

# A COMMUNITY AWARENESS BULLETIN

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1. **A Special Siyum Opportunity.** This year, if you start on Shabbos Parshas Teruma (February 16<sup>th</sup>) and learn only three Mishnayos a day, you will make a siyum on the entire Mishnayos Mesechta Megilah on Purim (only 11 days later), and if you then continue learning only three Mishnayos a day starting from the day after Purim, you will make a siyum on the entire Mishnayos Mesechta Pesachim on the first day of Pesach. Let us utilize our special opportunities!

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

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2. **Urgent Request.** In a recent major Kinus under the theme "Klal Yisroel in a World of Crisis", Rabbi Yisroel Belsky, Shlita, asked the olam if anybody had attempted, at least since September 11, to daven an entire Shemone Esrei at least once with kavana (i.e., without his mind being diverted from the meaning of the words). If some have not yet attempted to accomplish this basic yet monumental task, we urge you to try it now in these desperate times.

NOTE: We have been emphasizing meaningful prayer in recent issues of the Bulletin because, as the Rishonim and Achronim (quoting Chazal) point out, just as we were redeemed from Mitzrayim through heartfelt Tefilah, so will we be redeemed from this, our

final Golus, through Tefilah. See, for example, Rabbenu Bachya Shmos 2:23, Ben Yehoyada to Yoma 55A and the Chofetz Chaim's Nidchei Yisroel Chapter 5.

3. **Your Tefilos Are Needed.** Below are the names of the eight Iranian Jews still being held captive by the Iranian government, Y'mach Sh'mom, for teaching and learning Torah. Please recite Tehilim for them. As the Shulchan Aruch (Yorah Deah 252:1) writes, "There is no greater mitzva than Pidyon Sh'vuyim."

Yaakov ben Mohtairam  
Asher ben Soltanat  
Natzair ben Furan  
Farhad ben Hamdam  
Shahroch ben Shahnaz  
Farzad ben Eshrat  
Doniel ben Soraya  
Ramin ben Marzena (Mazal)

There are also other shvuyim being held captive by terrorists and governments. Please daven for each one of them to be redeemed B'soch Shvuyei Yisroel.

4. **The Power of Purim.** With the tremendous amount to do in the 24-hour period of Purim, we must be careful not to let the tremendous potential and power of Tefilah slip away from us on this day. It is for this reason that many people daven Vasikin on Purim. *The Power of Purim* (Lakewood, NJ) cites the following remarkable quote from

### 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.**

the Sefer Segulas Yisroel:

“...on Purim we find that ‘whoever asks will receive’. Not only is this in regard to money, for on Purim our prayers carry this same strength... and we are answered without being checked who is asking... The Baal Shem Tov taught that on Purim one should rise early to daven and ask Hashem for everything that he needs, not only for himself, but for others as well, as Purim is a time of acceptance just like Yom Kippur.”

Note: The classic Sefer Kav HaYashar writes that likewise on Taanis Esther one should recite Tehillim Chapter 22 (which was recited by Esther before she went to see Achashverosh) with kavana, and then beseech Hashem in the z'chus of Mordechai and Esther. (See *The Power of Purim*)

**5. How Are Men M'kayem the Mitzva of Tosefes Shabbos?** The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 261:2) poskens that on Friday afternoon, one is obligated to fulfill Tosefes Shabbos by adding on from Chol onto Shabbos. The Mishne Berurah (seif katan 19) explains that this is a Torah requirement—a Mitzvas Aseh D'Oraysa. Women fulfill this mitzva dutifully by lighting the Shabbos candles 18 minutes before sunset (shkiah) and accepting Shabbos upon themselves at that time. Men, however, who do not typically accept Shabbos upon themselves at candle lighting (even when they light Shabbos candles) have to consciously be mekabel Shabbos upon themselves before shkiah. Therefore, one should l'chatchila prior to shkiah verbally express that he is “accepting upon himself Shabbos for the purpose of Tosefes Shabbos” (Mishne Berurah 261:21)<sup>1</sup>. This should be done at least two to three minutes prior to shkiah (Igras Moshe, Orach Chayim 1:96) and as early as 15 minutes prior to shkiah if possible (Mishne Berurah, seif katan 22). Merely having in mind to be mekabel Tosefes Shabbos is only acceptable according to some Poskim (Bach and Gra quoted by Mishne Brurah 553:2) and should be avoided if possible.

As the Shulchan Aruch (263:15) and the Mishne Berurah (seif katan 43) pasken that once one has been mekabel on himself Tosefes Shabbos, he can no longer daven a weekday Mincha, all of the above assumes that the person has already davened Mincha and is now in a position to accept Tosefes Shabbos on himself. Many minyonim, however, are in the middle of Mincha when shkiah arrives. In this event, one should then fulfill Tosefes Shabbos by verbally accepting Tosefes Shabbos on himself as soon as he has finished his Shemone Esrei (assuming it is still prior to shkiah)<sup>2</sup>. Notwithstanding his acceptance at that point of Shabbos, the Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchosa (46:5) poskens that he may still answer to the Kedushah of Mincha. (This advice will not help the Shaliach Tzibbur who has to repeat the weekday Shemone Esrei). The Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchosa further poskens that if a person will not be in a position to finish his Shemone Esrei prior to shkiah if he davens with the congregation, he should daven at home alone, be mekabel on himself Tosefes Shabbos and then

go to shul. If a person finds himself in the situation that he no longer has sufficient time to both daven Mincha and accept on himself Tosefes Shabbos prior to shkiah, as there is a machlokes haposkeim as to what one should do, one should consult his Rav.

