

שבת

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Shabbat-B'Shabbato – Parshat Nitzavim-Vayeilech 25 Elul 5770 (4 September 2010)

INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBAT TABLE

by Bar-on Dasberg

"Hakhel" – Must this End in Weeping?

The leader began to read the Torah to the people, and their reaction was to weep. This has happened (at least) three times in our history, and one of these times was during the ceremony of "Hakhel" mentioned in this week's Torah portion (when the nation gathers in the Temple on Succot at the end of the Shemitta year). The first instance happened when Yoshiyahu read the Torah scroll that he had found. When he understood the significance of the seventy years that the people had spent in idol worship, he tore his clothing and began to weep. The second time the people wept was when Ezra read the Torah to them and they understood what was required of them after seventy years of exile. The third case was that of King Agrippus, and this took place at the Hakhel ceremony. He read the passage that states, "You cannot put a Gentile man over you" [Devarim 17:15], and he began to weep (see Mishna Sotta 7:8).

In all three cases, when these outstanding men came face to face with the truth of the Torah they did not try to avoid the situation but rather understood the significance of the moment. But the result was that the incidents did not end with weeping. What began with weeping ended with finding a solution for the problem.

What is the Answer?

It is written in this week's Torah portion about the subject of repentance, "And you will return to your G-d and you will listen to His voice" [Devarim 30:2]. Then the passage moves on to the subject of ingathering of the exiles, and then it is written, "And G-d will circumcise your heart... to love your G-d" [30:6]. Why does the subject of repentance appear twice, in two separate verses?

Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai describes the first repentance as a human effort to come back to the land in response to the Divine command ("it'aruta diletata" - an awakening from below) - which will be followed by G-d's help in gathering the exiled people ("it'aruta dile'aila" - an awakening from above). This will then be followed by general repentance, and the people will begin to observe all the mitzvot.

The following passage is well known: "Rabbi Eliezer says, If Yisrael repent they will be redeemed and if not they will not be redeemed. Rabbi Yehoshua said to him, How can it be that if they do not repent they will not be redeemed? Rather, the Almighty will set up a king whose decrees are as terrible as those of Haman, and Yisrael will repent and return to the good path." [Sanhedrin 97b]. Religious Zionism has always counted on the approach of Rabbi Yehoshua and was happy with it – even though the nation has not repented fully, we are in the era of the redemption. However, according to Rabbi Alkalai, the first step of repentance is the return to the land. Thus,

both Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua feel that we must return to the land. Unfortunately, the Almighty has sent us kings who make decrees worse than those of Haman, which has forced us to fulfill our obligation, following the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua.

Elementary

The more something is required for human existence, the easier is our access to it. This is what Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk writes in his commentary, "Meshech Chochma." For example, the substance that we need most is oxygen, and no special effort is needed to obtain it. There is less of an immediate need for water, and obtaining it is more difficult. This is followed by food, living quarters, and then, at the end of the chain, luxuries.

"The same is true of the insights and the behavioral traits which are the essence of mankind. He has been given what is most vital for him as a creature that should follow a straight path and does not distort his ways." Since these insights and traits are part of human nature, "These mitzvot... are not far away from you... but this is rather very close to you, you can accomplish it with your mouth and your heart." [Devarim 30:11,14].

Based on the same line of reasoning, Rav Kook wrote as follows: "The primary element of repentance... is that a person must return to his own self, to the root of his own soul." [Orot Hateshuva 15:10].

POINT OF VIEW

Let the Year End, with its News Broadcasts - by Rabbi Yisrael Rozen, Dean of the Zomet Institute

"For I will go as my heart sees fit" [Devarim 29:18].

The Daily Horror Report

Has anybody else noticed? About 80% (or is it perhaps more?) of the news broadcasts begin with a story of a dramatic murder, a rape, or some other similar crime, such as violence or a death resulting from drunken driving. Who would have thought that in the Jewish state we would hear day in day out, hour by hour, about the murder of "a pauper for a pair of shoes" [Amos 2:6], about sexual assault taking place for many years, about a fashion of drinking by youth and about shirking all responsibility, a path fraught with danger. From the announcer's tone at the beginning of the news, I find myself assuming that another horror has been perpetrated in our area, more souls have been lost in this world or the world to come, additional two-legged beasts have caused mortal injury to young girls and have left their souls with long-lasting scars.

