



A PROJECT OF CHICAGO COMMUNITY KOLLEL

# PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

23 Iyar 5767 / May 11, 2007

Parshas Behar-Bechukosai  Rabbi Moshe M. Willner

## Holy Headaches

**H**eadaches can be painful and annoying. Luckily they usually last for just a couple of hours. The Talmud Yerushalmi tells us about a headache that lasted for seven weeks! The Gemara relates that after Rebbe Yona would drink the “Arba Kosos” his head would hurt until Shavuos. It seems that even pain relievers were of no help to him. Isn't it peculiar that this pain lasted precisely until Shavuos? Additionally, how could wine be so powerful as to cause a headache for forty-nine days? The Tiferes Shlomo offers a novel interpretation of this Gemarah.

In order to understand this interpretation, though, we must first establish what the purpose of Sefiras Haomer is. At the time of Yetzias Mitzrayim, Bnei Yisroel underwent a tremendous transition.

They were suddenly lifted from the forty-ninth level of tumah, impurity, to an extreme level of closeness to Hashem. Because Klal Yisroel were in grave danger of sinking to the point of no return, Hashem had to redeem them. He injected them with this high level of spirituality, even though they did not earn it, thus enabling them to leave Mitzrayim with great miracles. However, as soon as the immediate spiritual danger for Bnei Yisroel had passed, this gift of holiness dissipated. Because this holiness was not earned, it did not last. Hashem therefore gave Bnei Yisroel an opportunity to recapture that closeness of Yetzias Mitzrayim once again. This time though it would have to be through our their own effort. The seven weeks following Pesach were given to Bnei Yisroel to climb the ladder of Holiness. After utilizing this time correctly, they were zoche once again to that special closeness with Hashem at Har Sinai.

This sequence of events plays itself out every year.

When Rebbe Yona would drink the Arba Kosses, he would experience the elevation of Yetzias Mitzrayim. The next day, to his dismay, this high level was gone. Just as by Yetzias Mitzrayim, he now needed to reacquire that spiritual level through his own hard work. For Rebbe Yona, having tasted this closeness to Hashem, the seven week waiting period was torture. His strong desire to once again be together with Hashem caused him to have a head-

ache. Finally, after climbing the ladder and reaching Shavuos, the headache was gone! Once again he was one with his Creator.

None of us are afflicted with headaches of this nature. However, the counting of the Omer itself can bring us a touch of this yearning for Kabbalas HaTorah. By counting each day we pump into ourselves an excitement for the upcoming Yom Tov of Shavuos. This excitement can be heightened by learning the mishna in Perek Six of Pirkei Avos that enumerates the forty-eight ways to acquire the Torah. Although it is hard to fathom, we can attain perfection in all forty-eight ways in such a short time. We can focus on one kinyan at a time and try to incorporate each one into our lives at least for one day. Through putting forth effort to feel the excitement building up to Kabbolas HaTorah, while working on the forty-eight ways to acquire Torah, we will surely merit a truly meaningful Shavuos.

*Rabbi Willner learns full-time at the kollel.*

CHICAGO COMMUNITY KOLLEL

is pleased to Welcome as our  
Special Shabbos Hakhel Guest,

**HARAV EPHRAIM WACHSMAN**

THIS SHABBOS  
*Parshas Behar-Bechukosai*

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ONEG SHABBOS:

9:15 pm at the home of Rabbi & Mrs. Sidney Glenner  
SHABBOS AFTERNOON:

5:00 pm at Kehillas Tiferes Yisroel  
Hosted by Mr. & Mrs. Asher Kohn

SHALOSH SEUDOS following Mincha  
7:00 pm At the Kollel sponsored by Mr & Mrs. Joel Klein  
MELAVE MALKA

10:00 pm at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Avi Goldfeder

# HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

## The Wedding Fast

*Rabbi Hensch Plotnik*

As the days of sefirah come to a close, many of us will have the opportunity to once again share in a simchas choson v'kallah. Minhagim abound not just around the wedding day itself, but extend back to the "erev chasuna" as well. These minhagim add new dimensions to the Yiddish concept of kiddushin.