**6. Applications of the Prohibition of Borer.** Rabbi Mayer Birnbaum, Shlita, writes (in Shamor L'Kad'sho: Practical Halachos of Shabbos, p.17), “If siddurim were piled up after a minyan, you may not sort out the Ashkenaz and Sefard siddurim in order to put them away [however, if you read a little from each siddur, you may put each one into its proper place after reading from it] (Hilchos Shabbos by Rav Shimon Eider, Shlita, p.184 and Igras Moshe, Orach Chaim 4:74 Borer #12).” Of course, Borer on seforim applies to other mixtures of seforim as well. There may be cases where you may be lenient in this area based on facts and circumstances. Please consult your Rav with specific shailos.

**7. Watch Your Step!** In many city homes, the front door leads directly to front steps which lead to a short path leading to the sidewalk. We have noticed many unknowing individuals on Shabbos holding a child, looking into a Sefer, or even taking out a chair to sit on the front steps outside. We caution that without an eruv around the house, the front steps may not be considered part of your home, and it may not be permissible to carry there. The fact that the steps are attached to, or project from, the house by itself is insufficient. We urge you to consult with your Rav as to the principles of Gud Achis, Mechitzos and Reshus HaYachid prior to carrying on your front steps on Shabbos.

NOTE: The above comment similarly relates to the side and front of your property. With Pesach approaching, we must note that one generally cannot move his garbage cans from the side of the house to the front of the house on Yom Tov for garbage pick-up, because it constitutes hotza'ah on Yom Tov (leaving aside muktzah issues). Similarly, unless one has a p'sak from his Rav that in his case it is permissible, one cannot take the garbage out of his house to the garbage cans on the side of his house on Yom Tov.

**8. Caught Carrying on Shabbos.** In our previous Bulletin, we pointed out that the Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchosa poskens that one cannot put anything inside his pockets on Shabbos even inside the house. If someone receives a p'sak from his Rav that he can put items in his pocket on Shabbos or if he might have placed an object in his pockets prior to the onset of Shabbos, he must, as a matter of halacha, check his pockets prior to leaving the house (Orach Chayim 252:7, Mishne Berurah seif katan 55, 56). In spite of all of the above precautions, what happens if you find a tissue, glove, coin or the like while you are walking outside on Shabbos? FIRST, if you have not stopped walking-DON'T!

IF, IN FACT, YOU HAVE NOT STOPPED WALKING:

a. Ask a goy who is walking near you to take it from your hand (don't give it to him). Although this may be the least

common aitzeh, it is the most preferred. (Shmiras Shabbos K'hilchaso 18, Note 218); or

b. It is next most preferable that you drop the object kilachar yad (i.e., turn your pocket inside out or throw the object from the back of your fingers and let the object fall to the ground as you are walking) (Rema, Orach Chayim, 266:32 and Igros Moshe Orach Chayim 2:112); or

c. Quickly run to a close reshush hayachid (other than the one you intended to go to) and remove the object kilachar yad. See Orach Chayim 266, Mishne Berurah seif katan 36; or

d. If it is within a four amos (approx. 6 ½ feet) radius of your discovery, place the item solidly on a makom petur (taller than 9.75 inches and smaller than 13 inches by 13 inches), such as a fire hydrant or parking meter. Kitzur Hilchos Shabbos 39:15.

IF FOR SOME REASON YOU PREVIOUSLY STOPPED WALKING IN ORDER TO REST (AND NOT TO STRAIGHTEN YOUR CLOTHES OR THE LIKE) you cannot use solution (c) above. If the item is expensive, an additional alternative would be to stop walking every four amos until you return to the Reshush HaYachid from which you left, and throw the object into your home kilachar yad (See Mishne Berurah 266, seif katan 29).

9. **What's the Bracha?** A popular new snack product from Israel, known as "Chupli" potato snacks, under the hashgacha of the Badatz Eida Hachareidis lists "potato starch" as the first ingredient, and rye flour and wheat flour as the third and fourth ingredients. We asked the Badatz what the bracha is on this product and they informed us that it was a shehakol.

10. **Brachos Out Loud.** A bracha must be recited loud enough so that you clearly hear yourself say the entire bracha. B'dieved, if a bracha was whispered so quietly that you could not hear it, as long as the words were actually recited, it is valid (Orach Chayim 206:3). We note, however, that if you fail to recite the bracha out loud:

a. you may unknowingly slur or skip words, rendering the bracha invalid;

b. you fail to take advantage of the "Kol Rom" arousing Kavana (Mishne Berurah 185, seif katan 3); and

c. you lose the opportunity for achieving the shleimus (completeness) of a bracha which results from others answering Amen to your bracha (Rema, Orach Chayim 167:2 and Mishne Berurah seif katan 20 and 85).

#### 11. **Amen: Questions and Answers.**

QUESTION 1: One enters a room after a bracha has been made and hears people answering 'Amen'—Should he answer 'Amen' as well?