And if you have not noticed this phenomenon before, I suggest you start paying attention.

If a descriptive report of a crime that happened that day does not appear as the main headline, then there will at the very least be a report from the courtroom – a sentence of a number of years for a serial murderer, for a stabber at a nightclub, for trafficking in women, for sexual assault of a man's daughters or neighbors, for strangling, or for hacking apart the bodies of murdered people. And all of this does not take into account the regular reports of wars between criminal gangs.

If by some chance no horrible crime has taken place between one edition of the news and the next and no exciting conviction in the courts can be reported – have no fear! The news will begin (and this is based on scientific statistical predictions) with a report of major corruption, supreme embezzlement, fantastic fraud, or some other evil event that our ancestors could never even have imagined.

When I first noticed the great burden of crime and the increase in the level of criminal activity, I was struck by shock and fear! Have we become as Sedom? Can we be compared to Amora? Have we become the worst nation on the planet? Have we reached the absolute depths? How can this be? Well, my gentle readers: this is not an exaggeration! It is a true picture of Israel as the year 5770 comes to a close!

How can We Weather the Storm?

Anybody who thinks that the answer and the solution to the above questions lie in the realm of enforcement and "the legal authorities" – is wrong! Even if we make huge increases in the budgets and the staff of the police force, the courts, the prison service, and all the support services that they need – these broadcasts will continue. Even if every street lamp and bulb at home and in every public area included a built-in camera, and half the population of Israel would be busy investigating the activities of the other half (while the second half spends their time studying the activities of the first half), the terrible crimes would not stop. Perhaps they would be moved down to the second item of the hourly news broadcast.

In last week's Torah portion, we read, at the beginning of the passage of the curses, "And all of these curses will come upon you and reach you" [Devarim 28:15]. Near the end of the curses, the phrase is repeated with an additional concept: "And all of these curses will come upon you and pursue you and reach you" [28:45]. To me, this addition is a warning: Even if you try to flee from the curses which come upon you – searching for a solution or the reason for the curses in the wrong place – they will not cease. "They will pursue you and reach you."

A Life of Obligations

In spite of the traditional optimism as Rosh Hashana approaches, I must admit that I find it hard to hope for an autonomous improvement in the public "weather" forecast and the social "atmosphere." That is the only realm where it is possible to decrease the flood of terrible crime. What is needed is to a total upheaval of the basic concepts and truths of society, mainly a change from one extreme to another – from a society based on "human rights" to a society of "obligations." We must move from the concept of "I" to the concept of "the other." The emphasis must be not on money ("mammon") but on vision ("chazon"). This is a radical change that reaches "the very foundations of the Altar" in the way the most basic word of all is understood: "life." As part of this, we have another

small task to perform: We must completely erase from our lexicon the expressions, "I don't want to... Whatever I feel like."

There is another task without which the calm will never return to our region and without which the scourge of crime will never be eliminated. We must return to a nationalistic outlook! Only nationalism (and the accompanying enhanced religious feeling) can serve as a replacement for the boredom and the selfishness that lead to sexual aberrations, murder, and government corruption.

How can all of this be accomplished? Ask the Minister of Education and the Minister of Communications. This is a task that is in their domain!

Blocking the Heart Muscle

"And he will bless himself in his heart, saying... for I will go as my heart sees fit." This verse appears at the beginning of this article, and it fits perfectly what I have been writing about. The Hebrew phrase used is "bisherirut libi." Exactly what does this mean? Today the word "sharir" is used for the English word muscle, but it appears with this meaning only one time in the Tanach ("the muscle of his stomach" [Iyov 40:16]. All the other times (once in Tehillim and eight times in Yirmiyahu) the word appears together with the word for heart, and it refers to an inclination. (Five times in Yirmiyahu this is explicit: "In the evil inclination of their heart." There is no such thing as a "good" inclination of the heart!)

Here is a summary of the commentaries on this phrase in this week's Torah portion, and they are all correct: "What my heart sees that it wants to do" [Rashi]; "Lust that rises in the heart is called 'sherirut'" [Ramban]; "In the strength of my heart" [Ha'amed Davar]. "Sherirut – taking an oath. The heart swears that it wants to cancel what was sworn at Sinai." [Or Hachaim].

In my humility, I would suggest adding another nuance to this word. "G-d created man straight, and they have demanded many different intrigues" [Kohellet 7:29]. The distortion of the heart transforms the straight approach ("yashar") into arbitrariness ("sherirut"). We must return to the straight path, and abandon the arbitrary approach.

