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PARSHA

ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Ahrei Mos— Kedoshim ✍️ Rabbi Shimon Zehnwrith

Good and Frum

“And Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of Aharon’s two sons...” (Vayikra 16:1)

The Midrash on this week’s parasha (Vayikra Rabbah 20:4) explains Moshe’s instructions to remove the bodies of Aharon’s sons, Nadav and Avihu. According to the Midrash, their bodies were in the most sacred part of the Mishkan, the Holy of Holies (see Eitz Yosef *ibid.*). Moshe called upon Aharon’s cousins, Mishael and Eltzafan, to remove the bodies “from before the kodesh” (Vayikra 10:4). The Midrash points out that the pasuk doesn’t state that Moshe asked them to remove the bodies, “from before the aron” - the Holy Ark, but rather, “from before the holy one” – referring to Aharon HaKohen. The Midrash equates this to saying, “Remove the deceased from the presence of this mourner; how long shall this mourner suffer?”

It seems, from the Midrash, that Moshe’s primary reason for removing the bodies was to reduce Aharon’s pain. Wasn’t there a more urgent reason to remove the bodies? They were in the spiritual heart of the Mishkan. After the soul leaves, the lifeless body carries the most severe form of spiritual impurity, and these two corpses were resting in the holiest place in the universe. What a terrible desecration of Hashem’s honor! Moshe was surely consumed with a powerful drive to restore the purity and holiness of the Kodosh HaKodashim, and every fiber of his being wanted to take action to remove this impurity. The pain of Aharon, a single individual, should be a secondary consideration in the face of the terrible desecration of the Mishkan that was taking place.

In addition, Aharon’s sons were dead and Mishael and Eltzafan’s action would only slightly reduce Aharon’s suffering. Why did Moshe feel that this small measure of consolation was more important than even the chillul Hashem of having corpses in the Mishkan?

We tend to associate spiritual greatness with acts between man

and Hashem: prayers, fasting, and similar deeds. The mitzvos that deal with relating to our fellow man somehow get downgraded to a lower priority. In reality, they are at least of equal importance, and in some ways the interpersonal mitzvos are the highest form of spirituality one can achieve.

The classic example is the Torah’s elaborate description Avraham’s chessed, in contrast to the complete omission of his self-sacrifice to avoid idolatry at the furnace of Ur Kasdim. Our closest emulation of Hashem, explained the Alter of Slabodka, is through acts of chessed, not by self-sacrifice. In a similar vein, the Alter’s close talmid, Reb Dovid Leibowitz, zt”l, used to point out that we find Hashem often described as good, kind, and merciful, but nowhere as being “frum.” Reb Yisrael Salanter once gave up davening Kol Nidrei in shul, because on the way there he heard a baby crying, and found that a young child left to baby sit in the house was scared of being alone. He understood that staying in the house to comfort the child was a greater act of serving Hashem than davening on Yom Kippur in shul. From this Midrash we see the same concept: Moshe’s greatest concern was Aharon’s feelings and how he could lessen, even slightly, Aharon’s pain.

It can sometimes be very tempting to focus on outward actions of serving Hashem at the expense of other people’s feelings. We can get too absorbed in our “own” mitzvos and not notice the suffering of others. The Torah here is teaching us that sensitivity to our fellow man is more important than removing the most severe violation of impurity from the holiest place in the world. May we strive to keep our eyes, ears and hearts open to notice when other Jews are in pain or difficulty, and seize the opportunity to emulate Hashem with our kindness and compassion.

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HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

Making Early Shabbos

Rabbi Moshe Rosenstein

With the long summer days already here, the starting time for Shabbos just keeps getting later and later. For some, especially those with small children at home, these late weeks can be quite difficult, with the Shabbos Seuda sometimes only beginning hours after the children have gone to bed. It has therefore become a common practice for families to “bring in Shabbos early” during these months. We will examine some of the background of this practice, as well as some pertinent halachic issues that can arise.

