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PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Naso ✍️ Rabbi Moshe M. Rokach

Early Intervention

In this week's *haftorah* an angel informs *Manoach's* wife that she will conceive a child and issues the following instructions:

"And now, be careful not to drink wine or aged wine, and not to eat anything impure. For you will conceive and give birth to a son; a razor shall not come upon his head, for the child shall be a nazir of Hashem from the womb..."

After *Manoach* is told of this encounter, he *davens* to Hashem that the angel should return and "teach us what we should do with the child." At first glance there is an obvious difficulty with this account. What prompted *Manoach* to request the angel to return and provide additional guidance? The angel's instructions seem clear.

The *Malbim* explains that *Manoach* was confused because the angel's instructions were directed to *Manoach's* wife. Although she was clearly told not to drink wine, no mention was made of the child. *Manoach* wondered whether the prohibition was intended to apply to the child as well and recalled the angel for clarification of this point.

In light of the *Malbim's* explanation, the angel's follow-up seems strange. Instead of explaining what should be done with the child, the angel repeats his initial instruction regarding *Manoach's* wife:

"Of everything I spoke to the woman she should be careful. Anything that comes from the grapevine she shouldn't eat, wine or aged wine she shouldn't drink, anything impure she shouldn't eat. Everything that I commanded her she should observe."

If *Manoach* was seeking clarification regarding the child's *nazir* status, one would expect the angel's response to address this point. Why does the angel again issue instructions regarding *Manoach's* wife and seemingly ignore *Manoach's* question regarding the child?

R' Chaim Brisker zt"l is quoted as offering the following interpretation of the *psukim* discussed above. *Manoach* wondered why the angel did not refer to the child because *Manoach* assumed that wine was prohibited to his wife due to her becoming a *nazir*. The angel's response implied to *Manoach* that this assumption was

incorrect. Instead, *Shimshon* was to be a "nazir mi'beter" – a *nazir* from the time of conception. The only reason *Manoach's* wife could not drink wine was because the wine would provide *Shimshon* with nourishment and compromise his status as a *nazir*. When the angel simply repeated the original message, *Manoach* realized that no further elaboration was needed because the child's prohibition of wine was already implicit in the prohibition stated for *Manoach's* wife.

Based on this we can also understand why *Manoach's* wife wasn't instructed to refrain from cutting her hair as is usually the case with a *nazir*. Since cutting her hair would have no effect on *Shimshon* and she herself was not a *nazir*, it was permitted. This is also why the angel did make a point of mentioning that *Shimshon's* hair not be cut. Unlike the prohibition to drink wine which was already implied from his mother's prohibition, not cutting his hair required specific mention.

We see from *R' Chaim Brisker's* comments that a Jewish child's preparation for *kedusha* can begin from very early on - even prior to birth. In fact, *R' Moshe Shternbuch shlita* writes that an expectant mother who is careful about the *kashrus* of the foods she eats will impart *kedusha* to her child enabling him to succeed in *Torah* and *mitzvos*. Eating non-kosher foods, on the other hand, will taint the child's *kedusha* and stunt his spiritual growth (*Ta'am Va'daas, Shemin*).

In a similar vein, we see that even unborn children played a crucial role in *kabbalas haTorah*. The *Medrash* relates that when *klal yisrael* declared *na'aseh v'nishmah*, Hashem demanded that they provide guarantors to back up this commitment. They inquired who could possibly assume this role to which Hashem responded, "your children will be the guarantors." Hakadosh Baruch addressed the unborn children directly and they agreed to be the guarantors for *kabbalas haTorah*. As *Shavuot* approaches, may we be *zoche* to train ourselves and our children to strive for *kedusha* and follow the *derech Hashem*.

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HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

Onions

Rabbi Yisroel Langer

One of the most common kashrus issues that arise in the kitchen is with the use of onions. A raw onion has the status of a “davar charif”- a sharp food, which has the ability to absorb and transmit taste in a unique fashion. In this article we will attempt to explore some common situations that come up in the kitchen with the use of an onion. Being that situations may vary, the reader is cautioned not to rely on anything stated here as a final psak. This article is meant to help acquaint ourselves with some of the issues pertaining to onions so that one may recognize when there is a halachic problem, and be able to present the question to a rav in an intelligent fashion.

Background

A davar charif such as a radish or onion differs from a regular food in three respects:

1) Ordinarily, in order for the “taste” of a food to be transferred into another food or utensil there needs to be heat. For example, if one were to use a non-kosher knife to cut cold food, the food only needs to be rinsed and in some cases scrubbed prior to being eaten (Chochmas Adam 47:3). (A fruit or juicy vegetable may have to be scraped.) However, if the food is hot, then the pressure of the blade will cause the non-kosher “taste” that is absorbed in the blade of the knife to be transferred throughout the food (Shach siman 94 s.k.27). With a davar charif, even if the food is not hot, the pressure of the knife will impart of its taste throughout the food. Therefore, if one cuts an onion with a fleishig knife, that onion cannot be eaten with milk.

2) Although one is never permitted to cook with any non-kosher pot, the food cooked inside will only become prohibited if the pot was a “ben yomo”. That means, the kosher food only becomes prohibited if the pot had non-kosher food cooked in it within the last 24 hours. The same is true for one who cooks dairy food in a fleishig pot, (or vice-versa). The dairy food only becomes prohibited if it was cooked within 24 hours of the cooking of meat. The logic behind this rule is that any “taste” in the walls of the pot becomes stale after 24 hours. However, if the food in the pot is a “davar charif”, many rishonim hold that the sharpness of the food can rejuvenate the “stale taste” thereby causing the taste in the pot to prohibit the sharp food. We are machmir like these rishonim. Similarly, if one uses a knife that is not a ben-yomo on a davar charif such as an onion, the onion will rejuvenate the “taste” coming out from the blade of the knife, and the onion will then take on the same status as the knife. (ex. If the knife is fleishig, the onion will become fleishig.)