ONE ON ONE – Interview of the Week

The Algorithm will Help solve the Problems - by Nachum Avniel

Until he reached the age of his bar mitzva, Arik Fredge (49) did not know that he was Jewish. But five years later, when he was drafted into the French army, he knew enough to object to being stationed in Lebanon. Today Arik lives with his family in Nof Ayalon, has a doctorate, and performs novel and exciting research in different fields of physics. His goal is to develop a Zionist algorithm.

"I grew up in a suburb of Paris," Arik says. This is quite obvious anyway from his accent. "I went to a regular school and I did not feel different from the others, until I saw my friends preparing for a Christian ritual that is parallel to the bar mitzva. I asked my parents why we did not do the same, and they said, 'We are different.'" Arik was sent to study in a Talmud Torah, where he prepared himself for the traditional bar mitzva. At the same time he began a process of a closer approach to Judaism and to Israel. Before he joined the army he came to Israel for a month on a Jewish Agency project, and he

became familiar with the Israeli army institutions. "My army service in France was a very difficult time for me. I was careful to eat only kosher food, and this made me stand out. They didn't like Jews very much there... At one point they wanted to send my unit to Lebanon, to participate in an international supervisory force. I told my commanding officer, 'Enough is enough. I do not want to put myself in a position where I might be forced to shoot an Israeli soldier.'"

Q: How does the French army react to insubordination?

A: "First of all, there is a moderate attitude. Obviously, there is an attempt to brainwash the soldiers, but in the end I was given a punishment and sent to another base. Half a year later I left the army because I was involved in an accident."

Young Fredge decided to take a step towards Zionism, and he began to prepare and study in order to enter the Technion, in Haifa. After a while, he passed the entrance exams, which were held in a school in France, and he prepared for his Aliya.

Q: Didn't your parents object?

A: "When he was young my father spent some time in Israel, in Kibbutz Maagan Michael, and he always wanted to return. My mother also supported me in all of my decisions. After I moved here they also decided to come, and the Jewish Agency sent them to Neve Dekalim. My father passed away and was buried there – his grave was one of those that was later moved to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem."

However, being a new Oleh doesn't have only disadvantages. "In addition to the studies in the Technion, there was an active social life. There were several of us new Olim who did not have any family in Israel, and we organized weekends for the religious students. That is where I met my wife, Amy, who was born in the United States. We were married in 1989."

Fredge went into the field of physical chemistry. His bachelor and masters degrees were in experimental subjects, while his work for a doctorate – on the subject of finding an approximate solution for the Schrodinger equation – was of a theoretical nature.

Q: What do you do now?

A: "I am working together with several universities in Israel and abroad. One project involves water purification using nanotechnology, and in another project I am trying to identify materials on the surface of the earth from pictures alone, without any need for physical samples. Another interesting project in which I am involved is an attempt to find a stable configuration of protein, which for example could help in the reconstruction of molecules from sick people in order to cure them. I am also part of a research effort tracking the flow patterns in the Red Sea. I developing a mathematical algorithm to model the data."

Q: What do you think about the phenomenon of a "brain drain" of scientists who leave Israel?

A: "It is true that it is very difficult to get an academic position in Israel. There are not many places available. I miss every one of my friends who went abroad, and I hope they will all come back. As for me, it is not only the money that is important, you have to know your proper place. My place is here.

"With respect to Israeli scientists: Recently I was in California visiting a well-known professor in my field by the name of Greg Martins. We worked on a difficult problem that he could not solve. I joined him and within two weeks I found the solution. What was needed was not intelligence but creativity. We, the Israelis, think in a very different way. Martins said to me, 'You Israelis are troublemakers in the good sense of the word. You can look at problems from a different angle.'"

Q: What can you say about issues related to Torah and science? Do you see any contradictions between the two?

A: "When I studied weather phenomena, one of my partners told me that he read someplace that in the Kabbala it is written that there are cycles in the world climate. I contacted a great number of people, and it turns out that this indeed appears in the Kabbala, but nobody can explain what research led them to their conclusion. I compared what I found with measurements by NASA, and I found that the differences between what is written in 'Sefer Hayetzira' and the best values that we have today are negligible. The same phenomena that appear in the Kabbala – descriptions of global cooling and heating – can be found in experimental measurements.

