

Why does Haggadah require a dialogue structure, but we do not find this obligation in connection with teaching Torah? See the JewishTimes Passover issue this Tuesday.

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CANDLE LIGHTING 4/3

Boston	6:53	Moscow	6:52
Chicago	6:59	New York	7:04
Cleveland	7:35	Paris	8:04
Detroit	7:41	Philadelphia	7:07
Houston	7:22	Phoenix	6:31
Jerusalem	5:41	Pittsburgh	7:27
Johannesburg	5:46	Seattle	7:23
Los Angeles	6:56	Sydney	5:31
London	7:17	Tokyo	5:45
Miami	7:20	Toronto	7:28
Montreal	7:05	Washington DC	7:14

Creation

Blessing on the SUN

RABBI DOVID HEBER

If one would visit the numerous day schools, chadarim, mesivtos and batei midrashim throughout the world, one would find that every child, almost

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Weekly Parsha

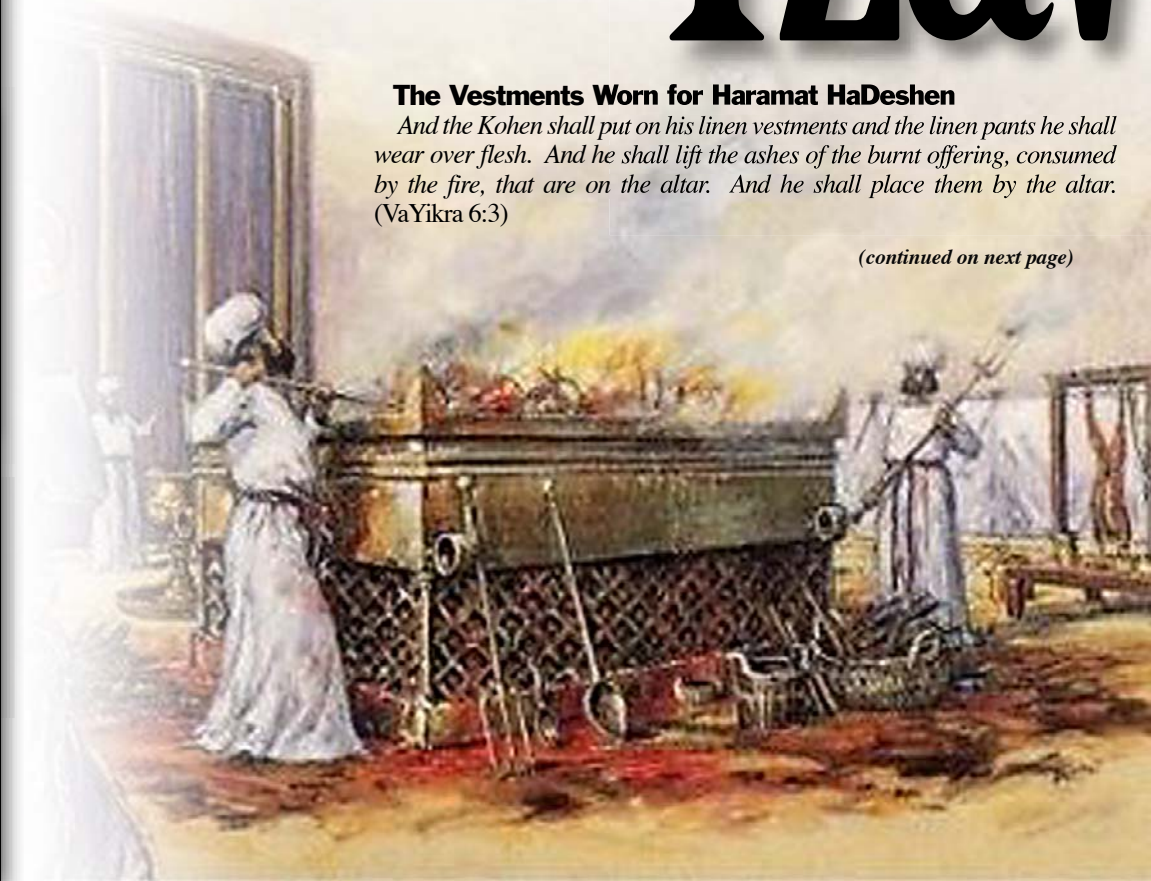
Tzav

RABBI BERNIE FOX

The Vestments Worn for Haramat HaDeshen

And the Kohen shall put on his linen vestments and the linen pants he shall wear over flesh. And he shall lift the ashes of the burnt offering, consumed by the fire, that are on the altar. And he shall place them by the altar. (VaYikra 6:3)

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(Tzav cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

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Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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One of the activities that occur each day in the Temple is the removal of the ashes from the altar in the courtyard of the Mikdash – the temple. This procedure – Haramat HaDeshen – is performed in the morning prior to placing the first offering upon the altar. The collected ashes are placed next to the altar and subsequently removed from the Mikdash. Two of the details related in our passage provide a fundamental insight into the mitzvah of Haramat HaDeshen. The passage tells us that a kohen must perform the activity. The pasuk also stipulates that the kohen must wear his priestly vestments when executing this duty. These two requirements indicate that this activity is an element of the service in the Mikdash. Therefore, like all other services, only a kohen dressed in his special vestments can perform this activity.

The Talmud comments in Tractate Yoma that the Kohen does not wear his normal priestly vestments when removing the ashes from the Mikdash. Instead, he wears a set of garments that are similar in design to the normal vestments, but of lesser quality. The Talmud explains that it is not appropriate for a servant to serve his master in the same garments worn when preparing the meal. Therefore, the kohen should not perform the more exalted services of the Temple in the same vestments worn in preparing the altar.[1]