QUESTION 2: One is already in a room, and does not know what bracha everyone is responding 'Amen' to, whether because he missed some words or was not listening—Should he answer 'Amen' anyway?

ANSWERS: No, one should not answer Amen to a bracha if he does not know which bracha is being recited, as this is one form of Amen Yesoma (Rema, Orach Chayim

124:8). However, if he knows the bracha that is being made, even if he did not hear all the words, he must answer 'Amen' (Mishne Berurah 215; seif katan 6). Moreover, when he hears someone davening or blessing another Jew (even without mentioning Hashem's name), one should answer Amen (Ibid, seif katan 9).

NOTE: If a person is called to the Torah and recites Borchu so softly that ten people do not hear him, the tzibur should not respond with Boruch Hashem Hamevorach but instead should simply answer Amen to the Baal Koreh's response of Boruch Hashem Hamevorach (Rema, Orach Chayim 139:6).

#### 12. **Ice Cream and Ices.**

a. **Bracha Achrona:** Is ice cream or ices a liquid or a solid? The difference l'maaseh is whether you make a bracha achrona. If the ice cream or yogurt is considered a solid, you have up to three or four minutes to eat a k'zayis to make a borei nefashos. If it is a liquid, you must consume a reviiis in a K'dei Shesiyas Reviis (less than a minute), which is impossible. The answer to this question is a great machlokes haposkim. According to Rabbi Aleksander Mandelbaum, Shlita, in *Sefer V'zos HaBrocho*, because of the machlokes, one should not make a bracha achrona on these items, but instead should preferably exempt these items with a borei nefashos on something else. Rabbi Pinchos Bodner, Shlita, in *The Halachos of Brochos* follows the p'sak of Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach Z'tl that ice cream is considered a solid, and if a k'zayis is eaten within three minutes, a borei nefashos would be required. However, ices would be considered a liquid according to Rav Auerbach Z'tl because it is made only with water and flavors (and not with eggs or other ingredients) and no borei nefashos would be made. Note that on the opposite extreme of temperature is plain hot water, clear chicken soup and broth, hot tea, coffee and cocoa. In these cases, the heat and not the cold render them extremely difficult to drink within the time frame permitted for a bracha achrona to be required. Accordingly, one should allow a reviiis of the beverage to cool off or make a borei nefashos on another food eaten at the same time and have in mind to exempt the hot liquid, as well.

NOTE ON TEAS: Flavored teas must have a proper hashgacha. In all events, please read the ingredients in flavored teas to determine whether the product is dairy or pareve.

b. **Grape Juice Ices:** According to *The Halachos of Brachos* (Rabbi Binyomin Forst, Shlita), "Frozen grape juice (i.e., grape ices) or wine may have lost its status as wine since it was transformed into solid food. One should therefore not recite a Borei P'ri Hagofen either on frozen wine or wine that was thickened into solid form."

13. **The K'zavis: Essential Information.** Super Snack products (barbeque twists, taco flavor, falafel bits, etc.) packaged in small "one ounce" bags are becoming more and more popular in America. If you make a borei minei mezonos and consume an entire "one ounce" bag, have you eaten enough to make an Al Hamichya? Rabbi Pinchos Bodner, Shlita, author of the recently-published sefer *The Halachos of K'zavis* has performed scientific testing under laboratory conditions on many foods and products, all of which are listed in the

Sefer. While a one-ounce bag of Super Snacks is more than enough for an Al Hamichya, Rabbi Bodner concludes that 8 tortilla chips, 12 regular jelly beans, 30 chocolate coffee beans, 17 licorice bites, 3 baby carrots or 1 2/3 slices of American cheese are necessary for a borei nefashos. Rabbi Bodner also provides similar need-to-know shiurim (measurements) on scores of fruits and vegetables, bread products and other snacks.

To explain how he arrived at his conclusions, Rabbi Bodner states that a “K’zayis means that the item is the size of an olive. The Shulchan Aruch states that this shiur is a measurement of cubic volume, and explains that volume is measured by submerging an item in water and measuring the amount of water that it displaces. ...an item having the cubic volume of .96 of a fluid ounce fills the requirement of a k’zayis for making a bracha achrona.”

In order to make a bracha achrona on a k’zayis, it must be consumed within Kdei Achilas Pras, which, according to Rabbi Bodner is l’chatchila is up to three minutes, and b’dieved, up to four minutes.

Your Rav may have even larger shiurim than those brought in the sefer, so we urge you to study the laws of brachos, to ask shailos so as to avoid brachos l’vtala, chas v’shalom, and to make the appropriate brachos at the appropriate times (Brachos 35A).

14. **The 100 Yard Hamotzi.** When attending a simcha, dinner, or large gathering, the place to wash netilas yadayim is very often far away and in another room from where your table and roll/bread are located. Caterers often try to accommodate this situation by placing cut-up pieces of bread (less than a k’zayis) near the washing station for you to make a Hamotzi on—as you are standing up and not in the room where you are eating! The apparent reason caterers provide this amenity is so that one will not wait the distance of walking 22 amos (approximately 12-15 seconds) between the time one finishes drying his hands and the time he makes Hamotzi which is the din l’chatchila (Rema Orach Chayim 166:1 and Mishne Berurah, seif katan 4 and 5). However this situation seems to create more issues than the original problem:

- One should preferably make a Hamotzi on a shalem and not on a perusa (broken piece) (Orach Chayim 167:1).
- One should not make Hamotzi on less than a k’zayis (Orach Chayim 167:1; Mishne Berurah seif katan 8).
- One should eat sitting at the table and not standing up (Rambam, Hilchos Deos 5:2).