The Halachic Background

The practice of making Shabbos early is not a new convention. In fact, the Gemora tells us that this was the practice of the *Amora*, Rav. The Gemora relates that Rav would daven the Shabbos davening on Erev Shabbos and would even make the Shabbos Kiddush on wine at that time as well.¹ The *Rema* therefore rules, “If one wants to be early and accept Shabbos upon himself from the time of *Plag HaMincha* and on, he is permitted to do so.”² [*Plag HaMincha* is half way between the times of *Mincha Ketana* and *Shkias HaChama*.] Prior to this time, one cannot accept Shabbos upon himself. Even if he tries to do so, his acceptance is meaningless.³ However, once *Plag HaMincha* has arrived, if one accepts Shabbos on himself, it is Shabbos for him and all regular Shabbos prohibitions apply.⁴ In doing so, one fulfills the *mitzvah* of *Tosefes Shabbos* – the requirement to accept Shabbos upon one’s self early (and to end Shabbos late).⁵

Telling Others to do Melacha

Even though, as mentioned above, once a person accepts Shabbos they are forbidden from performing any Shabbos *melachos*, there is, however, one leniency that applies during this time of *Tosefes Shabbos*. It is permissible during this time to ask of another Jew (who has not yet accepted Shabbos)⁶ or non-Jew⁷ to do anything we need, even if that act would involve *melacha*. Even though on Shabbos itself it is never permissible to tell a Jew to do *melacha* and there are severe limitations regarding when a non-Jew may be instructed to do prohibited activity for a Jew, during this time none of these restrictions apply.

Husband and Wife

There is a discussion amongst the *poskim* regarding the status of a woman whose husband has accepted Shabbos early. There are those who maintain that once her husband accepts Shabbos, a woman is automatically considered to have accepted Shabbos upon herself as well and she may no longer perform any forbidden Shabbos *melachos*.⁸ However, the opinion of HaGaon Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt”l* was that women are not bound to begin Shabbos at the same time as their husbands. They may continue doing *melacha* and preparing for Shabbos

even after their husbands have gone to shul and accepted Shabbos upon themselves (providing, of course, that a majority of the community had not yet accepted Shabbos, as below).⁹

The Entire Community Accepts Shabbos Early

If one lives in a community that accepts Shabbos early, once the majority of his community has accepted Shabbos he must now conduct himself as if it were Shabbos for him as well and he is forbidden from performing any Shabbos prohibitions.¹⁰

If, however, there are several shuls in the town, even if someone is a “regular” in a particular shul, that shul is not considered his “community” with respect to the prohibitions of Shabbos setting in for him when his shul accepts Shabbos. If there are still a majority of shuls in town that did not yet accept Shabbos, he may continue to do *melacha*¹¹ until either he accepts Shabbos upon himself or the majority of the shuls in that town have accepted Shabbos.

Furthermore, the *poskim* rule that if the community is accepting Shabbos early merely as a convenience (as many do in the summer) then under no circumstances is one obliged to begin Shabbos with them.

One rule, however, will apply to any situation of a shul making early Shabbos. If one arrives late and the congregation has already accepted Shabbos,¹² he may not daven a weekday *Mincha* in the actual sanctuary that the *tzibur* is davening in.

¹ *Berachos* 27b

² 261:2

³ *Mishna Berura* s.k. 255. If it were to happen that in the Summer when making early Shabbos, a woman accidentally lit candles prior to *Plag Hamincha*, a *shailoh* should be asked regarding what the proper procedure should then be.

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ 261:2

⁶ 263:17

⁷ *Melachim Umnayich* chap. 3

⁸ This was the opinion of HaGaon Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky *zt”l* as related by HaRav Dovid Zucker *shlit”a*. In fact, during the summer months in Rav Yaakov’s shul, the *luach* of *zmanim* for Shabbos included the time by which women should have lit candles, corresponding to the expected time for the *tzibbur* to have reached *Mizmor shir*. See also *Megillas Sefer (teshuvos) siman 7*.

⁹ *Igros Moshe* O.C. 3:38. Rav Moshe contends, however, that the wife should not perform any *melacha* specifically for her husband during this time. See, however, *SS”K* 46 note 42 who questions this restriction.

¹⁰ See *Shemiras Shabbos K’Hilchaso* 46 note 31 that this may only apply if the *tzibbur* accepted Shabbos together, as a *tzibbur* and not if they accepted it individually.

¹¹ 263:12 and *SS”K* 46:7

¹² See 263:16 – he may begin his *Mincha* before the congregation accepts Shabbos, however, even if he knows he will not finish his *Shmoneh Esrei* prior to their accepting Shabbos (at *Mizmor shir l’yon haShabbos* or *Bor’chu* of *Maariv*).

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