Rashi amplifies the comments of the Talmud. Rashi explains the clothing the servant wears in preparing the meal absorbs odors and becomes stained in the process. It is not appropriate for the servant to then serve his master in this clothing. Similarly, once the kohen has worn a set of vestments during the Haramat HaDeshen, it is not appropriate for him to wear these garments when performing the other services in the Mikdash.

There are a number of problems with Rashi's explanation of the Talmud's comments. First, according to Rashi, special garments are needed for the Haramat HaDeshen because, in the process of performing this service, the garments will become soiled. However, the Torah, through another restriction, assures that these garments will not be worn when performing the other services. The Torah requires that the garments worn by the kohen during service must be new, clean and tailored to the kohen.[2] A specific requirement that the kohen wear special vestments for the removal of the ashes seems completely superfluous.

Second, in addition to requiring that the kohen replace the vestments worn during the Haramat HaDeshen with a clean, fresh set of vestments, the Torah requires that the garments worn for Haramat HaDeshen be of lesser quality than the garments worn for other services. Rashi's interpretation of the the Talmud's comments explains the requirement that the kohen change his garments after the Haramat HaDeshen. However, Rashi does not seem to offer a reason for requiring garments of lesser quality for Haramat HaDeshen.

There is another discussion in the Talmud that clarifies Rashi's position. The Talmud comments in Tractate Shabbat that Rav Anan wore a simple black garment when preparing food for Shabbat. He did this out of consideration of the principle that the servant should not prepare a meal for the master in the same garments in which he will serve the meal.[3] The Talmud's comments are difficult to understand. We are required to wear clean garments on Shabbat. It is also important that we designate special clothing for Shabbat. The quality of the garments designated for Shabbat should be superior to those worn during the week.[4] However, Rav Anan went beyond this requirement. He not only designated special clothing to be worn on Shabbat; he designated special clothing for the eve of Shabbat to be worn when preparing the Shabbat meals. What was the purpose of Rav Anan's additional custom?