It would seem that a better aitzah would be to wash your hands at the designated station, while not fully drying them until you get to your table (avoid greeting and shaking hands with people at the simcha on the way). After arriving at your table, make an Al Netilas Yadaim, finish drying your hands and then sit down and make a Hamotzi, which will then be readily accomplished within the requisite time frame of 12-15 seconds.

15. **How to Say Thank You.** Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach Z’tl would never repeat words during davening. One time, however, he repeated the second paragraph of bentsching, “Nodeh Lecha” (We Thank You) after saying it once. Startled, his family members asked him what had happened. He responded that the first time he felt a “Ketzas Hesech HaDaas (slight loss of concentration)—and to say Nodeh Lecha without kavanah was simply not thanks. (See *The Mashgiach of Kaminitz*, page 263)

16. **Birchas Habonim.** The Peleh Yoetz (Chapter on Brachos) brings the Medrash that “all of the good and the power that Eisav’s descendants possess come from the importance he attached to his father’s brachos when he cried out bitterly and said ‘Borcheini gam ani avi.’” Accordingly, the Peleh Yoetz writes, one should go out of his way to receive brachos from his parents because, besides the fact that these brachos are closer to being fulfilled because they come from the heart, one also fulfills the mitzva of kibud av v’aim for which he will be rewarded. We should treasure and seek these irreplaceable brachos.

17. **Netilas Yodaim for Early Risers.** In the winter months, Alos Hashachar (when the first ray of light appears on the Eastern horizon) is quite late in the morning. If one has arisen before Alos Hashachar to attend a shiur, go to mikva, etc., the Rema (Orach Chayim 4:14) requires one who has washed his hands in the morning prior to Alos Hashachar to wash “neigel vasser” again after Alos Hashachar without a bracha. The Mishne Berurah (seif katan 33) holds that it is preferable not to make the bracha Al Nitilas Yodaim before Alos Hashachar. Instead, after Alos Hashachar one should take care of his needs, then make an Al Nitilas Yodaim and Asher Yotzar.

18. **Personalizing Birchos HaShachar.** We are all familiar with the story of the Yerushalmi Jew who, the day after the American presidential election, went around the streets of Geula asking people who had won the election. When he was asked why he cared at all, he responded that when he made the brocha of “Shelo Asani Goy” he did not want to merely have the kavana of thanking Hashem for not making him a low or middle class akum. Instead, with the brocha he wanted to thank Hashem with a full heart for not even making him the “highest class” of akum, the most powerful figurehead in the world.

We should likewise personalize each one of the remarkable Birchas HaShachar. The Yesod V’shoresh Ha’Avodah (2:4), for instance, recommends that we close our eyes and open them prior to concluding the brocha of Pokeach Ivrim. We should similarly picture ourselves getting out of bed (hopefully without physical difficulty) when we say “Matir Asurim,” and delight that we and our family have clothing to wear when saying “Malbish Arumim.” A fresh shot of emunah should precede the brocha of “Sheasah Li Kol Tzorki,” as we emulate our Avos, each of whom said that Hashem had given them everything they really needed (“Bakol, Mikol, Kol”). If having this in mind is too difficult for all 15 Birchos Hashachar

at once, try focusing on one, two or three brachos a week until you feel a greater closeness to each and every one of the brachos.

19. **Special Kavana in Shma.** The Mishne Berurah (25:14) writes that one should feel love in his heart to Ha-Kodosh Boruch Hu when saying the word V'ahavta in Shma so that he does not, Chas V'shalom, appear as "speaking falsely" by not fulfilling that which the Torah requires of him—to love Hashem (this mitzva in fact is one of the Six Constant Mitzvos—See Bulletin Volume II, Number 2). How does one feel this special love? The Chofetz Chaim (Sefer Shmiras Haloshon, Chasimas HaSefer) suggests that this can be accomplished by contrasting the Greatness of Hashem with the humility of man and recognizing the great beneficence that Ha-Kodosh Boruch Hu showers upon us because He loves us. We can affirmatively demonstrate our love by teaching His Torah to others (Sefer Chareidim, Mitzvos of the Heart 1:5) or by making Hashem's name beloved in the eyes of others through our stellar conduct (Chofetz Chaim, Sefer Chomas Hadas Chapter 15 and Yoma 86A). For the tape of a special Hakhel shiur on "Bringing Ahavas Hashem Into Our Daily Lives" by Rabbi Yaakov Feitman, Shlita, contact 718-252-5274.

20. **Your Own Daily Prayer.** The Mishne Berurah (122:2, seif katan 8, quoting the Chayei Odom) lists exactly what a person should specifically daven for daily. We refer you to the original Hebrew, so that the golden words don't get lost in the translation.

