the mitzvah, one must mentally gain a true appreciation and honor of their parents and literally view them as royalty. Indeed, the Chayei Adom (67:3) known for his succinctness in recording Halacha, writes that the “Ikar Kibud”—the most important [aspect of] Kibud is that “He should view his parents as GREAT personages and important dignitaries of the land.”

23. **Excuses, Excuses.** Consider each of the following statements:

1. “But it is true.”
2. “I didn’t actually *say* anything bad about the fellow.” (when it was hinted)
3. “I did the same thing myself.”
4. “Everybody knows it.”
5. “I’d say it even if he were here.”
6. “I was only joking.”
7. “He will never know about it.”
8. “I wouldn’t mind if someone said that about me.”
9. “We’re close friends so he won’t mind.”

Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, Shlita, in *Guard Your Tongue*, lists these as **invalid justifications** for speaking loshon hara. Please avoid them.

24. **Bikur Cholim Checklist.** Unlike the remainder of the world to whom “kindness” is defined by the whims of the person performing it, Halacha provides the laws for properly performing acts of kindness, whether in the giving of tzedakah (Yoreh Deah 247-259), comforting mourners (Yoreh Deah 376) or visiting the sick (Yoreh Deah 335). Among the important requirements of properly performing the mitzva of visiting the sick person are:

a. **Davening for the choleh while visiting.** Since the Shechina rests above the head of a sick person, tefilah is more efficacious in front of the sick person (Rema, Yoreh Deah 335:4). The tefilah should include the following nusach “Hamokom Yerachem Alecha B’soch Cholei Yisroel”, so that the choleh benefits from the z’chus harabim (Yoreh Deah 335:6). Tefila in the presence of the choleh can be said in any language, because the Shechina is present and, of course, understands all language of prayer (Yoreh Deah 335:5).

b. **Seeking help for the choleh, both physically and emotionally.** Does he have everything he needs—all the medications, the deodorant, toothpaste? Does he need Torah Tapes (718-438-3904)? Does his nurse know what an important person he is? Does he need to see a Rov or more friends? (Yoreh Deah 335:8)

c. **Providing Positive Reinforcement.** Is the choleh kept in the right frame of mind all day? Provide positive reinforcements, words of encouragement, bring in light (open the shades) and cleanliness (clean up the bedroom floor if need be). (Nedorim 40A; Ahavas Chesed 3:3)

25. **Tzedaka Pointer.** The highest form of tzedaka is to help keep someone free of financial support by helping him find a job, or giving him business or work to do (Yoreh Deah 249:6). We all try to give tzedaka daily. Yet, we also all know someone without a job or out of work, especially with the economy in a downslide. Why not try to do the highest form of the mitzva (in addition to v’ahavta l’reacha comocha, and other mitzvos) by making a few calls or doing some legwork to help your friend or neighbor in this regard.

26. **Nichum Aveilim Pointers.** The purpose of comforting aveilim is to alleviate their tzaar with comforting words (Ahavas Chesed 3:6). It is forbidden, however, to say to an avel, “What can you do, it is impossible to change Hashem’s decree” because it appears blasphemous (Rema, Yoreh Deah 376:2). If a person has the mitzva of bikur cholim and nichum aveilim to perform and:

a. He has time to perform both—bikur cholim comes first so that he can daven for the choleh in his presence, which is davening before the Shechinah.

b. If he cannot perform both—nichum aveilim comes first, because it is chesed with both the chayim and with the meisim (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 193:11).

Please note that a person should not talk to the avel until the avel has begun speaking in his presence (Yoreh Deah 376:1).

27. **What a Lesson!** Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, Shlita records the following truly enlightening story in *Love Your Neighbor*:

Although he was very ill and weak, Rabbi Yechezkaïl Sarna zt”l, Rosh Yeshiva of Chevron, exerted himself one Motzei Shabbos before his death to go to the yeshiva to daven Maariv. As he was walking up the steps, he and the person accompanying him realized that the students had already finished davening. Nevertheless, Rabbi Sarna continued up the steps.

“Why are you troubling yourself?” asked his companion. “They have already finished davening.”

“Tefilah with the congregation is the fulfillment of a Rabbinical obligation but blessing the students to have a good week is the fulfillment of “love your fellow man” which is a Torah commandment,” said Rabbi Sarna.