"As a scientist I do not reveal anything or make something that is new. All I can do is test a hypothesis. All we can do is obtain a very limited view of reality, we do not know absolute truth. Therefore, I do not see any contradiction between religion and science."

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A LESSON FOR THE CHILDREN

Why India? - by Rabbi Yikhat Rozen, Director of the Or Etzion Institute – Publishing Torah Books of Quality

Tamar (not her real name) constantly felt boredom and a void. She had no idea where she could find anything interesting in her life, something that would give her real satisfaction and make her feel good. In some devious way, she met some people from India who began to teach her their customs and their methods of idol worship. Their approach attracted her, and she studied more and more of the "Far Eastern way of life." In the end Tamar felt that she had indeed found the right path for herself. Now she was very satisfied. She went around with a constant smile on her face, and she tried to convince her friends to join her for a taste of "the true path."

One day Tamar received a letter from the head of an Indian religion with an invitation for her to come to India and to join a religious leader for a long period of study. Tamar jumped with joy and excitement. She had always dreamed of finding her way to perfection and faith – and now she had an opportunity to invest her time in this way, which seemed to her to be the absolute truth.

Tamar's friends and family were a bit more realistic about her plans. They feared that if she indeed went to India she might be drawn so strongly into the idolatrous path that she would stay there for the rest of her life. Some of her friends tried to dissuade her from making such a foolish move. They saw that Tamar would not listen to them and that in fact she was angry that they doubted what seemed to her to be so important and real. So they proposed the following: At least come with us to an important rabbi in Jerusalem, Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook. Listen to what he says – then afterwards, do whatever you want.

Unfortunately, even this effort was in vain. Tamar had already bought a ticket for her flight to India, she had packed her bags, and she was ready to leave. On the day before her scheduled flight, Beracha, Tamar's good friend, suggested one more time that they make a trip to Jerusalem, to visit Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda. For some reason, this time Tamar agreed.

When the two girls arrived at the rabbi's home it turned out that he was not feeling well. But because of the urgency of the request, he agreed to talk to Tamar. She went into his room, stayed for about half an hour, and came out – without saying a word.

After a while, Bracha asked her: "Well, what's going on?" Bracha was pleasantly shocked to hear Tamar's answer: "I'm not going." She explained that when she told Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda that on the next day she was scheduled to fly to India he did not try to convince her to stay in Israel. He did not say anything bad about India and the Indian religions. He only asked her, "Don't you think that it is a good idea to learn about Judaism before going to learn about other religions?"

In response to his question, she decided to challenge him in return, and she asked him, "Who will teach me? Are you willing to teach me?" He surprised her with his answer: "Yes, why not?" And then he asked, "Where do you live?" "In Ramat Gan." "How will you get here?" Tamar thought a moment, and then she heard herself say, "In order to study with you, I am willing to rent an apartment here in Jerusalem." So the two of them agreed to study together.

Tamar cancelled her trip to India. Instead she and Bracha went to Jerusalem the next day and rented an apartment. Every day Tamar went to study with Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda, and he would free some time between his regular lectures to teach her.

Eventually, Tamar repented and became religious. She severed all her ties with the Indian sects, and she has established a faithful Jewish home full of Torah.

(Source: "Mashmiya Yeshua," a book about of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook)

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PEOPLE OF YISRAEL

The Anonymous Man and his Famous Books - by Rabbi Uri Dasberg, the Zomet Institute

"The hidden things are for our G-d" [Devarim 29:28].

It is said that one time the "Chafetz Chaim" was called upon to appear in court in Lithuania. The judge wanted him to testify under oath, and of course the Chafetz Chaim did not want to do this. The lawyer said to the judge that this was a very trustworthy man, and that a story is told about him that – and here the lawyer repeated one of the amazing stories told about the Chafetz Chaim while he was still alive. But the judge stopped him. He said, "So what? Do you really believe all of these stories?" And the lawyer replied, "Your honor, even if you don't believe that the story is true – nobody ever tells such stories about you or me!"