Additionally, the following are available:

- For a copy of the Tefilah of the Shelah HaKodesh for Good Children or for a copy of the Tefilah of the Shelah and the Chida for Parnosa, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Hakhel, 1327 East 26<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn, NY 11210
- For a copy of the Chofetz Chaim's Tefilah on Shmiras Halashon (on stickers, kitchen magnets and in other formats), contact The Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation at 845-352-3505.

21. **Tzitzis Pointers.**

a. The mitzva of tzitzis is one of the few mitzvos in which the purpose of the mitzva is explained in the Torah itself. "Limaan Tizkeru V'asisem es Kol Mitzvosai" (Bamidbar 15:40). Accordingly, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 8:8) poskens that, in addition to the regular kavana required of all mitzvos—that a person is doing the Mitzva L'shem Hashem Who commanded us to do it—one must additionally have specific kavana when putting on his Talis that Hashem commanded us in this mitzva "in order to remember all of the Mitzvos to perform them." This special requisite kavana is actually missing from the "LeSheim Yichud" and "Ma Yakar" tefilos recited prior to and when putting on the Talis Gadol. Accordingly, it should be recited separately.

b. Although one is required to put on his Talis Katan immediately after standing up in the morning (Orach Chaim 8:1, Mishne Berurah seif katan 1), the minhag has become to make a bracha only on the Talis Gadol and to have kavana when making the bracha that the bracha is covering the Talis Katan as well (Mishne Berurah seif katan 24). Some, in fact, separate the strands of their Talis Katan immediately prior to making their bracha on the Talis Gadol to demonstrate that the one bracha is covering both the Talis Katan and the Talis Gadol. The question arises, however, for the person who goes to a Daf Yomi shiur, or otherwise learns prior to Shacharis—should he make a separate bracha of Al Mitzvas Tzitzis when putting on the Talis Katan—as he will be waiting over an hour before putting on his Talis Gadol? We have heard in the name of one Chasidishe posek that the custom in Europe was that a married man does not make a bracha on a Talis Katan for any reason. However, Harav Dovid Feinstein, Shlita, poskens that if a person does not go straight to shul to daven after getting dressed, he should make a separate bracha on the Talis Katan at home. This is also the p'sak of Rabbi Zvi Cohen, Shlita, in his encyclopedic work *Tzitzis* (8:10), who asserts that this is the opinion of Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita.

NOTE: When putting on the Talis Gadol, even if you are in a rush, you must stay enwrapped in it for a minimum of three seconds (the distance to walk four amos) before bringing your arms down. (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 8:3)

22. **Shehechyanu on a Talis.** It is our custom for the brocha of Shehechyanu on a mitzva to be made only on a periodic mitzva, i.e., a mitzva that recurs at set times such as Yom Tov, Netilas Lulav, Hadlakos Ner Chanuka, Krias HaMegilah, etc. However, a Shehechyanu is made on a new tallis not because it is a mitzva, but because it is a new "keli", since the wool Talis begged itself is chosuv (typically costing over \$100!). According to the Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 22:1 seif katan 2), if one is making the Shehechyanu the first time he puts on the Talis, he should first make the brocha of L'hisatef B'tzitzis and then Shehechyanu<sup>3</sup>. However, please note that the Mishne Berurah is posek (for those who make a Shehechyanu on "new" fruits<sup>4</sup>) that the Shehechyanu on fruits is different, and that on fruits the person first recites Shehechyanu and then borei p'ri haetz (Orach Chayim 225:3 seif katan 11).

23. **Tefillin Assistance as "Practice".** Many of us know at least one or two (or perhaps more) men in shul whose placement of the Tefillin Shel Rosh is off center or below the hairline and on the forehead. What can we do to help these poor, often elderly, people, who hope and believe that they are performing a mitzva, yet day in and day out, they may R'L instead only be making brochos l'vatala? The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 27, seif katan 33) decries this practice and urges us to help them. The mitzvos of Ahavas Yisroel and Hocheach Tochiach, among others, require us to learn how to properly adjust the Kesher Shel Rosh and then to respectfully approach the mistaken individual and ask him if you could try your "new-found skill" on his Tefillin Shel Rosh, then, after you have made the Shel Rosh smaller, to prove to him that you properly

adjusted the Tefilin—take him over to the rabbi to “kvel” over your new-found skill.

NOTE: When taking off your Tefillin Shel Rosh, it should be removed by a right-handed man with the left hand and with the right by a left-hander (Orach Chayim 28:2, Mishne Berurah seif katan 6), to indicate how difficult it is for you to part with the sacred Tefillin.

24. **Why Was the Car Invented?** The Chofetz Chaim (Igoros U'Maamarei HaChofetz Chaim, Maamar 45) was very bothered by this question, and summarily rejects the notion that its invention was the result of the “increased wisdom” of our times. Rather, “Ka’asher Hisbonanti Heitev B’inyan HaZeh (after much reflection),” the Chofetz Chaim writes, he determined that in the past, extensive and time-consuming travel did not involve bitul Torah, because whenever they traveled and wherever they traveled to, Jews were involved in Torah study. In recent years, with physical weakness and weakness of Torah study prevalent in the world, Hashem in His great mercy and kindness relieved us of the burden of difficult and time-consuming travel so that our Torah study would not be quantitatively or qualitatively affected. Accordingly, concludes the Chofetz Chaim, we must give shevach v’hodaah and be makir tov to Hashem for blessing us with more time to fulfill our purpose in life of Torah study and mitzvos. All else is an illusion.

