



A PROJECT OF CHICAGO COMMUNITY KOLLEL

PARSHA

ENCOUNTERS

7 Shevat 5770 / Jan. 22, 2010

Parshas Bo ✍️ Rabbi Yehoshua Berger

The True Mission

In this week's *parshah* (13:15), we find the concept of *pidyon haben*, the redemption of the firstborn. The *Sforno* comments that the purpose of this *mitzvah* is "to make the child permissible to perform *avodas chol*, mundane work."

This explanation implies that if not for the redemption, the firstborn would remain in a constant state of holiness. If so, asks Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky zt"l, why do we celebrate this act? The firstborn is descending from a lofty level of service to a lower one; whereas previously he was in a state of purity, he now enters the realm of the mundane. Shouldn't this be a cause of disappointment rather than a joyous occasion?

Additionally, immediately after the *kohen* accepts the money used to redeem the firstborn, we recite a *tefilah*: "The child should enter a good life of *Torah* and *yiras shamayim*. May it be His will that just as he has entered redemption, so too he should enter a life of *Torah*, *chupah*, and *ma'asim tovim*." This prayer resembles the one recited at a *bris* but adds the element of *yiras shamayim*, fear of heaven. Why does the *mitzvah* of *pidyon haben* necessitate this request?

Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky zt"l answers these questions by sharing a concept that is the foundation for an understanding of the role of a Jew in this world. The secular world often views the *neshamah* (soul) and

the *guf* (body) as two separate entities. Acts of spirituality and holiness are assigned to the soul, while the body is involved solely in mundane activities. Jews, however, appreciate that the *neshamah* and *guf* can combine to form a new entity, a human being, who has the opportunity to elevate the mundane to a higher sphere of holiness.

The *Gemara* refers to a Jew's earthly mission in *Pesachim* (68b): "All agree that on *Shavuos*, one needs to spend a portion of the day eating." The day on which we commemorate the reception of the *Torah* is a most appropriate one for reminding ourselves that the *Torah* offers us the opportunity to sanctify the mundane.

Understanding this principle enables us to appreciate the joy celebrated at a *pidyon haben*. Prior to the redemption, the firstborn is entirely holy and immersed in the purely spiritual world. However, his true mission in this world – elevating its physical aspects – can only be accomplished after his redemption.

This mission is especially difficult and requires special *siyata d'shmaya*, heavenly assistance. We therefore bless the firstborn that he should merit *yiras shamayim*, only with Hashem's help can he achieve his purpose.

Rabbi Berger learns regularly at the kollel.

HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

BORER PART TWO

Rabbi Shlomo Francis

In order for an action to be considered borer, the items in the mixture must be considered mixed together. The criteria of a mixture is not based solely on clear-cut rules. It also depends on how the mixture appears. Therefore, it is not always possible to give exact guidelines. One must take into consideration the size of the components, how close to each other the various parts are located, and the general appearance of the mixture. The scenarios discussed in the following paragraphs demonstrate the various criteria the poskim use to determine the status of a mixture.

Under normal circumstances, cleaning a table upon the conclusion of a Shabbos meal should not present an issue of borer. The plates and cutlery are usually large and spread out in way that is not perceived as a mixture. Leftover food, bones, and soiled cutlery on a plate do not constitute a mixture. However, the Orchas Shabbos (3:20), quoting Hagaon R' Nissin Karelits shlita, states that if the cutlery is completely covered by the leftover foods, then removing it may constitute borer. The Orchas Shabbos suggests that to conform to the conditions of borer, one may remove the piece of cutlery and immediately use it to clear food off a soiled plate. By doing this, he is removing the good from the bad, i.e. the cutlery from the waste. He is doing so without the use of a kli borer, and he is doing it for immediate use. If the contents of the table are gathered into a pile to be discarded, the pile would constitute a mixture. Thus, if one would notice an item, such as a piece of cutlery, inside this pile he would not be allowed to remove it without conforming to the conditions of borer. Similarly, if a piece of cutlery falls into a garbage can, and it is lying above the garbage, it is not considered a mixture. If, however, it is buried in garbage, then one may not remove it without adhering to the rules of borer.

Items arranged on a refrigerator shelf are usually not considered mixed together, and may be removed even if one does not intend to use the item immediately. However, fruits and vegetables in the refrigerator drawer are usually perceived as a mixture, and may only be removed for immediate use.

Some common situations where one must be careful to adhere to the laws of borer include:

- Removing fruits or vegetables from a refrigerator drawer.

- Removing a particular bencher from a drawer with many similar types of benchers.
- When cleaning children's toys or game pieces.
- When sorting dinnerware or cutlery.
- When sorting soiled clothes before placing them in a hamper.
- When preparing clothes to be worn the next day.

PEELING FRUIT

We previously discussed that even if one is performing an act of selecting for immediate use, he must still adhere to the other conditions of borer. This means he must still select the good from the bad and may not make use of a kli bereirah. Focusing on the item that one desires and separating it from the undesired items is only required in order to establish that the selecting is a casual part of normal usage. Therefore, foods, such as fruits, vegetables, and eggs, that can only be accessed through the removal of an inedible layer, are not subject to this requirement. They may therefore be peeled on Shabbos provided that it is done for immediate use. According to Hagaon R' Moshe Feinstein (O.Ch. 4:74:8) even a fruit with an edible peel such as an apple may only be peeled for immediate use.

REMOVING PITS AND SEEDS

Certain melons, such as cantaloupe and honeydew, cannot be eaten without skimming off the layer of seeds. One is therefore permitted to remove the seeds provided that he does so for immediate use (Shimiras Shabbos Kihilchaso 3:33). Some poskim require that one shake off the seeds. If any seeds remain after shaking the melon, they may be spit out of his mouth prior to swallowing (Igr'm O'Ch 4:64). Other fruits, such as apples and plums, can be eaten without removing the pits. The Chazon Ish, therefore, requires that one should either eat the fruit until the pit, or grasp the fruit with one hand and pull the fruit away from the pit using his other hand. The Mishna Berura (321:84) writes that one may remove the pit from the fruit, if he is holding the fruit in his hand, with the intention of inserting the fruit immediately into his mouth. He then suggests that because there is no practical method of removing the fruit from the pit, perhaps it can be viewed as removing the good from the bad, and may be performed with the intention of eating the fruit throughout the meal.

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