One can designate special garments for Shabbat in two ways. The direct method is to select a special set of clothing and to set it aside for Shabbat. However, there is another means of designation. One can select an alternative mundane garment worn when preparing for Shabbat. It must be a garment that contrasts with the Shabbat garments. Through wearing this mundane garment when preparing for Shabbat, the person demonstrates that a superior set of clothing is held in reserve for Shabbat itself. In other words, wearing contrasting, inferior clothing during preparation demonstrates the significance of the Shabbat clothing. If garments similar to the Shabbat clothing are worn in preparing for Shabbat, the status of the Shabbat clothing is diminished. How special are the Shabbat garments if similar clothing is worn when cooking the food!

This explains Rav Anan's custom. Certainly, we can assume that Rav Anan selected special

(continued on next page)

clothing for Shabbat. However, in order to further demonstrate the elevated status of his Shabbat attire, he also designated a contrasting mundane garment to be worn in preparing for Shabbat.

We can now understand Rashi's explanation of the Talmud's comments in Tractate Yoma. Rashi recognizes that it is not necessary to require special garments for Haramat HaDeshen in order to assure that clean vestments are worn during the other services. The Torah assures that the vestments worn for the other services will be clean through a direct prohibition against wearing soiled garments during any service. However, Rashi maintains that the garments worn during the other services must be special. They must reflect the elevated status of the service performed by the kohen. Rashi maintains that the lesser garments worn by the kohen during the Haramat HaDeshen enhance the elevated designation of the garments worn during the other services. The garments of the Haramat HaDeshen – a lesser form of service – contrast with the garments worn during the other services. This contrast demonstrates the elevated status of the superior vestments worn for the more elevated services. In other words, if the Haramat HaDeshen – a grimy responsibility – could be performed in the typical vestments of the kohen, the significance of these vestments would be diminished. How special are the typical garments if they are worn for the grimy job of removing the ashes from the altar!

The Minchah Daily Offering of the Kohen Gadol and Kohen's Initiation Offering

This is the offering of Aharon and his sons that they should offer on the day that any one of them is anointed. It is one tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a daily Minchah offering. One half is offered in the morning and one half is offered in the afternoon. (VaYikra 6:13)

This passage describes a special Minchah offering brought by Aharon and his descendants. This sacrifice is brought every day by the Kohen Gadol. One half is offered at the beginning of the day. The other half is offered at the end of the day.[5] An additional obligation is derived from this passage. Every kohen is initiated into service in the Beit HaMikdash by offering a Minchah.[6]

The midrash discusses the significance of these Minchah offerings. The midrash comments that this offering is described by Shimshon in a riddle. Shimshon's riddle describes this sacrifice as "a food from one that eats".

In order to begin to understand these comments, some background information is required. Shimshon challenged the Pelishtim to solve a riddle. He claimed that there was a food derived from something that eats. It is sweet and comes from something mighty. It was the Pelishtim's job to unravel the riddle.

The substance referred to in the riddle was honey that Shimshon discovered in an unusual place. This honey came from a beehive lodged inside of the carcass of a lion. This honey was aptly described by the riddle. Honey is a food. It was found in the carcass of an animal that preys and consumes other animals. Honey is sweet. This honey was found in the carcass of a mighty animal.

The midrash is suggesting that the first part of Shimshon's riddle also describes the Minchah offerings specified by our passage. This Minchah is a food. It is consumed. It comes from the kohen. Generally, the kohen eats a portion of an offering. Therefore, the Minchah can be described as a food derived from one who eats.[7]

Apparently, the midrash intends to communicate some significant message about the Minchah. However, the specific meaning of these comments is enigmatic.

A hint to the message of the midrash can be derived by more carefully considering the nature of these Minchah offerings. As explained above, every kohen must offer a Minchah before entering into further service in the Mikdash. In addition, the Kohen Gadol must offer a Minchah on a daily basis. Maimonides treats the Kohen Gadol's sacrifice as a component of the daily service of the Mikdash. The association of this sacrifice with the kohen's initiation and its offering on a daily basis by the Kohen Gadol suggests that some basic message is communicated by this offering. What is this message?