25. **Teaching Akum Torah.** It is forbidden to teach an akum Torah—or even the Aleph Bais—as the posuk (Tehillim 142) states, “Lo Asah Chen L’chol Goy” (Chagiga 13A, Yorah Deah 246:6, Gloss of Shiurei Bracha). Many times a person may be faced with an akum at work or in the neighborhood who has a “question on the Bible” or who states that there is “something I don’t understand about Jewish ritual.” One must, in a polite way, immediately divert the topic of conversation, just as if it were any other prohibited activity, like loshon hora. There is also a second potential issur of Lifnei Iveir (Tosfos, Chagiga 13A dibur hamaschil Ain Mosrin). Rav Moshe Feinstein Z’tl (Igoros Moshe Yoreh Deah 3:89, 90) adds that the prohibition even includes relating the Agados of Chazal. However, in a situation where an akum is present in the room when Yidden are learning together, they need not necessarily stop learning until the akum leaves (See Ibid.). For the tape of a masterful Hakhel shiur on this topic entitled “Ambassadors of Torah” given by Rabbi Yosef Viener, Shlita, call 718-252-5274.

26. **Don’t Look Now!** As we all know, the Yetzer Hora goes to great lengths to stop a person from learning Torah. This is simply because the study of Torah destroys the Yetzer Horah—The Gemora states, “Borosei Yetzer Hora, Borosei Torah Tavlin K’nedgo” (Kiddushin 30B). One of the Bad One’s great tricks is either to make noise, have someone enter the room or otherwise cause the Torah student to raise his head and look up and around in order to interrupt his limud HaTorah. In Kelm, this would most certainly have been the subject of a k’nas. In a similar vein, the Sefer Lev Eliyahu (Volume 1, page 27) states that Rav Eliyahu Lopian Z’tl was once waiting

for a considerable amount of time for a bus. He looked up to see if the bus was coming, although his looking up would not have made the bus come sooner. As a result, he felt the need to do teshuvah for the needless act of looking up. The Chazon Ish (Kovetz Igros, Part I, Letter 3) writes “Constant (uninterrupted) learning is the secret of holiness and...one should figure out ways to learn without interruption, and to daven for this always.”

27. **Hiring Workers.** The Chofetz Chaim (Sefas Tomim Chapter 5) writes that in order to avoid the Torah prohibitions of gezeilah (robbery) and oshek sechar sochir (withholding compensation) one should fix a price with a worker (repairman, painter, etc.) or craftsman prior to his starting a job. The Chofetz Chaim continues that if the ba’al habayis and the hired worker do not fix the amount and later dispute the amount due and the worker later receives a prutah less than what he is due, the ba’al habayis is called a gazlan and oshek sechar sachir Midoraysa. Moreover, the Chofetz Chaim writes, if no price was fixed before the job commenced, and the ba’al habayis is a talmid chochom (or perhaps someone who “looks like one”), he may also be guilty of Chilul Shem Shomoyim R’L, unless he settles on a price with the worker and obtains mechila b’lev sholem.

28. **It’s All About Money.** The Mishne Berurah (Orach Chayim 584:2 seif katan 8) writes that a mitzva is more elevated if one spends money on it than a mitzva that comes for free. Indeed, the Yesod V’Shoresh Ha’Avoda (11:2) writes that the ikar of a mitzva is to purchase it with money, “as is mentioned in the Zohar HaKodosh in many places—see Parshas Terumah 128A.” Similarly, the Chayei Odom (68:16) quotes Dovid HaMelech (Shmuel Beis 24:24) who insisted on paying Aravna for the land of the Beis HaMikdash “so that sacrifices to Hashem would not be free.” Indeed, we recite in the Shma daily—we are to love Hashem “with all of our heart, all of our soul (our lives) and all our resources” which Chazal teach us includes our money. The dedication of our money to Hashem is equated with the dedication of our heart and even our very lives!

Because a person is close to his money, it is difficult to make proper judgments as to monetary issues that arise. It is for this reason that our Gedolim have always urged us to ask a Rav help us decide and resolve monetary matters, including claims and disputes.

NOTE: Any person involved in business should know and understand that their Rav cannot be expected to *approach them* and ask them how they deal with onaah, ribis, hasagas g’vul, etc. Firstly, the Rabbonim do not, of course, know the details of each one’s business. Secondly, our Rabbonim are like our spiritual doctors. No doctors knock on our doors and ask us how they can help us! WE HAVE TO MAKE THE EFFORT OURSELVES TO SIT DOWN WITH OUR RAV AND REVIEW BASIC HALACHOS AND MAKE SURE WE PROPERLY CONDUCT OUR PARTICULAR BUSINESS. We are all familiar with the story of R’ Yisroel Salanter’s ZT’L talmid who wanted to leave his position as a shochet because he was worried that perhaps he would cause a shechita to be

improperly performed. R' Yisroel responded, "What will you become? A businessman? Shechita involves only the prohibition of neveilah—business involves many prohibitions, such as stealing, coveting, cheating, lying and keeping inaccurate measurements." We must always remember that the Torah is Hashem's guide for us—at home, in the streets and in our business. There are currently many practical seforim in English relating to Choshen Mishpat. For several series of excellent Hakhel tapes on the halachos and hashkafos of Choshen Mishpat, please contact 718-252-5274.

