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PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Behaloscha  Rabbi Aaron Rokach

Knowing Your Place

By the word of Hashem they camped, and by the word of Hashem they traveled... *Bamidbar* (9:23). This *posuk* describes the *b'nai yisrael*'s travels through the desert following the lead of the *amud ha'anah*, the pillar of smoke.

The *gemora* in *meseches Shabbos* (31b) discusses this *posuk* in connection with *soser*, destruction, one of the 39 forms of labor prohibited on *Shabbos*. The *gemora* begins by mentioning an opinion that the act of destruction is prohibited on *Shabbos* only if one dismantles a structure with the intention of reassembling it in its current place. However, taking a structure apart in order to transport and reconstruct it in a different place would not be prohibited. *Rabba* raises a basic problem with this view. We know that all 39 forms of labor prohibited on *Shabbos* are derived from the types of labor performed in connection with the *mishkan*. When the *b'nai yisrael* were prepared to travel, the *miskan* was dismantled so that it could be transported and then reassembled at the new place of encampment. If so, disassembling a structure for the purpose of transporting it and reassembling it in a different place should be prohibited on *Shabbos*, reflecting the procedure used in the *mishkan*. *Ulla* answers this question cryptically by citing the *posuk*, “*by the word of Hashem they camped, and by the word of Hashem they traveled*.”

Ulla's answer is very puzzling. Why should the fact that the *b'nai yisrael* followed the word of *Hashem* in their travels cause us to disregard their movement from one place to another in the desert?

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz, in *Sichos Mussar*, offers a fascinating explanation of *Ulla*'s words. The miraculous guidance enjoyed by the *b'nai yisrael* during their travels through the desert presented a profound challenge. As the *Bnai Yisroel* traveled

and camped solely at the word of *Hashem*, it became increasingly clear with every step that they had no control over the process. After days of difficult traveling, tired and eager to rest, the *b'nai yisrael* couldn't simply stop and make camp unless they were told to do so. When they had camped for a while and were prepared to move on they could not do that either. Again, they had to wait for the order to proceed. Rather than becoming frustrated by this predicament, the *b'nai yisrael* rose to the challenge. They transcended mundane concerns of where they were located and where they were going, and focused solely on following the leadership of *Hashem*.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz analogizes this attitude of the *b'nai yisrael* in the desert to a child who is being carried in his mother's arms. When asked where he is, the child will reply that he is in his mother's arms. As the mother walks from place to place the child's answer remains the same. The child is focused only on remaining in his mother's arms and relies on her to take him wherever she sees fit. This is how *Ulla* interpreted the *posuk* “*by the word of Hashem they camped and by the word of Hashem they traveled*.” In the desert, the *b'nai yisrael* rose above any personal concerns regarding the place they were located and the place they were going to and focused solely on consistently remaining in the place where *Hashem* led them.

As we journey through life, we are confronted with a wide variety of differing situations. We enjoy some, but sometimes want to just rush past others. May we be *zocher* to learn this lesson from the *b'nai yisrael* in the desert, that we are always in exactly the place we are supposed to be, and focus on utilizing the opportunities that it presents.

Rabbi Rokach learns daily at the kollel.

HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

Berachos on Beverages

Rabbi Yisroel Langer

Boruch Hashem, we are finally enjoying warmer weather after a freezing, grueling Chicago winter. To ensure a safe summer, the increase in temperature must be matched by an increase in fluid intake, particularly of water. Many people who suffer from headaches, dizziness, and fatigue do not realize that these symptoms could be the result of dehydration. This crucial increase in beverage consumption makes summer an opportune time to review the halachos pertaining to the berachos recited on beverages.

Generally, before one partakes of any amount of food or drink a beracha is required. A beracha acharona is recited if at least one kzayis (the volume of approximately one fluid ounce) of food was eaten within a time span of "kdei achilas pras" (approximately three to four minutes). With regard to beverages, one must drink at least a reviis (approximately three fluid ounces according to Hagoan Rav Moshe Feinstein ZT"l) in order to recite a borei nefashos (or al hagefen in the case of wine or grape juice). The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 210:1) states that since some opinions hold that a drink in the amount of one kzayis (one ounce) requires a beracha acharona, it is preferable to avoid drinking an amount between one and three ounces. If one did drink this amount, no beracha acharona is recited.