He published the book which has given him his popular name about the laws of gossip and telling about other people – the Chafetz

Chaim – anonymously, at the age of 38. He then traveled from community to community to sell it. The reactions were varied and unusual. Some people refused to believe that anybody existed who could observe all the rules in the book, not even the author himself. One person wrote that anybody who took it upon himself to observe all that is written in the book will be forced to stop using his tongue, and he will be transformed from a "talker" to one who is forever "silent." As it happens, the Chafetz Chaim was quite a prominent speaker. Not only was he among the main speakers at every meeting or conference. Whenever he felt that there was some problem he would write a book on the subject. Examples are: young men who are drafted into the army ("Machaneh Yisrael"); head coverings for women ("Geder Olam"); immersion in a mikveh ("Taharat Yisrael"); emigration of Jews across the sea to America ("Nidchei Yisrael"); unkosher food ("Davar B'Ito"); Torah study ("Chomat Hadat"); shaving with a razor ("Tiferet Adam"); and fraud in business ("Midot U'Mishkalot"). He was never appointed to a formal rabbinical position, but he took on the task of teaching the Jews.

As noted above, he published his first book anonymously. In general, many details of his life are not known. When was he born? The date on his gravestone is 5599 (1839), but some say it was 5598, 5595, or even 5593. Each of these suggestions is backed up by some sort of proof. What was his family name? Kohen, Kagan (the Russian pronunciation), or possibly Hakohen? Could it have been Popko, the name used by his son Aryeh Leib? In which yeshiva did the Chafetz Chaim study, and who were his teachers? It seems that he studied alone in a Beit Midrash in Vilna. Who ordained him as a rabbi? When he needed a passport in 5683 (1923) in order to travel to a conference in Vienna, he was asked to prove that his profession was "rabbi." He therefore obtained ordination documents (at the age of 90!) from Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky. It is even said that the most famous picture of the Chafetz Chaim is not really his, since he refused to have his picture taken. Rather, it is claimed that the picture shows the cook in the Radin yeshiva.

Here is another riddle about the Chafetz Chaim. In the beginning of Elul 5685 (1925), he announced that he was about to move to Eretz Yisrael, and a home was prepared for him in Petach Tikvah. The preparations were made, loans were taken out, but in the end he did not move. Why? Did Rabbi Chaim Ozer put pressure on him to stay? Was it because of his wife's sickness? Why do letters on the subject of returning the loan start out in his son-in-law's handwriting and then change to the Chafetz Chaim's handwriting when the subject of the money is reached? And all of this mystery surrounds this man, who was admired by all, the lead speaker at every conference, and with thousands of pairs of eyes watching him all the time in order to learn from his behavior. One fact about him is certain: the Chafetz Chaim passed away on the twenty-fourth of Elul 5693 (1933).

Words of Torah by our Subject:

One time before the High Holy Days, the Chafetz Chaim was seen to be crying. When he was asked to explain, he replied: People look at me as a prominent man, and they are very careful not to insult me. But then I never have an opportunity to show that I forgive someone. But the sages said, "Whoever shows forgiveness after being insulted will himself be forgiven for all his sins" [Rosh Hashana 17a]. And based on the verse, "He hangs the entire world by a thread" [Iyov 26:6], the sages taught us, "The world exists only for those who restrain themselves at a time of a dispute" [Chulin 89; 91]. But where does that leave me?

GUEST COLUMN

Writing a Torah Scroll – by Rabbi Prof. Neria Gutel, President of Michlelet Orot Yisrael

Those who compiled lists of the mitzvot and who consider the obligation of every person to write a Torah scroll as a Torah commandment see the verse in this week's portion as a source: "And now, write down this epic poem for yourselves" [Devarim 31:19]. This is what appears in the Sefer Hachinuch, the Rambam, the TUR, and the Shulchan Aruch. There are also some who do not count this as a Torah mitzva. During the time of the Geonim, this included the author of Halachot Gedolot and Rabeinu Saadia Gaon, and among the early commentators it includes Rabbi Eliezer from Mitz. Perhaps they agreed with Rashi and the Ramban, that the phrase "this epic poem" refers not to the entire Torah but only to the poem in Haazinu. That would mean that the verse is not a source for a mitzva involving a Torah scroll. Those who do consider it a mitzva might agree with the interpretation of the Ralbag, that "the poem refers to the entire contents of the Torah, until the very end." As an alternative, they might agree with the Rambam – even though the "epic poem" refers only to Haazinu, one is not allowed to write single passages from the Torah, and therefore there is an obligation to write the entire Torah scroll from beginning to end. And that is the essence of the mitzva.