SECOND NOTE: There has been a proliferation of "women's stores" both in storefronts and basements in our communities. It is important that the women proprietors (who are as equally bound to Torah law as men) be familiar with the same parameters of Choshen Mishpat and ribis as men who are involved in business, including such areas as Hilchos Onaas Mamon (overcharging), Gneivas Da'as (not disclosing mislabeling and hidden defects), responsibility for defective merchandise and the obligation to accept returned merchandise, fair competition, Dina D'Malchusa Dina (including sales and income tax laws), not selling D'varim HaAsurim (shatnez or goods from a questionable source), and clothing which meets the requirements of Tznius (such as sleeves past the elbow, dresses past the knees even when sitting, and no slits). Let us not forget what sealed the decree of the Mabul (Beraishis 6:13 and Rashi there); what causes Amelek to come upon us (Rashi on Devorim 25:17); and what we plead for at Neilah on Yom Kippur (L'Maan Nechdal Mai'oshek Yodeinu, See the Chofetz Chaim's Sefas Tamim, Chapter 3). Instead, we should remember that Rashi explains the first word of Birchos Kohanim, "Yevorechacha (May [Hashem] Bless You)" as "a blessing for wealth." Money comes only as a result of Hashem's blessing, and not through acumen, cunning and guile, or even wisdom.

29. **Simcha Shel Mitzva.** The Chayei Odom (68:13) brings the Arizal's explanation of the posuk in the Tochacha that the listed tragedies and suffering have come, "Tachas Asher Lo Avadato ... B'Simcha U'vtuv Levav", as follows: "Because you did not rejoice in the service of Hashem more than your rejoicing in obtaining the greatest of luxuries and the most precious jewels and gems." Let us bring this great lesson into our daily lives. How do you feel when plodding through the snow on the ground to make it to shul on time? To walk an extra block to avoid meeting the wrong crowd? When you put on the sacred Tefillin? Teaching Torah to your child who is being "difficult"? Cooking at midnight on Thursday for Shabbos?

The Torah provides us with a remarkable formula: In order to avoid the curses-rejoice in the blessings!

30. **Cohanim- On Guard.** Every person must be "on guard" against the particular nisyonos that will confront him. Cohanim, even in our time, are uniquely instructed to avoid Tumah (Yorah Deah 369-373). This means that Cohanim must be careful not only to avoid entering cemeteries, but also to avoid such issues as trees which simultaneously overhang both a grave and the sidewalk (the kehillahs of both Flatbush and Kew Gardens Hills have cemeteries in their neighborhoods), or a grave and the road (the Interboro Parkway connecting Brooklyn

and Queens may have this problem). A new issue in this regard has arisen in air travel to and from Israel. We understand that many flights out of Lod Airport, instead of flying over Tel-Aviv in the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> era now fly over the Holon Cemetery. We have obtained the telephone number of Kanfei Yonah, an organization in Israel which provides an updated tape-recorded message in English as to the current status of flights in and out of Lod. The number is 011-972-2-587-0358. However, we cannot take responsibility for the information provided on this tape recording. Every Cohen should check with his own Rav as to the permissibility and status of flying in and out of Eretz Yisroel.

As we go to press, we understand there may be a similar issue with flights arriving into the New York City airports flying over cemeteries in Queens. Please consult with your Rav for updated information.

31. **Ahavas Yisroel Checklist.** The Mesilas Yesharim (end of Chapter 19) writes, "Hakodush Boruch Hu only loves those who love their fellow Jew, and the more one increases his love for fellow Jews, the more Hakodush Boruch Hu loves him<sup>5</sup>. Many have asked—How can I properly fulfill the Mitzvas Aseh of V'ahavta L'reacha Comocho—How can I love someone else as much as myself? *Must I buy another a pair of shoes whenever I buy one for myself?* Rav Eliyahu Lopian Z'tl provides an incredibly practical guideline: The Mitzva is: Do for others what you would want them to do for you; and do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you. This is the formula to apply in all of your life's encounters (Lev Eliyahu, Beraishis, page 253). Using this as your guideline, the following is a list of practical ideas for a person to grow in the great mitzva of Ahavas Yisroel:

1. Did you say hello to at least one person before they said hello to you?
2. Did you make someone smile or laugh today? Did you boost someone's spirits?
3. Were you truly happy to hear good news about a friend? Even if you wish that the same good news would happen to you?
4. Did you judge someone favorably today? Did you see people positively—or did you sum up their lifestyle, pros and cons, with one glance of the eye?
5. How often did you find yourself talking about someone else?
6. Did you actually do any of the following:
  - a. Visit a sick person
  - b. Help the needy in some way
  - c. Invite a guest without family in town for a Shabbos meal
  - d. Patronize Jewish products and stores
  - e. Help a single person find a Shidduch
  - f. Sincerely ask Hashem to bring the Geulah for all of us<sup>6</sup>

For the greatest success, keep a daily record of your accomplishments!