In a very general sense, offerings brought in the Temple serve two purposes. First, they are a form of divine service. Second, the kohanim receive a portion from the altar Hashem for their own consumption. These offerings provide sustenance to kohanim.[8] These two functions are not of equal importance. The offerings primarily are a form of service to Hashem. The sustenance received by the kohanim is of secondary significance. However, it is possible for a casual observer to misinterpret the relative significance of these two purposes. One could conclude that the offerings primarily provide support for the kohanim and that the element of Divine service is secondary.

The Minchah offerings of the Kohen Gadol and kohanim address this potential misinterpretation. If the offerings are primarily designed to support the kohanim, there is no reason for the kohen to offer a portion of his material sustenance on the altar. Everyday the Kohen Gadol brings a Minchah. The one who eats from the offerings brings an offering. This demonstrates that the offerings are not primarily designed to provide material support for the kohanim. The offerings are Divine service. The Kohen Gadol, like other members of Bnai Yisrael, participates in this form of worship.

Similarly, every kohen begins his service by offering a Minchah. It seems that the kohen must begin his service with an acknowledgment. He brings his own offering before dealing with the offerings of the nation. In this manner, the kohen acknowledges that these offerings are not designed for his benefit. He, too, must offer a Minchah! This is because these offerings are Divine service and apply equally to the kohen and the rest of Bnai Yisrael.

Birkat HaGomel and Associated Blessings

If it offered as a Thanksgiving offering, then it must be presented with unleavened loaves mixed with oil, flat matzahs saturated with oil and loaves made of boiled flour mixed with oil. (VaYikra 7:12)

The Todah – Thanksgiving offering – is a type of Shelamim sacrifice. Rashi explains that it is brought in response to surviving a dangerous situation. For example, one who recovers from a serious illness would offer a Todah.[9] Rashi's source for these comments is the Talmud in Tractate Berachot. The Talmud is not discussing the Todah sacrifice. The topic in the Talmud is Birkat HaGomel. This is a blessing recited when one escapes danger. The Talmud outlines the specific situations that require reciting Birkat HaGomel.[10] Rashi maintains that these criteria also apply to the Todah sacrifice. However, Rashi does not explain the reason for his conclusion that the Todah sacrifice and Birkat HaGomel share these criteria.

Rabbaynu Asher explains that Birkat HaGomel replaces the Todah sacrifice. We cannot offer the Todah in our times. In order to replace the Todah, the Sages established Birkat HaGomel.[11] This explains Rashi's assumption that the Todah and Birkat HaGomel share identical criteria. Birkat HaGomel is derived from the Todah. Rashi

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assumes that the criteria for the blessing must be derived from the Todah offering.

There is another blessing recited in response to experiencing a rescue. One who revisits a place at which the individual experienced a personal miracle is obligated to state a blessing.[12] However, there is an interesting difference between these two blessings. Birkat HaGomel is said in a group of ten people. Preferably the group should include two scholars.[13] The blessing recited at revisiting the location of a personal miracle does not require ten people. Why does Birkat HaGomel require a company of ten? Why does the blessing on a miracle not require ten people?

There is a basic difference between these two blessings. The blessing for the personal experience of a miracle is an act of recognition and thanksgiving. Because this blessing is a personal act it does not require the presence of a group. In contrast, Birkat HaGomel is a public declaration of Hashem's benevolence. One confirms to others that personal experience proves Hashem's kindness. The blessing is public testimony. It follows that a group must be present.

mitzvah is a negative commandment to not extinguish the flame of the altar.[16]

The Talmud explains that each day a flame descended to the altar from the heavens. Nonetheless, this positive commandment requires that we ignite a flame on the altar each day.[17] Why is this required? In other words, the apparent reason for igniting a flame on the altar each day is to maintain a constant flame. But – as the Talmud explains – a flame descended to the altar each day. This flame that descended from the heavens assured that a flame would constantly burn on the altar. So, why are we required to ignite a flame on the altar each day?