In general, the sequence of verses relevant to the writing of a Torah scroll leaves room for various interpretations. A commandment to write a Torah appears not only in this week's portion but also in Shoftim. As part of the commands to the king, it is written, "And when he sits on his throne, let him write down this second Torah in a scroll... so that he will learn to fear his G-d and to observe all the words of this Torah, and to do all of the laws..." [Devarim 17:18-19]. This is a source for the halacha that a king must write two Torah scrolls, one like every other Jew and the other as a king. But the sequence is problematic: Why does the mitzva for the king appear before the general mitzva for everybody, when the more logical order would be the reverse – first the law of the individuals and then the added law that a king needs a "second" Torah! (The Rambam in Hilchot Sefer Torah in fact writes the law for an individual before that of a king. In Sefer Hamitzvot, on the other hand, he follows the bewildering sequence in the Torah.)

A possible answer to this dilemma can be based on the discussion by Rav Kook of why the king in fact needs a second Torah scroll. Rav Kook felt that the purpose of this obligation is to emphasize the existence of a "Torah of the kingdom" – a guide for the life of the nation as a whole – together with a "Torah of the individual." A government and a country have their own rules, directives, and even their own laws. Rav Kook gave some examples of the consequences of this approach.

There is another point at the root of Rav Kook's approach, related to the above reasoning. He stresses that the "community" is the basis for the individual within Yisrael, and not the opposite – a community which is a combination of individuals – which is the common picture among other nations:

"The relationship of the community of Yisrael to the individual is different from the relationships of all other national groups to their individuals. All the other nationals merely provide their individual people with the external side of their existence... Since the other nations have no Divine element incorporating an independent

heavenly goal. This is not true of Yisrael, where the souls of the individuals are drawn out of a source of eternal life in a general storehouse, and it is the group that gives life to the individuals... The relationship of the individual in Yisrael to the group is greater than in the other nations, and he can give up his soul without becoming torn from the nation if it happens that this is necessary for mending of the individual soul." [Orot Yisrael 2:3; see also Mishpat Kohen 124; and more].

Thus, the Torah did not follow the "logical" sequence but rather a different "Torah" sequence to teach us that what comes first is the community and only afterwards the individual. The kingdom comes before the individual - the portion of "Shoftim" is first and then the portion of "Vayeilech." This is meant to emphasize the obligation of the individual to the group. It is not meant in any way to diminish the importance of the individual but rather to place him in the correct sequence and within a proper structure.

It is well known that it is very advantageous at the time of judgment for an individual to include himself as part of the community of Yisrael. "I dwell within my nation" [Melachim II 4:13]. The lesson that we can learn from the sequence of the mitzvot to write a Torah scroll fits in very well with this concept. With G-d's help, it can lead Bnei Yisrael from "writing down below" to "being written above" in a good way – with wishes for a good year for all.

***** SPECIAL NOTE: Lighting a gas flame on a holiday *****

- by Rabbi Yisrael Rozen, Dean of the Zomet Institute

Recently questions have come up about lighting a gas flame on a holiday. The new standard for stovetops requires installing a valve that turns the gas off if the flame is extinguished. Here is how it works: When the gas is turned on, the valve is opened mechanically, while a spring applies a force to try to close it. There is a bimetal sensor next to the flame which creates a tiny electric force when hot, and this counteracts the force of the spring and keeps the valve open. If the flame goes off the sensor cools down, the electric force disappears, and the spring closes the safety valve. That is, one who lights a gas flame creates a new electric force which is needed to keep the safety valve open.

Is this allowed on a holiday? The answer (based on discussions with prominent rabbis) – Yes, it is permitted!

Among the reasons for this ruling are the following: (1) From the point of view of the "result" – nothing at all has happened. The sensor is merely maintaining the open status of the safety valve. (2) With respect to creating an electric force – the only way the person is involved is through "pesik raishai" (an inevitable result) and "gramma" (indirect action), since the rise in temperature does not start a chain of events. But the purpose of this action is the permitted action of preparing food on a holiday, and this cannot be done in any other way if the new standard must be followed.

HALACHA FROM THE SOURCE

The Prohibition of Putting Oneself in Danger - by Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon, Rabbi of Southern Alon Shevut and a teacher in Yeshivat Har Etzion

The Rambam writes that a person cannot be put to death based on his own testimony, out of fear that he wants to die and is therefore not telling the truth (Hilchot Sanhedrin 18:6). The Radbaz notes that the main reason that a person cannot testify about himself is a Torah law, but that we can also give a logical reason for this. A person's body is not his property but rather belongs to the Almighty (see Yechezkel 18:4 - "The souls are Mine"). He is therefore not allowed to harm himself in any way.