3) If one cooks parve food (ex. Macaroni) in a clean fleishig ben yomo pot and that macaroni is then **mistakenly** mixed with cheese, the macaroni may still be eaten because of the heter of “nat bar nat”. This means that since the “meat taste” is two steps removed from the original meat (the meat gave taste into the pot, and then that taste traveled into the macaroni) it is not considered strong enough to become prohibited when combined with the cheese. However, with a “davar charif”, many rishonim hold that there is no heter of “nat bar nat”. For example, if instead of macaroni, there was an onion cooking in the pot, the onion (prior to becoming cooked) is able to “pull out” the “taste” from the walls without the taste becoming weaker. If one would then mix the onion with milk it would become prohibited. We are machmir like these rishonim.

Using the above information let us deal with some common situations that may arise in one’s kitchen.

Q: If one cuts an onion with a clean fleishig knife and then uses the onion in their potato kugel, does one have to wait 6 hours after eating the kugel prior to eating dairy?

A: At first glance this question would seem to be subject to a machlokes achronim. The Pri Migadim (O.C. AA 494:6) rules that one may not eat an onion cut with a milchig knife if he is fleishig. (The Yad Yehuda 89:5 says that if the knife was not a “ben yomo”, one may be lenient and not wait 6 hours be-

fore eating the “milchig” onion.) However, Hagaon R’ Akiva Eiger (glosses to Y.D. 89:3) rules that one who eats a davar charif cut with a fleishig knife does not have to wait 6 hours prior to eating dairy. In our case, when one ate the kugel it would seem to be dependent on the above machlokes. Yet, some poskim say that there is no disagreement here. Although an onion cut with a milchig knife cannot be eaten when one is fleishig, an onion cut with a fleishig knife is not “strong enough” to make a person fleishig requiring him to wait 6 hours. This is indeed the ruling of many poskim including Hagaon R’ Moshe Feinstein Zt”l (as heard by R’ Yisroel Reisman Shlita). Other poskim rule leniently in both situations and whether the onion was cut by a fleishig knife or milchig knife, no waiting is required. (See also Daas Torah 494:3)

Q: If one cut an onion with a clean fleishig knife and then cooked the onions with eggs and cheese what is the status of the eggs and the pot?

A: Based on the rules that we discussed above, it would seem that the eggs would have to be thrown out and the pot kashered. However, if the fleishig knife used to cut the onions was not a ben yomo, there is an opinion (Beis Meir Y.D. 96:3) that b’dieved, the eggs do not become prohibited. The rationale here is that there are rishonim who are of the opinion that sharp foods do not rejuvenate “stale taste”, and there are rishonim who are of the opinion that we say “nat bar nat” even with sharp foods. B’dieved, when there is a “non ben-yomo” together with a situation of nat bar nat, one may be lenient (except with radishes which are more strict). Some poskim (including Hagaon R’ Pam Zt”l) rely on the ruling of the Beis Meir and permit the eggs if the knife was not a ben yomo.

Q: If one cut an onion with a clean fleishig knife, may he now place that onion into a pareve blender or food processor?

A: We mentioned earlier that a davar charif can pull “taste” **out of a utensil** without being reduced to a “nat bar nat”. The achronim argue as to whether in the reverse situation a davar charif injecting **taste into a utensil**, diminishes the taste to a nat bar nat. The Magen Avraham (451:31) is strict and holds that a davar charif injects meat taste into a utensil at “full strength”, while the Even Haozer (Y.D. 96:3) and Chavas Daas are lenient. Lechatchilah, one should be machmir and not put an onion cut with a fleishig knife into the blender. B’dieved, if it was done, the blender may still be treated as parve (Harav Dovid Zucker shlita, see also Badei Hashulchan 96:56). If however, the onions that were cut with a fleishig knife were then fried in oil, the onions lose their sharpness and can be put into a blender even lechatchilah. (See Aruch Hashulchan 96:20 who is of the opinion, that if onions were merely mixed with oil they lose their sharpness. However, the Darchei Teshuvah 96:20 strongly disagrees with the Aruch Hashulchan on this matter.)

Q: If one cuts an onion with a parve knife on a milchig plate, does the milchig “taste” from the plate transfer to the onion?

A: According to the Chochmas Adam (56:2), the pressure of the onion against the plate at the time of the cutting will cause the onion to absorb “taste” from the plate. Others disagree that the pressure on the plate is not sufficient to bring about a transfer of taste. For a final ruling one should consult his rav.

Q: Can one cut an onion with a fleishig knife to be eaten with fish?

A: Chazal tell us that it is a sakana (dangerous) to eat fish and meat together. However the poskim (Taz Y.D. 95 s.k.3) permit one to cook fish in a clean fleishig pot as the “fleishig taste” from the pot cannot prohibit the fish. (Some are stringent and have a parve fish pot out of fear that some meat residue may be left behind and get cooked with the fish.) However, when it comes to an onion cut with a fleishig knife, the onion pulls out a strong taste of fleishig. Therefore, some poskim say that it is preferable not to use a fleishig knife to cut an onion that is going to be used with fish (Darchei Teshuvah siman 116 s.k. 27).

Note: An onion is one example of a davar charif. Other examples are radishes, garlic, olives, lemons, horseradish and according to some poskim, pickles.

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