Sefer HaChinuch offers an interesting but enigmatic – response to this question. He explains that even the greatest miracles that Hashem performs for humanity and Bnai Yisrael are cloaked within nature. For example, one the greatest miracles recorded in the Torah is the splitting of the Reed Sea. The Torah describes the circumstances surrounding this miracle. Hashem told Moshe to extend his hand over the water. Moshe followed Hashem's command. In response, a strong wind began to blow. This wind continued the entire night. The Torah tells us that this wind transformed the sea into a dry

surface.[18] In other words the Torah seems to describe Hashem as employing natural forces in order to split the sea. Sefer HaChinuch notes that the effect of the use of the natural forces is that the miraculous nature of the event was somewhat hidden. He observes that the splitting of the Reed Sea illustrates an interrelationship between the miraculous and natural forces that is common to most miracles. The miracle is cloaked or hidden – to some extent – within natural forces.

Sefer HaChinuch explains that the requirement to ignite a flame on the altar each day is intended to communicate this relationship between the miraculous and natural that exists in most miracles. In other words, by igniting a flame of the altar, we conceal the affect of the flame that descended from the heavens.[19]

Sefer HaChinuch's explanation raises a question that requires careful consideration. Let us consider one of these issues. Apparently, the idea that Hashem's miracles are concealed is of immense significance. Each day this concept was communicated anew through igniting a flame on the altar! Why is this concept so important?

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The Daily Lighting of the Flame on the Altar

Command Aharon and his sons saying: This is the law of the Olah – this is the Olah that is on the flame, on the altar the entire night until the morning. And the flame of the altar should be burning upon it. (VaYikra 6:2)

And the flame upon the altar should be burning upon it. It should not be extinguished. And the Kohen should ignite upon it wood every morning. And he should arrange upon it the Olah and burn upon it the fats of the Shelamim. (VaYikra 6:8)

Parshat Tzav discusses the various fires that are maintained on the altar in the courtyard of the Mishcan. Maimonides explains three flames were maintained on this altar. One was used for the consumption of the sacrifices. All of the sacrifices offered on the altar are placed on this flame. The second flame is for the offering of incense. Coals from this flame are removed from the altar and the incense is placed on these coals. The last flame is required in order to maintain a constant flame of the altar.[14]

Maimonides explains that there are two mitzvot included in our passages. The first is a positive commandment. We are required to maintain a constant flame upon the altar.[15] The second

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Sefer HaChinuch does not address this question. However, Nachmanides discusses a related issue that may provide an answer to this question. Nachmanides observes that The Torah assures us that we will be rewarded for observing the Torah and punished for violating its laws. He explains that implicit in this assurance is the premise that Hashem interferes with natural law. Within the natural law there is no reason for a person who observes the commandments to be rewarded or for a person who violates these laws to be punished. Hashem must interfere and interrupt the natural chain of causality in order to provide rewards to the righteous and punishments to the wicked. These interruptions in the natural laws are hidden miracles. These minor miracles – because they are concealed within the pattern of nature – can be easily overlooked. But nonetheless, they do exist and are the basis for all of the rewards and punishments described by the Torah.[20]

Nachmanides' comments provide a possible response to our question on Sefer HaChinuch. According to Nachmanides it is possible for a person to fail to see or to ignore the existence of the minor miracles that are the underpinning of reward and punishment. Because the minor miracles are hidden from the observer it is possible for the casual observer to conclude that no miracles are taking place and that there is no providential reward for the righteous and punishment for the wicked. Sefer HaChinuch adds that even major miracles are somewhat hidden. This characteristic concealment can lead to the misinterpretation of these events and the denial of these miracles. They can be mistaken to be natural – albeit unusual – events. The flame of the altar reminds us that although Hashem's providence is often concealed and is not visible to the observer it does exist. The affect of the miraculous flame that descended daily to the altar was concealed – to some extent – by the flame that the kohanim ignited each day. This concealment is designed to serve as a model for other miracles. Most miracles are to some extent concealed. But just as the flame did descend daily to the altar, so too the miracles that are the basis of reward and punishment do occur.