Therefore, just as a person is obligated not to hurt others, so he must take care not to hurt himself!

In view of this, a person must be very careful when crossing a road. It is important to cross at recognized crosswalks and in places with a wide field of vision. One should walk on a sidewalk and not on the road. One should make sure to maintain eye contact with an approaching driver. One should not step behind a vehicle (out of fear that it will suddenly start to move backwards). One should refrain from crossing a street in places that are dark and busy. In general this can be summarized as follows: Every time our feet touch a road, we must think about what we are doing clearly and in a logical way.

Seat Belts

It has been shown that seat belts are the best way to provide protection in attempting to prevent serious injuries (airbags are not a replacement for seat belts!). Therefore, it is clear that there is a halachic requirement to wear seat belts. Even though a person is allowed to put himself in moderate danger and depend on the promise, "G-d keeps watch over fools" [Tehillim 116:6], he is not allowed to enter a situation where a clear danger exists (see Responsa Achiezer Volume 1, Even Ha'ezer 23; Responsa Ezrat Kohen 37).

Even if children in the car stubbornly refuse to wear belts, we must be firm and not give in! This is a life-threatening danger! If the children will be led to understand that the matter is definite, they will also stop their stubborn reaction.

Many accidents take place near the home. Therefore it is important to wear seat belts even for short rides, such as within the bounds of a settlement.

One should always enter a vehicle (or leave it) in a safe way – using a door that is next to a sidewalk.

The author of the Sefer Hachinuch discusses people who are fatalistic – since everything is in the hands of G-d, they therefore do not see any reason to be careful. His response to this is that the Almighty created the world in such a way that people must act in accordance with the laws of nature and to be wary of natural dangers. The Almighty made man smart enough so that he can take care of himself, and if a man is careless and expects to be saved by a miracle, the miracle will not happen!

The author of Chemdat Halevavot notes that with respect to a person who does not watch out for himself, whatever happens to him might be problematic, whether he is saved or not. If he is not saved, then he can be blamed for not watching over the Divine deposit that he was given, and he is just as guilty as if he had killed himself. And if the person is saved, he loses a corresponding amount of his positive credits.

The Rambam writes, "The sages have forbidden many things because they can cause mortal danger. And anybody who violates these decrees and says, 'I am putting myself in danger, why should others care about me,' or 'I do not care about this matter,' is punished by lashes due to a rabbinical decree." [Hilchot Rotzayach 11:5].

The conclusion of all of these cases is: Whoever wants the Almighty to watch over him must first watch over himself! Let us take care of ourselves, and then the G-d of our fathers will provide us with support.

OR HACHAIM PEARLS

Based on the Yismach Moshe edition of the Commentary by Or Hachaim, as summarized by Boaz Ofan

"It is not in heaven... nor is it across the sea..." [Devarim 30:12-13].

"It is not in heaven' – If it would be in heaven, you would be obligated to climb up in search of it and to study it" [Rashi]. Is that true? How can man be commanded to do something which is impossible?

The answer is that there is a precedent just for this. Moshe himself did exactly that! For forty days he remained on Mount Sinai, in the mist, in heaven, without food and water, in order to learn the Divine Torah, and then to bring it down and teach it to Bnei Yisrael ("Let him take it for us and teach it to us, and we will do it" [30:13]). Rising up to heaven means to forego the human way of life. If that would be demanded of us, we would indeed be required to do so! But in practice, Moshe has already brought the Torah down to earth.

But our mission is still not finished. Obtaining the Torah in a heavenly and spiritual way is only the first stage. In the next stage, we must bring the Torah "across the sea." We must take it across the Jordan River (which can be called a sea because of its outlet, into the Dead Sea) and then achieve its existential benefits in the form of mitzvot that depend on the land. This was a mission that Moshe was not able to finish, it was given to Bnei Yisrael to do. At this point in the Torah, when the people are in the midst of their final preparations before entering the land, Moshe tells them that while for him the Torah is "across the sea," for Bnei Yisrael "this matter is very close to you" [30:14]. The claim that the Torah is not connected to real life is about to end at this point in time, as the people enter the land.



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