32. **Shmiras Halashon Primer.** We provide the following definitions based upon *Guard Your Tongue* by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, Shlita:

*Loshon Hora:* Speaking badly about another Jew, even if true and even if meant in jest.

*Rechilus:* Reporting to someone what others have done or spoken against him in a manner which may cause resentment.

*Motzi Shem Ra:* Loshon Hora or Rechilus which is not true.

*Ba'al Loshon Hora:* Someone in the habit of speaking Loshon Hora or Rechilus—who loses his chelek in Olam Haba.

**Example:** “Rivka borrowed your book without permission.” This is both Loshon Hora and Rechilus. If it is not true, it is also Motzi Shem Ra.

### 33. **Watch Your Words!**

a. Chazal teach us that a person should never “open a mouth to the Satan” (Brachos 19A). This is brought l’halacha by the Rema in Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 376:2. We therefore caution you not to make statements such as “If you go near the stove, you will get burnt,” “I feel so sick, I must have...,” or “You are going to fall off that bike!”. You can think of many other practical examples. For further reference, please see the Rambam, Hilchos Deos 2:4,5.

b. Are “fortunately” and “unfortunately” kosher words or are they words for “fortune” tellers? It depends on how you use them. If meant to replace “happily” or “regretfully,” it is acceptable. Just as you should think before making dangerous statements, you should also think before making any statements. We have heard from a talmid of Rav Pam Z’tl that he disapproved use of the word “whatcha-macallit,” because it indicated that the person had not thought before speaking.

34. **The Right Choice.** If one has a choice between a Yoshon-labeled product and a Chodosh product (cake, crackers, noodles or the like), and he is not machmir to keep Yoshon generally, is it better for him to purchase the Yoshon product—or does it make no difference at all? The answer is found in the Chofetz Chaim’s Sefer Mitzvos HaKatzar (Mitzvos Lo Sa’aseh 101) in which the Chofetz Chaim clearly writes that one should observe Yoshon “B’chol ma sh’efshar lo (as much as possible).”

35. **Pre-Pesach Updates.** At this time we are not planning on our next Bulletin appearing until after Pesach. All Pesach inquiries as to mislabelings, new products, etc. may be referred to *Kashrus Magazine*, 718-336-8544. Additionally, the major Kashrus organizations all provide special assistance for Pesach with your questions.

### 36. **Important Community Resources.**

a. The Yitti Leibel Help Line – The only anonymous, free Help Line under Halachic auspices providing Frum mental health services worldwide. “When you are hurting and need someone to talk to,” call (718) HELPNOW (435-7669). There are also local numbers in other cities.

b. Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation Shmiras Halashon Shaila Hotline – Monday through Thursday and Motzei Shabbos 9-10:30PM. Poskim specializing in Shmiras Halashon issues. (718) 951-3696.

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Do you know about something important you would like to make your community aware of? Let us know by writing to Hakhel at 1327 East 26<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn, NY 11210.

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### FOOTNOTES:

1. The nusach, according to Rav Moshe Sternbach, Shlita (Teshuvos V’Hanhagos, Orach Chayim 2:297), is “Hareini Mekabel Olai Kedushas Shabbos Kodesh.” For a remarkable teshuva of the Lubliner Rosh Yeshiva (to the Gerrer Rebbe) on Tosefes Shabbos, see his sefer Shailos U’Tshuvos Eretz Zvi.
2. Rav Moshe Sternbach, Shlita (Teshuvos V’Hanhagos, Orach Chayim 3:83) gives another novel approach to this issue. He poskens that there are two kinds of Tosefes Shabbos—one for Kabolas Issur Melacha which one can be mekabel and still daven the weekday Mincha as long as he stops doing melacha—and the regular Kabolas Kedushas Shabbos after which one can no longer daven the weekday Mincha. Accordingly, if one has not yet davened Mincha but can refrain from doing melacha, he should at least be mekabel on himself “Tosefes Shabbos L’inyan Issur Melacha.”
3. We note that, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Z’tl, in Sefer Halichos Shlomo holds that the Shehechyanu is made first and the L’hisatef B’tzitzis second.
4. Today, many poskim hold that it is difficult to make Shehechyanu on many fruits because fruits are available all year round and it is difficult to distinguish first fruits of the new crop. (Rav Aleksander Mandelbaum, Shlita, in his sefer *V’zos HaBrocho*, citing Rab Elyashiv, Shlita). Compare Igros Moshe Orach Chayim 3:34, in which Rav Moshe Z’tl is posek that one is mevarech, but “Mikol Makom L’maaseh Ulei Yesh L’maet B’brachos... v’Befrat B’Birchas Shehechyanu Al Pri Chodosh She’hu Reshus” (Nevertheless, practically, perhaps one should minimize [in making] these brachos... and especially regarding the bracha Shehechyanu on a new fruit, which is optional [and not mandatory]).
5. We note the incredible statement of the Alter of Kelm (Kisvei HaSaba MiKelm page 13) that with V’ahavta L’reacha Comocha one can be m’kayem thousands of mitzvos a minute because for every single Jew that one loves, he is m’kayem a separate Mitzvas Aseh. (Also see Yesod V’Shoresh Ha’Avoda 1:7-8).
6. This checklist is based largely on a checklist developed by N’shei Ahavas Chesed of Brooklyn.