...How powerful a “Good morning” or “Gut Voch” can be—if you mean it that way!

28. **The Ecstasy of Car Pool.** After homework, the most common complaint of mothers with school-age children is the difficulty of managing, driving and conducting carpools on legal holidays, Sundays and other days. There is no question that carpools get high marks on the aggravation scale. However, the Chofetz Chaim (Chovas HaShmira Chapter 13) writes that our nashim tzidkonios should be reminded of the Chazal (Brachos 17A) who teach us that women merit Tichiyas Hameisim through taking their children to yeshiva. Thus the intense, short-term aggravation is very special, as it bears the fruits of eternal life.

29. **Taking a Haircut.**

a. Although apparently a mundane, unimportant and wasteful activity, taking a haircut (and shaving with a permissible shaver—See Volume I, Number 1) actually merits an entire siman in Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 181). The Peleh Yoetz (Chapter on “Giluach”) and Elef Hamagen to Mateh Ephraim 581:105 advise us that before taking a haircut, one should have kavana—specific intent in mind—and preferably articulate that he is about to avoid the aveiros of :

- 1) *Hakofas P’eos Harosh* (rounding the corners of the head); and
- 2) *Hashchosas P’eos Zaken* (cutting the corners of the beard)

The Peleh Yoetz adds that one should additionally have kavana that he is taking a haircut l’kovod Shabbos. We may add that one can also have in mind to fulfill the mitzva of kovod habrios.

b. It is purported that the Rogotchover Gaon (HaRav Yosef Rozen z’tl) never took a formal haircut because of the “bitul Torah” involved in not learning while his head was uncovered. We asked Rav Moshe Sternbuch Shilta, whose shailos v’teshuvos are replete with the ma’aseh rav and personal stories of many poskim why this was the case. After all, can’t one still “think in learning” with his yarmulke off? At the very least, one could review the Six Constant Mitzvos (see Item 31 below). Rav Sternbuch replied that while this was true, the quality of the learning—the pilpul, clarity and depth—would not have occurred without a yarmulke on! Thus, a proper head covering not only provides Yiras Shomayim (Shabbos 156B, Mishne Berurah 2:11), but actually improves the quality of learning!

c. According to the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 4:18-19), after taking a haircut, one must wash his hands with a cup until the wrist (Mishne Berurah, seif katon 38).

30. **One Thousand Mitzvos in Five Minutes.** The Chofetz Chaim (Toras HaBayis, Chapter 2) writes that when one enunciates words of Torah, he can say approximately 200 words in one minute, and each word constitutes a separate mitzvah (as explained by the Gra in his commentary to Mishna Peah 1:1) for which a separate “defense attorney” malach is created. This would mean, of course, that if one established a five-minute seder after Ma’ariv or before going to sleep, he would accumulate 7,000 mitzvos (and defense-attorney malachim) a week, or 365,000 for the solar year. In a lifetime, this translates into millions upon millions of mitzvos. We mention the five-minute seder specifically after Ma’ariv and/or before going to sleep, because the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 238) devotes an entire siman to the absolute requirement to set aside time to learn at night. We urge you to study the fascinating and uplifting words of the Mishne Berurah on this siman. **TONIGHT IS THE NIGHT** to start this “multi-million mitzva” five-minute k’vuyus itim as a z’chus for yourself, your family and K’lal Yisroel.

31. **The Six Constant Mitzvos.** The Sefer HaChinuch lists Six "Mitzvos Temidios" or constant mitzvos which are performed through thought at any time—whether strap-hanging on the subway, waiting for a light at an intersection, pumping gas or waiting in line on Friday afternoon (except of course in restrooms and similar unclean places). These six constant mitzvos are so crucial that they are brought by the Biur Halacha in Orach Chayim 1:1. See also Chayei Adom Klal 1 and the Aruch HaShulchan 1:14. We urge you to review and study the original Hebrew. Rabbi Moshe Goldberger, Shlita, has provided the following translation:

Six Constant Mitzvos-Sefer HaChinuch (with unlimited reward)

1. To believe that Hashem created and is in control of everything.
2. There is no other controlling force besides Him.
3. He is One.
4. To love Him with all one's mind, desire and ability.
5. To fear Him (He punishes for misdeeds).
6. To protect oneself from temptation.