Maimonides' treatment of the positive command to maintain a constant flame upon the altar is somewhat confusing. In his Sefer HaMitzvot, Maimonides explains that we are required to ignite a flame on the altar each day.[21] However, in his Mishne Torah, Maimonides provides a different definition of the mitzvah. There, he explains that we are required to maintain a constant flame on the altar. He continues and



acknowledges that although a daily flame descended, we are required to daily ignite a flame. But he does not define the commandment as the daily igniting of a flame. His definition of the commandment is that we are required to maintain a flame.[22]

Maimonides' treatment of this mitzvah in his Mishne Torah raises two questions. First, his definition of the commandment contradicts the definition he provides in his Sefer HaMitzvot. In Sefer HaMitzvot, he states that it is positive commandment to ignite the flame. In his Mishne Torah he defines the commandment as an obligation to maintain the flame. Second, if the requirement is to maintain a flame – as Maimonides indicates in his Mishne Torah – and a daily flame descended from the heavens, then why are we required to ignite a flame each day? It would seem that our obligation to maintain the flame of the altar is fulfilled with the flame that descended from the heavens.

It seems that according to Maimonides, this commandment can be understood and analyzed in two frameworks. First, the commandment has an objective. Second, the commandment prescribes a specific means for achieving this objective. Before applying this distinction to our case, let us consider a simple illustration.

A person decides to lose weight. In order to achieve this goal he adopts a specific diet. The person has accepted an imperative upon himself. The imperative can be defined in two ways. We can say that the person has decided to lose weight

or we can say that he has decided to initiate a specific diet. These two statements do not refer to two separate resolutions. Neither are these two definitions of the person's resolution contradictory. Both are accurate definitions of the imperative. The imperative can be defined in terms of its objective – to lose weight. It can also be defined in terms of its means – to initiate a specific diet. Both descriptions of the imperative are correct. They merely differ in the framework from which they define the imperative.

This same reasoning can easily be applied to Maimonides' two definitions of the mitzvah. In Mishne Torah, Maimonides defines the mitzvah in terms of its objective. The objective of the commandment is to maintain a constant flame upon the altar. However, in Sefer HaMitzvot, Maimonides defines the mitzvah in terms of the action or means legislated for meeting this objective. This means is through igniting a flame each day. The two descriptions or definitions of the mitzvah are not contradictory. They merely deal with the commandment from the perspectives of two different frameworks.

As mentioned above, Sefer HaChinuch is concerned with the requirement to ignite a flame each day. If a flame will descend from the heavens, why is our involvement required? This question is even more relevant to Maimonides' formulation of the commandment. Maimonides acknowledges that the objective of the commandment is that there must be a constant flame on the altar. Yet, he insists that the Torah prescribes a specific means for maintaining this flame – the daily ignition of a flame. It would seem that this prescribed means is superfluous to the objective! If a flame will descend, why must one be ignited?

However, Maimonides' formulation also suggests an obvious answer. Although we know that a miracle will occur – a flame will descend – we are not permitted to rely on this miracle. We cannot excuse ourselves from our responsibility to secure the objective required by the commandment.

This lesson has many practical applications. The Torah is replete with assurances and promises regarding the ultimate destiny of the Jewish people and the righteous individual. We are expected to accept the truth of the assurances and promises. However, this does not exempt us from our duty to work towards securing these ends by all means at our disposal. It is unfortunate that we often hear individuals express the opposite perspective. Faith in Hashem's mercy and providence sometimes takes the place of assum-

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ing personal responsibility. This is not the outlook expressed by the Torah. Instead, the Torah tells us that we are required to have absolute conviction in Hashem's mercy and providence. But nonetheless, we must assume responsibility for securing our own destiny. ■

[1] Mesechet Yoma 23b.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Klai Mikdash 8:4.

[3] Tractate Shabbat 119a.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Shabbat 30:3.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Tamidim U'Musafim 3:18.

[6] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Klee Mikdash 5:16.

[7] Midrash Rabba, Sefer VaYikra 8:2.

[8] See Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Shemitah VeYovel 13:12.

[9] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer VaYikra 7:12.

[10] Mesechet Berachot 54b.