There are two opinions mentioned in Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 612:10) concerning how fast one must drink the reviis in order to make a beracha acharona. The first opinion holds that a full reviis must be drunk in one shot. The Mishnah Berurah (Shaar Hatziyun 210:11) states that drinking the reviis in two gulps, pausing briefly in between as one normally does while drinking, is considered "one shot." Some interpret this Mishnah Berurah literally and maintain that one must actually drink the reviis in two swallows. However, Harav Dovid Feinstein shlita explains the Mishnah Berura that as long as one doesn't remove the cup from his lips it is considered to be "one gulp" (Kol Dodi siman 2). However sipping or drinking slowly as one does with a straw is not considered to be "one shot" (Biur Halacha end of siman 612 See also Vzos Habracha, Birur Halacha siman 12). The second opinion (O.C., ibid.) holds that if the reviis was drunk within the time span of "kdei achilas pras" (three to four minutes), a beracha acharona is required.

TEA AND COFFEE

This dispute is very relevant when sipping hot tea or coffee. According to the first opinion, one will most likely not consume the hot drink in one shot, and thus will not be able to make a beracha acharona. However, according to the second opinion, if one drinks three ounces of the beverage within three to four minutes, one should recite a beracha acharona. Some suggest that because hot drinks are normally drunk slowly (i.e. not in one shot), a beracha acharona would be required even according to the first opinion, which requires the reviis to be drunk in one shot. Practically, the minhag haolam is to not recite a beracha acharona even on a hot drink if it was not drunk in

"one shot." Consequently, it is preferable to allow the last three ounces of one's hot beverage to cool down and then to consume this amount in "one shot." A borei nefashos can then be said (M.B. 210:1).

WATER

Halachos pertaining to the drinking of water differ from those applicable to the consumption of other beverages. One recites a beracha before drinking beverages other than water, whether or not one is thirsty. However, a beracha is recited before drinking water only if one is thirsty or enjoys the taste of water (O.C. siman 204:7 M.B. S.K. 40). For example, if one drinks water to dislodge a bone stuck in his throat, or to soothe a sore throat, a beracha is not said. Those who drink a large volume of water for health purposes should also omit the beracha rishona. If the individuals described in the preceding scenarios are thirsty as well, however, then the beracha should be recited (M.B. 204 S.K. 41). One who is unsure whether he is thirsty should recite a beracha on another food or drink which definitely requires a shehakol.

Fast Days

Some poskim hold that in a situation where one drinks water before a fast in order to help alleviate his thirst for the upcoming day, that although he is not thirsty at the time of the drinking, he should still recite a bracha. These poskim maintain that since he is drinking the water so as not to be thirsty tomorrow, that has the same halachik status as one who drinks water when thirsty (Shevet Halevi V. 10 siman 42:12, Shiurei Bracha Ch. 18:50). However, many poskim disagree, and hold that one should not recite a bracha if he is not thirsty when he actually drinks the water (Daas Torah in the name of the Daas Kedoshim 204:7, Nitei Gavriel hilchos Bein Hamitzorim ch 51:22, Harav Dovid Zucker shlita).

A woman, who is nursing and is drinking water exclusively for the purpose of having enough milk for the baby, should not recite a bracha on the water. Some say that it is preferable to make a bracha on another food or drink that requires a shehakol prior to drinking the water. (Toras Hayoledes 2:3)

BOREI NEFASHOS

To reiterate, a shehakol is not said prior to drinking water, in the absence of thirst. Similarly, a beracha acharona is said after drinking water only if the drinker was thirsty. If one drinks a reviis of water but finds that his thirst has been quenched after only a part of the reviis was drunk, his obligation to recite a borei nefashos is in question. Harav Binyamin Zilber zt'l (Az Nidburn V. 11:5) concludes that even if a person is not thirsty for the entire reviis, a borei nefashos is recited since his original motivation to drink was thirst. However, others (see chidushim of the Vilna Goan on berachos 45) hold that a borei nefashos is not recited unless one was thirsty for the full reviis (see Meor Shabbos v.2 in letter 27:3 from Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach).

Rabbi Langer is a full-time member of the kollel.