For the tape of a practical and meaningful Hakhel shiur on this topic recently given by Rabbi Yerachmiel Milstein, Shlita, please call 718-252-5274. Additionally, for a business-card sized listing of these six mitzvos, contact Yeshiva Fund, Box 82, Staten Island, New York 10309. The Yeshiva Fund has many, many other useful "business cards" and booklets available. Contact them directly for free sample cards and booklets.

32. **Putting Things in Perspective.** As noted above, even taking a haircut can, and should, be transformed from the mundane into the spiritual. Perhaps one of our most common faults is our failure to think of what we are doing in our daily lives. A Gadol once asked: If the *mon* was a holy, spiritual food to those who intended it as such, and, on the other extreme, was a "steak and potatoes" meal to those with earthy desires, what did it taste like to one who had no specific intention? He replied that it tasted like nothing, because if one has no intent, he has nothing. This can be likened to a non-observant Jew who enters a glatt kosher restaurant and eats a glatt kosher meal simply because it is convenient for him, and not because he intended to eat kosher. This person has not performed a mitzvah (See Orach Chayim 60:4). Not far ahead of him, is the observant Jew who goes to the glatt kosher restaurant because he desires to partake of kosher "Greek-Chassidic cuisine". The true purpose of eating is, of course, to be strong and healthy to properly serve Hashem⁸. Kavana, proper intent, is the key to success. If one specifically intends not to speak loшон hara, he can be credited with observing up to 17 mitzvos Lo S'aseh and 14 Mitzvos Aseh (Sefer Chofetz Chaim, Introduction). Try this exercise once a day: Take something you have to do during the day and determine how many mitzvos you are doing.⁹ It is up to you to transform and elevate your everyday hassles, obligations, drudgery and difficulties (nobody can do it for you). Some examples:

- 1) Doing homework with your third grader who is fighting you every part of the way
- 2) Shopping in the supermarket on Thursday evening
- 3) Cleaning the house
- 4) Balancing your checkbook
- 5) Cooking meals
- 6) Greeting and talking with someone you do not know.

With proper kavana, you are creating z'chusim for yourself for eternity.

* * *

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.

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

5762 Gemach List. Hakhel's 5762 Flatbush/Boro-Park Gemach List, containing over 150 Gemachs of all kinds (simcha, clothing, baby needs, kallah needs, services, money and others) is now available. For a free copy, mail a self-addressed, stamped envelope to our address above.

Hilchos Shabbos for the Winter. What can you ask an akum to do in the winter? Can you make a snowball on Shabbos? Can you shovel snow or clear away ice? Can you hang up wet coats to dry? These and many other important and interesting topics are available on a Hakhel tape on this topic. For a tape call 718-252-5274.

* * *

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.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. See Item 32 for further elaboration.
2. The Shiur Seuda is either equal to the volume of four eggs of bread with other food or, according to other Poskim, the amount of food the average person of that age group eats in a regular meal. We note that the definition of a meal for a child is different than the definition of a meal for an adult, and that, accordingly, one slice may, in all events, be a meal for a child.
3. The *Halachos of Brochos* also concludes "Some establishments knead their pizza dough with fruit juice in order to "insure" that its brocha is borei minei mezonos... It should be noted that even for such pizza, if one intends to eat a shiur seuda, he must wash, make hamotzi and bentch."
4. Because there is a great machlokes both as to: 1) whether benching covers wine which one drinks before washing, and 2) as to what the minimum shiur of wine is for a brocha achrona. See Biur Halacha 174, dibur hamaschil *Ve'chen* and dibur hamaschil *V'afilu*.
5. However, if the mavdil is about to start a meal after Havdala, see Orach Chayim 299:8,9.
6. For example, when responding Amen to the bracha of "Bonei Yerushalayim" in Shemone Esrei, one should specifically think "It is true that Hashem will rebuild Yerushalayim."
7. Some say that no bracha is made in the case where there is only one mezuzah which is to be removed overnight and checked.
8. In fact, the Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 231, Seif Katan 5) writes that Anshei Maaseh actually state this prior to eating.
9. If you need help with the kinds of mitzvos you are performing, see the Chofetz Chaim's Sefer HaMitzvos HaKatzar and the Chofetz Chaim's Sefer Ahavas Chesed (translated into English as the Sefer *Ahavath Chesed*).