[11] Rabbaynu Asher, Commentary on the Talmud, Mesechet Berachot, Chapter 9, note 3.

[12] Rav Yosef Karo, Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 218:4.

[13] Rav Yosef Karo, Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 219:3.

[14] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Tamidim U'Musafim 2:4.

[15] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat Aseh 29.

[16] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat Lo Ta'aseh 81.

[17] Mesechet Yoma 21b.

[18] Sefer Shemot 14:21.

[19] Rav Aharon HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 132.

[20] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 6:2.

[21] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat Aseh 29.

[22] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Tamidim U'Musafim 2:1.

Message from
Rabbi Bernie Fox
JewishTimes "Weekly Parsha" Column



Once a year, I ask my readers to kindly consider supporting the Northwest Yeshiva High School. The Northwest Yeshiva High School is the only yeshiva high school in the Pacific Northwest. We are located in the Seattle area and provide our diverse student body with a comprehensive Jewish education. This year, we will be celebrating 35 years.

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I thank you for considering this request.

I wish you and your families a chag kosher v'sameach, a happy, healthy and kosher Pesach.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Bernie Fox
Head of School
Northwest Yeshiva High School
5017 90th Ave. SE
Mercer Island, WA 98040



Northwest Yeshiva High School

every bochur and most Kollel Yungeleit have never performed the mitzvah of reciting Birchas Hachama (the blessing of the sun). This is because this mitzvah is performed only once every 28 years. The last time it was recited was in 5741 (1981) and b'ezras Hashem the next time will be this coming Erev Pesach, 5769 - Wednesday April 8, 2009. What is this special mitzvah and why is it recited so infrequently?

I. Birchas Hachama – A Simple Explanation

The Amorah (Talmudic scholar), Abaye, said¹ that every time that “Tekufas Nissan” (the beginning of spring, as calculated by Chazal) occurs at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday evening (when the halachic day of Wednesday begins) one should go outside the next morning and recite the brocha, “Osei maaseh braishis.” This occurs once every 28 years.

II. The Halachos

On Wednesday morning (the day after Tekufas Nissan), one goes outside and quickly gazes towards the sun and says, “Baruch atah Hashem Elokainu Melech haolam oseh maaseh braishis,” – “Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who re-enacts the structure of the creation.”² Additional tefillos praising the Ribono Shel Olam are also recited. Before the bracha Hallelu es Hashem min Hashamayim³ is recited. After the bracha Kail Adon⁴ Mizmor HaShamayim Mesaprim⁵ and Aleinu⁶ are recited. If there is a minyan, Kaddish⁷ is recited after Aleinu.

Ideally, Birchas Hachama should be recited before the third hour of the day.⁸ B'dieved, one has until chatzos (midday) to recite Birchas Hachama. It is preferably recited while standing – “b'rov am”, with a group of other people.⁹ Women and children should recite the bracha, as well. A blind person should be yotzai (fulfill his obligation) through hearing someone else make the bracha.

If it is cloudy, the following halachos apply: If one can see the lines of the sun behind the clouds, one may say Birchas Hachama. If it is so cloudy that the sun is not visible, one may not say Birchas Hachama with the name of Hashem.¹⁰ Rather, shortly before chatzos (or when it is obviously going to stay cloudy until chatzos) one would say, “Baruch oseh maaseh braishis” without the name of Hashem.

III. Why Every 28 Years?

When the world was created, the sun and moon were created on the Wednesday of the week of bri'as haolam (creation of the world). On that day, the beginning of spring¹¹ (known as “Tekufas Nissan”) was at 6:00 p.m., on Tuesday the beginning of the halachic day Wednesday.¹²