On the day of his descendant's weddings, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach Zt"l would ask the choson and kallah to daven for him due to the special powers of tefilla they possess on that day. Aside from the viduy that is recited on the chasuna day, the choson and kallah fast as well as yet another display of the teshuva and mechilas avonos they merit as they begin their new life of hashroas hashechinah. There is however a dispute amongst the poskim as to the exact reason for the fast, resulting in various differences in the halacha and minhag. Interestingly, there was a custom to hold an official celebration the night before the wedding as mentioned in earlier poskim. The Beis Shmuel (35:2) writes that part of the reason for this seudah was to ensure the choson would meet the kallah before their marriage, something the Gemora maintains as an absolute requirement. This custom was abandoned over time because it led to irresponsible behavior amongst the merrymakers in attendance. The Yismach Moshe had to go so far as to ban any Rav from being mesader kiddushin at weddings that held such celebrations on the night prior to the chasuna (Sefer Minhag Yisrael Torah p. 109).

The minhag of fasting, as mentioned above, is mentioned in the Ramo (562 and 573). One reason given is because the wedding day is one of atonement (Maharam Mintz). Another reason mentioned in the earlier poskim is that this was a safeguard against being drunk at the wedding (Mahari M'Brons). A third reason given is to fulfill in a harmless manner the dictum of the gemara that teaches no wedding is free of discord or difficulty. Yet a fourth reason suggested is that fasting (Tashbetz) is a reminder of when Bnei Yisroel fasted at Matan Torah. Similarly, we have other minhagim at a chasuna that reflect Matan Torah, such as accompanying the choson and kallah down to the chuppah with candles. (The minhag of fasting was not adopted in many Sephardic communities.)

Based on the first reason, the Bach maintains that even were the chupah to take place before night, the fast must be com-

pleted until the end of the day. However, common practice is to end the fast after the chupah as mentioned in numerous seforim. The analogy has been drawn to Motzei Yom Kippur which takes on the status of a Yom Tov. So too here, mechila has been by the chupah, and the celebration can then begin.

In line with the second reason (drunkenness) it would stand to reason that even if nightfall arrives, if the chupah was not yet held, the fast would not end either. R' Shlomo Zalman Zt"l would permit eating in such a case, as long as intoxicating beverages were avoided. (The Aruch Hashulcahn writes that the minhag is to be machmir. One should obviously consult their Rav for direction).

When davening during the fast itself, aneinu is said but with the omission of the words "b'tzara gedola anachnu" which is inappropriate for a fast of this nature. (R' Shlomo Zalman Zt"l quoted in Mevakshei Torah)

On days that tachanun is not recited min hadin, the Chosson and Kallah don't fast. These days include Chanukah, Purim, Isru Chag, 15<sup>th</sup> of Av, and Tu B'shvat. There are other days that tachanun is omitted but not all are in agreement that those days exempt one from the ta'anis. These include the month of Nissan, Rosh Chodesh Sivan through Shavuous and the days between Yom Kippur and Succos. A shaila should be asked if this situation arises.

Unlike voluntary fasts, this one does not require a kabolos ta'anis the day before. The S'dei Chemed feels, based on the second reason, that since women do not tend to indulge in drunken behavior, a kallah need not fast. Therefore, when necessary, there are certainly grounds to be lenient. If the chosson finds it too difficult to fast, there is room to be lenient as well (Aruch Hashulcan 61:21). As always, one should consult with a responsible halachic authority.

In conclusion, a Jewish marriage is defined by its kedusha. Our appreciation of that kedusha and our attitude towards it, is what has given us the distinction of being an Am Kodosh. May we continue to safeguard our holy minhagim, thus infusing our marriages with sanctity.

*Rabbi Plotnik, an alumnus of the kollel, is rav of Beis Tefilla and R"m in Yeshivas Meor Hatorah.*