It takes approximately 365 days and 6 hours¹³ for the Earth to completely revolve one time around the



sun. This is equal to 52 weeks, 1 day and 6 hours. Therefore, in the following year (after the world was created) spring began early Thursday at midnight (midnight early Thursday is one day of the week and 6 hours after Tuesday at 6:00 p.m.). The following year it began at 6:00 a.m. on Friday, the following year at noon on Shabbos and the year after that at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday. Every four years, the time of the tekufa moved five days of the week later (e.g. from 6:00 p.m. Tuesday to 6:00 p.m. Sunday). After 28 years,¹⁴ it returned to the same time that it was at Brias Haolam, 6:00 p.m. Tuesday the beginning of “Lail Revi'i” (halachically Wednesday). So, in year 29 (counting from the creation), 57, 85, 113 and every 28th year after that, including most recently in 5713 (1953) and 5741 (1981) the tekufa was at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday and Birchas Hachama was recited the next day. Once again, it will be at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday this year. After this year, the next time Birchas Hachama will be recited will be in 5797 (2037) and then again in 5825 (2065). ■

Footnotes:

1. Berachos 59b. The halacha is addressed in Shulchan Aruch - Orach Chaim 229:2.

2. This is the same brocha recited upon seeing lightning, very tall mountains or the Mediterranean Sea (the brocha recited upon seeing an ocean is different).

3. Tehillim 148

4. This is from the Shabbos morning davening.

5. Tehillim 19

6. Mishna Brura 229:8. See also Teshuvos Chasam Sofer 1:56. There are various other customs as to which psukim and tefillos are recited before and after the bracha.

7. “Kaddish Yasom”/Mourner's Kaddish

8. Sof z'man K'rias Shma, according to the opinion of the Gra.

9. “B'rov Am Hadras Melech”. We honor Hashem when a group of people perform the mitzvos together. Of course, one can say Birchas Hachama alone, but it should ideally be said with a minyan or with at least two other people (the minimum “rov am” is three – see Chaye Adam 68:11).

10. Mishna Brura 229:8, who quotes the Teshuvos Chasam Sofer 1:56. Note the Panim Meiros 2:30 states that it is enough to see the light of the sun as opposed to the actual sun. Therefore, even if it is cloudy, one may say Birchas Hachama by going outside and seeing “sunlight”. The Mishna Brura rejects this view. Alternatively, one could go to a tall mountain or very large body of water and recite, “Oseh maaseh braishis,” having in mind Birchas Hachama (see Sefer Shaarei Zmanim, Siman 3, footnote 4. See also Siman 3, Section 3 regarding whether Birchas Hachama can be said in countries west of Eretz Yisroel on Tuesday if the weather forecasters predict that on Wednesday it will be very cloudy).

11. This goes according to the opinion of Rebbe Yehoshua (Rosh Hashana 11a) that “B'Nissan Nivra Ha'olam” – the world was created at the beginning of spring. In regards to molados (new moon) and in the davening of Rosh Hashana (when we say, “Zeh Hayom Techilas Ma'asecha”) we follow the opinion of Rebbe Eliezer, who holds “B'Tishrei Nivra Ha'olam,” the world was created at the beginning of autumn. For a detailed discussion of this topic, see Tosfos Rosh Hashana (8a-L'tkufos and 27a-K'mahn), Sefer Shaarei Zmanim Siman 2 and Sefer Mayim Rabim Siman 1.

12. The Jewish day begins at night. Hence, at the beginning of spring, the new day begins at 6:00 p.m. when the sun sets and night begins. “Sunday” begins at 6:00 p.m. Saturday. “Monday” begins at 6:00 p.m. Sunday, etc. It should be noted that the “fixed” time of 6:00 p.m. for the beginning of any day of the year only relates to tekufos and molados (new moon). Regarding Shabbos and Yom Tov, the day begins at sunset and ends the next day when the stars come out. In the winter, this will be before 6:00 p.m., and in the summer after 6:00 p.m. Davening times also vary depending upon the season.

13. In reality, the earth takes 365 days, 5 hours 48 minutes 46 seconds to revolve around the sun. As will be discussed, Shmuel sacrificed accuracy for simplicity, and used the rounded number of 365 ¼ days.

14. Every four years, the tekufa is once again at 6:00 p.m., five days of the week later than the last time the tekufa occurred. After seven sets of four years (i.e. 28 years), it returns to 6:00 p.m. Tuesday.

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